

El Retiro & the Art Museums

Neighbourhood Top Five

① Taking a journey through the richest centuries of Spanish and European art, beginning with Goya and Velázquez, at the **Museo del Prado** (p99).

② Marvelling at the sheer genius of Picasso as you ponder the many dimensions of *Guernica* at the

Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (p108).

③ Ticking off just about every European master under one roof at the **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** (p104).

④ Enjoying the peace and beauty of the **Parque del Buen Retiro** (p111), one

of the most beautiful city parks in Europe.

⑤ Sampling all that's innovative about the Spanish food revolution at **Estado Puro** (p114), one of Madrid's premier tapas bars.



For more detail of this area see Map p242 ➔

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Avoid the free opening hours at the Museo del Prado, when crowds can really spoil your visit. First thing in the morning is the best time and if you've purchased your ticket online and in advance, you'll skip the queues. The Prado is worth two visits to take it all in; its 'Two Visits in a Year' ticket for €20 saves you €8.

If you're visiting the Reina Sofía and Thyssen as well, you'll save €6.40 with the 'Paseo del Arte' combined ticket – it gets you into all three galleries for €25.60.



Best Places to Eat

- Estado Puro (p114)
- Viridiana (p114)
- El Brillante (p114)

For reviews, see p114 ➡



Best for Art

- Museo del Prado (p99)
- Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (p108)
- Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (p104)

For reviews, see p99 ➡



Best for Architecture

- Plaza de la Cibeles (p110)
- Caixa Forum (p111)
- Palacio de Cristal (p111)
- Antigua Estación de Atocha (p113)
- Iglesia de San Jerónimo El Real (p111)

For reviews, see p110 ➡

Explore: El Retiro & the Art Museums

The Paseo del Prado, a former river and now one of Europe's grandest boulevards, is all about the fabulous art galleries arrayed along or close to its shores. With other grand monuments and the city's botanical gardens also in residence, it's very much a daytime neighbourhood, one that all but shuts down – at least by Madrid standards – after dark. Metro stations sit at either end of the Paseo del Prado with none in between – when walking from one end to the other, take the footpaths under the trees down the centre of the Paseo, not those on the outer extremities. The *barrio* (district) of Huertas climbs up the hill to the west.

Behind the Museo del Prado and Real Jardín Botánico to the east, a gentle rise of tranquil and refined residential streets leads towards the Parque del Buen Retiro. The park is even more of a daytime experience (the gates close soon after sunset), but its moods vary with the days. On weekdays, the park is quiet and sleepy, sprinkled with enough people to feel alive but peaceful in a way that serves as an antidote to the clamour of downtown Madrid nearby. Come Saturday and Sunday, locals stream into the park – when the weather's fine on a Sunday afternoon, it can seem as if the whole city has come here to play.

Local Life

- **Retiro groove** East of the Monument to Alfonso XII (p112) in the heart of El Retiro, crowds gather, drumbeats start to roll out across the park and people begin to dance as the sun nears the horizon on a Sunday afternoon.
- **Hang out** On Sunday afternoons after El Rastro's clamour has faded and the tapas crowds are thinning, head for the Plaza de la Puerta de Moros for an infectious street party.
- **Madrid's left bank** Just off the southern end of the Paseo del Prado, the Cuesta de Claudio Moyano bookstalls (p115) sell secondhand books, drawing the curious as well as serious bibliophiles.

Getting There & Away

- **Metro** Banco de España metro station (line 2) to the north and Atocha station (line 1) to the south sit at either end of the Paseo del Prado.
- **Metro** For the Parque del Buen Retiro, the most convenient station is Retiro (line 2). Ibiza (line 9) also leaves you in a good place, but isn't as well connected to the centre.