

# Sol, Santa Ana & Huertas

## Neighbourhood Top Five

**1** Discovering the little-known artistic riches of the **Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando** (p85).

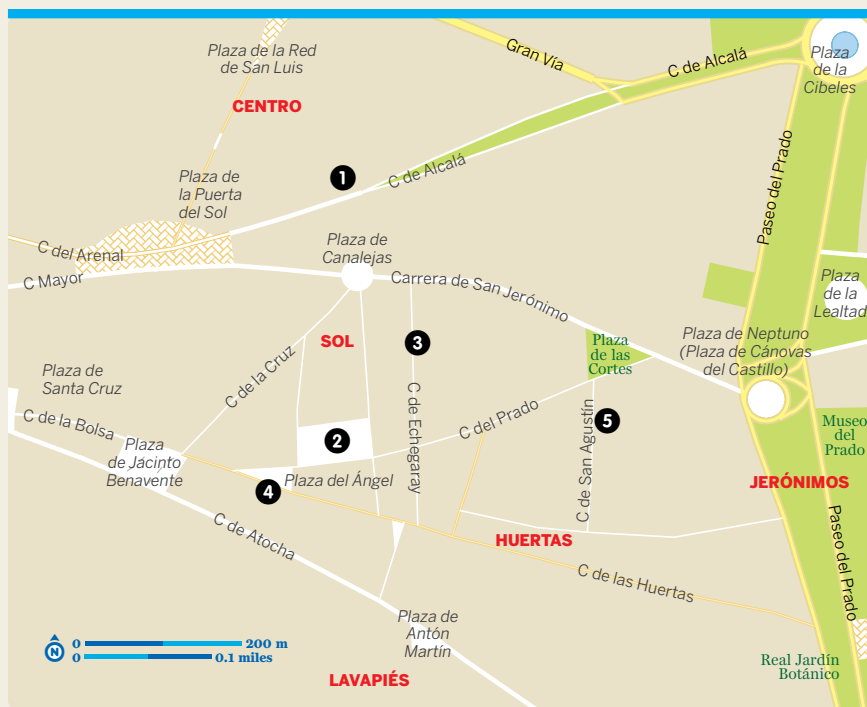
**2** Spending a lazy afternoon watching the world go by from one of the outdoor tables on **Plaza de Santa Ana** (p87).

**3** Stepping back in time at **La Venencia** (p91), an old-style sherry bar that captures the spirit of a Spain that long ago disappeared elsewhere.

**4** Getting into the swing at **Café Central** (p93), an art-deco salon that's internationally recognised

as one of the world's finest jazz clubs.

**5** Losing yourself in the lanes of the **Barrio de las Letras** (p89), with its echoes of Cervantes and Madrid's literary past.



For more detail of this area see Map p238 →

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

The Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando may have a collection the envy of many a European gallery but it's free if you come on a Wednesday. And unlike free days at other better-known Madrid art galleries, you'll see no discernible rise in visitor numbers on the day, allowing you to enjoy it both for free and in peace.

### Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Casa Alberto (p89)
- ➔ La Terraza del Casino (p91)
- ➔ Casa Labra (p88)
- ➔ Lhardy (p91)
- ➔ Vi Cool (p89)

For reviews, see p88 ➔

### Best Places to Drink

- ➔ La Venencia (p91)
- ➔ La Azotea (Círculo de Bellas Artes; p88)
- ➔ El Imperfecto (p92)
- ➔ La Terraza del Urban (p92)
- ➔ Taberna La Dolores (p92)

For reviews, see p91 ➔

### Best Literary Landmarks

- ➔ Calle de Cervantes 2 (p89)
- ➔ Casa Alberto (p89)
- ➔ Convento de las Trinitarias (p89)
- ➔ Casa de Lope de Vega (p87)

For reviews, see p87 ➔

## Explore: Sol, Santa Ana & Huertas

Sol, Santa Ana and Huertas together make up Madrid's most clamorous corner. So many explorations of this neighbourhood begin in the Plaza de la Puerta del Sol, the pulsing heart of downtown Madrid, then move on to nearby Plaza de Santa Ana and the tangle of laneways that tumble down the hillside to the east.

And yet, there are subtle differences between the two squares. Sol is above all a crossroads, a place for people to meet before fanning out across the city. There are reasons to linger, but for the most part a sense of transience is what prevails. And Sol is always busy, no matter the hour.

Plaza de Santa Ana, on the other hand, is a destination in its own right, a stirringly beautiful square that has become emblematic of a city intent on living the good life. It is also a place of many moods. On a sunny weekday afternoon, it can be quiet (by its own rather noisy standards), a place to nurse a wine as you plot your path through the city. This is when the Barrio de las Letras is also at its most accessible, its streets suitably sedate for a *barrio* (district) rich in literary resonance. But come most nights of the week, Santa Ana and the surrounding streets crescendo into life, an explosion of noise and revelry that ripples out across the city.

## Local Life

- ➔ **Hang out** 1pm on a Sunday is known in Madrid as *la hora del vermut* (vermouth hour). Mostly this resonates in neighbouring La Latina (p69), but Casa Alberto (p89) is arguably the real star of the hour.
- ➔ **Flamenco** One of the great flamenco venues of Old Madrid, the extravagantly tiled Villa Rosa (p94) has mercifully shed its recent past as a fairly run-of-the-mill nightclub and returned to its roots. It even starred in a Pedro Almodóvar movie.
- ➔ **Meeting point** It's a cliché whose time has passed for the in-crowd, but meeting at the paving stone that marks Spain's Kilometre Zero on Plaza de la Puerta del Sol (p86) is a time-honoured local tradition.

## Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Metro** Sol metro station is one of the most useful in Madrid, with lines 1, 2 and 3 all passing through.
- ➔ **Metro** Other useful stations are Sevilla (line 2) and Tirso de Molina and Antón Martín (both line 1).