



Madrid

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

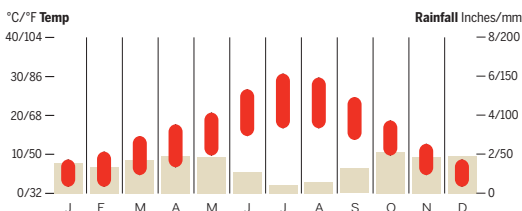
No city on earth is more alive than Madrid, a beguiling place whose sheer energy carries a simple message: this city knows how to live.

It's true Madrid doesn't have the immediate cachet of Paris, the monumental history of Rome or the reputation for cool of that other city up the road. But it's a city whose contradictory impulses are legion, the perfect expression of Europe's most passionate country writ large.

This city has transformed itself into Spain's premier style centre and its calling cards are many: astonishing art galleries; relentless nightlife; an exceptional live-music scene; a feast of fine restaurants and tapas bars; and a population that's mastered the art of the good life. It's not that other cities don't have these things. It's just that Madrid has all of them in bucket-loads.

When to Go

Madrid



February Five days of Spain's best flamenco during the Festival Flamenco Caja Madrid

May Two of Madrid's biggest fiestas: Fiesta de la Comunidad de Madrid and Fiesta de San Isidro

September Madrid shakes off its summer torpor with (usually) lovely autumn weather

Madrid Baroque

The Spanish capital's contribution to world architectural textbooks is known as *barroco madrileño* (Madrid baroque). Its creation is largely attributed to Juan de Herrera (1530–97), perhaps the greatest figure of the Spanish Renaissance, who fused the sternness of the Renaissance style with a muted approach to its successor, the more voluptuous, ornamental baroque. Prime examples in Madrid include the Plaza Mayor, the former *ayuntamiento* (town hall) on Plaza de la Villa and the Convento de la Encarnación.

MADRID'S BARRIOS IN A NUTSHELL

Los Austrias, Sol and Centro form Madrid's oldest quarter, home to some of Madrid's grandest monuments, as well as bars, restaurants and hotels. Next door, the **La Latina and Lavapiés** neighbourhood is the preserve of narrow medieval streets, great bars for tapas, drinking and restaurants. Away to the east, the **Huertas and Atocha** area is one of Madrid's nightlife capitals and home to the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

Down the hill and a world away, **Paseo del Prado and El Retiro** is downtown Madrid's greenest corner, with world-class art galleries along the Paseo's shores and the Parque del Buen Retiro up the hill to the east. **Salamanca** is upmarket and Madrid's home of old money, not to mention Madrid's home of designer shopping, while **Malasaña and Chueca** are two inner-city *barrios* with eclectic nightlife, shopping and outstanding eating options; the latter is the heartbeat of Madrid's gay community.

To the north, **Chamberí and Argüelles** are residential *barrios* with a glimpse of Madrid away from the tourist crowds, while **Northern Madrid** has high-class restaurants and is the home of Real Madrid football club.

Madrid's Best Art Galleries

- » **Museo del Prado** (p69) One of the great art galleries of the world, with Goya and Velázquez the highlights.
- » **Centro de Arte Reina Sofía** (p68) Stunning art gallery that's home to Picasso's *Guernica*.
- » **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** (p73) Private art gallery with masters from every era.
- » **Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando** (p63) Goya, Picasso, Velázquez, Rubens...
- » **Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida** (p77) Exquisite Goya frescoes in their original setting.

DON'T MISS

La Latina, the tangle of medieval streets southwest of Plaza Mayor, ranks among Spain's finest hunting grounds for tapas. Start along Calle de la Cava Baja, and finish with a mojito on Plaza de la Paja.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 3.6 million (city), 6.2 million (Comunidad)
- » Area: 505 sq km (city), 7995 sq km (Comunidad)
- » Number of visitors (2009): 7.2 million
- » Annual income: €22,870

Planning Your Trip

- » Book your accommodation at hotels.lonelyplanet.com.
- » Avoid the queues and book your tickets online to the Museo del Prado (www.museodelprado.es).
- » Beat the rush and book your tickets in advance to see Real Madrid play (p110).

Resources

- » Tourism in Madrid city (www.esmadrid.com)
- » Tourism in Madrid region (www.turismomadrid.es)
- » English-language guide to what's happening (www.in-madrid.com)