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La Latina

Madrid's famous flea market is buzzing with activity.



Delicious tapas and Europe's biggest flea market.

If there is one thing you must do before leaving Madrid, it's to graze in barrio La Latina. Home to Europe's biggest flea market and some of the finest tapas bars in the world, this barrio a delicious slow feed for the senses. The only problem is that with delicacy-tasting, wine and beer swilling, knick-knack rummaging, people watching and atmosphere absorption on the menu, you may never want to leave.

If you're only staying in Madrid for a few days, be sure to make one of those a Sunday. From 7am to 2pm each week, the historic streets of La Latina are transformed. Seemingly half of Madrid descends upon the neighbourhood as the sprawling El Rastro markets take over – stretching from the Ronda de Toledo to Metro La Latina, sending out tendrils in every direction.

LA LATINA

GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF ART

GRAN VIA

MALASAÑA & CHUECA

WHERE TO STAY

Calle de Ribera de Curtidores forms the flea market's spine, but the side streets are filled with real treasures. Antiques, caged birds, retro clothing, arts and crafts and electronic goods are found in abundance, and if you're not interested in any of these, the atmosphere is unbeatable. Sure, it's crowded but a visit to El Rastro allows one to socialise, eat tapas, and drink in the bars and cafes populating the market streets.

For a more civilised culinary adventure, try the many tapas bars of Calle Cava Baja, north of Metro La Latina and a short walk south of Plaza Mayor. There are traditional tapas specialities from Galicia, Asturias, Andalusia and other regions available, along with modern tapas creations, but it helps to know where to look. If you don't know a local, the Viator's Madrid Tapas Night Walking Tour is a good option. The four-hour tour features an English-speaking guide introducing the best bars on the street, while illuminating you on cooking techniques, history and culture.



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Ben has travelled extensively through the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australia. His features and reviews have appeared in publications and websites in the UK and Australia, including Rough Guides (Penguin Group, London, UK), The List (Edinburgh, Scotland), Tiger Beer's UK website, Australian Traveller, OUTthere and Cruise Passenger.

