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Where to Stay

Area & Hotel Guide

Visiting Madrid for the art? Only interested in its tapas? Want to party all night or soak up alternative culture? By no means exhaustive, these are our barrio picks for travellers thinking of where to stay in Madrid.

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For culture... Huertas

Culture vultures seeking to soak up remnant literary genius or massage occipital lobes with the best of European art for the last millennia will be best served staying at Las Huertas. The neighbourhood is famous for the many literary giants who have lived here and/or stupefied their genius with its golden juice. Among them Miguel de Cervantes, celebrated author of Don Quixote, and Ernest Hemingway. Staying here also places you in equidistant proximity to three of the greatest art museums in Europe: Museo Del Prado (featuring pre-20th century art), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Sofia (20th century modern art) and Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (a private museum featuring historic through to contemporary art). In addition, a brief wander east will land you in the magical arboreal kingdoms of Real Jardín Botánico de Madrid and Parque Del Retiro.

Our picks: **Radisson Blu Hotel, Madrid Prado** (*Luxury*) is a boutique hotel in the heart of Huertas. Designed by famous interior decorators Sandra Tarruella and Isabel López, beauty is present in every detail, from the chic bar and restaurant to the snazzy rooms and luminous soul-soothing waters of its Turkish/steam bath. **Hostal Bruña** (*budget*), while by no means imbued with style, has friendly staff, clean and comfortable rooms and is great value for money.

For food... La Latina

Madrid is famous for its tapas, and if partaking in numerous tasca crawls is your intention, this is where to base yourself. Bordering La Latina, the historic Plaza Mayor is an unmissable Habsburg structure, with cafes beneath its porticoes and glorious alfresco seating. From here, a stroll through La Latina, down Calle de los Chuchilleros on to Calle la Cava Baja, a journey through one of the oldest parts of the city, is littered with some of the best tapas bars in the world. Sample traditional fare, like deep fried bacalao (cod) and tortilla de patatas, or try out more contemporary inventions, like anca de rana marinadas (frogs legs marinated in soy, lime and ginger).

Our picks: Nurse your growing belly at **Petit Palace Mayor Plaza** (*luxury*). Located next to Plaza Mayor, its dark hues, spot lighting and chic design features assist in the proper appreciation of your post-gastronomic bliss. All the luxury mod-cons abound and sight seeing is made easy with free use of the hotel's bicycles. **Hotel Garnivet** (*mid-range*), located at an easy stroll south of the tapas treats of Calle la Cava Baja and north of the famous El Rastro Market (Sundays), is modern and comfortable. A good option for light-sleepers, as each room has been properly soundproofed.

For nightlife... Malasaña (Universidad)

If you're wanting to party, accommodation in Malasaña (officially Universidad) is a good option. Chock-full of lively bars and clubs, cool cafes, record shops, piercing parlours and funky fashion outlets (many integrating the barrio's extensive graffiti murals into their design), this is the domain of University students and 20-somethings dwelling on the cutting edge of cool. And Malasaña is only a short skip and jump to Chueca, the city's vibrant gay district, where all are welcome, and clubs pulse into the early hours to the beats of some of the worlds best dance and electronic music. Additional club offerings in La Latina and Gran Via are only a short stroll away.

Our picks: Polished parquet floors and stylish modern décor make the apartments of **Madrid 4 Rentals Madera** (*mid-range*) the perfect hangover cure. Well-equipped kitchenettes enable reduced-cost home cooking, while free Wi-Fi and flat screen televisions supply the requisite downtime stimuli. Step outside for immediate access to the style, spunk and groove of Malasaña's many shops, restaurants and bars. For a cheap, clean and stylish place to kip, however, **HostelOne Centro** (*budget*), on the cusp of Malasaña and Chueca, is unbeatable, with hip, friendly and youthful staff to guide your partying ways.

For global influences... Lavapies

Lavapies is Madrid's multicultural quarter with more than 50% foreign residents and a few artists and hippies thrown in for good measure. Nationality based cafes, restaurants, clubs, Dell's, clothing and knick-knack stores fan out from Lavapies train station, where Moroccan, Indian, Bangladeshi, Asian and Caribbeans mix in an exotic mishmash of skin colours, traditions, modern street apparel and styles (expect euro mullets, piercings and berets). Sit down at one of the alfresco cafes or bars on Calle De Argumosa or Calle Lavapies and watch it all go by: middle aged Indians in traditional attire, bald African men in reflector glasses, kaleidoscopic Rastafarians, cute Spanish girls in globally inspired figure hugging outfits and more... you will be entertained.

Our picks: Spend your downtime in style and comfort in one of the chic apartments of **Apartamentos Ministriles Art** (*mid-range to luxury*), located in northern Lavapies, in proximity to central Madrid. Sleek modern kitchens, designer furniture and uber-comfy beds combine with free Wi-Fi and flat-screen TV to make a very attractive temporary home. In the alternative, **Cat's Hostel Madrid** (*budget*), situated in a beautiful 18th century building, is a value-for-money backpacker with a great bar for relaxing and making friends.

For style... Salamanca

If money is no issue and you live for style, the barrios of the district of Salamanca, northeast of the city (directly north of Parque El Retiro) are possibly for you. One of the wealthiest areas in Madrid, with up-market restaurants and cafes, designer boutiques and exclusive clubs, this is a place of beauty, high-class fashion, old-money eccentricity (think old lady with purple hair and clown-like excesses of makeup talking emphatically with her poodle) and the best food and alcohol money can buy. Recoletos, the barrio in the south of the district, is in walking distance of Parque El Retiro, Museo Del Prado, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and the exquisite architecture of Plaza de Cibeles and Calle Gran Via, so may be your best option.

Our picks: Beauty, elegance, and style make **Hospes Madrid** (*luxury*) the ultimate sojourn for the wealthy, sophisticated traveler. Situated on Plaza de la Independencia, across the road from Parque El Retiro and at the southern tip of Salamanca, guests have access to a spa, gym, and indoor pool, and the hotel restaurant's terrace offers fabulous views over Puerta de Alcalá and El Retiro. No less beautiful, but with a darker, more futuristic aesthetic, the equally exorbitant **Petit Palace Art Gallery** (*luxury*) caters to every whim, and is situated in the centre of the Jorge Juan boutique-shopping district.

Getting Around

Madrid has a modern and efficient transport infrastructure. Its underground metro, in particular, is fast and easy to use, with train stations located close to all significant barrios and landmarks. Between 2am and 6am, however, trains do not operate, so you'll need to either walk or flag down one of the city's many taxis.

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