

Madrid Travel & Accommodation Guide

The capital of Spain will help you live again.



"Nothing excites our interest more than prohibition."

– Carl Jung

World-class art galleries, eye-catching architecture, saliva-inducing food, heavenly parks and gardens aside, it is Madrid's local inhabitants' unmistakable lust for life that makes this city one of the greats.



LA LATINA

GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF ART

GRAN VIA

MALASAÑA & CHUECA

WHERE TO STAY

The oppressive dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), which ruled from the city, is no doubt partially responsible. Once released from Franco's vice-like grip, the Spanish capital, after decades of systematic suppression, exploded with creativity and colour.

And decades on, there's no signs of it stopping.

Madrid, it is claimed, has more bars and restaurants per capita than any other city in the world. Its youths are famous for partying to the early hours then downing electric jolts of Godzilla-strength coffee, before showering and heading to work. And there is truth to this. Life is to be lived, and this the locals do with gusto. From sunny afternoons on 'tasca crawls' (sampling the city's world-famous tapas and wines from one bar to the next), nights dancing like Dionysus in one of the city's numerous clubs to sunrise chocolate and churros; loving life is what Madrid is all about. So do as the locals do.

And, you must explore.

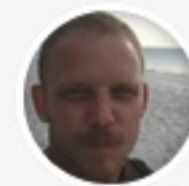
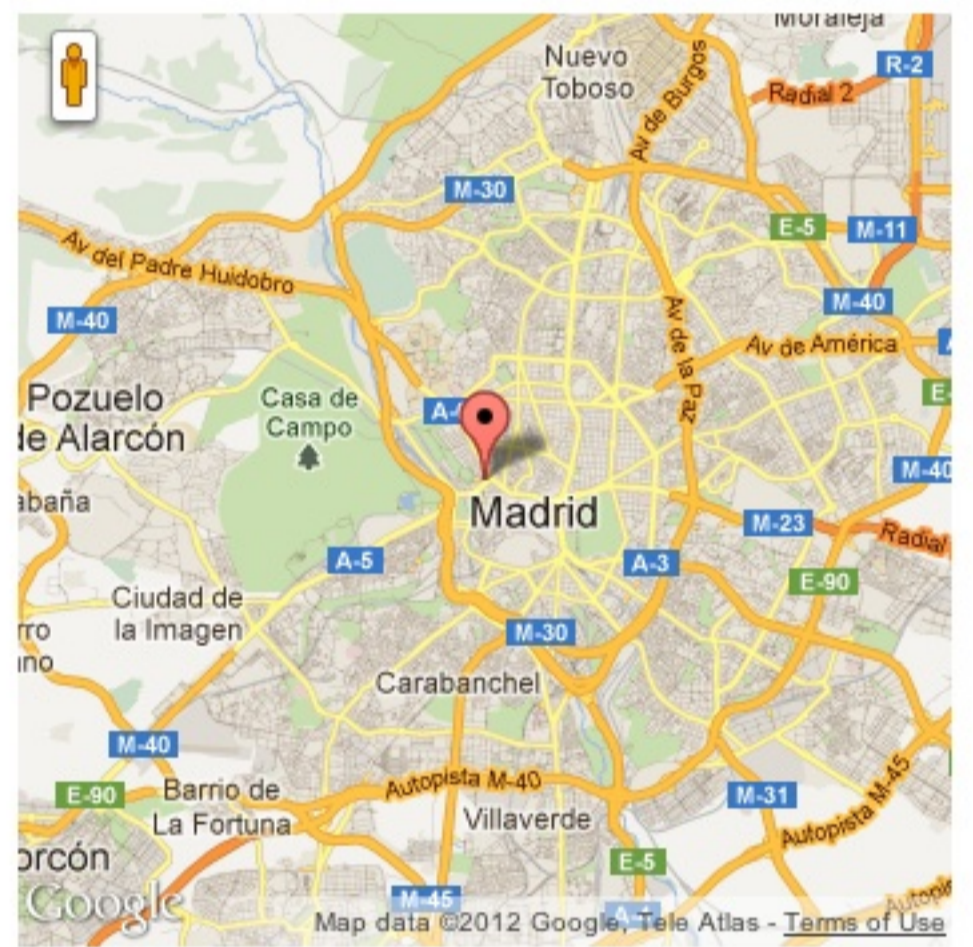
There is much to be seen and experienced in the barrios of the cities compact populous centre. Narrow one-way streets form a seemingly endless network of deep ravines through ancient four storey blocks – once battlegrounds of the Civil War. Here, doorways are like gateways to a myriad of dimensions: space age clubs, old-world bars, retro-fashion boutiques, funky record stores, classic eateries and cool cafes. And by day, in hipper quarters, nocturnal establishments perform a similar function: their closed roller doors, animated with surreal, vibrantly coloured graffiti murals, sucking viewers into worlds previously only known to them in dreams.

Wide city arteries, lined with trees and elaborate architecture, old and new, beg to be strolled; glorious plazas demand coffee sipping obeisance; and a patchwork of parks and gardens populated by exotic floral species provide all the psychic gifts of Japanese Zen masters.

And there is art. The city is host to three of the world's greatest art museums (Museo Nacional del Prado, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia and Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum), flamenco performers entertain in bars, streets and parks and the city's south is home to the Matedero Madrid, a vibrant arts centre for contemporary art, photography, design, architecture, dance, theatre and circus.

If you've forgotten how to live, live a little life in Madrid.

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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.

