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Malasaña & Chueca

A neighbourhood filled with the city's funkier bars, cafes, stores and clubs.



The barrios of Malasaña & Chueca are a pleasure to explore.

Visitors to Madrid in search of the hip, alternative and fabulous, should head to the barrios of Malasaña and Chueca. The two neighbouring areas, north of Gran Vía, are a veritable labyrinth of narrow winding streets and sunlit plazas filled with the city's funkier bars, cafes, record stores, fashion boutiques and clubs.

Malasaña, which is officially known as Universidad, got its name from 15-year old local girl Manuela Malasaña who was killed by the French following an uprising in 1808. Manuela is the perfect champion of an area whose youth, since the fall of Franco, have resisted conservative control and brought liberal thinking and cutting edge art, film, music, fashion and style to the capital and the world. In the 80s, Malasaña was the centre of a post-Franco cultural movement known as *La Movida madrileña*, a time when innovators like director Pedro Almodovar pushed the boundaries of expression, and received international recognition in doing so.

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While not as progressive as it once was, Malasaña is a vibrant place. By day, you'll merrily sing the words of Manu Chao, "Me Gustas Malasaña, me gustas tú" ("I like Malasaña, I like you"), as you stroll from café to bar, record store to hip hop clothing boutique, vintage emporium to designer gift shop, passing sexy alternative youth, exceptional murals and walls plastered with event posters as you go. And at night, you'll party. Here and in neighbouring Chueca.

Only a few decades ago, Chueca was a seedy run down area, famous for its illicit drug trade. In the last two decades it has transformed, however, into a lively neighbourhood and centre of Madrid's gay community. But Chueca is by no means exclusive. All are welcome in the barrios many hip bars, clubs and cafes, while design shops and fashion stores have something for everyone.

So if you're looking for good times, wild nights and alternative styles and fashion, spend a little time in Malasaña and Chueca.

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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.

