

Best Gifts from Madrid

Buying gifts for friends and family in Madrid can be a difficult task. Pretty much everything can be found everywhere nowadays. I often see the same Spanish brand names and products when I walk around my neighborhood in New York. So I think to myself, why did I even bother lugging that bottle of *Marqués de Riscal* all across the ocean? If you find yourself faced with this same problem (and not inclined to buy your mom a keychain or a magnet), here's a list of well thought-out **gift ideas from Madrid**. Hope it helps!

First let's quickly name some of the **more obvious gift ideas**, which are also good but run the risk of being found in your hometown (scroll down if you're all too familiar with these):

Handheld fans, flamenco shawls, ceramic tiles and dishes, paella pans, recipe books, aprons with a flamenco dancer or the flag of Spain, **football/soccer jersey, wine, cured ham and sweets** with long shelf-lives such as *mazapán*, *turron* and *polvorones* (can be bought at [El Riojano](#) or [Casa Mira](#), two very traditional pastry shops in the city center) or a **swiss army/pocket knife** (best from Toledo but also sold in Plaza Mayor). While it's always best to buy these items from independent sellers (which you will find below), if you're pressed for time you can find absolutely everything at **El Corte Inglés**, the country's major department store with locations all around.

Now let's move on to the **more original gift ideas**:

1. Anything from La Violeta



La Violeta is a candy shop located in the center of Madrid. It must be included in this list because it is a typical place **where Madrileños buy gifts for other Madrileños**. **Las violetas** are purple-colored sucking candies wrapped in pretty little boxes and ribbon. You can buy them plain or **escarchadas**, meaning sugar-coated. You can also find **cajas de bombones** (boxes of chocolates) and many other sweet treats. Prices range from **€5** to **€15**.

[Web](#)

Address: Plaza de Canalejas, 6

Metro: Sol and Sevilla

2. Saffron or a pack of mixed Spanish spices for anyone who likes to cook

My sister, Amanda, actually gave me this idea. Her boyfriend's family is originally from the Basque Country. Her father-in-law loves little trinkets from Spain and also makes **paella** every year for the whole family. So she had the bright idea of buying him a pack of **azafrán** (saffron). **Yes, saffron!** It costs

peanuts in comparison to what it costs in the States. She bought it at **Corte Inglés** and he was over the moon when he received it. For non-purists, you can also buy **sachets**, which is a bag of mixed Spanish spices, also used **for making paella**. Anyone who likes to cook will enjoy this gift!

3. Berets; can be bought at a charming century-old hat shop right in Plaza Mayor



Founded in 1894, Madrid's oldest hat shop—[La Favorita C.B.](#)—is now in the hands of its family's fourth generation. It remains in its original location in Plaza Mayor and sells all types of traditional Spanish hats that make for fun and useful gifts. Amanda gave me this idea too. She bought a **black beret** for her stylish sister-in-law which cost €19. Although the black beret is traditionally worn in the Basque Country, where it's called

a **Boina**, it very well looked like it could have been bought at Top Shop. I'm sure anyone could rock this look in any city around the world, and they'd have a nice story to tell when someone asked them where they bought it.



[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Plaza Mayor, 25

Metro: Sol or Opera

4. Chocolate for dipping churros; can be bought at the famous Chocolatería San Gines (near Sol)

In Spanish, this is simply called **chocolate a la taza** or **chocolate *caliente***. However, for English-speakers this can be quite confusing—this is not just hot chocolate. It refers to the thick chocolate that you **dip churros** into. When my husband's relatives from California were visiting, they bought bags and bags of this chocolate as a present for all their friends back home. It was a hit! And it's not exclusive for dipping *churros*, you can also use it for dipping

strawberries, bananas—anything you like! You can buy it in bags by the kilo at Madrid's most famous churros shop, **Chocolatería San Ginés**, open 24/7 and just a stone's throw from Sol.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: *Pasadizo de San Gines, 5*

Metro: *Sol*

5. Peseta; for millions of small gift ideas made in Madrid, using fabrics from around the world (in Malasaña)



Named after Spain's former currency—**las pesetas**—this charming store was founded by Laura Martínez del Pozo around ten years ago. She collects fabrics from all over the world and uses them to make unique, creative and very handy items, from **tablet** and **laptop cases** to **handbags** and **wallets**. They even sell beautiful shoes, also typical from Spain—**espadrilles** and **alpargatas**—though with a nice twist as the fabric is a hundred

percent unique. Seeing as these everyday items are useful for everyone, you're sure to find great gifts here.



You can also find Peseta's products sold at an awesome book store and cafe near Callao called [La Central](#), which will talk more about below.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Noviciado, 9

Metro: Noviciado

6. Summer shoes; can be found in stores everywhere (also in Peseta)



alpargatas at the top and mallorquinas at the bottom

Esparto (espadrilles), **alpargatas** and **mallorquinas** are the **three most popular summer shoe styles** originating from Spain. All can be found in any colour and in any standard shoe store (the center is littered with typical shoe stores, especially around **Plaza Mayor** and **Calle Carmen** which is right off of Sol). The latter two styles are unisex, so you're bound to find something for both your male and female friends and family. Since Spain is well-known for its amazing shoes, why not wow them with some Spanish summer footwear they can strut around their own city in style? Plus you don't have to limit yourself to the traditional ones. You can find snazzier versions too. You can also check out our post on "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)" for more recommendations.



This photo is from a new store called [Alpargatus](#) which is located just off of Plaza Mayor on Calle Postas. They have all types of *alpargatas*, *espadrilles* and *mallorquinas*, plus other souvenirs. It's really convenient.

[Facebook](#)

Address: *C/ Postas, 20 (just a few steps away from Plaza Mayor)*

Metro: *Sol or Opera*

Or check out another post of ours dedicated solely to espadrilles: "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)"

8. Traditional gloves with silk lining from 100-year-old glove shop in Sol

Just a note—I couldn't get a photo because the owner closed the shop for the whole weekend to go to Lisbon and watch the football match...

Believe it or not, Spain still has entire shops dedicated solely to **gloves**! One of Madrid's most well-known and oldest glove shops is called [Guañtes Luque](#), nestled between the streets of Sol and Sevilla. Entering the shop is an experience in and of itself. These elegant gloves take you back to

another era, when items were not mass produced and were meant to last a lifetime. Understandably on the **expensive** side, these traditional **Spanish gloves** are not only beautiful, but have silk lining which is a godsend in winter.

No web, but they're on [Yelp](#)

Address: c/ Espoz y Mina, 3

Metro: Sol, Gran Vía or Sevilla

7. Gift Basket – 3 simple and delicious ingredients



image from gastronosfera.com

When I asked around for good gift ideas, one expat said that he always brings home a basket of 3 items: **pimientos de piquillo** (roasted red peppers), **aceitunas campo reales** (olives) and a really fancy **aceite de oliva** (olive oil). After speaking with many foreigners living in Spain, it became clear that **campo real olives** are a major hit among the gift-giving crowd. Though if you don't like olives, you can always replace them with a bottle of wine (my favorite red is **Ribera** and my favorite white is **Albariño**), a box of **marzipan** from Toledo or

sweets from **La Violeta** (mentioned #1).

Where to buy: while you can buy these items all over the city and of course at **El Corte Inglés**, we recommend you go to [Mercado de Antón Martín](#) or [Mercado de San Fernando](#). These markets are very traditional, unlike many of the others that have become over-priced and over-touristy. You can also go to Qué Rico Tó, mentioned #2 on this list.

Mercado de Antón Martín

[Facebook](#)

Address: C/ Santa Isabel, 5

Metro: Antón Martín

Mercado de San Fernando

[Facebook](#)

Address: C/ Embajadores, 41

Metro: Lavapiés or Embajadores

8. Spanish Comic Books



For your alternative or comic-book loving friends, a **Spanish comic** could be a really cool gift. It's always fun to read comics in other languages, especially because the drawings and images help you figure out the story. But of course this gift isn't for everyone. The above photo is of [El Coleccionista](#), a well-known **comic shop in Lavapiés** with a wide collection. My sister, Amanda (also in the photo), bought a few rare books for her friends here. When I asked Amanda if I could include her photo in this article, she said of course—she'd be happy to support any type of independent shop like this one which make up the backbone of a city's personality and charm. I've also just found out that one of the world's best comic stores is located in Madrid too, it's called [Akira Comics](#) and is located a bit further out in the city.

[El Coleccionista](#)

Address: C/ Tribulete, 5

9. Second-hand books with personality from Desperate Literature



At [Desperate Literature](#), a new international bookstore located in the center of Madrid (close to the Royal Palace), you can find good quality used books in English, Spanish and French, many of which are related to Spain and can make for a great, personalized gift. Also, this bookstore has a nice story behind it, as its three young owners—Michael, Corey and Craig—have opened used international bookstores in Santorini,

Greece and in Brooklyn, New York. With the recent opening of Desperate Literature in Madrid, they aim to provide a literary haven for travellers, expats and Madrileños alike. [Here's a long article on Desperate Literature.](#)

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: c/ Campomanes, 13

Metro: Santo Domingo and Opera

10. New books and much more from a La Central, an ultra hip bookstore/cafe near Callao



While my first suggestion would be to go to Desperate Literature, if you're looking for all kinds of new books in

Spanish (i.e. children's, novels, poetry, you name it) or other gift ideas such as **board games, notebooks and fun nicknacks**, then this is the store you should be going to.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Postigo de San Martín 8

Metro: Callao

11. Trinkets from a Funky Madrid Gift Shop called Curiosity

As far as gift shops go, this one is quite original. At [Curiosity](#), you can get maps of Malasaña and Chueca for €12, which look great framed, as well as tons of other fun little *tchotchkes*. This gift is recommended for someone who has lived or spent a good amount of time in Madrid.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Corredera Alta de San Pablo, 28

Metro: Tribunal

Any other gift ideas? Please share! We'll be happy to add more to this list ☐

A Heightened Beer State of Mind in Madrid

Beer lovers this is for you again! You can read my [first article on craft beer bars in Madrid](#) to explore/discover more. The main idea is to go try and find your favourites'.

There truly is a very special place just North of Metro Bilbao that I like to call the **triangle of craft beer**. It involves 3 craft beer bars that are within throwing distance of each other. It really is the perfect place to have your heart's desire of good beer satisfied without feeling trapped in the same bar the entire night. **The 3 bars are named ANIMAL, Oldenburg and Cervercería L'Europe**. What they all have in common is their huge offer of various beers from across the world. This selection of bars promises a night out where you know your next destination and be sure to arrive as well.

ANIMAL I wrote about in my [previous article](#) and you can follow the link to take a look. It is a bar that consistently offers excellent beers from all parts. Tivo, the owner, also speaks good English.

1) [Oldenburg](#), in Calle HARTZENBUSCH, 12



Famous for standing in the Guinness book of world records as the establishment that offers the greatest variety of beers per square meter. Opened some 25 years ago, this bar lets you choose among **200 varieties**. One of the very first craft beer bars in Madrid, it inspired the opening of Fabricas Maravillas and is loved by the owner of [La Buena Cerveza](#). However beware there are 2 Oldenburgs and this is the younger bar. More of an institution than an ordinary bar, the brilliant thing here is

that you can order **Alt bier**. This beer is brewed according to the German "**Reinheitsgebot**" (shouting it makes the pronunciation easier) and originates from Düsseldorf. It is a dark beer that is incredibly hard to find unlike the Cologne cousin Kölsch beer. If you are familiar with the LENT beers, **Thor** is brewed after the same recipe.

Alt bier is the beer of my home city and I will always be biased to this incredible bar for stocking it. The Belgians, apart for being famous for having no one famous (name 10 famous Belgians, footballers excluded) and no government, make incredible beer. Oldenburg offers the most varieties of **Belgian beer in Madrid**. Every beer brand in Belgium has its own beer glass to drink from. The glass is designed to increase the flavour of the beer.

Metro: Bilbao

[Facebook](#)

2) [Cervercería L'Europe](#) in Calle Cardenal Cisneros 19



You enter and believe you have been transported to the German Alps to celebrate a round of après ski fun. It looks like a drinking hall with kitsch decorated around the bar so skiers are reminded there is a home away from home. Terrible decoration aside, this place does offer excellent beers on tap and even more in bottles. In fact, it claims to have the largest offer of beers on tap and in bottle, check out the website, with nearly 100. The whole menu is online. The food here is **typical German beer food on offer**. Lots of sausages, potato dishes and sandwiches to soak up the beer.

Those that like an after work delight will be happy to know that between 18 and 20h all beers on offer are half price.

Metro: Bilbao

[Facebook](#)

3) **Irreale** in Calle Manuela Malasaña 20



The other bar not included in the triangle of greatness. However this bar does feature in the same street as **La Tape**. You just have to love this city. Irreale only recently changed location to their new home a few months ago. Recently having relocated from Calle de la Ballesta 15, this place is a gem. Having taken over the space from Ave Phoenix, the bar offers 12 different beers on tap. Similar principal to **ANIMAL**, these beers will also change once the keg is empty, meaning a lot of variety. The only two beers they always serve are **La Virgen** and **Schneider Weisse**. The latter being easily one of the best wheat beers in Europe.

The real advantage with **Irreale** is that it offers you the pub feel whilst also offering food. Most, however, stick with the beer and if you prefer the smell of hops and alcohol to chorizo and tortilla I recommend you take a visit. However let's think bigger better more exciting! Media pinta beats caña, pinta beats media pinta, but the king will always be the keg. You need a place for a birthday party or a friend's leaving due, **Irreale** will let you rent the **cellar of the bar**

for free. All you need are thirsty friends and yourself if you order one keg (20 litres) and the room is yours free of charge. They will also give you a 10% discount on the keg you order. Price will range with beer type so just go in and have a quick chat. English fluency is minimal here.

Metro: San Bernardo / Bilbao

[Facebook](#)

For more articles related to Madrid's drinking culture, check out:

- [A Beer State of Mind in Madrid](#), on the city's best craft beer bars
- [Martinis, Margaritas & More](#), on Madrid's best cocktails
- [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international beer shop offering a huge variety plus tastings and more

Madrid doesn't have the sea, but it's not that far away! So let's go sailing!

A fresh breeze hits my face while the waves make us swing smoothly. Juan is steering the **sailboat**. He grasps the rudder and tells Vanessa and Daphne to get ready to swerve. Antonio, our **patrón** (skipper or captain), adjusts the rope that controls **the boom** (a spar on which the foot of a triangular sail is bent). In perfect harmony, we change course, picking

up **2 more knots** of speed and a big smile on our faces. Let's do it again!



Although this could have been a perfect dream, this actually became real for me for a few days. The journey started in **Cádiz** (a city in Andalucía, the southern region of **Spain**) when I decided to join in on an adventure with some friends on a Wednesday night. After having lots of **Biodramina** (sea sickness pills), I climbed into my cabin and quickly settled into the tiny space and the light rocking movement of the boat. Then I slept like a baby, pondering what sailing was all about.

On Thursday morning, I woke up fidgety and full of enthusiasm. After the right maneuvers, Juan got us out from the port and went along the edge looking for some wind. We ended up getting hit by what we thought was smoke from a boat in flames, but

was actually **a cloud of mosquitoes from Africa**. I had my body covered with insects and thus my first impression of sailing wasn't very good. But then Antonio dropped the anchor at the same altitude as **Rota** (Spanish municipality located in the Province of Cádiz) and prepared the most delicious **tuna** I had ever tasted in my life. The tuna saved the day.





After lunch, the wind gained more strength. We took the anchor up, set the sails and went in the direction of the open sea. As if we were in a **regatta**, Antonio marked our target: **"A por ellos!"** (go after them!) and gave us instructions: **"Déjate caer Juan!"** (back starboard or catch the wind on the forward side of the sail), **"Hay que largar el Génova Vanessa!"** (I'm still wondering what that means...), **"James, get your butt in the Cockpit if you don't want to jump off the boat!"** (oops!)



A few swerves later, we headed for **Guadalquivir** estuary in **Sanlúcar de Barrameda**, (a small town in Huelva province), in front of which, you can find **Doñana** (a Spanish National Park), a beautiful paradise where Antonio decided to call it a day and prepare another amazing meal.



Doñana National Park

The next day, we woke up and had breakfast while the **National Park** was illuminated by the morning sun. After that, when I

thought it was going to be a calm day of sailing up the river towards **Seville**, Antonio proved me wrong once again. "**I won't waste this wind,**" said the captain. We raised up the sails and set out to the **capital of Andalusia**.







A few days after our trip started, we were finally pedestrians again. We spent Saturday walking around the city of Seville, just as it was getting ready for its world-famous week of partying, known as **La F eria de Sevilla**. We were lucky enough to sail with our friend, Vanessa, from [Las mesas de Vanessa](#) (a food blog from Madrid). She knew exactly where to take us for lunch—[Espacio Eslava](#)—a fantastic spanish restaurant which won the **Best Tapa of the Year in 2013**. This restaurant is a must if you find yourself in Seville. We ordered **salmorejo** (a typical Andalucian tomato soup made with bread, garlic, olive oil and tomato) and, my favourite, **costillas** (ribs), among many other unbelievable dishes.



It was hard to come back to reality. Life at sea can be pretty addictive. Yet now I know that even though Madrid doesn't have sea, it's not that far from here!

Sailing School Info: [Oversailing](#)

[Facebook](#)

Restaurant in Seville: [Espacio Eslava](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address C/ Eslava, 3 & 5
41002 Seville, Spain

Madrid's best rooftop bars, round 3

Welcome to **round 3** of **Madrid's best rooftop bars**! We hope that by now you've already visited and enjoyed some of the ones we've mentioned in [round 1](#) and [round 2](#). This third list includes **5 magnificent rooftop bars**—all but one of which are located right smack in the center of Madrid. Thus if you find yourself strolling along the Gran Vía or the Royal Palace, please know that there is a rooftop terrace with champagne and wine awaiting you!

**all photos are from each place's official webpage, unless noted otherwise*

8. [Apartosuites Jardines de Sabatini](#)

Address: Cuesta San Vicente, 16

Metro: Principe Pio and Plaza de España

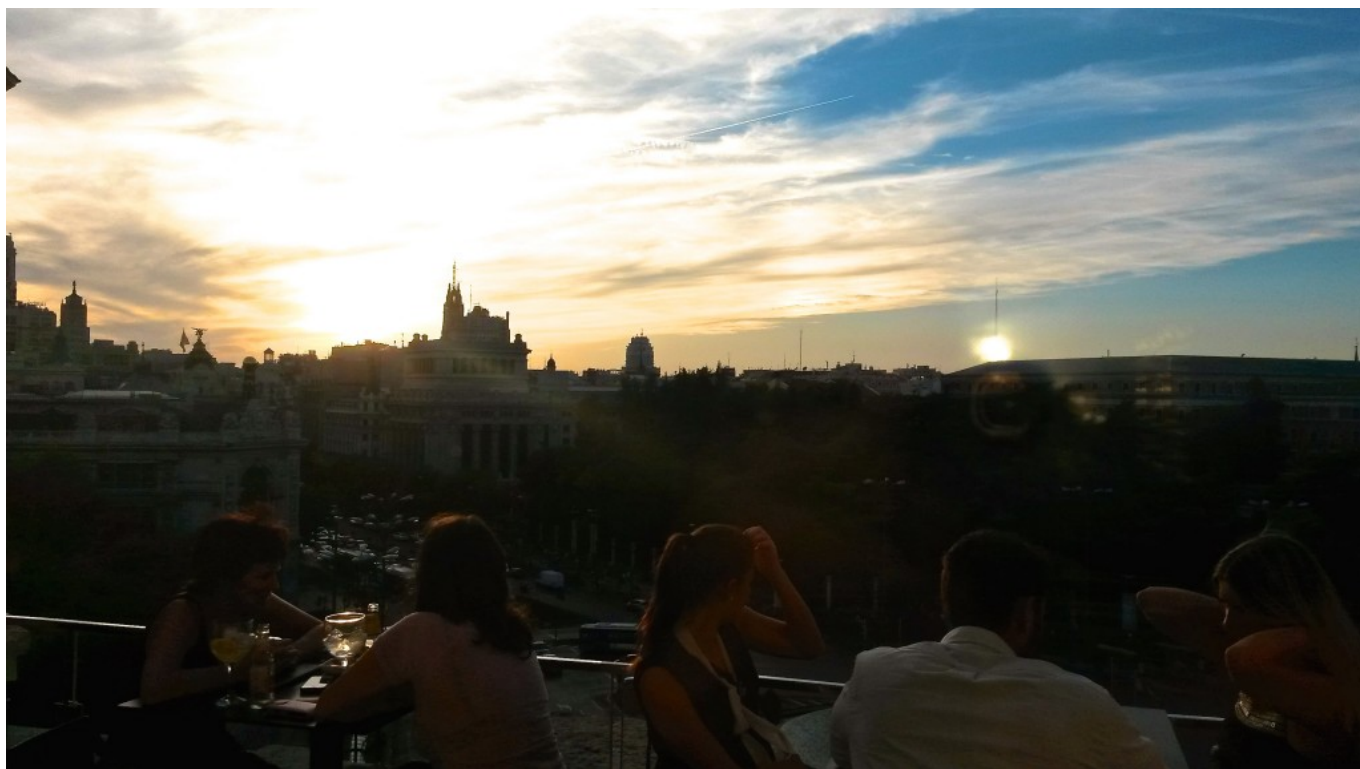


Named after the **Gardens of the Royal Palace (Jardines de Sabitini)**, this hotel has a very nice advantage, as it overlooks both the beautiful **Jardines** and stunning **Palacio Real**. What's more, during the summer, the royal garden plays host to a series of traditional theater, music and dance performances, from flamenco to *Zarzuela*. This hotel rooftop gets a private concert as it's a stone's throw from the stage!

9. [Bar Terraza Palacio De Cibeles](#)

Address: Plaza de Cibeles, 1 (Palacio de Cibeles 6ª Planta)

Metro: Banco de España



Overlooking **Plaza de Cibeles**, **Paseo del Prado** and **Madrid's breathtaking skyline**, this iconic and postcard-perfect building used to be the city's main post office, although it has just recently been refurbished and turned into a museum and cultural center with free entry. The building's interior is beautiful; the first few floors are dedicated to art exhibits, while the 6th floor is now known as [Terraza Cibeles](#), a fancy restaurant & cocktail bar overlooking the city with stunning views. Prices on drinks are high, as you can imagine, but the whole experience is a real treat. What's more, every 30 minutes there are **scheduled visits to the *mirador*** (lookout point) for just €2 and €0,50 for under-12-year-olds. Opened to the public for the first time, the visit takes you to the highest point of the building, situated at the very top of the tower on the 8th floor.

10. [The Roof](#) at ME Madrid Reina Victoria Hotel

Address: Plaza de Santa Ana, 14

Metro: Sol, Sevilla



I've never been here, mainly because it's way too fancy and exclusive for my taste, but The Roof is one of Madrid's most famous rooftop bars, located atop the high-end Meliá Hotel in Plaza de Santa Ana, one of Madrid's most famous squares full of bars and restaurants. Take the elevator up to the top floor and you'll find beautiful views, purple lighting contrasted against the building's white tower, expensive cocktails, fine cuisine and lounge chairs. It must make for a truly glamorous experience.

11. [Hotel Urban](#)

Address: Carrera de San Jerónimo, 34

Metro: Sevilla



As its name entails, **Hotel Urban** is extremely fashionable and modern. The hotel also prides itself on having an art deco look and contemporary-style interior design. Its high-end restaurant is named [Europa Decó](#), its oyster bar is named [The Glass Bar](#), and its spectacular rooftop is named [La Terraza del Urban](#). If you like sipping on cocktails in chic bars with exquisite views, you will absolutely love this place...

12. [Hotel Silken Puerta América Madrid](#)

Address: Avenida de America, 41

Metro: Cartagena



image from societeperrier.com

This is the first rooftop terrace we've mentioned that is not within walking distance from Sol! **Hotel Silken** stands out along Madrid's major highway for its multicolored facade and unconventional shape. Making it even more unique, **each of the hotel's 12 floors was designed by an internationally acclaimed architect**, including Arata Isozaki from Japan, Zaha Hadid from Iran and Norman Foster from the UK. Highly modern to say the least, this hotel is situated near **Avenida de America**, a transport and business hub that draws in all kinds of crowds. The **hotel's rooftop terrace** is absolutely incredible in summer; it is an open-air nightclub that offers a much appreciated breeze, plus a significant drop in temperature as it's so high up!

If you're looking for more of Madrid's best rooftop bars, check out [round 1](#) and [round 2](#) of this series.

And of course, if we've missed any, let us know!

Also check out a few of our other "best of" Madrid

lists:

- [Madrid's best cocktails](#)
 - [Madrid's best bars for craft beer](#)
 - [Madrid's best first date ideas](#)
 - [Madrid's best gift ideas](#)
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El Riojano, Madrid's best pastry shop is right in the centre and it has a hidden tea room!

For all of you who are like me and have a major sweet tooth, I present [El Riojano](#)—an old-work pastry shop in the city centre and the perfect place to start off this series on **Madrid's sweetest eats!**

Who said that *Roscón de Reyes* is only eaten at Christmas? At **El Riojano** in Sol, you can order it all year round or taste it in their very own tea room.



For many years, all I knew about **El Riojano** was that it was a pastry shop in the centre of Madrid, tiny and with extraordinary quality. But today, I know it a bit more. For example, it was founded in 1855 by Damaso de la Maza, baker of the Royal Family. As Maza died without heirs, the pastry shop is now owned by its fifth family. While it has changed hands throughout history, its spirit remains intact.

For many it is considered one of the **best secrets of Madrid**, where you can enjoy not only the typical sweets of religious holidays, but all of Spain's best sweet and savoury treats,

from ***pastas*** (finger cookies) to ***hojaldres*** (puff pastries filled with all types of goodness).





My little love affair with this place emerged a few months ago, when I asked a friend of mine, also a *Madrileña*, if she knew a nice place for tea in the centre. I wanted to try something new.

She replied without hesitation: **El Riojano**.

I was a bit surprised so I replied, "Are you sure? El Riojano has no tea room." She insisted I go find out for myself.

Well, when I entered I still thought my friend was totally mistaken.



But then I discovered the wonderful tea room hidden through the back. It turned out my friend was right. I was simply blown away!



While admiring the room, I took a seat and looked at the menu. The menu is very simple, dominated by savoury pastries such as **hojaldres** and **empanadas**, and, of course, a long list of **irresistible sweets**.



I opted for a riskier pastry, made with **dates and bacon**. Delightful!

My friend who came with me decided to order an **empanada de pollo** (chicken pie), which she said tasted wonderful.

We also decided to share some **saladitos**. These are mini pastries filled with different flavours such as cheese and sausage. **La ración** (a full portion) comes with **6 saladitos**.

For dessert, we decided to try some delicious **Torrijas**, Spain's version of French toast—to die for!

The lounge has an old, spacious and clean air to it, making you feel as though **you've gone back in time**. Although it's not always full (which is great), do **go early if there is a holiday** or you will have to wait.

Price-wise, **El Riojano** is very reasonable. The pastries cost around €2-3 each, and for €3.50, you get 6 *hojaldritos*. The average price person is around €11, which will get you a few ***raciones*** of savoury pastries and sweets, plus a drink.

Since I discovered **El Riojano**, it has become one of my **essential places** in the centre for a quick snack or breakfast. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do!

[Facebook](#)

Address: C/ Mayor, 10

Telephone: 913 66 44 82

Flowers are nice (but this First Date is better) Part 1



The moment: Check your phone or ditch all together

I get nervous and will probably continue to get nervous when planning a first date. It's not easy. It can even be daunting. You might have just met the girl/boy on a drunken Saturday night and you find yourself trying to come up with a way to entertain, show off, and come across as interesting and intelligent all at once. So I'm back to getting nervous and with little idea of what might or might now work.

Topics of interest can be hard to find but I believe that the location of the date should tie into the conversation. So rather than the usual routine of restaurant then drinks, this is a bit more dynamic and Madrileño (known for going to lots of places on one night).

The idea behind my method is to take your date to at least 3 different places on a given night. Each place will compliment each other and yet offer a very different component of the night. I have included a route order to help. All the places will be in walking distance from each other.

Part 1 is taking the arts and culture route. Not the Prado and its thousands of archangels, but more modern and contemporary offerings. Something more quirky to get the conversation flowing.

This in no way will guarantee you get laid on the first night. Too many factors depend on that result. However, it should reduce those awkward silent moments because you're grasping for a common topic. Quick tip for the awkward moment, just kiss him/her. There is no perfect moment. Only the courage to move your head forward 5 inches.

Act One: [Fundacion Telefonica](#) in Calle Fuencarral 3



Fundación Telefonica

We start in the Fundacion Telefonica on Fuencarral. This gallery is always free and almost always open, except Mondays. It regularly changes the collections and usually has photography showing. I am no art student but when you are confronted with space geese and watching a video of their training to fly to the moon, it makes you smile and realise we live in a great place (Moon Goose Analogue, 2011-1012, Agnes Meyer-Brandis). So quickly check out the website and see

what's on, the stranger the better as you don't need to be knowledgeable. Only a sense of humour is required.

Best time: 18-20h

Metro: Gran Via

Act Two: [Aio](#) in Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 25 (mentioned in a [previous article](#))



Now that we have started down the cultural road, we cannot go too formal with the restaurant. It needs to fit the setting but shouldn't cost too much. Aio is an Italian restaurant that offers aperitivo for dinner. Aperitivo means you just buy

drinks at a slightly higher price and are able to eat from the buffet at your heart's content. The food is typical Italian with pizza, pasta and salads on offer. Aperitivo is incredibly popular in Italy since the crisis hit, as a way to entice consumers to leave their homes. You cannot reserve a table but there's always a positive atmosphere.

Best time: 20-22h

Alternative: la Mucca is an excellent restaurant. You can make reservations and also sit outside on the terrace. It is the more high quality and expensive option.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

[Facebook](#)

Act Three: [Microteatro](#) por dinero in Calle de Loreto Prado y Enrique Chicote, 9



What surprise will await?

You then continue the night by going to Micro Teatro, a bar where you can watch a small theatrical performance for only €4. You can enjoy drinks upstairs and then when your number is

called out, you will descend the stairs into the basement and go into the designated room. All groups are at most 15 people and you come face to face with the actors in the small room. Each little play lasts around 15 minutes, which is good because not all are great. It never fails to create another conversation and even if you only understand 50%, it will still be entertaining.

Best time: 22-24h

Alternative: [Bar Lambuzo](#): an Andalusian tavern offering Micro Teatro every Thursday night from 9pm-11pm in their downstairs wine cellar (21h-23h if you will J!), with sessions every half hour for 4€ (more information in a [previous article](#))

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

The Final Act: [El Perro de la parte de atras del coche](#) (or just el Perro) in Calle de La Puebla, 15,



Once you still have energy and need a club, I recommend El

Perro, which is around the corner. This club is free entry before 24h, otherwise entry is €10. The music varies a lot. Not a huge dancing room means even if it is not packed will have you feeling like enough people are present.

Best time: after 24h

Alternative: Wind down with a cocktail instead of some dance moves at [1862 Dry Bar](#) in Calle Pez 27, which is open to 1.30am and until 2am on weekends. The martini like many of their cocktails is thoroughly worth it.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao



For other great date ideas in Madrid, check out these off-the-beaten-path cultural centres, restaurants and bars!

- [El Matadero](#), a slaughterhouse turned cultural hub
- [Bar Lambuzo](#), a family-run Andalusian tavern in the centre of Madrid offering activities in their wine cellar, from wine tastings to microteatro!
- [La Paca](#), the perfect Malasaña bar & café offering movie nights, art, markets, music and Chema!
- [Mercado de Motores](#), Madrid's coolest vintage & food market that takes over the city's old train museum once a month!
- [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international and imported beer shop in Madrid offering beer tastings, workshops and more...
- [Beer State of Mind](#), go on a route to discover Madrid's best craft beer bars, you'll love them all ☐
- [Martinis, Margaritas and More](#), where to get the best cocktails in Madrid...