

Got Milk? If not, get some at Cántaro Blanco Lechería

Got Milk? Every single American child of the 90's remembers the commercials and print ads of our favorite celebrities with their milk moustaches aimed at increasing our dairy consumption. Flash forward 15-20 years and in Malasaña, America's Dairy Farmers can find a place where Madrid-based expats can make up for what they didn't consume in their early days. One random afternoon, I found myself cutting through Calle de Manuela Malasaña when I stumbled upon a lechería, **Cántaro Blanco**. While I've found my fair share of *carnicerías*, *fruterías*, *charcuterías*, and *pescaderías*, I had yet to come across a *lechería*. As *El Comidista*, *El País*'s gastronomy [blog](#) confirms, the lechería is now up-and-coming.

With its white façade and clean interior, it gives you immediate association with milk. As the owners, Nacho and Adrián aim, it's like getting the fresh *leche del pueblo* (milk from the village). For those of us who've never had said experience (especially when your pueblo just happens to be one of the largest cities in the world), Cántaro Blanco gives you that fresh milk and much more.



Cántaro Blanco stocks fresh milks, cheeses, yogurts, and milk-based desserts. Its main supplier, according to the *El*

Páis article, is Los Combos, a farm in nearby Móstoles. The fact that the milk is super locally-sourced makes it so so fresh (the owners had actually planned on bringing it from the North, but keeping the suppliers as local as possible gives you the truly fresh taste). Other than from Los Combos, two brands you'll most likely be familiar with are Xanceda from Galicia and Pastoret (a dairy from Lleida, Catalunya that makes the non-fat yogurt I mix with berries for breakfast each morning). Pastoret's yogurt is perfectly smooth and creamy, even in its nonfat form.

They don't just stop at the stuff you can take home: they have some homemade products to satisfy your need for Vitamin D. First is the fresh frozen yogurt with your choice of toppings. My personal pick is the *batido* (or milkshake), which can be made with whatever type of milk you want in a variety of flavors. Since I can only drink skim milk, I was elated and enjoyed one with strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries.



Strawberry and frutos rojos; ñam ñam indeed

There's also ecological horchata (that tiger-nut drink from Valencia that tastes like almond milk with a touch of

cinnamon), both to have on the spot or to take home.

Get yourself into Cántaro Blanco. Then you'll be answering the question "Got Milk" with a resounding "¡Síííííí!"

Cántaro Blanco Lechería

Address: Calle de Manuela Malasaña, 29

Tel.: +34 91 029 66 39

Metro: San Bernardo (Lines 2 and 4), Bilbao (Lines 1 and 4), and Tribunal (Lines 1 and 10)

[Facebook](#)

[Website](#)

Banibanoo, an Iranian Market-style Restaurant in the Center of Madrid!

I have to admit that when I was first invited to try a new Persian food restaurant in Madrid, I had my doubts. Until then my knowledge of Persian food was very limited. But if there is something that I love it is trying new things. So of course, I accepted.

[Banibanoo](#) describes itself as a restaurant offering Persian market cuisine. It is owned by a young woman named Banafsheh who, after working six years in marketing, decided to pursue her dream of becoming a chef and restaurant owner. One day she left her job and went to London to study in Le Cordon Bleu School. Upon returning to Madrid, she discovered that Iranian food was little known in the Spanish capital. So she decided

to open her very own restaurant where people could enjoy these wonderful dishes.

The name of the restaurant is also very personal: *Bani* is short for her full name Banafsheh and *Banoo* means Miss. So Banibanoo means *Miss Bani*.



Banibanoo's owner Banafsheh



The restaurant is small and cozy, perfect for a fantastic meal with friends or with your partner. Apart from the food, what I love the most about Banibanoo is how bright it is and that the food is on display at the bar. That way, you can see all the food they serve before you order. It also has an intimate and familiar feeling, as if you were entering a market and wanted to eat something from a particular stand.



Banibanoo.



Fresh ingredients and beautiful homemade dishes are all the decorations you need



Banibanoo

According to Banafsheh, Iranian shares a lot in common with Mediterranean cuisine; the ingredients are all very similar. But

for me, each dish at [Banibanoo](#) tastes unique and exotic, for the mixture of flavors and variety of ingredients on each plate.



Food on display



Food on display

The food

[Banibanoo](#) offers a simple menu, consisting of traditional and original dishes, all made with fresh ingredients and a lot of love. If you're the kind of person who struggles when it comes to ordering, no problem. At Banibanoo you have the option of choosing a menu with three different dishes on one plate. Banafsheh likes to change up the menu every two weeks, offering different recipes along with the old ones. [Banibanoo](#) also offers wonderful breakfasts. On Saturday and Sunday, for example, she offers a very special breakfast that will be the highlight of your weekend: a "burnt" brioche bun with cream cheese and jam.

When I went for lunch with two friends, Banafsheh suggested we

try out different dishes so we could all share. I have to say that was a fantastic idea. The first three dishes we tried were: *broccoli with roasted cherry tomato in a yogurt sauce and tahini*; *beetroot hummus with feta cheese and hazelnuts*; and *gourmet purple potatoes with yogurt sauce, cherry tomatoes and cardamum*.



Menu 1

For the second place, we ordered: *sweet potato with red onions, yogurt sauce, almonds and pomegranate seeds*; *couscous with cheese, mint sauce, cilantro and parsley*; and *Kuku Kadoo: zucchini 'frittata' with mint and cheese*.



Menu 2

Our last plate included: *roasted beets with cherry tomatoes, feta cheese and a pomegranate and Sumac sauce; Shirin Polo, Persian rice, saffron, orange zest, carrot and pistachio (this was one my favorite, amazing!); and Kuku Sabzi: similar to a 'frittata' with herbs, walnuts and cockles.*



Menu 3

For dessert we had an incredible carrot cake (really, please try it!) and a brownie-like chocolate cake. Also delicious.



Carrot cake



Guinness Chocolate cake

All this feast of food could only be accompanied by a typical ***Iranian drink, infused with cucumber, flowers and other refreshing ingredients.*** How can you describe something that tastes so good? They now have two different drinks based on this one: One is call ***Tejebin:*** The same drink but with tea and ***Cafejebin:*** The same but with coffee.



Banibanoo drink

What can I say? If you want to enjoy healthy and traditional food with an exotic taste, this is your place! Fantastic Recommendation – thank you Jose and María for taking me to this wonderful place.

INFO

Address: Calle Martires Concepcionistas 19, Madrid

Price: *€12.95, 3-dish menu plus coffee and drink during the week; €13.95 During the weekend, without drinks; Breakfast goes from €2.50 with coffee or tea to €5.50.*

[Facebook](#)

Espadrilles: 3 places in Madrid to get your hands on one of Spanish footwear's greatest items

Summertime is here, and while many of us have already done a little bit of vacationing, there's a little [Made in Spain](#) thing that is made for a truly authentic *veraniego*: **the espadrille (*alpargatas*)**. Before I spent a lot of time in Spain, my summer footwear was just about limited to flip-flops and other summer sandals (and let's face it, they really hurt your feet, and in my case, your tolerance for them stands at zero when your heel cracks for the first time). But then when I walked around major Spanish beach towns, it wasn't flip-flops that were the main shoe of choice: they were espadrilles.

Now wait, you're probably thinking: All Spaniards wear the wedge ones everywhere? Nope (except for the woman at my gym who wears them on the exercise bike and to lift weights); there's actually a lot more variety of them than the ones you normally see in New York, Miami, LA, London, or Palm Beach. You can find them in just about every shoe store around (and even in Zara!), but as a true proponent of finding things that are **really authentic and handmade**, here are three places where you can get your hands on them in Madrid, some more traditional and others more modern.



1. If you're looking for something traditional... Casa Hernanz

A few years ago, when I was an *alpargata novice*, I checked, like any good New Yorker does, *The New York Times*. I had seen an [article](#) about Casa Hernanz, just off Plaza Mayor. And this is without a doubt the most emblematic place to get espadrilles in Madrid, While we often tend to get concerned about a place's proximity to Plaza Mayor because of the fear of it being a tourist trap, coming here, like going to the rooftop bar at The Hat or eating your way through the Mercado de San Miguel, is absolutely worth it (while an expensive relaxing cup of *café con leche* is not).



Founded in 1840, and in the fourth generation, you'll find the wide selection of threads and fabrics the family produces. And

of course, the star product- the espadrilles themselves. It's no wonder you'll find a line out the door onto the street



...on a Friday at 10 AM

Be sure to try everything on! You want them to be snug at first because they stretch out over time!



Casa Hernanz
Calle de Toledo, 18

28005 MADRID

Tel.: +34 913 66 54 50

Hours: Mondays and Fridays 9:30 to 1:30 PM/4:30-8;
Saturday 10-2 Closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays

Metro: Tirso de Molina (Line 1), La Latina (Line 5)

[Website](#)

**2. If you're looking for a
"capricho" (to treat yourself)...
Mintandrose**



Modeling my Skorprios along the Alameda de Apodaca in Cádiz

Mintandrose is a fairly new player in the espadrille market, but their 100% handmade models are making a splash not only in the fancier parts of Spain, but also abroad, including in American retailers such as Nordstrom and Anthropologie. With single-soled and double-soled models in a variety of hues (such as all black, white with a black tip, or marine blue with a white tip), this is your go-to for a splurge.

The main way to buy them is online, but in my experience the best thing to do is to try them on. You want them to be SUPER TIGHT because since they're all made by hand, they'll gradually grow looser (my first pair is now a little too big for my feet). They also make canvas models and the line has expanded to include sandals and bags.

Should you want to try them on, the website offers a list of [stockists](#). I went and got one of my pairs at [Etbang](#) in Chueca (which I will have to go and write about at a later date).



Some of the selection of Mintandrose at Etbang

Mintandrose

[Online Shop](#)
[stockists](#)

If you want to try them on go to...

Etbang

Calle Pelayo, 66

28004 MADRID

Tel.: +34 626 56 04 82

Hours: Monday-Saturday 11:30-2:30 PM, 5 PM-8:30 PM

Metro: Alonso Martínez (Lines 4, 5, and 10), Chueca (Lines 5)

<http://etbang.com/>

**3. If you're looking to go where
the locals go (and for other shoes
all year-round, too)... La
Alpargatería**



They say that Chamberí is one of the city's most *castizo*, or authentic, neighborhoods, in this 'hood (which is my favorite

to live in) there's a hidden gem of a store at La Alpargatería. If you associate García de Paredes with the Extranjería office where you drop off your prórroga paperwork, then just know that this street is so much better than that. A lot of my haunts happen to be on this very street, and when it's time for my pairs of espadrilles in the summer, this is my spot. I bought my family matching ones for our family vacation last year in Greece; let's just say that I got them converted (or at least that's what I'd like to believe).

example. My favorite color is *crudo* (which is a type of off-white) because it's the perfect neutral tone that goes with most of my wardrobe, and it deals better with urban wonders that would get a white pair very dirty in no time. I've also gotten my black wedges there, perfect for those who like the idea of tying the rope up your ankles, but would rather buckle in at the top.



They even have new models, which you can see in the picture above, that have a rubber sole as opposed to the traditional

one. This is perfect for city-dwellers who love their espadrilles, but want a little bit more safety in their step.

La Alpargatería isn't just a place for summertimes espadrilles; they also have Victoria sneakers, ballet flats (aka *manoletinas*) in a wide plethora of colors and fabrics (suede AND leather), and if you need some *zapatillas de casa* (because going barefoot in your *piso compartido* really isn't going to fly), they've got you covered.

La Alpargatería

[Web](#)

Calle de García de Paredes, 74

28010 MADRID

Tel.: +34 913 08 32 11

Hours: Monday-Friday 10 AM-2 PM/5 PM-8 PM; Saturdays 10 AM-2 PM

Metro: Gregorio Marañón (Lines 7 and 10)

Check out our new **[Made in Spain](#)** category for more on local designers and producers. And feel free to make some recommendations!

You may also like our previous post on: **[Best Gifts from Madrid](#)**

L0L0 Polos Artesanos: Popsicles for grown-ups (and so much healthier)

Madrid has no shortage of **[amazing ice cream parlors](#)**, and considering the oppressive heat waves we've been under lately,

it's no wonder that people are craving frozen treats. But what about ice cream's neglected cousin, the popsicle? The snack that every American child (at the very least in the New York Tri-State area) craved at the end of a long day at day camp? It's been revived, and majorly upgraded in Malasaña, becoming the new *it spot* of the summer.

Truth be told I should have written about this a long time ago, but it took me a little while to actually get myself there to try them. When I, currently prohibited from eating ice cream because I can only consume non-fat dairy products, found out about [Lolo](#), I jumped for joy as I knew that at last I could have popsicles and not have to only eat Bimanan ice cream that you can buy at a pharmacy.



When you walk inside [Lolo](#), you get a playful décor that reminds you of a little *chiringuito* on a beach somewhere in Cádiz or on the Mediterranean or your childhood. You can also

get coffee, tea, and other drinks to go with your popsicles, but let's face it, what most people come here for are in fact the frozen fruit on a stick.



Every day, [Lolo](#) posts its menu outside of ten different flavors. But we're not talking about your standard cherry, grape, and Sunny Delight-tasting orange. You do have some flavors that are indeed more classic, like chocolate...

...but many of the flavors play with sweet and savory.




Such as Orange and Lemon

While some of the flavors may be creamier, like strawberry-banana with yogurt, others are just straight-on refreshing and are the ingredients themselves and water. You'll find some that have truly off-the-beaten-path flavor components, such as lemongrass. There's even an avocado-flavored popsicle (which I have yet to try, but have on my pre-August-in-New-York checklist). This is reminiscent of the new savory gelato trend happening in Rome.

So now that I've covered the "popsicles for grown-ups" part of

the title due to the major gourmet flavor upgrade (perfect for the foodie in all of us), it's time that we move on to the healthier part. All of Lolo's popsicles are 100% natural. This means, that unlike the popsicles of our childhood there's no extra funny stuff like chemicals or 100 times more sugar than necessary. For those who have to be really strict about eating (like me), LOL0 lets me in on the summer frozen treat fun.

My personal picks? I've tried the *sandia y pepino* (watermelon and cucumber) and the *frambuesa y agua de jamaica* (raspberry and Hibiscus tea).

A close-up photograph of a large, thick, red popsicle. The popsicle has a textured, slightly grainy surface. A hand is visible at the bottom, holding the white, crinkled paper wrapper of the popsicle. The background is a dark, out-of-focus surface.

But first, popsicles from Lolo

A logo for 'Madrid Spain'. It features a white silhouette of a building with a central dome and two side towers, set against a dark background. Below the silhouette, the word 'MADRID' is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Underneath 'MADRID', the word 'SPAIN' is written in smaller, white capital letters, with the 'S' and 'N' being larger than the 'P', 'A', and 'I' in the middle.

MADRID
SPAIN

Watermelon and cucumber. Please forgive the use of a Snapchat photo.

I prefer the raspberry one, but I'm still wanting to try avocado. And I'll celebrate publishing this article with two LOL0s, one being avocado!

Now, one last thing. LOL0 has its own hashtag, #LOL0Selfie, for all of the selfies you may just happen to post with your popsicles. Like I added later on to this one (I took my friend visiting from Barcelona to LOL0. He was very impressed).



My frambuesa y agua de jamaica #LOLOSelfie with my friend visiting from Barcelona

Now go to Malasaña and get your very own LOL0!

LOLO Polos Artesanos

Address: Calle del Espíritu Santo, 16

Hours: Every day from 12:00 pm – 1 am

Metro: Tribunal (Lines 1 and 10)

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

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[María's: Sensational Sweets on Calle Zurbano](#)

[Madrid's Best Gluten-free Bakeries](#)

[Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars](#)

**Dime que me quieres:
Personalized jewelry to show
how much you love someone (or**

yourself)

This may be the déjà vu (and if you've read some of [my previous work on Naked Madrid](#), you already know this). But I once again have found a spot on Instagram. [Lovely Pepa](#), a Madrid-based fashion blogger had a beautiful gold-plated bangle and, curious, about where she got it, I clicked on the [pin](#) which had the designer tagged.

iFenomenal! I said to myself, it's right on my way home from Plaza de Castilla (on my way back from one of my July gigs in Alcobendas). Looking for relief from the oppressive heat, I headed down the hill as Plaza de Santa Bárbara merges with Hortaleza and Fernando VI off to the little storefront on the Travesía de San Mateo (which I, considering myself to have an excellent handle of my Madrid geography, had just found out existed) where you'll find [Dimequemequieres](#).



Run by Eva Verdeal, who divulges on the [blog](#) that she studied fashion design in Madrid and London, and until having kids,

worked in the fashion industry. One day, she came up with the name “Dime que me quieres” from the idea that there are an infinite amount of ways for us to say “I love you.” And by personalizing bracelets and necklaces we can manifest however we want to say *te quiero* (or I love you) to the people around us.

When I walked into the store, I was in love with everything and began trying lots of things on. The biggest conundrum was that my desired message was too long for what Eva considered to be her preferred piece. After a little bit of debate, she proposed abbreviating my desired phrase, and I agreed.

After waiting for a few minutes while she engraved the bracelet down in the basement workshop (and browsing through the sale section), my brand-new bracelet was proudly on my wrist



Front



and back

There are plenty of other non-personalized pieces such as statement necklaces, earrings, and rings (all in my exact taste!)



While I'm a gold-plated kind of girl, you can also get pieces in silver or rose-plated as well. I'm already creating a

mental wishlist.



Her pieces are stocked in some El Corte Inglés locations (I have seen a display case in the one on Preciados), but it's well worth going to the store/workshop to have yours engraved in the moment (and as an added bonus, if you're a tea lover. you can take samples from a tea shop in the vicinity.

Dite que te quieres (Tell yourself that you love yourself) or whoever you love how much with something from Dimequemequieres

Dime que me quieres

Address: *Travesía de San Mateo, 7-9*

Tel.: *+34 914 38 40 98*

Email: *info@dimequemequieres.net*

Hours: *Monday-Saturday 11 AM-8:30 PM*

Metro: *Alonso Martínez (Lines 4, 5, and 10)*

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

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You'll also like:

Helena Rohner, handmade jewellery in the heart of La Latina

Pajarita: Having fun with your food while eating well

On Calle Apodaca, just around the corner from the Mercado Barceló, is a little restaurant called [Bar Pajarita](#). And I'm so excited to be able to do the honor of writing about it for

Naked Madrid. Why, do you ask? It's been on the go-to list for quite a while, and also on mine. One of my friends, who constantly raves about it, kept saying that I needed to go. This furthered my intrigue, but as time went by, the timing wasn't right for me to get my first [Pajarita](#) experience. And then, one hot, summer night (one of many in this never-ending Madrid heat wave), I FINALLY got to see what Pajarita is all about. I was in luck as she was my partner-in-crime for the evening, helping decide which dishes to try.

We split four items, which was a perfect amount for dinner. The chef plays with a lot of different flavor profiles; this you can get a vibe for right away when you see the black napkin folded in the shape of a bow-tie (and in Spanish *pajarita* does in fact mean bow-tie) on top of your place-setting. This fusion of traditional ingredients and unique preparations is what makes it so playful, and so good. And that's the point of the experience at Pajarita; they want you to have fun eating. You can eat with your standard fork and knife, or you can take the chopsticks at hold the napkin as a bow-tie when you walk in and eat that way too (or, as they say on their website [if you dare](#)).

We first started off with the **quekas**, which are quesadillas with mushrooms. The pico de gallo and the sunflower seed pesto were placed perfectly in the middle. While quesadillas often make for a challenge, these were perfect finger-food



Quekas

The next one, which was my hands-down favorite, were the ***huevos divorciados***. Now don't let the name (divorced eggs)

fool you; the thing is that one one side that looks like potatoes is actually the egg white. As the name implies, the whites and the yolks are separated. And like a good Spaniard, you put the egg white as if it were a potato by dipping it in the yolk and mixing bites of seeds and lima beans.



Huevos divorciados- the “must-have” dish

We rounded out dinner with **bacalao (cod) on top of a sweet potato purée and little squirts of mayonnaise..**



Delicia de bacalao

...and one of my favorite meats, ***solomillo de buey*** on top of a pimientos de padrón mustard.



Coruñés 53

It definitely lived up to my friend's hype, and I can't wait to go back again and again. I also need to go back because we

didn't have dessert. I'll definitely work through as much of the menu as I can, but I will be (and still am) dreaming of the *huevos divorciados* going right into my mouth. On a quiet street in Malasaña, **Bar Pajarita** is a perfect place for dinner with great food and playful fun. It's more fun if you have someone (or a few people) to have fun eating with.

Restaurante Pajarita

[Web](#)

Address: Calle Apodaca, 20

Tel.: +34 91 591 73 10

barpajarita@gmail.com

Hours: Monday-Wednesday 1-4:30 PM/8:30 PM-Midnight; Thursday 1-4:30 PM/8:30 PM-2 AM; Friday and Saturday 1-4:30 PM/8:30 PM-3 AM; Sunday 1:30-4

Metro: Tribunal (Lines 1 and 10)

Cafés Guayacán, an artisanal coffee roaster in Chamberí

Nestled in the heart of Chamberí is Madrid's latest gem, an artisanal coffee roaster offering a wide variety of specialty beans roasted in-house.

As a former barista and bona fide coffee addict, I was excited to see [Cafes Guayacán](#) open up in my *barrio*. My first visit, I was welcomed by owner, roaster and third generation Madrileño, Enrique, who was eager to share his passion for coffee. Guayacán is not a café but a space dedicated to coffee, with tastings, brewing equipment and, of course, coffee beans.







Boasting a wide range of single origin coffee in 125 and 250 gram take home packs Guayacán grinds your beans according to

preparation method whether you're using filter, Italiana, French Press or Espresso.



The best thing about **Cafés Guayacán** is tasting their coffees and talking with Enrique about the ensuing aromas. In house, you can try Enrique's delicately prepared coffees, brewed using the filtration method without milk. With coffee in hand you can talk about favourite tastes, methods and styles. Even if your Spanish level is low, like mine, fear not, Enrique is patient and eager to instill his knowledge and to find out your opinion.



[Cafés Guayacán](#) also offers personalised blends, which would make a perfect present for someone serious about coffee. Talk

with Enrique about your dream coffee taste then leave it to the maestro to blend and roast away creating a one of a kind taste named after you or your caffeine crazed sweetheart.





It's certainly the best way to get the most out of your home coffee. If you're looking to get started up at home with a

coffee maker, **Cafes Guayacán** also sells a host of accessories from French Press, Filtration systems and Moka Pots (Italiana).





Also check out their delicious artisanal selection of **chocolate** for sale from Jaen, perfect with an afternoon cuppa

Joe. My personal favourite is *chocolate con sal de guerande*.



Take home packs of ground coffee range from 4-7 euros depending on size and variety. To try a cup of Guayacán coffee without purchasing a take home pack costs 2 euros.

By Sean McKenzie

Info:

[Facebook](#) & [Web](#)

Address: *Calle Fernández de los Ríos, 26*

Metro: *Quevedo, Canal*

Phone: *910 01 36 14*

Hours: *Monday – Friday: 10am – 2pm, 5pm – 8:30pm. Saturday:*

10am – 2pm

Other Madrid cafes we like:

Coziest cafés in Chamberí

Monkee Coffee, an amazing coffee shop next to Canal Isabel II

The Little Big Café, my big little pick me up

Pepe Botella, a coffee shop where you can think

Toma Café, fuel up, feel hip

Cafelito, a trendy spot for coffee lovers in Lavapiés

Catedral de Justo, a self-built cathedral in Mejorada del Campo, Madrid

Conceived and brought to life by a present-day Don Quijote and situated in La Mancha, stands a cathedral like no other. Over half a century ago, former monk and visionary, Justo Gallego Martínez, also called Don Justo, made it his life-long quest to build a cathedral in his hometown of Mejorada del Campo, just 20km from Madrid. Today, at nearly 90 years old, he is still pursuing his dream.

I'd been meaning to visit the **Catedral del Justo** for a long

time, although it wasn't until last weekend that I finally made it out there with my husband, James. It's a [great day-trip destination from Madrid](#) if you have a car, as you can combine it with a visit to [Alcalá de Henares](#) afterwards.

To be honest, visiting this cathedral is a visceral experience, making it difficult to describe the feeling of seeing it first-hand. As I approached it, I was first impressed by how big it is. With outer dimensions of 20×50 square meters, it takes up a whole block and has a somewhat whimsical appearance.



As I entered, I noticed a huge dome hovering over me, 40 meters high and 12 meters in diameter. The columns, walls, floors and stairwells are made out of materials that were either found, recycled or donated from local tile and brick factories. Even though parts of the building reminded me of an

old scrapyard, it did resemble a cathedral—just from another planet!

The next thing that caught my eye was Don Justo himself, sitting contentedly on a chair, reading a book as if everything surrounding him was completely normal. His little dog was running around and an old TV was playing the same trance-like song, over and over again.



When I got home I started reading up on the history of the cathedral. It turns out that Don Justo never got a legal building permit, nor is his cathedral recognized by the Catholic Church. But for me, there was no question I was entering a spiritual place.





What strikes me the most is the story behind his decision to dedicate his life to building this cathedral by himself. Born in 1925, Don Justo had a religious upbringing and aspired to be a monk. However, his dream was crushed when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis; he promised himself that if he ever recovered, he would build a cathedral from scratch and make a shrine to “Our Lady of the Pillar”. In 1961, he started building on an olive grove that belonged to his family in his hometown of Mejorada del Campo, and he hasn’t stopped since.





He never studied architecture nor formalized any sort of building plan; instead he envisioned it in his mind and drew inspiration primarily from the Vatican, St. Peter's Basilica and other churches around Spain. On certain occasions, he received help from professional architects and volunteers, but overall, this cathedral is the realization of one individual's dream. He has financed his work through renting inherited land and donations.





Although it will take at least another 15-20 years to complete the cathedral, Don Justo expects to be there every day,

despite his nearly 90 years. Walking through the cathedral's crypt, courtyard, mini cloisters and chapels; gazing up at the dome and examining the different recycled materials used to make the columns, staircases, and floors—it feels slightly Gaudí-esque. In fact, the town of Mejorada del Campo, which notoriously has not fully embraced Don Justo's cathedral, eventually changed the name of the street on which it lies to "Calle Antonio Gaudí."





Not surprisingly, I've read that many people have called Don Justo crazy. Watching this present-day Don Quijote sitting on his chair, reading quietly in the cathedral he has been building with his own hands for more than half a century... while it all feels like a dream, the cathedral is real, and so is Don Justo. I highly recommend paying them a visit and enjoying the experience of witnessing such a unique vision come to life.

How to get there:

Catedral de Justo is located in **Mejorada del Campo**, a small town just 20km from Madrid. To get there, there are two **public buses** from the center: *Avenida de América* (line 282) and *Conde Casal* (line 341). However, going by car is a better option, so you can continue your day-trip to [Alcalá de Henares](#),

Cervantes' hometown, which is about a half hour away or less.

Address: *Calle de Antonio Gaudí*

Bus Line 341 from Conde Casal ([link](#))

Bus Line 282 from Avenida de América ([link](#))

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