

Arugula, a restaurant serving fantastic salads near Retiro park

Folks, it's getting to be that time of year when the sun is out, the grass is green, and the best way to eat is outside. This weather calls for picnicking! And what better place for a picnic than El Retiro park? Prices inside the park can run ludicrously high and the same can be said for many of the places around the perimeter. Of course, there exists the classic option of bringing a bocadillo, but for a step up, there's a gem of a place on Calle Velazquez called [Arugula](#) that will put together an A plus picnic for you and it's only a stone's throw away from the park.



A little over 10 euros can buy you a menú complete with soup, salad, beverage, and coffee. Other options beside salad are available including focaccias and wraps. It's a reasonably priced combination considering the salads are huge, not to mention delicious.



At Arugula, the customer takes the reigns when it comes to

creating the salads. To start, there are three options for the lettuce base (romaine, mesclun and arugula, or mesclun and spinach). After that, there exists the option to add pasta or rice to bulk up the salad.



Next, onto the toppings, which are divided into two categories: basic and premium. Here's where it can get tricky because all the toppings look tempting, colorfully arranged in

a patchwork spread behind the counter. The basic ingredients include avocado, bacon, egg, carrots, olives, and lentils to name a few. The premium ingredients are even more luxurious and include such items as goat cheese, salmon, serrano ham, and sun dried tomatoes. Chose three basic ingredients and one premium, and then it's onto the dressing.



The eight dressings can be mixed and matched just like the toppings to create scrumptious hybrids like pesto/roquefort, for example. For the indecisive, there are salads already

designed and listed (with pictures of the ingredients) on large posters hanging on the wall. To compliment the salad, add soup or yogurt, throw in a beverage and don't forget the coffee and voilà! Your picnic is ready. It's a lot of food, filling, but upon finishing the meal, you'll be left with the feeling that you've made a healthy choice.



When you order a menu to go, the staff at Arugula will wrap everything up for you and give you a sturdy bag to carry it all with you to the park. Even the coffee is accounted for;

they will put a piece of tape over the mouth of the cup to prevent spilling en route. Service is fast and you'll be picnicking in no time. It's about a five minute walk from the restaurant to the park.

Info

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

Address: Calle Velázquez, 9

Madrid with Kids! – Tips from a Mom

Whether you're planning a trip to Madrid or a long-time resident looking for new ideas, Madrid is full of great options to keep your little ones entertained.

You might also like my article on [workout tips for moms in Madrid](#).

Parks

Madrid is home to several great parks that offer lots of fun activities.



Madrid Rio: Why not go for a run with your baby along the park lining the Manzanares River? Parents running with a jogging stroller in Spain used to get a lot of odd stares. The running boom has changed all that and made jogging strollers a trend that's here to stay. Get yours at [Baby Running](#) – an online store with top-of-the-line sport strollers.

Casa de Campo: Casa de Campo is a huge park housing the [amusement park](#), [zoo aquarium](#) with more than 6,000 animals, and a scenic lake with outdoor cafes and boats for rent. If you'd like to avoid traffic jams and screaming kids on the metro, try the [cable car](#) for a scenic view of Madrid along the way. You may want to make sure you are out of the park before it gets dark as escorts tend to make their appearance later in

the day.

Retiro: Look for a puppet show at the [outdoor theatre](#) on weekends and enjoy the many other street performers surrounding the pond at the center of the park. You can also rent row boats if you're feeling confident in your deltoids, or sit back and relax on the solar boat. If you are looking to get some exercise, [Diverbikes](#) across from the O'Donnell entrance rents all different kinds of bikes, and surreys.

Rain driving you and your kids up the wall? Check out the second floor of the [library](#) in the park for a space dedicated to babies and children.

Theme parks and zoos

In addition to the amusement park and zoo aquarium in Casa de Campo, your children will also love seeing the animals at [Faunia](#) in Valdebernardo. Visitors can interact with cage-free animals, and even feed them. The manatee exhibit and petting zoo tend to be a big hit.

If you have a car, the 30 kilometer drive to [Warner Theme Park](#) is the worth the trip. With five different park areas, including Hollywood Boulevard, Superheroes World, Cartoon Village, the Old West and WB Movie World Studios, there are plenty of options to keep everyone in your family happy. Younger kids will love seeing Batman, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Superman while older kids and parents check out the latest roller coasters, log fumes and rapid rivers.

You also have the largest water park in Europe about 15 minutes from Madrid in Villanueva de la Cañada. [Aquópolis](#) can get very packed during the peak season so you may be better off going to one of Madrid's [outdoor pools](#) on hot summer weekends.



Summer pool by UCM

Sports fans

Kids dreaming of becoming the next Cristiano Ronaldo will forever thank you for taking them to the tour of the [Santiago Bernabeu stadium](#). Mini Real Madrid fans will be in heaven as they visit the players' locker room, the President's Balcony and even sit on the players' bench.

Little ones hoping to join Cholo's squad will love seeing the [Atlético de Madrid Museum](#). Atlético fans will adore looking at the trophies, memorabilia and collection of shoes and balls dating back to 1903.

Kid-friendly museums

If your kids hear the word "museum" and start to groan, several museums in Madrid could change all that.

The [Wax Museum](#) has over 450 figures including Harry Potter, Snow White, The Simpsons and Frodo from “The Lord of the Rings”. Look online for special discounts for families.

The [Madrid Railway Museum](#) contains a selection of 19th century trains, related exhibits and a wide range of family friendly activities. Take a break afterwards and have a snack in the café located in a 1930s carriage. In Spring and Fall you can also take a ride to Aranjuez on an old-fashioned train, the [Strawberry Train](#) (*Tren de la Fresa*).

Madrid’s [Planetarium](#) lets little explorers observe other galaxies, planets, stars and black holes. Children’s workshops are also available for Spanish-speaking little ones.

With huge dinosaur skeletons and weekend workshops for children, the [National Museum of Natural Sciences](#) is another good option for families.

Theatre and concerts for babies and kids

Madrid offers a wide range of theatre and concerts designed for babies and children. The bill is constantly changing so check [BabyTribu](#) and [Sapos y Princesas](#) for the latest options.

Other ideas

Older kids who are into go-carts will love the [Carlos Sainz Center](#) in Madrid and Las Rozas.

Little ones may enjoy visiting [The Casa Museo del Ratoncito Pérez](#) – the Spanish version of the tooth fairy. The hours change so check their website before going.

Located inside the [Kinépolis](#) movie theatre, [The Magic Forest](#) is a children’s park with slides, climbing trees and mazes.

Nearly every neighborhood in Madrid has a **play center** (***ludoteca***). Find the one closest to you [here](#).

By Marybeth Redheffer

Marybeth is the founder of [Baby Running](#), an online store selling sport strollers so you can stay fit with the little ones in the city! Check out her [website](#) and [facebook](#).

You might also like: [Workout tips for moms in Madrid!](#)

Gin O'Clock – Time to Enjoy Madrid's Finest G&T's

In my youth (to be said in granny-esque tones) I had many love affairs, with many different tipples. You name it; I'd tried it (and more than likely I would have had the hangover to show for it). Malibu and Pineapple, Archers and Lemonade, Amaretto and Coke followed by a brief dalliance with Vodka and Cranberry. They'd all been enjoyed (or endured) until I finally met my drink soulmate; **the G&T**.

Being a Brit, it's fair to say that they'd had always been on my radar, but upon moving to Madrid my unabashed obsession with them reached fever pitch. Clearly encouraged by the sheer abundance of gin bars that positively litter the *calles* of pretty much every *barrio*. To this end I'm going to share my gin aficionado tips on **where to grab the best G'Vine in the city**.

La Prudencia



Situated on one of my favourite streets in Madrid, this small but perfectly formed bar is ideal for a romantic rendezvous due to its gorgeous low lighting and shabby chic decor, as well as being the perfect place for a few pre-club copas. It was here where I first sampled a **Brockman's gin** (one of my current faves in case you're curious) but should you fancy a gin that's served exactly as it should be then put **La Prudencia** on your list. The bar is piled high with fruits, herbs and even rose petals which the expert bar staff use with flair. They explain why certain flavour combinations have been matched and don't make you feel like a numpty for asking. Most gins start at around **10 euros** which (given that they're the size of your head) is in my opinion, money well spent.

[Facebook](#)

Where: *Calle del Espíritu Santo, 41*

Phone: 915 22 30 97

Metro: Noviciado or Tribunal

The Gin Room



Now here's a bar that is slightly out of my comfort zone (and by that I mean it's not in Malasaña) but if you're looking for reason to get out of your skinny jeans and into an LBD whilst sipping on a gin, this place is it. Extremely slick and stylish, **The Gin Room** has a gin list quite literally as long as my arm. Whilst the atmosphere there was slightly lacking on my last trip, the gins certainly packed a punch. By default I always tend to revert back to **G'Vine** (it's French and fabulous). Here it came served with grapes which complimented the delicate floral flavour of **G'Vine** perfectly. Before the night was through I'd managed to blitz about 70 euros on six gins (not all for me might I add) so this is definitely not the place to visit when there's too much month left at the end

of your money. Saying that, as a payday treat it's a great place to enjoy a glamorous gin o'clock.

Facebook

Where: *Calle de la Academia, 7*

Phone: *699 75 59 88*

Metro: *Atocha or Banco de España*

Shuzo's



Shuzo, Shuzo, Shuzo, it almost pains me to share this hidden gem for fear that I'll never be able to perch on a bar stool there again. First things first, it is tiny (we're talking the size of a wardrobe) and secondly the array of gins that they stock is a gin lovers delight – I think I genuinely clapped and whooped on arrival, admittedly it doesn't take much! This bar has the old classics such as **Hendricks**, **Bombay** and the

like as well, as some very quirky brands such as **Monkey 47**, an unusual (yet potent) gin hailing from the Black Forest in Germany. The atmosphere here is laid back but rest assured you definitely feel as though you are 'someone in the know' upon entering into this wee Aladdin's cave.

[Facebook](#)

Where: *Calle de Jorge Juan, 52*

Phone: *914 35 91 71*

Metro: *Príncipe de Vergara*

So folks, there's three to get you started and remember – it's always gin o'clock somewhere in the world...so bottoms up!

Looking for more on Madrid's best cocktail bars? Check out:

1862 Dry Bar – perfection served in a glass!

Madrid's best cocktail bars – Martinis, Cosmopolitans and more...

Harina, for something sweet or savoury

The temperature inside [Harina](#) is usually cranked well above the temperature of the street, thereby increasing the coziness factor. Within the walls of this white, bright, and charming locale lies one of the most satisfying menús in the city.



Available for both lunch and dinner, the menú begins with a luscious green salad dressed with sweet balsamic vinegar. The whole bowl of greens, a mealtime rarity when eating out in Spain, is like a pot of nutritious gold. Eating the salad, however, is just a warmup exercise for diving into a sprawling slab of pizza.



Keep gulping wine and it may feel as though the pizza has a magnetic force. The glowing light of the interior only becomes softer the less wine remaining in your glass. Thin crust, thick pieces of bacon, a runny fried egg perched in the middle—need I say more? Cut a piece away from the pie and cheese strings out like a game of cat's cradle.



Other menu options do exist, but this one consistently pleases. Dessert is not included in the menu, rather a pot of tea or a cup of coffee seals the meal. Baked goods can wait for another day—maybe when an entire pizza is not taking up stomach real estate.



Harina is a merienda dream come true. Whatever sweet tooth whimsy you may harbor, sugary goodness awaits behind the glass cases. The meringues have rock hard shells, but they shatter into smithereens, and what is left is a sugary marshmallow pillow.



Other desserts can be hit or miss depending on how freshly they were baked. The carrot cake was dry on a recent visit, but Harina gets brownie points for presentation and a mediocre cake can be forgiven.



Multiple locations around the city, prices vary.

Here's their [Facebook page](#) and [web](#).

You'll find one of their nicest locations inside **Plaza de la Independencia**, right next to **Puerta de Alcalá** and a hop skip away from **Plaza de Cibeles**.

After a trip to a nearby museum, you may want to pop into Harina for a coffee or snack. Here's an article on [Madrid's known and not-so-known art institutions](#), many of which are located near Harina.

4 Best City Biking Routes for Tourists in Madrid

There is no such thing as the best city in the world (even though New Yorkers like to claim the title). From what I can see, however, Madrid is getting pretty close. You've probably noticed that Madrid's public bike system, [BiciMad](#), is fully up and running. Madrid's public bikes are **electric-powered** which is awesome because you barely break a sweat while going up the city's many hills. This also means that you can see Madrid's most emblematic buildings, plazas, parks and river all in one day, on two wheels.

Now that cycling in Madrid has been made easy, **here are four beautiful cycling routes in the city-center!** I've attached a **google map** with each route, but you really can't get lost. Combine these routes as you wish, as they're not too long and meant to be enjoyed, so you can feel free to wander off and explore. Happy cycling!!!

If you want to know how [BiciMad](#) works, check out our post: [“Electric city bikes in Madrid, a city that's turning bike-friendly”](#)

1. Atocha – Paseo del Prado – Recoletos



This first route starts at "*Ministerio de Agricultura*" or Ministry of Agriculture building. This tour is very easy to bike because the streets are flat and wide. There is also a pretty boulevard which goes all the way up Paseo del Prado and Castellana. You will see some of the main buildings in the city like the Prado Museum, Caixa Forum and the National Library. You'll also pass through three of the most important and well-known squares (plazas) in Madrid: Neptuno, Cibeles and Colón.





Find the route on the map:

2. Cibeles – Alcalá – Retiro Park



While New York and London have, respectively, Central Park and Hyde Park, we *Madrileños* have **Retiro Park**. Maybe it's not that famous or was never featured in a Hollywood production, but we are as proud as can be of our city's beautiful green oasis. The route through Retiro is also really easy to bike, however, you can start it at "*Plaza de la Independencia*", also known as Puerta de Alcalá, to make it even easier. In Retiro Park, you'll see some of Madrid's most stunning places such as "*Palacio de Cristal*" (main pic at the top) and "*Retiro Lake*" where you can rent a rowboat.





Find the route in the map:

3. Palacio – Casa de Campo



What I like most about this route is that you get to leave the city for a while. We first start at the Madrid's Royal Palace and take a ride around to enjoy it in all its glory from front to back. Then, we head for "*Casa de Campo*", where there are always groups of mountain-bikers going up and down the park's infinite paths. If you're not familiar with Casa de Campo, it's much bigger than Retiro, and looks more like a forest– it has a great [public swimming pool](#) and lake where people do water sports. Of course, there are bars too. As for this route's level, I wouldn't say it's easy one but it's definitely doable. It all depends on how far you go into "*Casa de Campo*" .





Find the route in the map:

4. [Matadero](#) – Madrid Rio – Principe Pio



Just a few years ago, the **Manzanares River** was surrounded by an ugly highway. Thanks to Madrid's former mayor who spent who knows how much money on its renovation, now we are enjoying "*Madrid Rio*" to the max. Starting at **Principe Pio**, you will enter Madrid Rio to bike along different paths and stumble upon fun (and free) activities like a "*tirolina*" or zip-line, playgrounds (for adults too!) and one of Madrid's urban beaches, a.k.a. sprinklers, that we love when summer comes. Then you will end up at one of my favorite spots in the city, [Matadero Madrid](#), an old slaughterhouse which is now an awesome and free cultural center. Here is a link to our post on [El Matadero](#).





Find the route in the map:

Beauty Series for the Ladies: Madrid's Best Nail Salons

Getting ready for a dinner party or just need a relaxing moment to yourself? In that case, nothing's better than a **wonderful manicure and pedicure...**

In Madrid, you can have a mani-pedi in practically all hair salons and beauty centers. However, many of these places are often not the best, as they are either too fast or don't use the appropriate tools, plus hygiene can be really

questionable. At **Naked**, we bring you **our list of great places for manicures and pedicures.**

Apart from offering an enjoyable experience and stylish setting, these are my requirements for **mani-pedis**: cleanliness, value, quality products and professionalism. The first three places on this list are nail institutions here in Madrid—they throw nail parties and events, great for hen/bachelorette parties. **Happy mani-pedis girls!!**

(all photos from each salon's Facebook)

1. [Mi Calle de Nueva York](#)





My experience at **Mi Calle de Nueva York** has been **wonderful**. It reminds me of a loft in Soho. The brands they work with are the best on the market and the quality of their treatments is fabulous. It's a real luxury for your hands and feet.

Not to mention they also do **waxing, threading, and have just introduced a new "Eyebrow Shaping" service**. If you, like me, have no idea what that means, it's getting your eyebrows professionally done – waxed and tweezed and all – according to the shape of your face. They literally take out a ruler and start measuring.

- Manicura Express: 16€
- Manicura Normal: 28€
- Pedicura Express: 18€
- Pedicura Normal: 39€

[Web](#)

Where: Calle Barquillo 39

Hours: Tues-Fri, 12-21h. Sat-Sun: 12-20h. Closed on Mondays &

holidays.

Metro: Chueca

2. My Little Momó





MLM is located in the Salamanca district. Among the many things we love about this place is its **Parisian style**. If you wish to have a fabulous manicure or pedicure in an **elegant and sophisticated** place, this is your best choice.

- Basic Manicure: 18€ (20 mins)
- Price Brazilian Manicure: 28€ (30 mins)
- Express Pedicure: 20€ (20 mins)
- Brazilian Pedicure: 38€ (45 mins)

To see the rest of their treatments, visit their web.

[Web](#)

Where: c/ Villanueva, 21

Phone: 34 914 354 378

Email: info@mylittlemomo.es

Hours: Monday-Friday, 10:00-20:00. Saturdays, 9:00-19:00

Metro: Retiro

[3. Nails Secret](#)



If there's a place in Madrid that really **reminds me of NYC**, its **Nails Secret**. Once you enter, it's as if you were transported to a scene from **Sex & the City**. It's safe to say that Nails Secret meets our main requirements for a manicure.

- Express Manicure: 14€
- Manicure Basic: 19€
- Full Manicure: 29€
- Express Pedicure: 24€
- Complete Pedicure: 45€

Check out their web for for other services.

[Web](#)

Where: 2 locations: 1. Calle de García de Paredes, 78 & 2. Calle Hernani 68 (semiesq.c/0rense)

Phone: 1. 917 02 40 38 & 2. 91 533 67 43

Metro: 1. Gregorio Marañón & 2. Cuatro Caminos



4. [Opium](#)

In the Salamanca district, this place works with quality brands and has fantastic prices.

- Manicura express: 15€
- Manicura completa: 20€
- Pedicura express 30€
- Pedicura completa: 40€

[Facebook](#)

Where: Donde Duque de Sesto, 50

Hours: Monday to Friday de 11:00 a 20:00 / Saturday de 11:00 a 14:00

Metros: Goya & O'Donnell

5. [Handmade Beauty](#)



What a wonderful place!!! I only have great things to say about Handmade Beauty, which can be found in two locations, both in great neighborhoods when it comes to fashion and style—Salamanca & Chueca.

▪ **MANICURE**

- Re-polish (15 mins): 11€
- Slow & Go (25 mins): 15€
- Manicura a la carta (45 mins): 28€

▪ **PEDICURE**

- Re-polish (15 mins): 11€
- Slow & Go (35 mins): 18€
- Pedicura a la carta (45 mins): 38€

[Web](#)

Where: 2 locations: 1. c/Lagasca, 58 & 2. c/ Conde de Xiquena, 17

Phone: 1. 91 435 94 18 & 2. 91 319 66 10

Hours: Mon-Fri, 10:30-20:30h. Sat, 11-18:30h

Metro: 1. Serrano and Velázquez & 2. Chueca

6. Beautyque Nail Bar



Fantastic mani-pedis! Located in Chueca, Madrid's trendiest area, this nail salon is very bohemian and the perfect place for a stylish manicure.

- Oferta Manicura & Pedicura: 45€
- Manicura Express 12€
- Pedicura Express: 16€
- Manicura Tradicional: 19€
- Pedicura Tradicional: 28€

Web

Where: c/ Pelayo 76

Phone: 910 816 655

Metro: Chueca & Alonso Martínez

7. Ghetto Nailz



For the **non-traditional** ones who are **not afraid of experimenting** with their nails. If you are looking for a specific nail design, this is your place.

- Basic Manicure + color: 15€
- Basic Manicure + Nailart: 30€
- Basic Manicure + semi-permanent polish: 30€

[Web](#)

Where: Calle Barco 45

Phone: 630161187 & 666100880

Metro: Tribunal, Chueca or Gran Vía

[Check out Round 2 of our recommendations for great mani-pedis in Madrid!](#)

Know of any more? Let us know!

Chocolates are nice (but this first date is better) Part 2



So you don't like Da Vinci or Michelangelo and don't see what the fuss is about with graffiti artists like Banksy. I love that shit but not every girl is interested in it either. Again we want to take our date to **3 different places**, it keeps momentum flowing and builds new experiences between you two in a short time. This will not turn all pumpkin dates into shining diamond-studded carriages of awesomeness but it is harder to get bored when you are going to new places.

For **part 2** we will be exploring the **scenic route of Madrid**. Madrileños are crazy about their terrazas, so we will explore

the skies and sights of this beautiful capital. The great thing about this is that you let the views do the talking rather than you. Any anecdote about the buildings you see always helps. One is that **Palacio de Cibeles** with its fountain of the Greek goddess Cybele is the unofficial party spot of Real Madrid. Any cup win will see thousands of supporters descend onto the roundabout. As with all routes you will be able to walk from one to the other. This route is one for the summer, which in Madrid you have plenty of. The views however do have their price and you pay something like a terraza tax. It is a price gladly paid.

Act One: Retiro park



Palacio de Cristal

It is an easy pick but a great place to start with because you get away from the noise and hectic life of the city. You invite your date for an aperitivo to the café (on paseo Venezuela) next to the pond in the centre of the park. However you shouldn't linger too long with the drinks. After the first copa you should take your date to **Palacio de Cristal** in Retiro or show them the now abandoned zoo that used to be in Retiro.

For both do a little research and make sure how to get there because you can get easily lost. My personal favourite is the rose garden located towards the side of Av. De Menendez Pelayo. It is incredibly impressive when you walk along and are met by a resident peacock. It will also take you to the restaurant. If the sun is setting though take the route to **Palacio de Cristal**.

What time: 19h-20/21h

Alternative: no just take him/her to the park.

Act Two: [La Castela](#) in Calle del Doctor Castelo, 22



This is a truly excellent restaurant. You have two options when you decide to have dinner here. You can eat at the front of the bar and join in with the crowd. Definitely my recommended option to get the adrenaline pumping after the quiet walk. Even with a minimal Spanish you will get by and be

able to order the local delicacies. You can also book a table for two and will be seated at the back, which is much more quiet and intimate. The last time I went a boyfriend gave his girlfriend a necklace for their anniversary (I took the picture if you were wondering).

What time: 21-23h

Metro: Take a walk / Ibiza

Alternative: Platero & Co. A very stylish bar that is located right next to La Castela. The restaurant was designed the Catalan interior designer Inma Rull. Very nicely done.

Act Three: [Azotea](#) on top of **Circulo de Bellas Artes** in Calle de Alcalá, 42



Yes it is crowded with tourists, Spanish and everyone looking for a view but it still is an incredible view. On a first date confirmation is just as important as impressing. Further, walking by foot will give you an excuse to pass by la **Plaza de Independencia** at night down to **Palacio Cibeles** and up **Calle de Alcalá**, which is one of the most beautiful walks in Madrid once it's gone dark. Once you arrive step ahead and pay for both entry tickets (3 euros each). It is a small token of

chivalry, especially if you just split the bill 50/50. Once at the top you really have two main choices depending on your comfort level. On the right going down the stairs is an area where you can sit/lie and it is easier to get closer to one another. On the left are high seats with small tables. Daring wins the game in my eyes and I choose the right. It makes your intentions clear in a subtle way.

What time: 23h to 02h

Alternative: [Room Mate Óscar](#) in Plaza Vázquez de Mella 12



The terrace at the top of this hotel has just been renovated. Good thing too because the white plastic surface has been replaced with wooden planks. The special thing about this terrace is that it has a pool but if you fancy a dip you will need to reserve. The terrace has a nice feel due to the artificial grass spread across the ground. Also not a cheaper option as a gin tonic will cost 12 euros and a glass of wine 5 euros.

Metro: Gran Via / Banco de España

Read on...

- For more **first date ideas in Madrid**, check out **part 1** of this article, [Flowers are nice \(but the first date is better\)](#)

- For more on **rooftop terraces in Madrid**, check out our series on [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars](#)