

Unleash your inner kid at The Playground

Ever miss recess? Family game nights? Dedicating a whole day to just having a good time?

I don't blame you—**adulthood is hard**. Sometimes all I want to do is go back to being a kid, when I could completely lose myself in a game of cards or kickball and momentarily forget about the rest of the world. I miss the carefree way I made new friends and laughed so hard I couldn't breathe—even with people I'd only just met.

Apparently, I'm not the only one suffering from this particular brand of nostalgia. A few years ago, the lovely and talented Majida Mundial (a longtime Madrid resident who hails from New York) decided to do something about it.

She created [Let's Go Ánimo](#), a company dedicated to helping people have fun, meet new friends, and release the inner child that lives on inside us all.



Majida, the founder of Let's Go Ánimo, cracks up with The Playground participants.

Every month, Let's Go Ánimo hosts [The Playground](#), a night of board games and friendly competition that's every bit as fun as it sounds. At first glance it may seem like your average expat networking night; it's held on Thursday evenings on a trendy Malasaña street, everyone speaks English, and yes, there's wine involved. But the similarities end there.

When you walk in the door, you'll be placed on a team with other attendees who you'll compete with throughout the night. The games are different every time—you might play Jenga, Scattergories, Cards Against Humanity, Limbo, Twister, or an endless number of other classics. The winner of each game is awarded points for their team, and at the end of the evening there's a challenge round to crown the overall champion. **Expect plenty of fun, prizes, and unlimited surprises.**



A fierce Twister competition puts players' balance to the test.

Of course, there are some things that set The Playground apart from the game nights of your youth: namely, alcohol. The **€10 entry fee** includes a drink and a few small tapas, and you can buy more throughout the night if you're still hungry (or thirsty). Beer, wine and *tinto de verano* are usually on offer.

If you're shy or nervous about meeting new people, The Playground will leave you no choice but to let loose and get out of your comfort zone. Awkward icebreakers, dance-offs, improv activities... everything is fair game.

Pro tip: you'll have more fun if you go all out and really get into it—apathy and introversion might be acceptable at a normal bar or networking night, but here they just won't fly.

In addition to the monthly Playground events, Let's Go Ánimo organizes special activities and celebrations throughout the year. Sometimes there's a particular theme; the Christmas edition held in December featured a white elephant gift exchange, an ugly sweater contest, and no shortage of holiday cheer.



Participants strut their stuff in an ugly Christmas sweater fashion show.

Other past events have included picnics in the park and Thanksgiving-themed fun. Let's Go Ánimo also offers corporate [team building workshops](#), and Majida even teaches [Sevillanas dance classes](#) in English, if that's your thing!

Stay up to date on upcoming events by joining the brand new Facebook group, [The High-Vibe Tribe](#). According to Majida, **"This group is being created to build an international family-like community of passionate people all over the world who believe that being an adult does not have to equal living a dull life, and that living the fulfilling life you dream of is not only possible but necessary!"**

So if you're tired of the same old language exchanges and afterwork meet-ups, and you want to try something totally new and unique, mark your calendar for the next edition of The

Playground—or any of Let's Go Ánimo's events—and get ready to have the time of your life.

Info

- [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) & [Website](#)
 - **Location:** El Salón del Artista, Calle de la Palma, 50
 - **Metro:** Noviciado & Tribunal
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Tapapiés: a guide to everyone's favorite food and culture festival in Lavapiés

It's that time of year again. The air is turning chilly, the leaves are starting to change, and the millennial obsession with all things autumn is taking over social media. But here in Madrid, there's a whole different reason to be excited. With October comes [Tapapiés](#), the annual festival that inundates the streets of the [Lavapiés neighborhood](#) with delicious food, cheap drinks, and live music.

For 11 days at the end of October (this year's 7th edition lasts from October 19–29), dozens of restaurants and bars in Lavapiés offer a very special deal. Each one develops their own **signature tapa**, and offers it to the public for just **€1.50**. For an extra euro, you can also get a *botellín* (a 250 ml bottle of beer) to wash it down. The [event](#) is sponsored by Barcelona's Estrella Damm, and at most places you can choose between a regular beer or Damm Lemon (beer and lemon soda).



A bar advertises its participation in Tapapiés with the festival's official poster.

Lavapiés is known for its incredible cultural diversity, with large immigrant populations from all over Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Central Asia. As a result, it's full of [international eateries](#) offering everything from [Senegalese thieboudienne](#) to Syrian sweets. A good number of these establishments participate in [Tapapiés](#), which means that in one night you can practically eat your way around the world, just by exploring the neighborhood's sloping streets.



The delicious “Crepioca” tapa from Saboor Tapioca

In other words, **this [festival](#) is every adventurous foodie’s dream come true.** There are various strategies for tackling the overwhelming amount of options (**122 tapas in total**) and chaotic crowds. You can simply wander around, dropping into whatever bars you come across and trying your luck. Each one usually advertises a photograph of their tapa with a huge poster out front, so you’ll know more or less what to expect. Don’t forget to stop by [Mercado de San Fernando](#) and Mercado Antón Martín, where several vendors also participate.



A tray of tapas at Toscanaccio Italian bakery: marinated eggplant, walnuts, goat cheese, and sun-dried tomato pesto on spelt bread

If you're (A) a picky/allergy-prone eater or (B) determined to try as many different tapas as possible, you might want to consider a more organized strategy. Ask for a brochure at any of the participating places—you'll get **a pocket-sized booklet that contains a list of every single tapa being offered**, as well as a color photograph and a detailed ingredients list for each. They're all plotted on a numbered map, so you can plan out your ideal route. Be warned, though: it's hard to stick to a set plan when there are so many tempting options around every corner.



Dishing out the special tapa at Maloka Bar Brasileiro: yuca in a coconut milk sauce with peanut pesto

My advice? Grab a group of friends who aren't afraid to elbow their way through some crowds and try as many new things as possible. This is not an activity for those who would rather settle in at a cozy restaurant for a relaxed dinner.

Expect to eat standing up while balancing a beer in one hand a a tapa in the other, and shouting at each other just to be heard. **It's messy, it's crazy, it's loud—and it's totally worth it.** The frenetic and colorful spirit of the neighborhood is never more alive than on a night of [Tapapiés](#).



“Carrillada melosa” from Maldito Querer: braised beef cheeks in a sauce of caramelized onion, garlic, herbs, and Pedro Ximénez reduction

To complete the experience, it’s essential to attend one of the [various outdoor performances](#) by local musicians, dancers, and entertainers that take place throughout the event. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons and evenings, you can catch live music and shows at nine different designated spots (a full schedule is included in the brochure). There’s also the simultaneous **Chollopiés** festival, which **spotlights the neighborhood’s local businesses** by offering [special discounts](#) on certain products.



Maybe you live in Lavapiés and want to get to know your *barrio* better. Maybe you've never been and want to see what all the hype is about. Or maybe you're just hungry, thirsty, and low on cash. Whatever the case, [Tapapiés](#) is bound to become one of your favorite events in Madrid. If you go into it with **the right mindset, a healthy appetite, and a handful of coins**, I guarantee that come next October, there'll only be one thing on your mind. Who needs pumpkin spice lattes, anyway?

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Instagram](#)

Check out our roundup of [Tapapiés' offerings last year!](#)

I'll Be Back: The Monthly Chess Event

Get ready for another monthly chess event brought to you by Desperate Literature. This month's theme: [I'll be back!](#) Practice your best impression of the Terminator and enjoy playing a game of chess with friends.

Beer Festival in Palacio Vistalegre!

With an array of brews, this [Beer Festival](#) in Palacio Vistalegre February 25-26 and March 3-6 will blow you away! Designed to be family friendly and accompanied by live music, a global variety of meat and a playground for the kids, this festival is open to all. All people and all ale from Irish reds to Belgian blondes, Mexican pales and more. Though limited, admission is free and all children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult and abstain from consuming alcohol, other options will be available.

The festival is open from 7:30pm – 12am on Thursdays and Fridays, 12pm – 5pm on Saturdays and 12pm – 10pm on Sundays.

Located in Palacio Vistalegre Arena on Calle Matilde Hernández, the nearest metro station is Vistalegre

Like their [Facebook](#) page

Harry Potter Book Night

Calling all wizards, witches and muggles alike... On Thursday February 4th at 8pm, Desperate Literature will be hosting a [Harry Potter Book Night](#)! Join in on the quizzes to win prizes such as Dobby's last place socks or Hagrid's rock cakes.

British Shorts: Ten. Ten. Ten.

[British Shorts](#) is a new theatre company made up of all native English professional actors on a mission to provide Madrid with good quality short and one-act plays in English. Their first micro-theatre production, '**Ten.Ten.Ten**', was running at [El Escondite](#) in La Latina throughout January and due to its success, it's now been extended to February as well. You can come watch them perform every Wednesday this month at 8:30pm, 9pm and 9:30pm. Tickets cost €4.50.

“Weird Folk” Music Concert at Desperate Literature

[Desperate Literature](#) is hosting yet another cool event on Friday night at 9pm. Expect drinks, dancing and fine literature, accompanied by live music played by [The Mañana People](#). According to the guys at Desperate Literature, “They’re bloomin’ brilliant so we got them in again: join us once more for the blue-grass, weird folk fantasmagoria that is [The Mañana People](#)!”

Poetry Reading at Desperate Literature (with vodka!)

Head over to [Desperate Literature](#) on Friday night at 8pm for an evening of poetry with James and Marian Womack, reading from James’s newest translations of the great Vladimir Mayakovsky. Thanks go out to [Carcenet Press](#) for giving Desperate Literature the rights to print a limited edition pamphlet of the poems to accompany the evening.

Not only will there be poetry, but we’ll also be swilling Vodka like there’s no tomorrow!

The Orange Dogs of Halloween – Party at Desperate Literature

Want to do something different this **halloween in Madrid**? Then head over to [Desperate Literature](#), a charming little bookstore near Opera, and wear your best costume. Marian Womack, editor of Ediciones Nevsky, translator and sci-fi legend, will be ushering in the halloween festivities with a reading of her most recent work, 'Orange Dogs'. There be all the usual tricks and treats, meaning **booze**.

Dress code: cosmic horror.

Fiesta del Cine; Spain-wide film festival featuring new releases and classics!

Fiesta del Cine begins this Monday, the 27th, and continues until Wednesday, the 29th, during which time all films in participating theatres can be watched for just **2,90€**. The event takes place across Spain in over 250 different venues, listed under [Salas Adheridas](#) on their webpage. Films shown in each venue vary; both new and old can be found, as well as screenings in V.O. (Original Version) with subtitles, in cinemas such as [Yelmo Cines](#) and [Renoir](#).

Fiesta del Cine is a great excuse to explore the theatres of

Madrid, at the very economic price of 2,90€!