

Toledo



What to see:

The breathtakingly beautiful city of Toledo lies to the south of Madrid and was Spain's former capital. Although there are plenty of things to do here, nothing beats getting lost amidst Toledo's tiny and windy streets.

If you're looking for a gift (check out [Best Gifts from Madrid list](#)), Toledo is well known for its **mazapán** (marzipan) and **navajas** (Swiss army and pocket knives), which can be found throughout the city.

How to get there:

- **By high speed train (AVE)**

Depart from: Atocha AVE station (take metro line 1 to Atocha Renfe)

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid-Toledo horarios y precios \(RENFE\)](#))

Return ([Toledo-Madrid horarios y precios \(RENFE\)](#))

Duration: approx. 35 min

Price: 12,70€ (round trip 25,40€).

**Note. You will have to walk 15 min or take another bus to get to the center.*

▪ **By bus**

Depart from: Plaza Elíptica bus station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid-Toledo horarios y precios \(ALSA\)](#))

Return ([Toledo-Madrid horarios y precios \(ALSA\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 5,63€ (round-trip 11,26€). Buy tickets on the bus.

Where to find it on a map:



San Lorenzo del Escorial



What to see:

El Escorial is famous for its beautiful *Monasterio* which was built between 1563 and 1584. We recommend going inside the monastery, even though the entrance fee costs €10.

Once you've visited the monument, it's absolutely necessary to take a walk around the charming little town. Grab a seat at a *terrazza* and enjoy the pure air of the city's mountains, known as *la sierra de Madrid*.

How to get there:

▪ **By cercanías train ([map](#))**

Depart from: Sol, take Cercanías Line C3

Schedule:

Departure ([Horario Sol-El Escorial](#))

Return ([Horario El Escorial-Sol](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 5,40€ (round trip 10,80€). Buy tickets from machines inside Sol's train station.

**Note: you will have to walk 15 min or take another bus to get to the center.*

▪ **By bus**

Depart from: Moncloa, take bus line 661

Schedule:

Bus line [661](#) (every 10-15 min)

Bus line [664](#) (every 10-15 min)

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 4,20€ (round trip 8,40€). Buy tickets on the bus.

Where to find it on a map:



Segovia

What to see:

In this thousand-year-old city, you'll find one of the most famous Roman aqueducts in the world, ***el acueducto de Segovia***, as well as the magnificent castle, ***Alcazar***, which really resembles a castle from Disney World.

More importantly, while you're in Segovia you must try their star dish – ***cochinillo asado*** – roasted suckling pig which is cooked so tender that it's tradition for the waiters to slice it in front of you with the side of a plate.

Although I haven't succeeded in finding Segovia's best *cochinillo*, I highly recommend going to the restaurant [Candido](#) which is easy to find as it's situated in the Aqueduct's plaza and its ambiance is very special.

How to get there:

▪ By high speed train (AVE)

Depart from: Chamartín train station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid-Segovia horarios y precios \(RENFE\)](#))

Return ([Segovia-Madrid horarios y precios \(RENFE\)](#))

Duration: approx. 30 min

Price: 12,70€ (round trip approx. 25€).

**Note. Sometimes you can find special offers on the website.*

▪ By bus

Depart from: Príncipe Pío bus station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid-Segovia horarios y precios \(La Sepulveda\)](#))

Return ([Segovia-Madrid horarios y precios \(La Sepulveda\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour 15 min

Price: 8,09€ (round trip 16€)

Where to find it on a map:

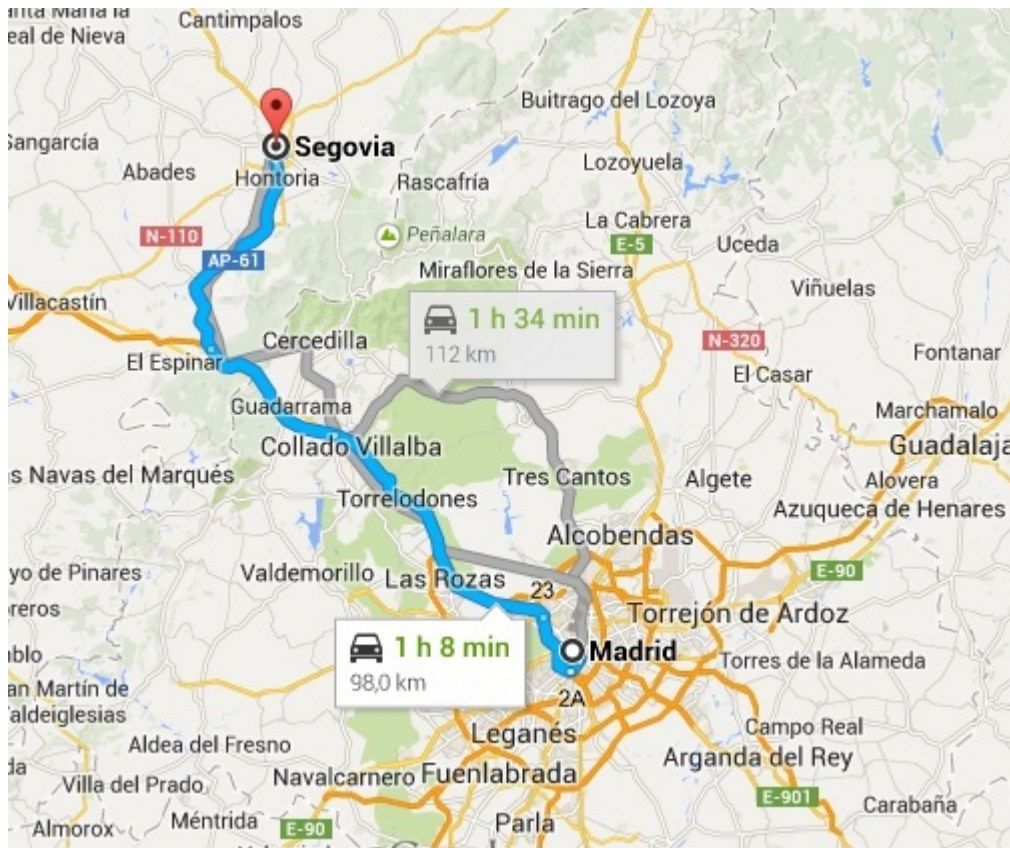


Image from wikipedia

Lavapiés and its Market: the real food emporium!

Grab a round of imported **German beers** at wholesale price, share a bottle of **local Spanish wine** for as little as 2€ (bottled and corked right before your eyes), and all the while, snack on **kalamata olives**, **manchego** cheese or even **sushi**. How nice does that sound?

Madrid's [Mercado de San Fernando](#), or "el mercado de Lavapiés", as it is more commonly known, is a vibrant indoor market where bars selling imported German beers, local Spanish wines, Italian breads, sushi, homemade Greek food, oysters and much,

much more are nestled in right alongside the cobbler, grocer and butcher.



Local Spanish wines for less than 5E , bottled and corked right before your eyes. Makes for a perfect gift.



Greek Kalamata Olives, my favorite

As in all big cities, neighborhoods go in and out of style as fast as Zara's storefronts. Madrid is no exception. Once considered a dodgier side of town, **Lavapiés is fast becoming the city's newest nightlife destination**, attracting Madrid's trendiest young hipster crowds. Great restaurants and bars, from urban chic to authentic Moroccan, are interspersed within the demographic makeup of the neighborhood. And the prices are still modest in comparison to other hotspots like Malasaña and Chueca.



Colorful handmade leather goods

All neighborhoods of Madrid have their local markets. Many, especially in the more upscale areas, have been refurbished and turned into fashionable displays of Spain's haute cuisine, such as Mercado de San Miguel and Mercado de San Anton. But in 2012, [Mercado de San Fernando](#) – el mercado de Lavapiés – decided to reinvent itself making it more reflective of the eclectic tastes of its host neighborhood. Unlike the others, **Lavapiés' market** has managed to embrace the new while maintaining its laid-back, local and traditional essence.



The streets of Lavapiés are lined with **Indian restaurants**, hipster cafés and independent boutiques, and its market is just as diverse as all the small alleys and plazuelas surrounding it. Here you will find a wonderful mix of

traditional Spanish shops and foreign options. The fruit-seller and the good old Bar Barroso blend happily together with the higher-end oyster/wine bar, Bond 40, and the stylish leather handbag maker.



Cocktails and oysters



oyster bar and butcher shop sit side by side

When I first went to [Mercado de San Fernando](#), it was by chance. I was walking up Calle Embajadores and stumbled upon a rather austere building with a grey facade. Little did I know that I was about to slip through the market's winding aisles to discover stands selling quiches and empanadas, as well as full bars crowded with patrons from all walks of life—families with children, the older generation, groups of hipsters, foreigners and locals alike.



Homemade food from quiche to meatballs



Sushi!

I like to start off by browsing through the market's many stands, and graze a bit before I settle down at the German bar for an imported beer. Then I head over to the Greek's for dinner—moussaka, **kalamata olives**, feta cheese and spinach pie. It just doesn't get any better than that. For me, that is. For you, who knows?



irresistible Greek food

Though the possibilities are endless when it comes to food, here you can expect, above all, a great ambience. Judging from the live music and boisterous company I experienced the last time I went, it's safe to say that the word is out.



Oysters, clams and pimientos de padron



bread and empanadas... mmmm



the quintessential Spanish butcher

While I think the monthly [Mercado de Motores](#) is Madrid's "coolest" market, **Mercado de San Fernando** is much different. This one's open every day and it's totally unexpected!



Spanish-style treats and snacks



Mercado de San Fernando/Lavapiés' facade on calle Embajadores, 41

Plus, on **Sundays** they throw different events, such as **Swing Dancing** and **Salsa Lessons** (free...)!

Information:

[Facebook](#)

Metro: Embajadores/Lavapiés (yellow line 3)

Address: C/ Embajadores, 41

Email: mercadosanfernandomadrid@gmail.com

Schedule:

- *Mon: Fri: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm*
 - *Sat: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*
 - *Sun: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm*
-

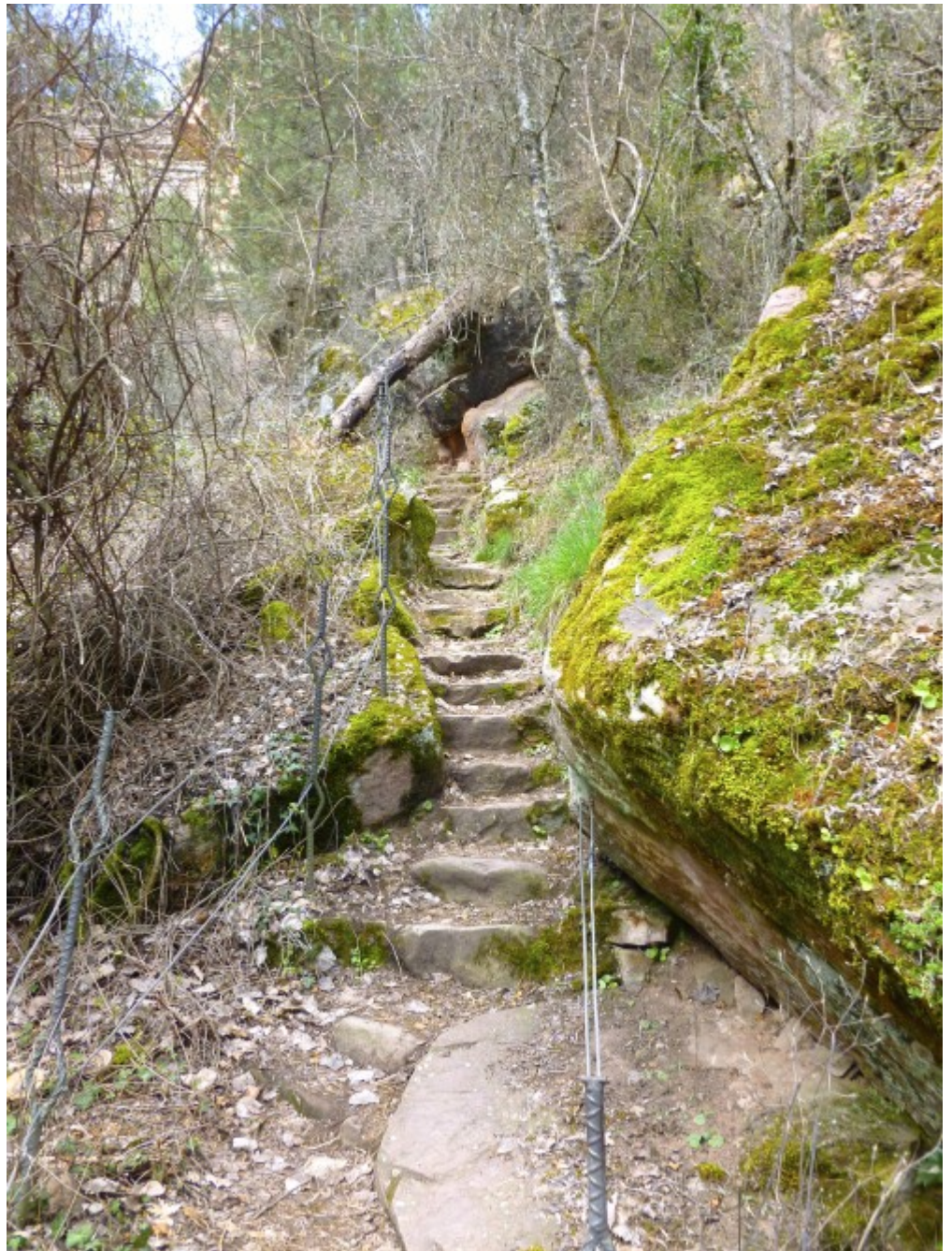
Barranco Virgen de la Hoz (Parque Natural del Alto Tajo) in Guadalajara

No plans for the weekend? Here's a great alternative to barhopping it up in Madrid. Last Sunday, my friends and I decided to discover other **natural beauties of Spain**; get out of the city and smell some fresh air. So we drove to the province of **Guadalajara** to visit what our friend, Carlos, describes as "**the mini Grand Canyon of Spain**".



Just a few hours drive east of Madrid lies one of the country's most beautiful natural parks, the **Alto Tajo**. Inside

this park, you'll witness nature's grandeur, the orange and red cliffs of **Barranco Virgen de la Hoz**. Views from the top of **these cliffs** make you feel as though you've been transported



to Arizona.

With **270 handmade stone steps** ahead of us, our non-athletic friends got worried. But as we walked up, we arrived at a series of “miradores” (lookout points) where we could rest, and take in the views; totally worth it. As we looked down, we could see the side streams of the **Río Gallo** (river) winding below the majestic **Barranco Virgen de la Hoz's** burnt-orange-colored cliffs.



What I liked most about **Barranco Virgen de la Hoz** is that you don't have to be a professional alpinist to make it all the way up. So there are no excuses to enjoy a really nice journey to the top.





Along

the path, the views get better and better.



Finally, after about an hour's climb, we reached our

destination.





Smile!

Oh well,
time to go back to reality. Good bye **Barranco Virgen de la Hoz**, hope to see you again soon...



Before we headed back to Madrid, we went to the breathtaking **Monasterio de Piedra**, where we saw hundreds of waterfalls. We could call it Spain's "**mini Niagara Falls**". More about that later...

Beerlingual, a fun spin on a Thursday night

True or false? Both the Ukraine and Malaysia have two official languages (*you'll have to read till the end to find out!*)

Last Thursday, my friend Mike brought me to [Beerlingual's](#) pub **quiz** which is held at a Mexican bar in La Latina called [La](#)

[Morena](#). I was a bit reluctant at first, thinking my knowledge of random facts wouldn't be up to par. But I ended up joining in on the game, which turned out to be a lot of fun. The bar was packed with people from the world over, and the nachos were ridiculously good.

**Beerlingual has since changed its location. Now it is held at [Cervecería Espuma](#) on calle Arganzuela, 1 (metro La Latina & Puerta de Toledo). Same time. See info below for more details.*

Included on the Guardian's list of [8 Hidden Gems in Madrid](#), here's the inside scoop on Beerlingual's pub quizzes:



Nachos, beer and random questions about sports and the Ukraine.

In Madrid, **Thursday** brings in the weekend, not Friday. So why not add a fun spin on your regular **Thursday night** at the bar with friends and play some **trivia**? Since November of last year, [Beerlingual](#) has been hosting **free trivia nights** at 9pm every Thursday at [La Morena](#), for foreigners and locals alike.

How does it work?

No reservations needed! Show up with your friends by **9pm**, and organizers **Matt** and **Betsey** will be at the door to assign you a **table** (as long as one person from your team holds the table, it's yours). From there just grab a drink, make up a team name, and pick a scribe. You can have groups of **up to 8 people**. If you're more than 8, you might be asked to join another team, which could be fun as you'd meet new people (**Matt** and **Betsey** will help you out).



Before it gets packed for Beerlingual's pub quizzes at La Morena

Matt says that lots of people come in pairs or even solo, so they try to add them to existing groups. Combining people from different countries also turns the event into a **language exchange** as well as a **pub quiz**.

Betsey, an American who's been living in Madrid for five years, is the **quizmaster**. She's on the mic all night asking questions in **Spanish and English**. They provide the paper, but you might want to remember to **bring a pen** (I almost ended up

using eyeliner).

How long does it go for?

There are **four rounds**, and each round takes around a half hour. Organizers Matt and Betsey aim for it to **end by 11pm**, but sometimes it runs a bit longer.

What types of questions are asked?

Questions about everything from **movie titles** to **current events** are included in each round. When I went, in the first round we were given ten photos from different movie scenes. The people in the pictures were cut out, and we were asked to identify the movie without seeing any remnants of skin, hair or eyes (we killed that round!).



trying to spot movie scenes from images in which the bodies have been cut out (image from Beerlingual's Facebook page)

In the next round, however, we didn't fare so well. Each

question in round 2 pertained to two countries that were heavily featured in recent news—**Ukraine and Malaysia**. Hence, questions such as, “Which country to the north of the Ukraine borders both the Ukraine and Russia?” (in case you’re wondering, the answer’s Belarus). And the next round was dedicated to **sports...** yikes.

What’s the prize?

A round of **5 drinks for the winning table!** (winners can choose from La Morena’s extensive cocktail list)



winning team at Beerlingual’s pub quiz (image from Beerlingual’s Facebook page)

What type of people go?

You’ll find people from all over the world, even Spaniards...!

What's the answer to the first question in this article?

False!

Info:

- Beerlingual
 - Beerlingual's Facebook
 - **Where:** Cervecerías Espuma, Calle Arganzuela, 1
 - **Metro:** La Latina & Puerta de Toledo
 - **When:** Every Thursday at 9pm
-

La Paca, the perfect Malasaña café and bar with art exhibits, movie nights and Chema...

As you walk through La Paca's door, you feel like you're in the right place. This **funky café in Malasaña** is always a good choice when you're in the mood for a coffee, a beer, or something stronger.



La Paca's facade on calle Valverde in Malasaña (image from [Facebook](#))

La Paca is divided into two areas: the ground bears a worn-out floor from a different time period, when the place used to be a family's house. **Vintage furniture** from every single corner of Spain fills the room: old sofas, lamps, Galician mirrors, and bird-cages. **La Paca's** owner is an antique collector who travels across Spain in pursuit of treasure troves. You can find his finest pieces either sold at his **vintage store** [La Republicana](#), or displayed at La Paca.



funky furniture at La Paca

One step up and you'll find **Chema**, the star bartender and the man who runs the show. As I say in Spanish, he's "***un terremoto de felicidad***" (an earthquake of happiness). Working alongside Chema is his sister, **Vero**, who's also the perfect host. Feel free to ask them both about the place and their drinks.

La Paca's menu has different types of tea and coffee served with cakes (carrot, cheese or *couland* which is an oozy chocolate muffin-type cake), and *bizcocho* (pound or sponge cake). If you're looking for a drink, they also have a wide collection of **craft beers** (made from Madrid breweries) on tap, **wines** and **cocktails**.

In this quintessential **Malasaña café**, you've also got to try their **tortilla de patatas** (homemade Spanish omelet), it is my favourite!



my favorite tapa at La Paca

Another feature that makes **La Paca** so special is its **events**. On Wednesdays at 9pm, they have **free movie night downstairs**. They prepare the room in a way that reminds me of a **movie night** at a friend's house; sofas and people scattered about with no order whatsoever (plus the popcorn is also free!). I went last Wednesday and saw **Kill Bill I**, and the week before they had shown **Taxi Driver** (in Spanish with no subtitles).



free movie nights on Wednesdays at La Paca in Malasaña (image from [Facebook](#))

On Thursdays, **La Paca** holds **acoustic music performances**, making room for **up and coming Spanish artists**. Although Wednesday movie nights and Thursday concerts are held regularly, La Paca showcases several other events such as theater performances, **independent markets**, English classes, clown shows, and **art exhibitions**. In fact, when it comes to **art exhibits**, they're booked until 2016!



Theater performance at La Paca (image from [Facebook](#))

What I like most about **La Paca**'s events is the way they're set up. Last time I was there, I ended up sharing a few beers with **Chema** and **Vero**, and I asked them how they make money from their events. Their answer was as simple as it was nice: **they just want to help people from the neighborhood**. If you have a **creative project** and you need a place to start, you shouldn't think twice about getting in touch with them.

Shhh..... today is Wednesday night and **the movie** is about to start!

La Paca

[Facebook](#)

Address: c/ Valverde 36

Metro: Gran Vía or Tribunal

Lateral, my go-to restaurant

Whenever my husband and I are in the mood to go out for **a good dinner for a good price**, [Lateral](#) is our spot. It's also proven to be the most successful restaurant when it comes to taking out friends and family visiting us in Madrid, which we do quite often.

Before I go on, I must admit that **Lateral** is a restaurant chain (**a chain!**), with a handful of locations. But it's definitely the good kind that makes you rethink what that means. **Spanish cuisine** can be very heavy, especially if you're not used to it. Somehow, however, **Lateral** has taken what I think are **the best parts of Spanish food** and tweaked them to make them pleasant for absolutely **all tastebuds**. That's why this is my go-to restaurant.

In addition, all their locations have spacious *terrazas* (**outdoor seating areas**) with heaters in the winter and fans in the summer, making it hard to resist at any time of year.



You are looking at the best tosta ever... with grilled pork tenderloin and melted brie

My favorite thing to order here is the **tosta de solomillo con queso brie** (pork tenderloin with melted brie on toast). My husband, James, always orders the same, but with **cebolla caremilzada** (caramelized onions). One time, James had his extended family from California visiting; two teenage girls and their parents with several food preferences to take into consideration. Out of all the restaurants we took them to, **Lateral** was by far their favorite. They especially loved the **gazpacho** because they were given the platter of freshly diced vegetables so they could garnish it themselves. And of course, they too fell in love with the **tostas**.

For something light, you should try the **gazpacho**, **tartar de aguacate con salmon** (fresh avocado topped with salmon, tomato and chives) and the **tosta de salmon con queso brie** (smoked salmon and brie cheese on a slice of toasted bread).



tosta de salmon con brie



tartar de aguacate con salmon

Although the Spanish passion for **croquettes** is not always understood by foreigners, **las croquetas de jamón** are a must here too, as are the **albóndigas** (meatballs). Since I always order them both, last week I decided to venture out a bit and went for the **mini-hamburgers** instead, and wow, that was a good choice. They're served with a reduced **Pedro Ximenez** (sherry) sauce which you can sop up with bread.



mini hamburguesas con reducción de Pedro Ximenez (sherry reduction)

One of our latest and most surprising discoveries was the **tortilla de patata** (Spanish potato and egg omelette). This Spanish staple is so common that it had never occurred to us to order it at **Lateral**. But don't be fooled, please do try their **tortilla de patata** right away. It's really one of the best I've had in Madrid.



the tortilla de patata, a surprisingly delicious Spanish staple: potato and egg omelette

And when it comes to dessert, I recommend the **tiramisu**, the **torrijas** (a very traditional Spanish version of bread pudding; a slice of bread soaked in milk and honey, then fried and topped with whipped cream and ice cream) and you should also try the **apple crumble**. Again, this was a surprise. Never would I have thought that apple crumble could be so good (I've had it many times and it's usually just not my cup of tea. Here, though, it truly was).



Apple and cranberry crumble topped with vanilla ice cream, to die for

To drink, I usually order **tinto de verano** (a great spin on sangría) which is a cold mix of red wine and a sweet Spanish seltzer called **casera**. During the winter, I almost always share a bottle of wine with friends. Last time the waiter recommended the **Finca Vieja Reserva from La Mancha** for 12E, which was very much worth it.

Price range: 10-20E per person

[Web](#)

They have various [locations](#) in Madrid, but the two I go to are:

C/ Fuencarral, 43

Tel: 91 531 68 77

Plaza de Santa Ana, 12

Tel: 91 420 15 82

Adelita Market, sell and buy second-hand treasures

Last weekend I finally got to sell the mountain of clothes that I love but just never wear. Out of the blue, a friend called me up and said I could share a stand with her on Sunday at [Adelita Market](#), a second-hand market that takes place every month in a cultural center in Malasaña, called [Espiritu 23](#) (named after its address), with lots of events and collaborative projects going on all the time.

I had shopped at **Adelita Market** many times, because I have a thing for **second-hand clothes** (it's love, really). After digging through baskets and racks, I've always been able to find great items there, especially one time where I really hit the jackpot—a girl who was a fashion designer was emptying out her wardrobe and she was my size. I paid 20E for a bag full of clothes that I could now not live without.



Anyone can purchase a stand at **Adelita Market**, either for two days (**60E**) or for one day (**35E**), and you're welcome to share the stand with a friend to split the cost. So if you have a bunch of clothes you're looking to pass on, this is the place to do it. It's also one of the best places **to shop for second-hand clothes in Madrid**. Unlike cities such as New York and London, good quality and cheap thrift shops are hard to come by here.



Since I'd always been the one buying and not selling, here's what my first experience on the other side of **Adelita Market** was like:

I arrived on Sunday at 10am with three suitcases, and two huge bags overflowing with stuff. I set up the stand in the basement with my friend, Sol, who also had loads to offer. She brought the clothing racks, hangers and baskets (the center doesn't provide you with anything but the space). She also bought a folding screen so that people could try on clothes behind it.



As soon as the market opened to the public at 11am, it was non-stop **selling** and **bargaining** all day long. It was actually really fun and exciting, and even nerve-racking. We had no idea if we were going to sell anything or not. Not to mention, price-wise, it's not so easy to know what people will pay for **used clothing items**.

Fortunately, our stand was really successful, partly because of our portable dressing room, and partly because we engaged with every person we caught peering through our items. We held up our best dresses and leather boots, showed them off, and told people they looked great in them. It worked!

We didn't get out of there until 9pm. Good thing for the stand selling quiche and coffee. And I must say, it felt like I had only been there an hour. The time just flew.



Whether or not you want to get a stand, or just browse through **second-hand goods**, Adelita Market is great. Some of the vendors are rookies, like me, and some have been doing this for years and have racked up great collections. You're bound to find something amidst the labyrinth of stands, and even if you don't, you'll be in Malasaña so you can grab a beer right afterwards.

In the photo below, the lady standing on the left is wearing the **Swedish Hasbeens boots** that I sold her for 10E!



Check out their [Facebook page](#) where they announce the dates.

Adelita Market:

Hours: **12am-9pm**

When: **one weekend per month (usually both Sat and Sun, but it's best to check out their Facebook page for specific times and dates)**

Address: **c/ Espiritu Santo, 23**

Metro: **Noviciado/Tribunal**

*They've also started to hold Adelita Market in Majadahonda. See dates on FB page.

Mercado de Motores, Madrid's coolest market

Toot toot! Old trains mixed with vintage clothes and hot dogs.

Once a month, [El Mercado de Motores](#) (meaning the Engine Market) takes over an old train museum in downtown Madrid for a **unique flea market experience**. Independent collectors and designers set up vintage stands right alongside Madrid's old trains, creating a mix of 20th century charm with cluttered treasure madness.

As you walk along the platform, amidst the stands you'll find handmade leather shoes, vintage jewellery, funky upholstered arm chairs, quirky lamp shades, and much more. The market started out as a community-led effort to popularize second-hand goods. Now it sells everything from current designer items, chic furniture, rare art and even retro pieces, plus it also offers tons of **outstanding food, a happening outdoor space, and free live music**.





One of the other highlights of the market is its **outdoor ambience**. On a sunny day, it's such a nice place to eat outside with friends and family. Sample from all types of food stalls, some selling regional Spanish dishes such as **paella** and **fabada** (Asturian white bean stew), others selling **sandwiches**, **hamburgers** and **hot dogs**, and find a place to sit.

Here's when you should start to linger and enjoy the ambience, listening to live music as it spontaneously comes on.





My friends always get the **hamburgers** or **hot dogs**, as is tradition at an outdoor market. But I love the ***bocadillos de jamón serrano*** with a glass of **red wine** in a plastic cup. That's my favorite outdoor treat.





After eating through fideau (a traditional noodle dish from Valencia) and finishing your beer or **Asturian cider**, feel free to move on to the **cocktails**. Don't hold back.

And grab a gelato on your way out, or hop on a new bike!



Mercado de Motores gets packed to the brim, as it caters to whole families and hipsters alike. So I highly recommend going on *off* hours, such as 11am or right after lunch, around 4pm. Or just be prepared for a huge crowd.

Mercado de Motores:

Where: Paseo de las delicias, 61

Metro: Delicias

When: one weekend (Sat & Sun) per month, check out their [Facebook](#) page

Hours: 11:00-22:00