

Beer State of Mind in Madrid

A bucket of Heineken for 5€, a pint of Mahou for 1,50€ and a can of whatever offered for 1€ by the smiling street vendor. Cheap is easy, cheap is good. **Madrid** is littered with examples of how to drink to your heart's content for under a tenner. Taste, well it all tastes the same, doesn't it? The beer sold in more than 95% of bars in this city does taste similar. The name changes but it doesn't matter. The aftertaste vanishes as quickly as the first round of drinks.

Price is king and we all know it. Signs of the large distributors are all around us in the areas of **Malasaña** and **Chueca**. What furthers this dominance is their implied demand that a very high percentage of a bar's income has to be made through their products, unless the owner wants to see a rise in price per litre. This restricts to a large extent the amount of freedom given to owners under contract with the big beer companies.

Luckily, more and more bars are coming to life in this area that are looking to rediscover flavour and verve. So don't just impress your taste buds but dive into a different and less corporate world with the below bars. *Salud*.

1) [La Bodega de la Ardosa](#) in Calle Colon 13



This precious place was one of the very **first Irish pubs in Madrid**, opened in 1892. At the bar, you're likely to meet Antonio or Victor, both friendly faces who've been at La Bodega for years. It feels like an Irish pub when you enter, yet with the unmistakable smell of tortilla in the air. This pub only serves alcoholic beers from the tap and currently serves 4 in total. It's one of the very first pubs in Spain to import **Czech beer**, with its main beer being **Pilsener Urquell** from the city of Pilsener in Czech Republic, the birthplace of pilsner beer.

Another option is **König Ludwig**, a **Bavarian wheat beer** which is excellent for the summer time as the yeast gives it a fruity beer flavour. It won the **World Beer Award** for best wheat beer in 2008. Usually available from the bottle in Madrid, La

Bodega offers this fine brew straight from the keg.



Also on offer is **PUNK IPA** from Brew Dog. **Indian pale ale (IPA)** that packs an even fruitier punch but never becomes sweet and retains its bitter finish. The last beer on offer is **Guinness**. When you enter the pub you have to turn around and face the entrance. Above the door, you'll find a **Guinness** leader board. At the top you'll find a Sebastian from Germany who drank 14 pints in under 4 hours. You would receive free pints once you had surpassed the previous top score. The competition was stopped in 1990 due to health and safety regulations.

If the front bar is too crowded, he or another waiter will offer you to climb under the bar through to the other side, which tends to be more quiet and intimate. Also, it handily places you closer to the toilets, which are at the back of the bar.

La Bodega is also renowned for having some of the best **Vermouth in Madrid**, an option for all the non-beer lovers. If you become a little peckish (hungry), order the **tortilla** or **salmorejo** which are both incredibly good. Each beer is offered

in either pints or half pints, akin to England, and will cost you between 3.50€ to 5.50€.

Metro: Chueca / Tribunal

2) [Las Fabricas Maravillas](#) in Calle Valverde 29



An American from Chicago and a Frenchman from Bretagne created this bar. Living in Madrid, these longtime friends were frustrated that the only decent bar they knew offering **craft beer** was la Cervercería Oldenburg. So approximately one and a half years ago they opened Fabricas Maravillas. Each has a master in beer brewing and all the beer is produced in the same bar you enter. You can see the fermentation tanks through the glass behind the bar.

You can choose from several varieties, some named after different areas in Madrid such as **Malasaña and Valverde**. They brew ales, stouts and pilsners. If you're unsure of your selection, just ask to have a try of the beer you fancy. The

staff speaks and understands **English**.

The bar doesn't serve food, only a few crisps (chips for those in America) and olives. It isn't a big bar and if you want to sit you'll have to go early or stand up on weekends because of the amount of people that enter. The bar enjoys a healthy mix of Spanish and **expats**.

If you find it too crowded, you can also find Fabricas' beer at [Bar Martinez](#) (Calle Barco 4), a 3 minute walk away, which is less known and much more likely to have a seat.

Metro: Tribunal

3) **EL ANIMAL** in Calle Hartzenbusch 9



With 12 different beers on tap and many more in bottles in the fridges, this bar offers a **multitude of different beers** with flavour. Tivo, one of the owners of **ANIMAL**, changes the beers on tap when the keg is empty, replacing it with another of the many craft beers he has in storage. He tastes all the beers

himself before serving them to his customers, ensuring their quality is up to his standards. If you can't get enough of discovering new craft beers, this is an ideal place to visit. ANIMAL tends to offer more **Danish, English and Irish beers**, in particular offering a wide selection of ales.



In September, ANIMAL will turn 2 years old. The bar is situated on the same street as the same La Cervercería Oldenburg that the two creators of Fabricas Maravillas used to frequent. **Tivo speaks English** and encourages it with his “we speak English” sticker on the front glass door.



He'll serve you a small portion of food with each beer you order. Tivo knows his beers and can explain to you in detail each taste profile and how the production affected this.

Not a large bar, **ANIMAL** has several tables for you to sit down and eat. It doesn't have a typical pub atmosphere due to the variety of food on offer and seating area. The food is supposed to be excellent and the smell alone made me hungry.

[Facebook](#)

Metro: Bilbao / Quevedo

4) [La Tape](#) in Calle San Bernardo 88



A craft beer bar which feels more like a restaurant than any other bar on this list. This bar offers **7 different craft beers on tap** and the best thing to do if you are entertaining visiting friends is to try the **beer tasting**. You're offered to try 4 different beers on tap for 10€. They change the beers on

a weekly basis except for the first or second. The first is La Virgen, a Spanish craft beer that is very light. The second is a German wheat beer that is both fruity and a bit bitter.

The true treasure, however, is their **huge selection of bottled beer**. They have a menu solely dedicated to beers from across the world. Be sure to look at the very back of the menu where the temporary bottled beers are displayed. They're off the menu as soon as the last one is sold.

Two Madrileños created La Tape a little over a year ago. Having travelled across several countries and continents, they both noticed the lack of different beers on offer, and continue to travel in search of new beers to stock in their bar.

My friends have told me the food is excellent. A restaurant is situated above the bar, serving mainly Spanish dishes and offering a large selection of desserts. A pint of beer will cost between 4-6€.

[Website](#)

Metro: San Bernardo

**5) [REVOLTOSA](#) on Plaza del Rey 4
(bar under contract with one of the
big guys)**



As summer time is approaching fast and we want to enjoy the sun, I mention this place as an alternative. This bar has a large terrace area outside with tables and umbrellas. They offer **Konig Ludwig** and **Grimbergen** (a Belgian beer) in bottles. It is a good place to try the more popular Spanish craft beers. Their **5 Spanish craft beers** on offer are **Cibeles**, **Aoora**, **La Virgen**, **Sagra Premium** and **Burron de Sancho Rojo**. Going early to **REVOLTOSA** has its advantages, as all beers will be 50 cents cheaper during the day. The night prices start from 21.00 onwards.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Metro: Banco de España / Chueca

Also check out [Round 2, A Heightened Beer State of Mind in](#)

Madrid!

And...

- [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international beer shop in Chueca offering a huge selection of beers, tastings and workshops
- [Cervezas La Virgen](#), a microbrewery in the outskirts of Madrid offering tours, tastings and hot-dogs & sandwiches