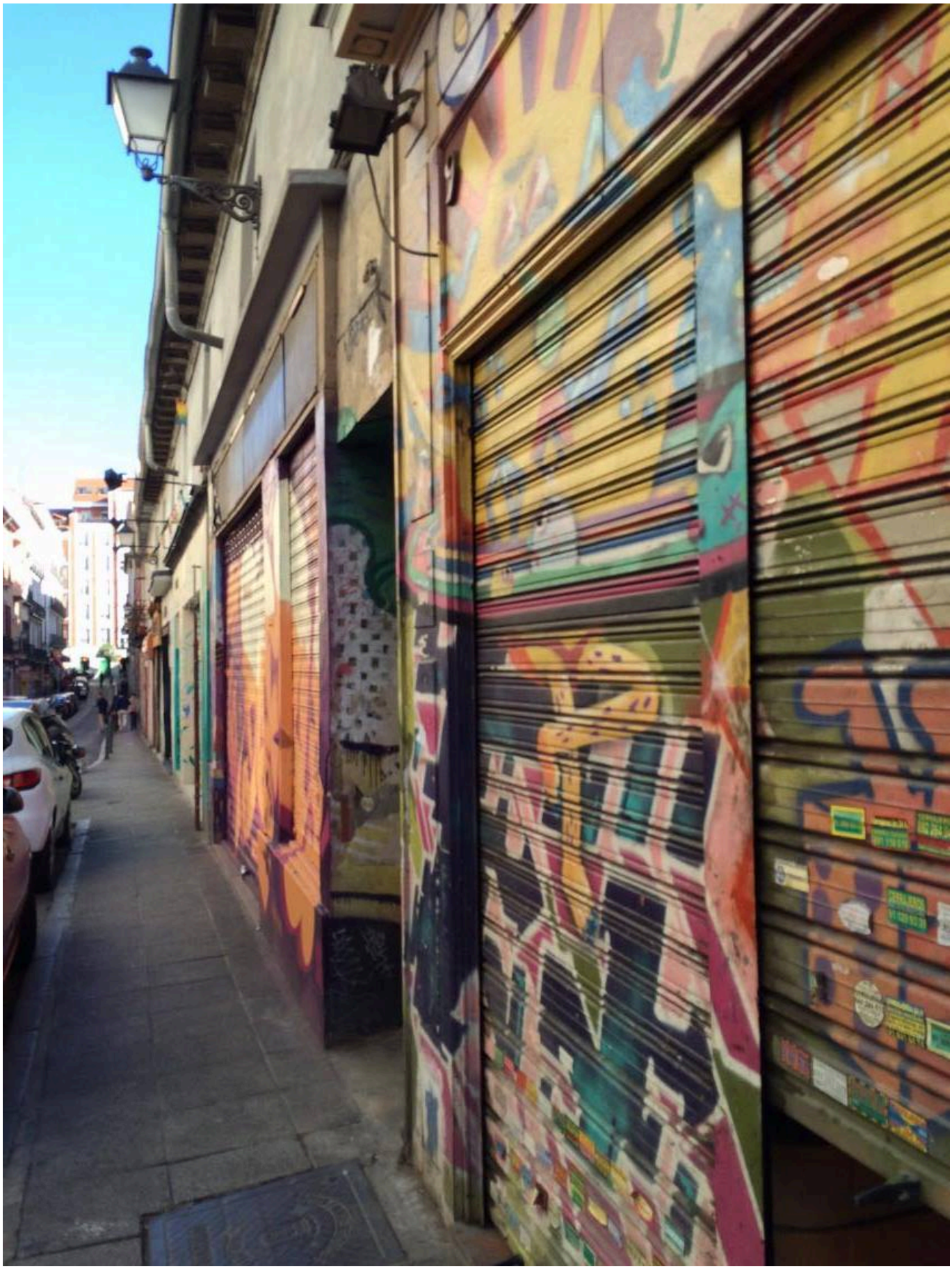
A Mini Guide: how to make the most of rainy Madrid

When the sun shines on the big city… Madrid is spectacular, especially in the sun. The authentic Spanish architecture on every building looks picturesque against a backdrop of blue skies, and even the areas coated in graffiti look artistic and vibrant in a summery light. You can walk pretty much anywhere; take a stroll in El Parque Retiro; sip sangría in Plaza Mayor; visit a rooftop in almost any barrio.



But with some Autumnal showers it can be difficult to experience Madrid to the full, so here are a few ideas to keep

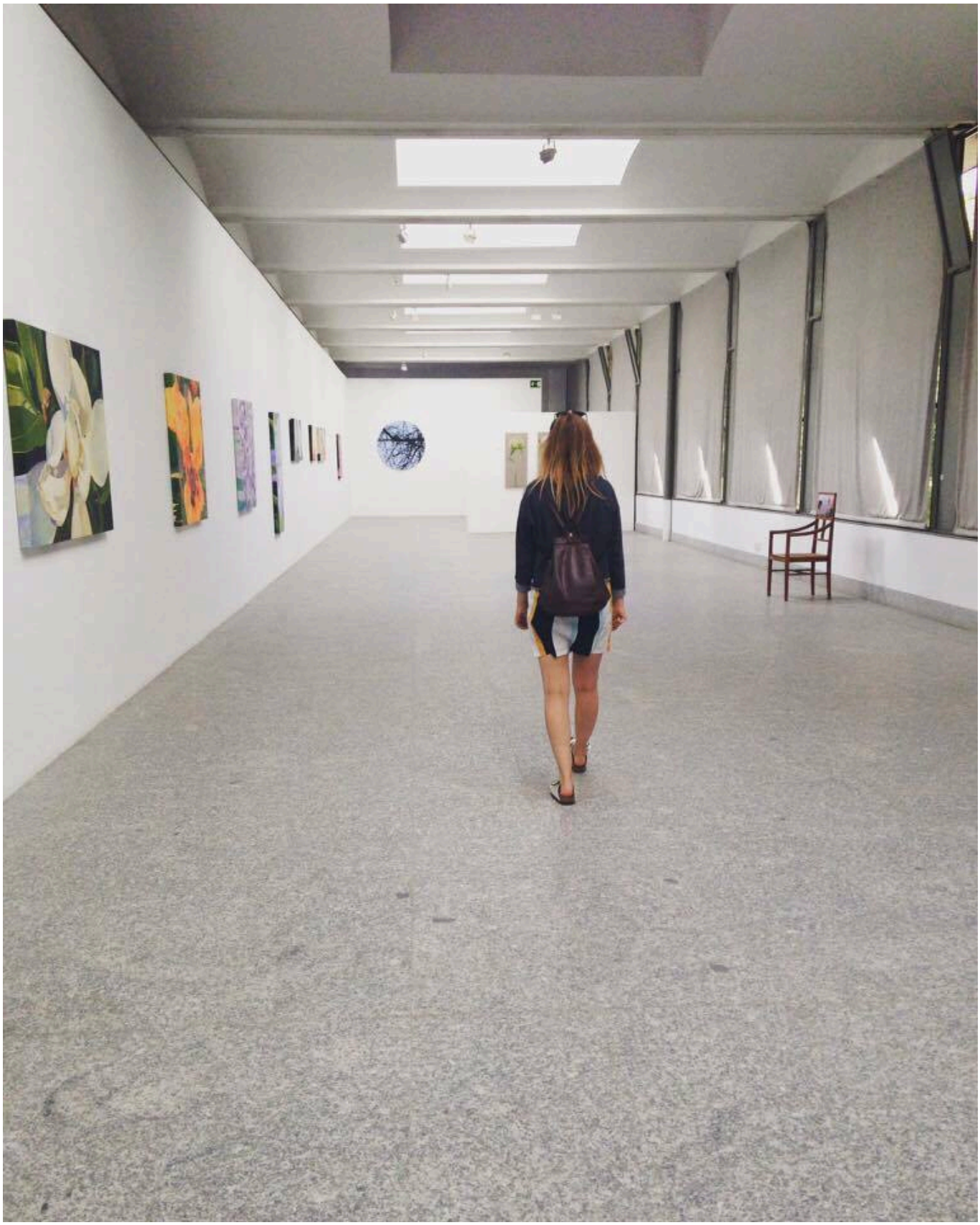
you busy come rain or shine…

Get even more culture in you

It goes without saying that rainy days are perfect museum days. Stay warm and dry inside beautiful exhibition rooms, and feel like you have really experienced at least a snippet of the art and culture that Madrid has to offer, even on a miserable day.

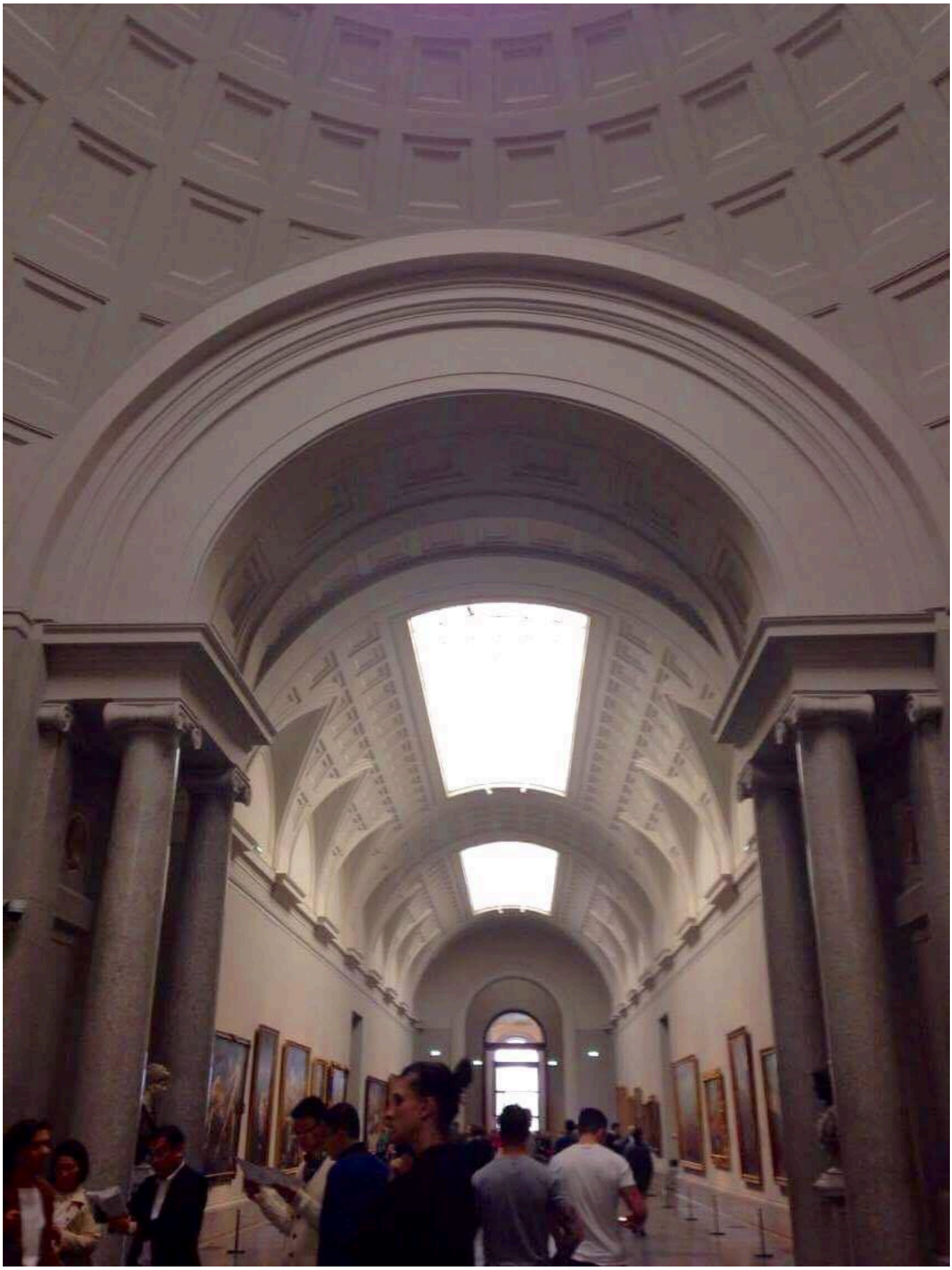
This can also be a free way to enjoy Madrid! Just as though you were wandering through tourist sites in the sun, like the grounds of Palacio Real or within Plaza Mayor, many art exhibitions in Madrid are free to the public.

To get started with art in Madrid, a true tourist or cultured expat must visit the **city's main art museums**. **El Museo del Prado** houses Spain's finest works ever produced, and is free from 6 to 8pm every day. **La Reina Sofia** boasts the breath-taking Guernica (*Pablo Picasso*) and four floors of thought-provoking artwork; it is free on Sunday mornings and afternoons. To get even more authentic, **El Museo Taurino** is Spain's bullfighting history museum, and is free to the public every day of the week.



For **less well-known exhibitions**, keep checking websites to find the best ones, as lots are exhibited for limited time periods. Photography exhibitions seem to populate the Embajadores area: **La Tabacalera** is home to many temporary

shows for renowned Spanish photographers and artists.



When you think of Spanish culture, you think of Flamenco. A quintessentially Spanish dance art that is both vibrant and dynamic. **La Villa Rosa Flamenco** is the oldest flamenco bar in the *world*. It opened in 1911, and has since promoted the Flamenco art with regular shows. Enjoy a class of vino in this relaxed, lively atmosphere.

PRIMERAS FOTOS
1977-1982

Fooooooooood: cake, churros and tapas with a twist

When it's rainy, chilly, or just a bleak day, we often entertain ourselves with food. I mean, eating is great at any time, but there seems to be something about a miserable day that makes you feel peckish for a tasty gastronomic experience. Luckily, any street in the centre of Madrid is largely populated by tapas bars and restaurants. But these can too often feel very same-same.

When it comes to eating tapas and savouring every single taste because you have never tasted anything quite like it before, think: **LA MUSA**. It's what foodie dreams are made of. Forget your standard croquette, and think *Croqueta 2.0*. Forget your standard patatas bravas, and think of *La Patata Bomba* filled with meat and served on bread crumbs and a magical pea puree. If you are lucky enough to go to **La Musa** you will enjoy the fusion of Asian and Spanish cuisines in one, revolutionary tapas menu. Find La Musa in both La Latina and Malasaña.

As well as typical Spanish bars, Madrid boasts a plethora of cool artisan cafes to choose from. Cosy up on a Central Perk

style sofa with a caramel macchiato and a slice of red velvet cake. There is always a buzz running through such places, whether that be from the coffee grinder or the many chatty customers: they really seem to be a hub for expats and travellers sheltering themselves from the drizzle. Some personal favourites in Malasaña include:

La Bicicleta: an industrial-chic, modern and artistic café with homemade cake and great coffee. It has a work station for those with laptops, and slowly transforms throughout the day from a bustling café to lively and casual bar by night. Here, I would recommend their **Chai Vanilla Latte** (not many places do it Madrid!) and a slice of **fluffy carrot cake**. Be careful not to head there in peak hours (2-5pm) as you will struggle for a table.

HanSo Café: a hidden gem. By hidden I mean there is literally no sign on its exterior. Inside it is pretty minimal too, with

concrete walls, floor and bar area. The grey tones are contrasted with the warm low-hanging lighting, and the soft sound of music and subtle smell of sourdough toast adds some atmosphere.

Fresh cakes are constantly brought out by HanSo's friendly owners, with some *postres* looking colourful and fruity with an Asian twist. There is a large central table for social hipsters and a few window seats for more private coffee dates. They have a never-ending list of frappes – so you will be spoilt for choice.

When you think of Madrid in cold or rainy weather, you will warmly dream of **chocolate con churros.** In fact, you can kill two birds with one stone. You get your daily dose of 'culture' by trying typical Spanish delicacies, whilst also satisfying your chocolate cravings…

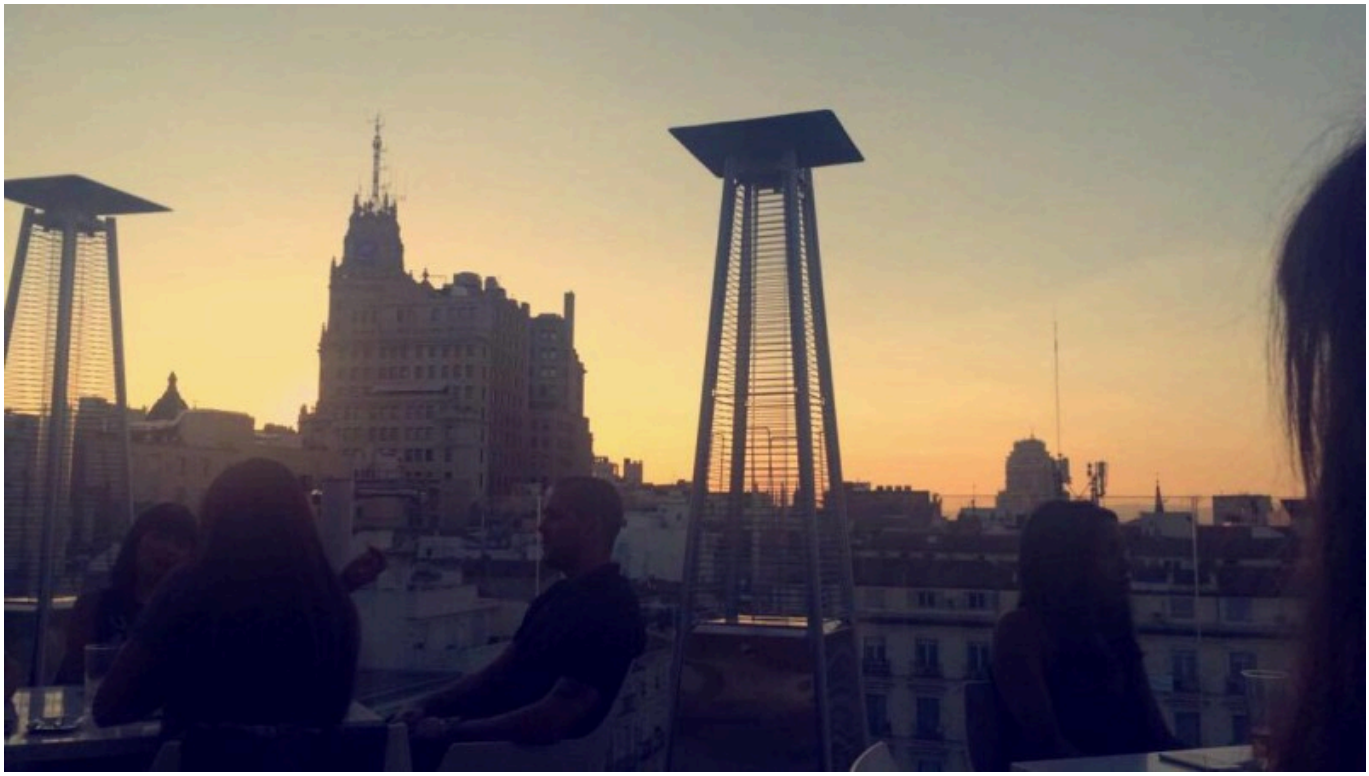
Artesanos 1902: ‘La mejor churreria’ – this churros joint stands wide and proud on Calle San Martín (between Sol and

Opera), complete with twinkly fairy lights that make it all the more inviting. What better way to spend your day eating churros than in a place that has made them their speciality for over 100 years?

They serve their rich chocolate accompaniment in either dark of milk flavours, and also have waffle and crêpe options just in case their mouth-watering churros don't tickle your fancy.

Still up high: panoramic views without getting soaked

One of Madrid's main attractions is the ability to take in the majestic skyline at sunset from one of its **many rooftop terraces**. In the rain however, this is still possible! Just find somewhere *indoors* that is still high up with panoramic views of the city.



To many, **El Corte Ingles** is just a large department store with everything you may want from furniture to fashion. But it can also be on your list of 'things to see and do' in Madrid. The

9th floor in Sol is a foodie hub, with many street food stands and joints offering all types of world cuisines.

Called **Gourmet Experience**, El Corte Ingles' 9th floor has cafes and restaurants with window tables that provide customers with an almost birds-eye view of the city. It provides a warm and dry haven to enjoy while feeling on top of the world.

Mercado San Anton, Chueca: here you will find 4 floors of foodie market heaven, topped with a rooftop restaurant and bar. Fear not, 70% of this floor is covered to keep you dry from the rain, and you still feel as though you are high up in the city air with the ability to take in the views.

Faro de Moncloa: a viewpoint standing tall in the heart of Madrid's university district, Moncloa. Visitors have access to two panoramic lifts that will take them up to the 92-metres-high, glass viewing room. Although yes, a view so high of Madrid would probably look better on a sunnier day, it's still a tourist activity that grants a breathtaking view sheltered from rain or wind.

By night: secret gardens and sandy beaches

A problem with rain is that you can't access a sandy beach or an enchanted forest without getting soaked. That's where Madrid's bohemian and artistic student area, Malasaña comes in handy.

El Jardín Secreto: a bar disguised by indoor plants, trees, fairy-lights, unicorn heads, bird cages and swinging princess-style chairs. For a simple cocktail with friends, you can enter this enchanted world *and* keep dry from the rain. It's most definitely Instagram worthy: you won't be able to keep your eyes from gazing around the room at all the Midsummer-Night's-Dream-style décor.

Ojalá: a tastefully decorated cocktail bar and eatery upstairs, and a sandy beach downstairs. I don't know who came up with the idea to create an indoor beach bar, but it's genius. Relax on their floor level seating whilst running your hand through the sand and enjoying a nice copa, cocktail or milkshake. Who says Madrid doesn't have any beaches?!

So here you have it: just my personal selection of the endless activities available in this amazing city, during rainier weather. Other indoor pursuits include Madrid's many cinemas

and theatres, but the list could go on forever.

It is often way too easy to opt for a day in bed watching Netflix when the weather gets miserable, but that’s no fun is it? You may be able to take advantage of Madrid’s frequently fine weather and stunning outdoor spaces most of the time, but rainy Madrid weather brings with it the chance to discover quirky bars and cafes, taste amazing food and appreciate Spanish art in all its glory. Enjoy!

By Rosie Dowsing

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