

Lockdown diaries: Monica, meeting her neighbors from her balcony in Lavapiés

Monica is a Madrileña who lives in Lavapiés. She's enjoying meeting all the neighbors as they're greeting each other from their balconies and windows. And she hopes that once this is all over, they'll say hi to each other on the street, too.

Monica Rojo specializes in the worlds of fashion, digital marketing and social media. She's also a personal shopper, stylist and dance enthusiast.

What was your life like a week ago vs. today?

Exactly a week ago I was celebrating my birthday, so I had asked for the afternoon off. While I was out for dinner and having some wine with my boyfriend, we heard the schools were going to be closed and it was advised that we should all "work remotely." It had been coming for some time, as we had seen the examples of China and Italy. That's why the lockdown didn't catch me by surprise.

Right now I'm taking advantage of this time to rest, take care of myself and do new things. In three or four days I'll probably be pulling my hair out, but I've decided to look on the bright side.

What does the street look like?

Although I live in the heart of Lavapiés, my street is quite quiet and doesn't have a lot of traffic, so in that sense I haven't noticed a big difference. It's been nice to get to know most of my neighbors since, especially on days when the weather's nice, we're all out on our balconies and terraces, taking in a bit of fresh air, and we end up talking to each other. I hope that after this is all over, we'll greet each other when we see each other on the street, too.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

The applause dedicated to the healthcare professionals and other workers is really moving. I admit that some days I've started to tear up. Also, it's wonderful that so many free online activities are appearing: concerts, museums, theaters, dance, classes, etc.... There's so much that you barely have enough time to enjoy it all!

How are you coping?

I'm taking advantage of this time to cross many things off my to-do list and take time for myself. I'm a very social person, so right now I'm trying to do the things I had been putting on the back burner and come out stronger from this situation in the end.

I'm spending a lot of time on my terrace and exercise at home every day. I also have the company of my partner who is very supportive. The other day we had a meet-up with all our friends on Skype, so we could share our experiences over a beer. It was delightful, even if it's through a screen.

I also call my brother and my mother every day to see how they are. And I think I'll continue doing that, even once this all is over. But first I'll go and give them a huge hug.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

I'm already imagining the scene... The first thing I'll do, in this order, is: take a long walk, go back to dance class and dance like there's no tomorrow, then meet up with friends. We'll all give each other hugs and kisses like crazy, and then we'll have a few beers and glasses of wine which we all love so much... If it's sunny out, even better.

As soon as I can, I'll leave Madrid to see my mother (in Ávila) and my brother to tell them all that I love them. And depending on the economy and if we can afford it (because we don't know how we'll recover from this), I'll travel with my partner as much as possible. I may even get stressed trying to make up for lost time!

If you could tell the government one

thing right now, what would it be?

I think they've taken too long to adopt measures. And I'm very angry seeing how certain sectors or companies force their employees to go to work when they aren't dealing with essential services. I have many friends who are forced to work in person when it isn't necessary and they have no choice but to take public transport. On many occasions, they have to work with their colleagues hand in hand, creating very dangerous points of exposure for themselves and for the rest of society. They should put stricter measures in place to avoid this. It's absurd that half of the population is isolated at home, and then they allow things like this to happen which prevent the situation from being controlled.

[Monica's website](#)

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