

Lockdown diaries: Kristen, using this time for self-development and having proper phone calls with loved ones

Welcome to episode three of our series of stories from Madrid residents going through the current lockdown in Spain. Here we'll hear from Kristen Wiltshire, an English teacher and art enthusiast from Trinidad and Tobago who has been living in Madrid for 4-and-a-half years.

Kristen also runs the [Madrid Art and Culture](#) Facebook group where she shares tons of news related to the city's art scene. In light of the lockdown, she's recently been sharing several online resources to help keep us entertained these days, from free virtual tours of the world's beautiful museums to classes at prestigious universities. So check it out.

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

Well Mondays are my long days at school. My first class starts at 9am but I work in a suburb so I wake up pretty early to get the direct bus at 7am to my school and then I'm going non-stop once school starts until 5pm. Last week I was a bit worried about catching the virus so I tried to sit away from other people and I washed my hands after each class if possible and used lots of hand sanitizer. I knew there was a chance they might close schools, as I had been monitoring the updates on

the virus and I saw the numbers ticking upwards. But I didn't think there would be anything like a full shutdown.

Compare that to today, I'm home, of course and have been since Thursday last week. I had to go into work last Wednesday and even then wasn't taking this all that seriously – I even went to a movie on Wednesday afternoon (fortunately there were only two other people in the theatre) – but as the measures started getting rolled out, it became quite obvious just how real this was getting, not only for me but also on a global scale. I went out on Saturday to pick up groceries and stop off at the pharmacy but other than that, I haven't left my house. It feels a bit like when you're off sick because I'm waking up late on a Monday with no alarm except that it's eerily quiet in my neighbourhood. Even in my apartment as my roommate is a little under the weather.

What does the street look like?

I popped my head out of my living room window just now and it was very quiet. No one on any balconies or in the windows, unlike yesterday when the weather was better and there were a lot more people out. I saw about 4 people on the street, either going for groceries or walking a dog. They all gave each other a wide berth. I did see quite a few cars passing by though on the main road.

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

Well I was really heartened by the applause for the health

workers, pharmacists and shopkeepers that's been happening every night. And yesterday afternoon there were people playing music on their balconies and other people sitting out or leaning out their windows and enjoying it. It was the first time I've ever seen some of these people. In a way, it feels like this quarantine is forcing us to connect with our neighbours more which is a nice side effect.

How are you coping?

I'm an introvert so having to stay indoors isn't really difficult for me. I have a ton of books and podcasts and the like and I'm trying to think of this as a time to do all the things I always say I don't have enough time for. Almost as though we're frozen in time. I'm exercising more too which is good.

My tip would be to take this time to start on any projects you've been meaning to or to work on your Spanish or start an online course. Use this time for self development or to reach out to your friends and family and have a proper chat on the phone or by Skype. And if you're worried about your loved ones who are elderly or immunocompromised, try to talk to them as much as you can. I've been trying to talk to my grandmother every day and I pray for her and all the more vulnerable people out there every morning. There isn't much more I can do to protect them but that gives me some peace.

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

Once the shut down is over, I'm probably going to go for a long walk in the sun. It will be nice to breathe some fresh air and stretch my legs.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

For the government I would say, please don't forget the homeless. They are especially vulnerable as they have less access to the types of facilities that most of us do.

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please send an email to daphne@veracontent.com