

Nest Boutique: A local gift shop that's far from an empty nest

Like most people who live abroad, there's a multitude of things that I miss from home. Marmite, check. Being the happy recipient of a Colin the Caterpillar cake on my birthday, double check. Perhaps most surprisingly of all, I still pine for greetings cards. Back when I lived in London, I could spend hours (and inevitably a small fortune) in both Paperchase or Oliver Bonas. I'd gladly while away hours mooching through the aisles to find the perfect card for any occasion.

What came next was a move to Madrid; land of cheap wine, but sadly, no greetings cards. Save for some sad excuse of a birthday card in VIPs and El Corte Inglés, I felt almost tempted to make my own. You see, for me, the cards that you send are just as important, if not more so than the gift. You get to pen a heartfelt message, and show the recipient how much you care.





So with this in mind, [Nest](#), the brainchild of Nadine Walker, was born some 13 years ago. Fed up and frustrated by not being able to find both cards and gift wrap, she decided to take matters into her own hands – and Nest, the shop, was born.

Having started her professional life in Madrid working as a personal assistant in recruitment, Nadine starting to float the idea of opening up her own store after growing tired of apologising for the somewhat lame cards that she was forced to send on special occasions. Having had tentative conversations with suppliers, fate played a hand in finding the perfect location for where Nest can be found.





The store enjoys pride of place on “Plaza San Ildefonso” – one of the most popular and picturesque squares in the thriving barrio of Malasaña. Nadine recalled shopping regularly at the clothes shop that was once next door, and as she got along with the girls who worked there, a good word was put in – and the rest they say, is history.

Nest is, and was, an original concept store in a city that is now awash. The idea of having a one-stop shop where you could buy cards, gifts, trinkets and more was completely novel back in May 2008, and its uniqueness played a huge part in its success. Coupled with the prime location, the fact that there was nothing else quite like it, enabled business to boom, and for the shop to become synonymous with good taste when you were looking to buy a quirky, yet affordable gift.





Having spoken to Nadine at length, times haven't always been plain sailing. With any small business comes inevitable challenges and those more "unprecedented" ones too – such as a nine-week lockdown. COVID obviously put the brakes on Nadine's ability to keep the store open, but it did provide what Nadine referred to as "a much needed time to reset and reflect."

Being given the gift of time, Nadine leaned in and nurtured her creative side, and began illustrating postcards and cards which can now be found on sale in the shop. A fact that I imagine conjures up great feelings of pride.



Hola
Peque

I LOVE YOU...



I KNOW

STAYIN' ALIVE!



HAPPY BIRTHDAY



As someone who is anchored by the routine that comes with being a teacher, I asked Nadine what was her favourite thing about running her own business – the answer was immediate. “I love being my own boss” was the response, without missing a beat.

As independent gift stores continue to pop up throughout the city, there is something to be said for being the OG. When guests visit, we always drop by Nest, safe in the knowledge that there’s always something that you will make you reach for your purse. Far from just being the top spot for cards, there’s candles, wall prints and jewellery all vying for your attention. A fact that even a global pandemic seems unlikely to change, as we continue to view our homes as our sanctuaries.



As the seasons change and those darker nights draw in, there's never been a better time to "Nest." If the last 18 months have taught me anything it's that Amazon doesn't need anymore of your custom, and the power of a good gift can never be underestimated. So for me, I will always support small, and support local.

These wonderful words are by [Cat Powell](#) ([@littlemissmadrid](#))

And these beautiful photos are by [Brett Hastie](#) ([@b.hastie](#))

Nest Boutique

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