Celebrating International Women's Day with Leah Pattem, the inspiring woman behind Madrid No Frills

> *All throughout the world I'm always seeking out the no-frills places. In the UK I'm always in the filthy pubs. Even in India, you'll find me in bars lit by one fluorescent light, where I'm the only woman. I love these really divey 'salt of the earth' kind of places. Pure, raw… no-frills.*

Today, in celebration of International Women's Day, I'd like to introduce you to Leah Pattem (UK), the creator of the truly extraordinary blog **Madrid No Frills**. Through her powerful stories and photos, Leah passionately documents the city's old-fashioned bars and traditional businesses, many of which are on the brink of extinction. She is one of the city's most inspiring independent female journalists, and is making her voice heard to support a sector that is often overlooked in the mainstream media.



Leah also explores Madrid's lesser-known neighborhoods and forgotten legends, revealing a side of the city that most residents rarely see: from **dark messages hidden in the city's street art** to **Spain's last toy hospital**. And her efforts are making an impact in the lives of many, including local shopkeepers, migrants and artists.

Madrid No Frills really took off last November, when Leah published a photo series of ***100 No-Frills Bars.*** The series went viral and was also featured in top publications like **El País** and **Cónde Nast Traveler**. Her website now receives

25,000 visitors per month. But despite all the acclaim she's earned, Leah has no plans to change the core purpose of her blog. This is her personal hobby – her incredible gift to the city.



> *That bar in the cover photo is the most famous bar in Spain right now. The day I published the photo series, I literally had to increase the website's capacity overnight. It's been shared by millions of people around the world, in Lithuania, Mexico, America… That's just amazing.*

I actually first met Leah just before she started Madrid No Frills (MNF). She got in touch with Naked Madrid to write a piece about **an olive grove tour** run by her friends in the

outskirts of Madrid. Three years have passed since she embarked on her own mission – and now, it's my turn to write about her inspiring work. We met up for a coffee in Plaza Cascorro, and here's what went down:

How did it all start?

In a no-frills bar, just thinking: all of these cool, new chic bars get huge shout-outs all the time, with hordes of people coming to visit while, at the same time, these little bars – often tired, physically and emotionally – don't even have a location on Google Maps.

Nobody would ever write about these places but, to me, with an 'outsider's' perspective, they're the most special – they're unique to Madrid. One doesn't move a thousand miles to have the same thing you can get back at home, so I thought, these places need to be celebrated, or else they're going to close.



The death of the Spanish bar and the invasion of the square plate



Bar Lozano: one of Malasaña's last no-frills bars (closed 2018)

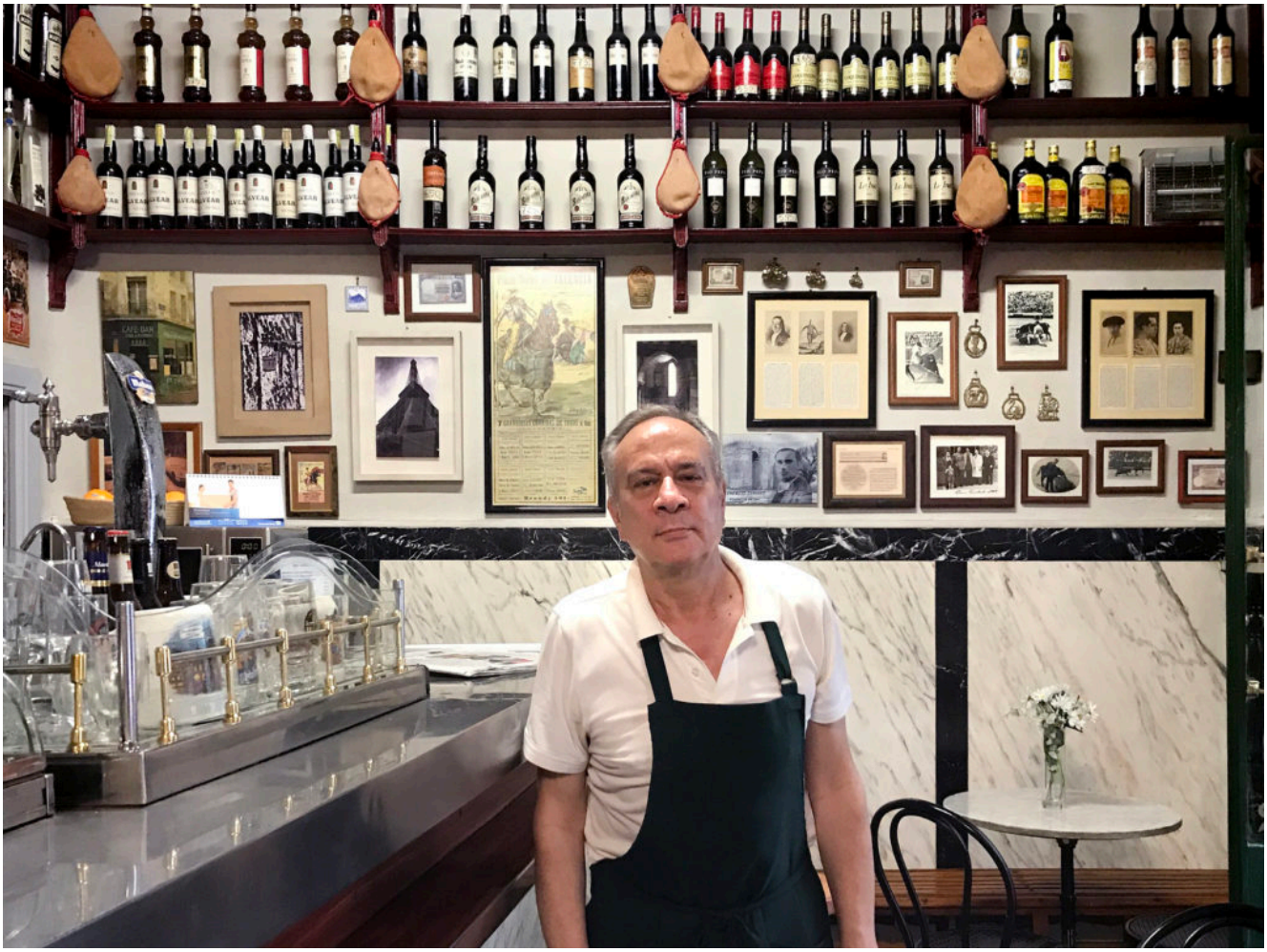


Botón de Oro, a centenarian haberdashery featured in: **An archive of places Madrid has lost**

Why do you do it?

I just want to raise awareness of the Madrid that very few know about. It may sound naive, but I got into journalism because I want to change the world. I've recently become a professional journalist and my blog is a part of that. But, you've got to be so sensitive about the information you receive and the way in which you share it, such as people's specific details and photographs of them.

I love to share my personal angle on things but don't want to cause controversy in doing so, but at the same time, I need to be bold and stand up for what I believe in. This combination is tricky, but it can be powerful.



[71 enchanting years of Bodegas Jiménez]

How did you get into photography?

Photography has always been a hobby. I've always loved taking photos, even in single digits. I used to process my own photos. Several years back, I dabbled in professional photography for a year and a half in Newcastle, mainly working with startups. Well, that was big mistake. I felt like I was selling my soul and was so traumatized that I didn't pick up my camera for three years. Once I picked it back up, Madrid No Frills started. That's a lesson I learned: don't sell your hobby. You've got to keep something for yourself.



Leah Pattem, the inspiring creator behind Madrid No Frills

You realize you've become an influencer, right?

I actually have influenced! Bar Cruz just over there [she points out the window] has been seen by millions of people on their screens and another 99 bars from **my 100 Bars** project have been seen by millions of people around the world. That's just insane.



Bar Cruz, featured on [100 of Madrid's No-Frills Bars photo series]

Is Madrid No Frills still a one-woman mission?

Yes, mostly. I also have a growing team of writers who are helping me try to save these authentic, time-warp kind of places. These no-frills bars. And it seems to be working! And that's what crazy. It seems to be *actually* working.

What are some of the other articles that have made a big impact?

The one about the Senegalese tailor, he had a really powerful story: **[How a starry-eyed rumour of a better life brought this young Senegalese tailor to Madrid]**.



And another article about Vallecas that went viral around Madrid: **Vallecas: Madrid's rebellious working-class neighborhood**.



How do your articles affect the bars and people when you feature them?

A lot of the owners are quite old and they don’t even know what a blog is. They’re so unplugged, so unconnected to the Internet. I mean, many don’t even have Google locations for their own establishments. I’m the one who puts them on the map – literally.

Before writing an article about them, I’ll let them know and give them the option to say no, which they never have. Then, after writing the article, I’ll go later on and ask if my article may have made an impact on their bar. A lot of the owners do say: “I’ve suddenly received a lot of foreign people in my bar, from France, Germany, people from all around the world…” But usually they don’t understand why.



[Relive the old Vallecas in Bar Etiquio]

So what exactly is a no-frills bar?

It's just really interesting to understand *what is a no-frills bar*. There are so many "codes" to learn, especially as an Englishwoman new to this whole thing. There's the steel bar, the formica cladding, and the serviettes. Then on top of that,

you've got the owner's personality and that's what sets each bar apart.

Behind every no-frills bar you'll find family photos, a little mascot such as a teddy bear sitting on top of the oven or in the extractor fan area. And then a couple of little trinkets, souvenirs that people have given them.

They all have a beautiful, mid-century modernist design throughout, which, even though they were built to last, are beginning to fade. I'm trying to understand what this all means – trying to find the parallels and patterns. These specific designs and the personality superimposed on top of that.

What could a "new" no-frills place look like? For example, I saw you wrote about a new restaurant, 100 Mandela.

They've got a slightly different aesthetic. **100 Mandela** is more about the immigrant communities. I'm a huge fan of raising awareness and telling stories about ethnic minorities, the elderly and also women. I'm also working on an LGBT+ story as well.

I'm trying to raise awareness of these communities through physical access points like restaurants or shops, so you can actually meet them in person. Here they are, right here, right now. They're part of your community and here's how you can connect with one another.



Mandela 100: Emblematic Senegalese diner opens on Plaza Nelson Mandela

What makes Madrid No Frills so unique?

It's not just "I recommend this place." It's "understand the story and the history" and experience the very same thing that I experienced when I went there too. I'm trying to open people's eyes to see the city in a new way. Not just my way, but in a really special way that maybe people have overlooked or simply forgotten about.

I want you to think about what is around you – not just all the exciting new places, but be conscious of the harder-hitting truth: there's a lot of suffering that happens in Madrid, and it's often right in front you. The places where you're eating, the people you're talking to, the **scars that have been covered up on the walls**. It's all around us.

Every now and then, we should stop and think and process…. just by being aware of something helps, and simply discussing

it is huge.



Barrio Aeropuerto, one of the poorest neighborhoods of Madrid, captured in **10 no-frills finds (Vol. VI)**



Discover the dark messages hidden in Madrid's street art

Why should we make a point of going to these no-frills places?

Well, it's all about supporting the local community. I really appreciate my *barrio* [referring to the Rastro area and Lavapiés]. I've got my bread girls, my Spanish shoe guy, **my Mauritanian veg guy**.



From the Jarama Valley to a Lavapiés okupa: Meet Usman, the alternative organic veg farmer

As foreigners, we often feel a lot more in common with people who are in the same boat as us – people who've come from another city or country, who've moved across Spain, or the Atlantic – to a new city. You find you have a lot in common with your community, and you might be surprised what your community looks like.

It's also about building bridges between communities, where everybody's welcome under one roof. For example, if you're a Brit in a Senegalese restaurant with Senegalese people, you're creating a bridge and simultaneously supporting a local business.

You've got to be a little bit adventurous. Sometimes it can be a little daunting being different. At a no-frills bar, you might be surrounded by a bunch of old men. But, if you go with a bunch of your girl friends, you've suddenly got a small

space that’s more representative of society. We’re bridging a gap between two sexes, two generations, and often between two ethnicities too, bringing everyone together and supporting the local communities as well.

What inspired you?

Honestly, Naked Madrid was a huge inspiration. As you know, I’ve written many articles for you. I remember how excited I was to have my first article published about the Italian place in Mercado Chamartín, and then **the olive grove run by my friends**. They’re also doing a kind of unusual thing: they’re millennials reconnecting with a traditional industry: farming. They’ve had a lot of English-speaking people come on their tours since that article came out, and they’re so grateful!

How much time do you dedicate to it now?

Quite a lot. I have full-time work – I’m a teacher and a writer – but I love Madrid No Frills so I don’t see it as work (OK, well it’s not work because I don’t get paid!). I currently put out one new article a week, plus research… if you even consider it research. It’s fun! It’s just that I fancy going to this place, so let’s go check it out…

It’s genuinely a reflection of my life, how I roll. I don’t want it to be the opposite, ever. Every now and then there might be a mission, for example, I **recently covered an eviction**. I knew it was going on. I was there for a few hours.



[Madrid's anti-eviction warriors]

Is there a game plan?

For a long time, I didn't have one, and that's what's been so fun about it. I've always been very spontaneous and I think that's what's made MNF what it is. There was no strategy – it's a passion project. There are a lot of people who are asking me to write a book, and Madrid deserves a book.

I've been approached by publishers and even investors, but I've always said no because I want to do things my way. Also, if I did write a book, it would be a collaborative thing, bringing in illustrators and other writers. It also wouldn't just be a guidebook, but more of a portrait of Madrid.

Having said all that though, I've recently hatched a top-secret plan to grow MNF, so watch this space!

How has Madrid No Frills changed over the years?

Looking back to the very beginning of Madrid No Frills, I've brought in a lot more human stories. But the core of MNF is still Madrid's no-frills bars. I absolutely love no-frills bars. I genuinely spend a lot of time in them.



[Bar El Jamón: the godfather of Lavapiés]

What would you say to people who don't see what's so special about no-frills bars?

I would say "take my hand and come with me, and let me show you why I love them so much." Maybe I could explain the

details and the hidden narrative of the place: the history, and what it all means from within.



The 128-year-old Chueca hideout for generations of simmering lefties

Would you like to see Madrid No Frills go global?

I would love to see Mumbai No Frills, London No Frills, Newcastle No Frills, raising awareness of those little places that are being overlooked all over the world. The No Frills mission is a great cause. If it turns into a global trend, that would be great.

What about if people start copying you?

I've already come across a lot of copycats, but I'm beyond fine with that. I'm so excited when I see a copycat – it means they're doing a service to their city. A hundred no-frills bars in Berlin? Go for it! 100 no-frills bars in Vallecas? Please, dude, go for it. Steal my ideas. You're going to be doing an amazing service. I never get worried about it.

Have you thought about monetizing the site?

I've been asked that question so many times [Leah laughs]. I'm lucky enough to earn a vaguely sustainable income through teaching and journalism, and still have just enough free time and energy to give to MNF. Not making money through my blog has meant that this is a project that is so pure…

The fact that it's not monetized means I've never been influenced by sponsored content. People have tried to get me to plug them for money or freebies but I've never accepted because I don't support their particular business.

If a no-frills bar approached me asking for a plug, I might accept, but they typically have no money, so I couldn't really ask for it. There's no money in the places I write about, and that's a big part of why I write about them. MNF is purely based on what I love. People can sense that. Money isn't the only resource – love and passion make the world spin too.

Any thoughts on Women's Day… in terms of Madrid No Frills?

It's not like blogging is a man's world or anything. But what's weird is that I'm a woman behind this, also of color, who goes to these predominantly white, male-heavy bars. That's kind of unusual. Not many people look like me here. I speak to

quite a lot of male migrants and old Spanish men. I do often find myself in a male-dominated space in many ways, but perhaps it’s made me more confident. I can hold my own more than ever before. I’ve had to learn to speak louder, be more persistent and I probably have to fight harder than men to be listened to.

Women’s Day has also made me more aware of myself as a woman, and it’s helped me realize that my voice is important. Through MNF, it now reaches 25,000 people a month, and I don’t take that lightly. I use my voice to fight for those who don’t have one.

I’m also working on having more women stories on the blog but they’re a lot more shy and a lot harder to find in certain professions, like being a *portero* (doorman). There aren’t as many female shopkeepers or female bar owners. I’m trying to find more, but here are some that I’ve written about:



Tale of a Lavapiés concierge



[Meet Miss Beige, an ordinary Madrileña after all our hearts]

Is Madrid No Frills going to keep its core?

Yes, definitely. The blog is based on passion, a personal passion. Also, the one thing that's consistent about Madrid No Frills and that's never going to change is that I'm behind it. I trust myself to keep it real, so I know that it's going to continue as it is, staying true to Madrid and its no-frills soul.

Thank you, Leah, for sharing your story with us! And Happy International Women's Day to all the inspiring women of the world – get your work out there and make your voices heard!

- **Please follow Madrid No Frills' incredible mission on Facebook and Instagram, too.**

- **You can also sign up for the newsletter to receive a copy of the free weekend guide.**

Things to do in Madrid: Naked's ultimate guide 2019

Whether it's your first time in the city or you've been living here for years, this guide provides a little something for everyone. You'll find a mix of touristy and non-touristy things to do in Madrid, along with hidden gems and quirky tidbits scattered throughout.

We plan on updating this guide regularly with our own discoveries and friendly suggestions. So feel free to comment!

Wining & dining

As you walk through the streets of Madrid it can feel like there are more bars and restaurants than people. Choosing where to eat and drink among all the options is tricky at times, so here's a list to start off with:

Food markets

Many of Madrid's neighborhood markets have been revamped while preserving their traditional spirit. They're one of the best ways to experience Madrid's food culture. Here's a list of the most popular *mercados:*

Mercado de San Miguel: The city's prettiest and most famous food market, situated right off Plaza Mayor. The quality here

is excellent, although you'll usually find hordes of visitors.

Mercado de San Fernando: My favorite food market in the city, situated in Lavapiés. Here you'll find a great, casual atmosphere, visited by locals and foreigners alike. There's a wonderful mix of food stalls, from the Asturian **El Guaje de Lavapiés** to the Portuguese **Mercadillo Lisboa**.



Mercado de San Antón: If you're in Chueca and not sure where to go, head over to this multi-level food market and grab a drink on the rooftop bar, open year round!

Mercado de Antón Martín: This popular market offers several classic food stalls and international eateries, including one of the city's best Italian restaurants, **Fiaschetteria La Saletta**.

- Tip: just one flight up you'll find the most important

flamenco dance studio in Madrid, Amor de Dios! Pop up to feel the vibe.

Mercado de la Cebada: Located in La Latina, this market especially comes alive on Saturdays. You'll find visitors eating and drinking amid the labyrinth of stalls. Join them!

- Also read: **La Latina's seafood party in Mercado de la Cebada**





Mercado de Vallehermoso: Located near Arguelles, this one's a little less central than the others, but no less active. You'll find the traditional market stalls situated alongside modern options like the popular Kitchen 154, specializing in spicy Asian street food dishes.

Restaurants, bars and cafés:

Bodegas Rosell: If you're looking for an authentic Spanish meal, it's best to go to one of the old-school *tabernas* that have stood the test of time, like Bodegas Rosell, situated by Atocha.



Three more Spanish eateries we love:

- **Juana la Loca**: A family-run Spanish restaurant in La Latina offering a wonderful ambience and a menu featuring traditional and international dishes, and *pintxos* with a creative twist. Always a great choice.
- **Casa Mingo**: A one-of-a-kind and very no-frills restaurant specializing in roasted chicken and *sidra* (cider) – so you get to learn how to pour it in the Asturian way (*escanciar*).
- **Bar Lambuzo**: One of the first restaurants we ever wrote about on Naked Madrid, **back in 2014**. Lovingly run by a family from Cádiz, this welcoming *taberna* serves authentic dishes from Andalucía. Bar Lambuzo now has three locations: Sol, Mercado de Chamberí, and Retiro.



Typical tapas at Bar Lambuzo

Tapas bar hopping in La Latina: At least one night in Madrid should be dedicated to tapas bar hopping, and one of the best streets to do this on is Cava Baja, along with its surrounding *calles* and *plazas*. Here you'll find bar after bar… after bar.



Calle Ponzano, the city's top foodie street. Madrid has chosen Calle Ponzano to become its gourmet golden mile, lined with great restaurants to choose from, including **Sala Despiecie**, **Alipio Ramos** and **Toque de Sal.**

- Here's a longer list of **places to eat on Calle Ponzano**.

Corredera Bajo de San Pablo in Malasaña. This is another street that's full of fun bars and restaurants, including **Amargo Place to Be** (with live music), **Elemental Bistro** (French-Spanish cuisine) and **Aió** (Sardinian restaurant with a bike storage downstairs). There's also the famous Teatro Lara, and…

- **Secret bar at Kikekeller:** This design studio turns into a clandestine bar at night on the weekends, when art and mixology come together.

Lavapiés has it all: Malasaña and Chueca have become so popular that it's a bit overwhelming at times. The multicultural neighborhood of Lavapiés offers a more casual vibe, yet there's no shortage of food options.

- Some of our favorite places in Lavapiés include: **Los Chuchis**, **Badila**, **La Berenjena**, **Los Porfiados**, **and Barbieri, just to name a few.**
- Also see: **10 eateries from around the world in Lavapiés and Embajadores**



Egeo, a popular Greek place in Lavapiés

Barrio Slamanca: This is the city's higher-end area. It's *very* pretty and has some of the best eateries in the city, from Michelin-starred restaurants to friendly neighborhood bars. We'd love to explore Salamanca's hidden gems more. Here are some of the places we've previously featured:

- **StreetXO**, a casual version of the world-famous **DiverXO** by rockstar chef Dabiz Muñoz
- **Arugula**, a restaurant by Retiro Park serving great salads and healthy dishes
- **Tandoori Station**, one of the city's top Indian restaurants
- **Banibanoo**, a wonderful market-style Iranian restaurant



Delicious and seasonal Iranian dishes at **Banibanoo**

Go on a hunt for the best *tortilla*: This Spanish comfort food always hits the spot and you can order a “pincho” (slice) at just about every bar in the city. Try these spots (and many others) and see which one you like best: **Where to find the best tortilla in Madrid**.



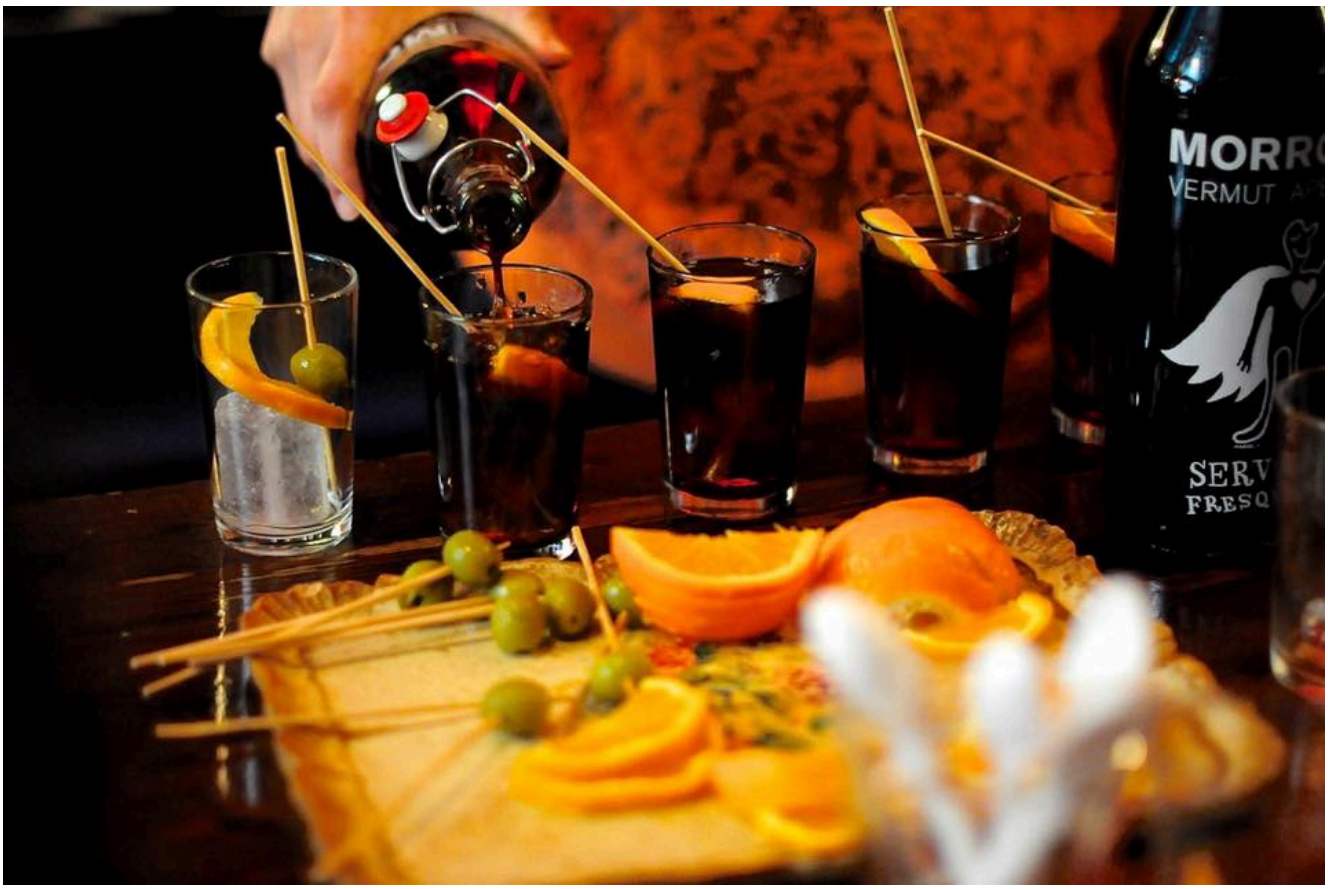
Sip on sherry at La Venencia: Please don’t leave the city without visiting this truly unique bar in Barrio de las Letras. Entering La Venencia means traveling to another time period. They only offer sherry (four types).

- Also check out: **What to see in Barrio de las Letras**
- And: **Take a peek inside 5 historical Madrid bars**

La hora del vermut*:** The city is reviving an old ritual, which entails drinking vermouth along with an *aperitivo* before lunchtime, especially on Sundays. Experience this tradition at **these timeless bars**, or at **the newer *vermuterías to join in on the vermouth craze.



[Bodegas de la Ardosa], one of the most iconic bars in Madrid



Pic by **La Vermutería**, a popup bar throwing great vermouth-inspired events

Cocktails at The Cock: Madrid has some great cocktail bars. If you're looking for the kind that hasn't changed in… forever, then The Cock's your safest bet. Right down the street is **Del Diego**, another good option.

Pepe Botella: If you're looking for a place to get a coffee or a glass of wine in Malasaña, I personally recommend this bar in Plaza Dos de Mayo. Grab the window seat if you can. After a couple of rounds, you'll be in the perfect state of mind to explore the neighborhood.

Also see: **Work-friendly cafés in Malasaña with great Wi-Fi**



María Pandora: Have champagne at this funky arts bar in La Latina. You'll also get to watch the sunset over Parque de las Vistillas. The hours are a little odd so check online if they're open.

Also see: **Discover Madrid's passionate poetry scene**



Have a sweet treat at an old-world pastry shop: The city's most famous is **La Mallorquina**, located right in Sol. You'll usually find a line out the door for take-away, but there's a spacious tea room upstairs.

- Right down the street is another traditional pastry shop, **El Riojano**, also with a tea room.
- Also see: **7 best pastry shops in Madrid** and the **city's best churros spots**.

Cultural activities

El Matadero: This former slaughterhouse is now one of the city's most active cultural hubs, complete with a cinema, theater, café, an outdoor area used for markets and more!



Two great markets held at Matadero are the **Mercado de Diseño** (design market) and **Mercado de Productores** (farmer's market, pictured above)



There’s an incredible greenhouse next door to Matadero, Invernadero del Palacio de Cristal de Arganzuela

Conde Duque: An enormous cultural center holding free exhibits including large-scale art projects and exhibits. It also hosts concerts, performances, book archives and even **outdoor cinema** which runs during summer.

- **Plaza de Guardia de Corps:** it’s located in a cute little plaza, surrounded by bars, restaurants and shops.



This mini-house was set up for Madrid Design Festival

Cine Doré/La Filmoteca: A funky old cinema screening classic films from around the world in original version and at an unbeatable price of €2.50. It's one of the city's most popular movie houses, located right by Mercado de Antón Martín.

- Also check out: **Where to enjoy good film in Madrid**



Sala Equis: One of the city's trendiest hotspots, a former XXX theater transformed into an eatery and cinema, located in Tirso de Molina.

Desperate Literature: An international bookstore selling the best selection of English-language books in the city. They also throw great events, from readings to concerts.

- Also check out: **The city's best café-bookshops**



Microteatro por Dinero: "Micro-theater" performances are all the rage in Madrid, and one of the best places to see these 15-minute shows are at **Microteatro por Dinero** in Malasaña. Get your €4 ticket, grab a drink and enjoy the show! It makes for a really fun night, although you do need a good level of Spanish to appreciate it.

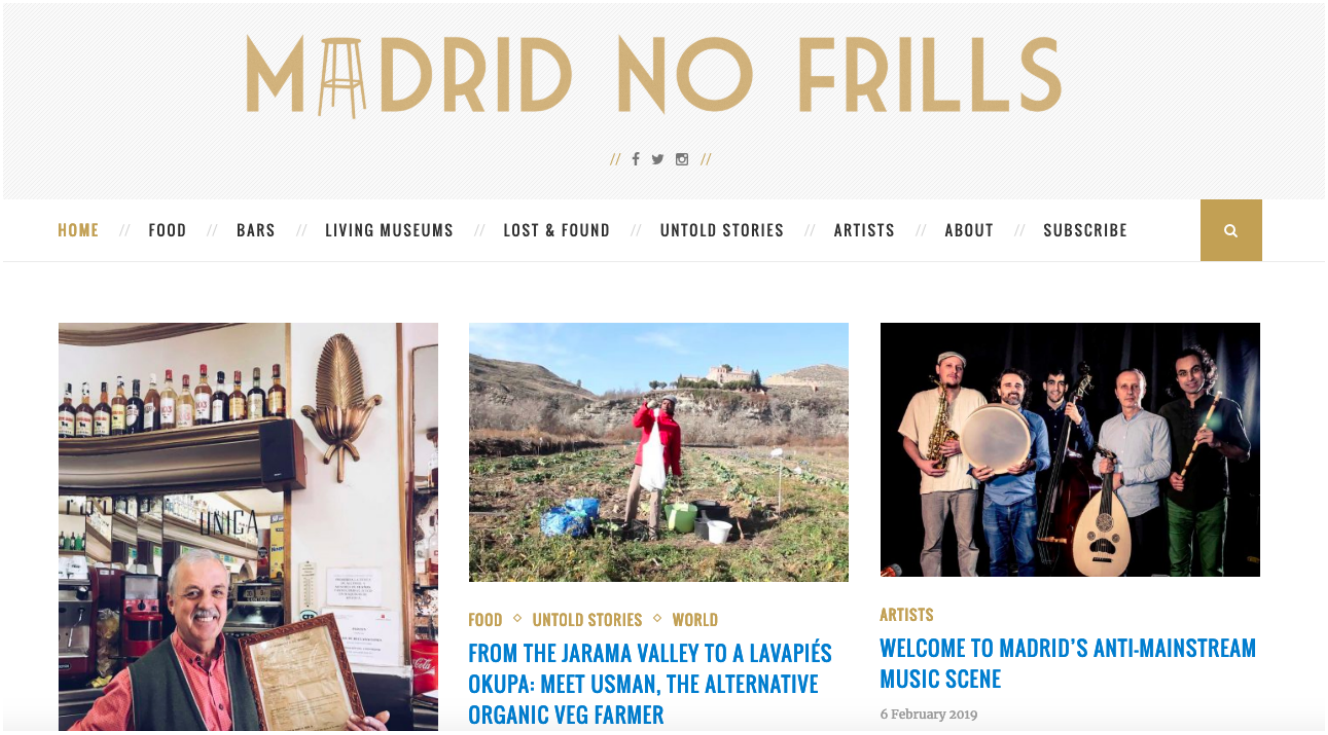
- If you're looking for theater in English, check out the interactive shows put on by **Mad Improv**. Lots of fun!

Mercado de Motores: The city's trendiest monthly market, held in a train museum. You'll find a variety of stalls set up along the tracks, and food trucks outside. Get there early before the crowds swarm in.



Image from Mercado de Motores

Check out Madridnofrills.com: This website offers incredibly insightful information on a side of Madrid that tourists (and locals) almost never experience, from the city's **anti-mainstream music scene** to a **photo series of 100 of Madrid's no-frills bars** (that's recently gone viral!). Do have a look.



madridnofrills.com, the city's most insightful blog

Museums

Madrid boasts several world-renowned arts institutions as well as lesser-known museums and "casa museos" (former private mansions). Here are some top picks, although you can also check out our **guide to the city's museums (and how to get in for free) here**.

The Golden Triangle of Art: Madrid's three world-famous museums are located on Paseo del Prado, and need no introduction:

- **The Prado Museum**
- **Thyssen**
- **Reina Sofía Museum**



Within walking distance are three other museums I'd highly recommend:

- **Museo Naval**: Located beside the Prado is the Maritime Museum, which houses an impressive collection that's a surprise to many, even Madrileños.
- **La Casa Encendida**: Situated near Reína Sofía, this dynamic cultural center holds contemporary art exhibits and activities, both inside as well as on its rooftop terrace. Free entrance.
- **CaixaForum**: Also located on Paseo del Prado is a contemporary arts center with great exhibits and an urban garden wall.



Three “Casa Museos” that are incredibly charming and take you back in time:

- **Museo de Cerralbo**: My personal favorite. This small museum is a portal to another era. It was a former private mansion and is located next to the stunning Templo de Debod (more on that below).
- **Sorolla Museum**: The former house of famous Spanish painter Joaquín Sorolla. Step inside his private living quarters to see his studio and personal collection. It’s well worth a visit.
- **Museo del Romanticismo**: Walk through the beautiful rooms of this museum in Chueca that have been kept in tact from the Romanticism Era. **Make sure to have a tea in the lovely garden afterwards.**



La Neomudéjar: This is the most avant-garde museum on the list, occupying a former industrial railway building near Atocha train station.



Art shows and festivals: Madrid has a thriving arts scene, with events held year round, such as the world-famous **Madrid Art Week** that's going on right now. **Time Out Madrid** is the best place to find out about the city's events in English.

Plazas & streets

After seeing the mandatory Plaza Mayor and Puerta del Sol, here are a few other must-see places:

Plaza de la Villa, the city's original town hall is absolutely beautiful, especially at nighttime. The little surrounding streets, like Calle del Codo, are also charming.

- Tip: just a few steps away from the plaza lies a sweet shop run by nuns: El Jardín del Convento, on Calle del Cordón 1.



Plaza de Oriente: Here you'll see the Royal Palace, Royal Opera House, the Sabatini gardens and the Almudena Cathedral. There's also a lesser-known crypt below the cathedral that boasts hundreds of columns, each one unique.

Plaza de Dos de Mayo: This happening plaza is nestled between the streets of Malasaña, one of Madrid's trendiest neighborhood. **My favorite café in this plaza is Pepe Botella** (mentioned above).

Plaza Olavide: A charming plaza in Chamberí, loved by locals. Come here to sit out on a terrace and soak up the sun.

Plaza de la Paja: A very popular plaza in La Latina, full of bars and restaurants. When the weather's nice you'll find spacious *terrazas* set up everywhere – you'll have to be quick to find a table!

- **Palacio del Príncipe Anglona Garden**: This charming little garden is located right inside the plaza.



Jardín del Príncipe de Anglona

Staircase streets of La Latina

La Latina is one of the city's oldest and most beautiful neighborhoods. Take a stroll through the area's windy, narrow streets. You'll find several streets that have stairs, like Calle del Rollo and Travesía del Nuncio (pictured below). Just wander around a little.



This unbeatable terrace belongs to Café Angélica, a sweet café and restaurant

Streets of Lavapiés: Explore this vibrant, multicultural

neighborhood. You'll find a lot of street art on **Calle Embajadores**, **Miguel de Servet**, and **Doctor Fourquet** (where you'll also find many micro-galleries).



Calle Embajadores, pic by @jessiesusanna



Calle Miguel de Servet, lined with street art, restaurants and cherry blossom trees in full bloom

Parks

Retiro: The city's most popular park, situated in the center. There are several spots worth visiting, such as the lake, the rose garden and of course, the stunning glass palace.



Glass Palace at Retiro Park, pic by @os_car_a

Templo de Debod: Madrid houses a beautiful Egyptian temple surrounded by greenery. Come here to watch the sunset! Then take a walk through Parque del Oeste (next point).



Sunset at Templo de Debod, pic by @meagamind

Parque del Oeste. This spacious park is located in the western part of Madrid, near Moncloa and Templo de Debod. It provides a much-needed breath of fresh air, plus there are outdoor concerts held during the warmer months of the year.

- **Rose garden:** There’s a beautiful rose garden you shouldn’t miss in spring, Rosaleda de Madrid.



Parque del Oeste, pic by @os_car_a

Casa de Campo: The largest park in Madrid. It really makes you feel like you've left the city. You'll find lots of hills, trails, bike paths, bars with outdoor terraces and a lake. It's also connected to Parque del Oeste and Madrid Río (mentioned below). You can **rent a bike for the day** and explore the park on wheels. Here you'll also find:

- **A theme park**
- **The zoo and aquarium**
- **Piscina Lago**: one of the city's most popular public

swimming pools, open in summer.

- According to **Madrid No Frills**, there's an old Spanish Civil War map that you can follow…

Madrid Río Park: Madrid's Manzanares river has been turned into a public recreation space for children and adults alike. You'll see people having picnics, rollerblading, running, cycling, playing sports and having a drink on the terraces. Madrid Río has sprinklers open during summer, playgrounds year round and the famous "spiral" bridge.

- I like going to El Matadero first, and then taking a walk along Madrid Río afterwards, as they're connected.
- At the other end of Madrid Río is Casa de Campo, so you can **bike through both on the same route**.



Rooftops

One of the best things to do in Madrid is enjoy its rooftop craze. The city has tons of *azoteas*, and many are open year round:

Azotea del Círculo de Bellas Artes: Pretty much all the city's best postcards feature views from this famous rooftop. Whether you're in the mood to stay awhile and have a drink, or just pop up to take in the view, make sure to include it on your list.



View from Círculo de Bellas Artes, pic by @os_car_a

CentroCentro Cibeles: This is the city's most famous building, hands down. It used to be a public post office but is now a free-entrance arts and cultural center. There's also a rooftop bar where you can see panoramic views of the city, as well as a lookout point at the very top.



Low-key rooftop bars: If you're in the mood for a casual rooftop setting, one of our favorites is **The Hat Madrid**, a hostel located near Plaza Mayor.

- Also check out our full list of **low-key rooftop bars open year round**.



Shopping

Rastro Flea Market: Spend a Sunday rummaging through Madrid's largest open-air flea market, open from 9am-3pm. Start off in Plaza de Cascorro and walk down Ribera de Curtidores. Make sure to explore the surrounding *calles* and *plazas* as well. You'll find an endless number of shops and stalls selling trinkets and antiques from around the world.

- Best of all, it's tradition to spend the rest of the day having tapas in La Latina. Just follow the crowds and do as the locals do!



One of the many stores in El Rastro, pic by @madridnofrills

Gran Vía and Calle Fuencarral: You can get all your shopping done on these two popular streets, which are connected. Gran Vía has all the big-name brands like Zara and Mango, while Calle Fuencarral is also lined with smaller shops. Once you're on Fuencarral, explore the whole neighborhood of Malasaña on foot, and Chueca too while you're at it. They're next-door neighbors.

Barrio Salamanca: This is the city's most upscale neighborhood and it's much less touristy than Gran Vía and Malasaña. It's full of designer shops and independent brands.

Vintage and thrift shops: A few years ago it was hard to come by good thrift stores in the city, but now you can find a bunch to choose from. Check out our list of **10 great secondhand and vintage stores in Madrid**.

Tour

Take a tour with Devour Madrid: This is the tour I'd most recommend going on. The folks at **Devour Madrid food tour** truly know what they're taking about. This is one of the best things to do in Madrid if you're just visiting: eating your way through the city as you learn about its history, culture and language.



Exploring Mercado de Antón Martín on a tour with Devour Madrid

Stunning local olive grove tour – in English: The founder of Madrid No Frills, Leah Pattem, suggests an olive oil tour in the outskirts of Madrid, called Proyecto los Aires. It's a family-run olive grove with an innovative mission: to connect the local countryside with the city of Madrid and make farming a sustainable way of life once again.

Travel

Take a day-trip to a nearby town: There are several trips you can take from Madrid, which are very easy to get to by public transport. Here are a few recommendations:

- **Toledo:** If you're short on time, I would highly recommend the breathtakingly beautiful city of Toledo.
- **Segovia** would be next on the list, especially for its Roman aqueduct.
- **Alcalá de Henares,** the hometown of Cervantes, is another great option and very nearby.
- Check out our list of the **10 most beautiful surrounding towns**.



Alcalá de Henares, pic by Russ Pearce from anythingbutpaella.com

Know of any other things to do in Madrid that should be included on this list? Let us know in the comments and we'll add them in!

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9 Low-key rooftop bars in Madrid to enjoy year round

This city may be landlocked, but the sky's the limit when it comes to rooftop bars in Madrid. From fancy restaurant-hotels like **Picalagartos** and **Hotel Óscar**, to emblematic buildings like **Palacio de Cibeles** and the picture-perfect **Tartan Roof** at Círculo de Bellas Artes, the options seem endless. And if you're in the mood for something a little more casual, we've got you covered.

Here are our top picks for rooftop bars in Madrid that are low key and winter friendly.

1. The Hat



Photo from The Hat Madrid

This popular rooftop bar is located atop one of the city's coolest hostels, right off Plaza Mayor. It provides a great escape from Madrid's crowded center. Pop up for a few drinks with friends or a full meal, whatever you fancy.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- **Address:** Calle Imperial 9
- **Metros:** Sol and Tirso de Molina

Check out our full post on The Hat Madrid

2. Mercado de San Antón



Photo from Mercado de San Antón

This is a perfect place to start your evening with friends. As you enter Chueca's beloved food market, Mercado de San Antón, first you'll walk through various food stalls and tapas stands. Then make your way up to the fourth floor for a drink any time of day, any time of year.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- **Address:** Calle de Augusto Figueroa, 24
- **Metro:** Chueca

3. El Viajero





This plant-laden rooftop bar has been a staple in La Latina for years. Situated atop El Viajero restaurant, it offers a laidback atmosphere, plus a full bar and food options. It’s a great place to spend a winter evening with friends.

- Facebook & Instagram
- Address: Plaza de la Cebada 11
- Metro: La Latina

4. Gymage



Photo from Gymage

Gymage is a multi-level recreation center located in Plaza de la Luna, just off Gran Vía. Inside you'll find everything from a full-on gym to a health food store. But the best part is the two-level rooftop lounge with a bar, restaurant, and pool! Although you don't get to take a dip in winter, you still get to take in that chill Ibiza vibe and enjoy those gorgeous Madrid sunsets.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- Address: Calle de la Luna, 2
- Metro: Callao

5. Forus Barceló



This spacious rooftop restaurant is a green oasis in the middle of Chueca and Malasaña. Situated atop the Barceló food market, here you can enjoy creative and healthy cuisine, in a friendly urban garden environment. It’s also open every day of the week.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram: @azoteaforus
- **Address:** Calle Barceló 6
- **Metro:** Tribunal and Alonso Martínez

6. Doña Luz



This is one of the newest rooftop bars in Madrid, situated right in the heart of Sol, on Calle Montera. The street-level entrance is tiny, so it’s easy to miss. But once you enter the Doña Luz Hotel, squeeze through the door and take the elevator to the top floor. There you’ll find plenty of room to enjoy a nice break on the roof. There’s an indoor and outdoor area, plus a full restaurant and bar.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- Address: Calle Montera 10-12
- Metro: Sol

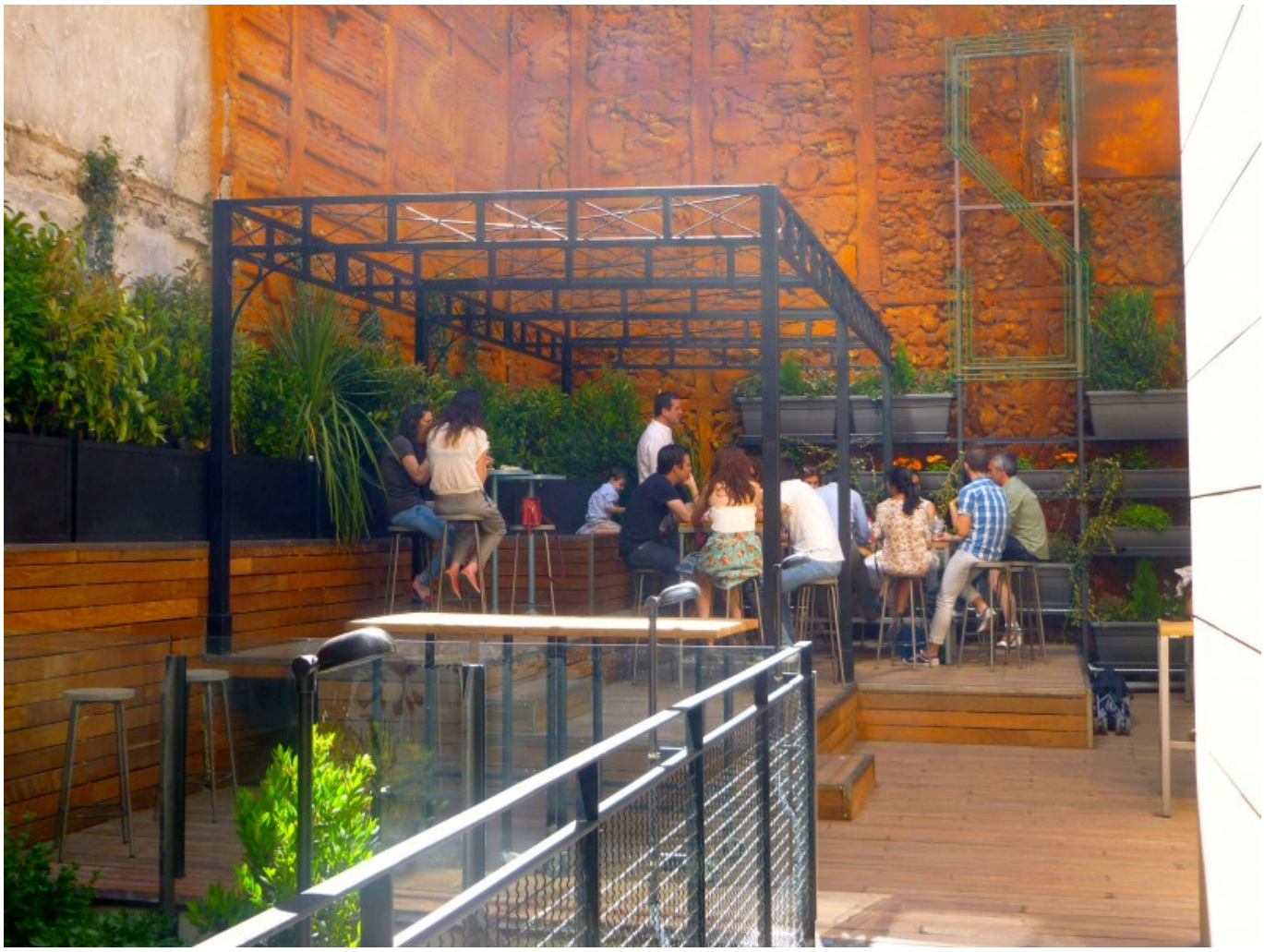
7. Jardín Secreto



This rooftop is also situated on Calle Montera, and it’s called Jardín Secreto (although it’s not that much of a secret anymore). Step inside the accessories store, Salvador Bachiller, and take the elevator up to the top floor to discover a small yet charming rooftop absolutely covered in plants and flowers. Although you won’t find much of a view, you will discover a nice change of scenery from the busy city center.

- Website & Facebook
- Address:Calle Montera 37
- Metro: Gran Vía or Sol

8. Mercado de San Ildefonso



This isn’t exactly a rooftop bar, but it still deserves a spot on our list. This outdoor terrace is located inside an ultra modern food market in Malasaña, Mercado de San Ildefonso, right on Calle Fuencarral. So once you grab a drink and a bite to eat from the array of food stalls, find a seat in this fun patio area.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- Address: C/ Fuencarral, 57
- Metros: Tribunal

9. Casa de Granada



In Tirso de Molina, you'll find Casa Granada situated on the top floor of an unassuming residential building. This rather old-school restaurant has been around for ages and is definitely the least "chic" option on the list. The menu features traditional Spanish dishes, from *croquetas* to *patatas bravas*. It's well insulated during the chillier months of the year and when the awnings are up, you get great views of the heart of the city.

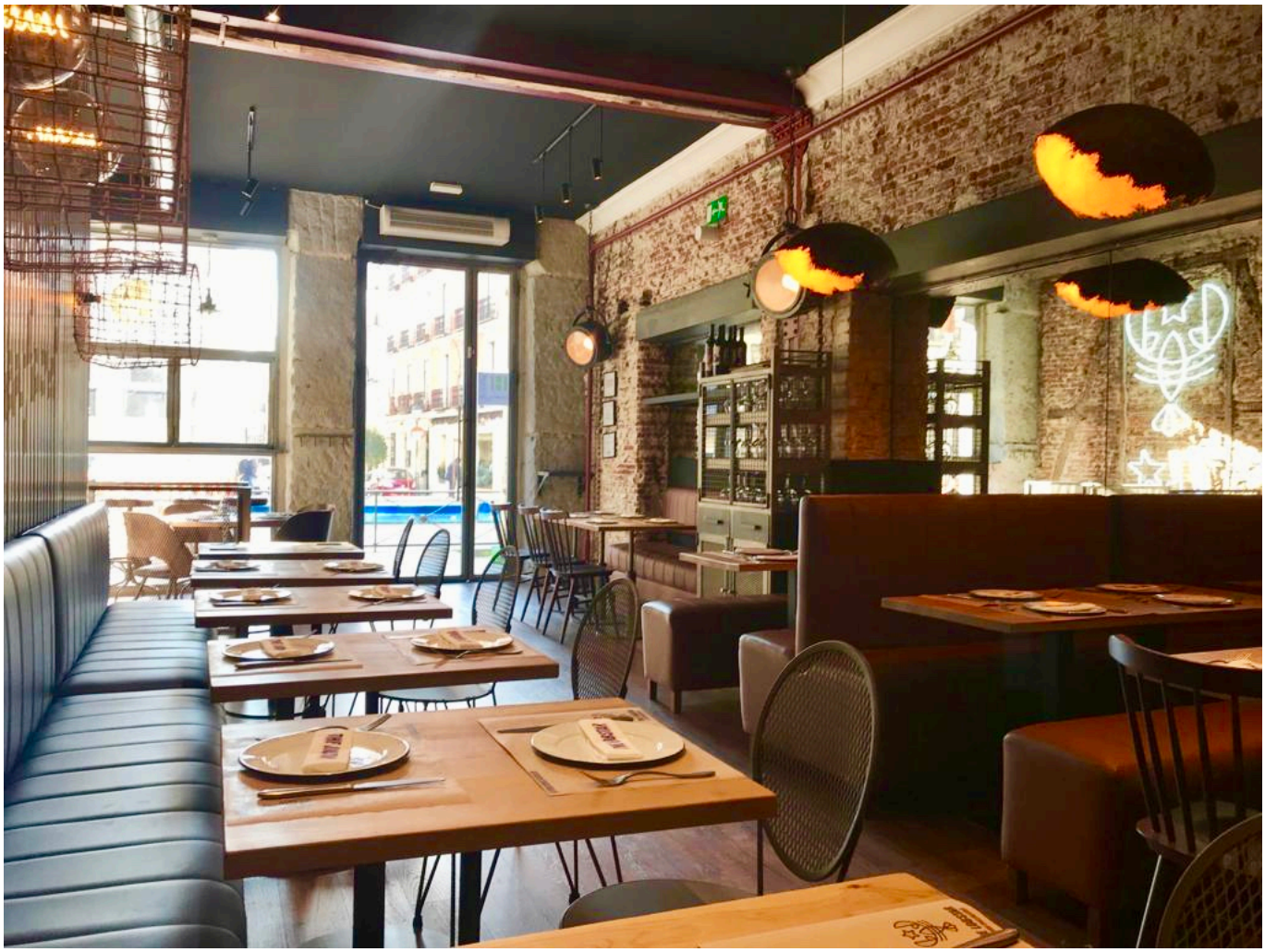
- Website, Facebook
- Address: Calle del Doctor Cortezo, 17
- Metro: Tirso de Molina

Did we miss any other low-key rooftop bars in Madrid open year round? Let us

know and we’ll add them to the list!

The Lobstar – bringing authentic New England comfort food to Madrid

We can now savor authentic lobster rolls in Madrid thanks to The Lobstar. Situated near Bilbao, this newly opened restaurant is bringing the best of New England comfort food to the city, with hearty dishes like clam chowder, lobster bisque and shrimp rolls.



The decor is inspired by restaurants you'll find along Maine's quaint coastal fishing towns. It mixes industrial touches with a casual vibe. Lots of light streams in through the tall storefront windows, and the brick and metal walls contrast with the wooden floor.

There are just a few tables and booths, and an open kitchen where you can see the chefs preparing casual American seafood dishes following traditional recipes. As for the music, classic hits are played back to back, so you'll probably know all the lyrics. Feel free to sing (or hum) along.



In true “lobster bar” fashion, we first ordered beer – a trusted Sam Adams and an excellent pilsner from Marbella. As for the menu, our servers were very helpful and recommended we start with the buffalo shrimp tacos.



We also asked for a bowl of rich clam chowder, for nostalgia’s sake. Both were delicious and filling enough to be a complete meal on their own.



Next up, our main dishes. Of course we ordered the star of the show – “the lobstar roll” – and it was the real deal. The lobsters arrive alive from Canada, boiled up and served on a toasted and buttered homemade brioche bun, with lots of flavorful mayonnaise. Absolutely perfect.



We also ordered the swordfish burger which was gigantic. It had several generous-sized pieces of grilled fish along with the works: lettuce, tomato, onion and mayo, also on a sweet bun. Both were served with a heaping portion of the best sweet potato fries I've tried in the city so far.



And the most surprising part for me? The side of coleslaw. It was real coleslaw! The kind you find at New York City delis. We also couldn’t help but take a peek at the delicious-looking mac and cheese dishes that kept coming out of the kitchen. We’ll definitely be going back for those next time.



We needed to take a short pause before we could even consider having dessert. After two slowly sipped cups of espresso (each served with a cute “Lobstar” marshmallow), we decided to go for it. The first items to catch our eyes were the cider donut and the butterscotch with honeycomb milkshake…



They sounded amazing, but given the meal of champions that we'd just devoured, we asked for a lighter option. The server recommended the key lime pie, one of my favorite desserts and the perfect finishing touch for an incredibly satisfying meal. Let's just say we walked all the way home, happy.

The Lobstar

- **Website:** www.thelobstar.es
- **Instagram:** @thelobstarbar
- **Address:** Calle Carranza, 4 (Madrid)
- **Metro:** Bilbao

Crumb, signature sandwiches that truly hit the spot

I've always loved sandwiches, particularly the kind that are made with several ingredients and creative combinations. When I was growing up, my family owned a sandwich shop where my siblings and I would get to experiment with all different types of breads, ingredients and spreads.

Needless to say, when I'm in the mood for a good sandwich, the typical "bocadillo" or "bocata" usually just doesn't cut it. That's why I was so happy to discover Crumb, a small restaurant in the charming Conde Duque area. Crumb serves signature, gourmet sandwiches and dishes, along with the bread they bake daily with organic flour and sourdough starter.



The menu is simple, and is divided into four parts: dishes without bread (starters and salads that are great for sharing); with bread (dishes that range from Fish&Chips to meatballs, with bread served on the side); on bread (open-faced sandwiches, similar to *tostas*); and between bread (the amazing sandwiches). You can order your sandwich with a side of fries or a salad. Crumb also serves tempting international specials, so make sure to ask.



We started out with two dishes *sin pan* (without bread): The first was gyozas made with chicken, garnished with pineapple and soy sauce. They were so delicious that we highly regretted ordering the half portion. We also tried the *patatas revolconas* (mashed potatoes) which was heaven in a bowl. It had a perfectly smooth texture and was topped with *torrezno* (bacon). Great comfort food for one of the coldest days of the year in Madrid.



Then we each ordered a sandwich *(entre pan).* The first had roasted chicken, guacamole, herbs, lettuce and *alioli*, on delicious toasted homemade bread. Now that’s what I call a sandwich. Seemingly simple ingredients that make for an amazing combination. You can imagine why the paper wrapping came in handy.



And the second was the veggie sandwich, made with tahini pesto, dried tomatoes, grilled eggplant and zucchini, sweet potato and goat cheese. For me, pretty much anything that involves pesto and goat cheese is bound to be delicious. But if you add toasted bread and flavorful vegetables, let's just say it turns into the kind of sandwich that I could eat every day and never get tired of.

We finished off our meal with a luscious chocolate cake with walnuts and vanilla ice cream. Everything truly hit the spot and had us savoring the very last crumb…

Crumb

- **Facebook**, **Website** & Instagram: @crumbmadrid
- **Address:** Calle Conde Duque 8
- **Metro:** Plaza de España or Ventura Rodríguez

Best Coworking Spaces in Madrid

Madrid is becoming increasingly friendly toward freelancers and startups, thanks to its great coworking spaces and work-friendly cafés. Here's a list of our favorites, located in different central neighborhoods of the city. Although each one has something unique to offer, they have the essentials in common: fast WiFi and plenty of coffee.

Espíritu 23



Image from Espíritu 23

- Website, Facebook & Instagram @espiritu_23
- Address: Calle del Espíritu Santo 23
- Metro: Tribunal/Noviciado

Situated in the heart of Malasaña, this coworking space definitely reflects the nature of the neighborhood. There's also a friendly café open to the public. It has a young, artsy and urban vibe, with lots of personality. Of course the coworking space offers a fast internet connection, a kitchen, a meeting room, events, activities, workshops… the works. Best of all, the fees are great and the location couldn't be better.

Plázida – Loom



Image from Plázida

- Plázida: Website, Facebook & Instagrram @plazidacowork
- Loom: Website

- **Address: Calle Vandergoten, 1 and Calle de la Princesa, 5**
- Metro: Atocha and Plaza de España

Plázida prides itself on being specifically designed for digital nomads. It collaborates with LoomHouse in two Madrid locations; one is near Atocha train station, occupying the former building of the Royal Tapestry Factory, with a beautiful outdoor garden area. The other is centrally located right by Plaza de España, complete with a rooftop hangout space. At both locations you'll find high ceilings, brick walls, bright light, ergonomic workstations, and more. There are several member options to choose from for both individuals and teams, ranging from half days to 24/7 access.

Google Campus



- Website
- Address: Calle Moreno Nieto, 2
- Metro: La Latina or Puerta del Ángel (it’s a bit of a walk from the metro)

Google campus isn’t exactly a coworking space, but more like a giant café that anyone is welcome to work at, for free! There are several tables spread out across two floors, outlets everywhere and fast internet connection. Plus there are events held regularly and good food options at the café operated by Do Eat. The building also has offices for startups in the upper levels, and a huge conference room. All in all, it’s a great environment for working, networking, having a lunch meeting, or setting up your own individual office.

The Shed Coworking

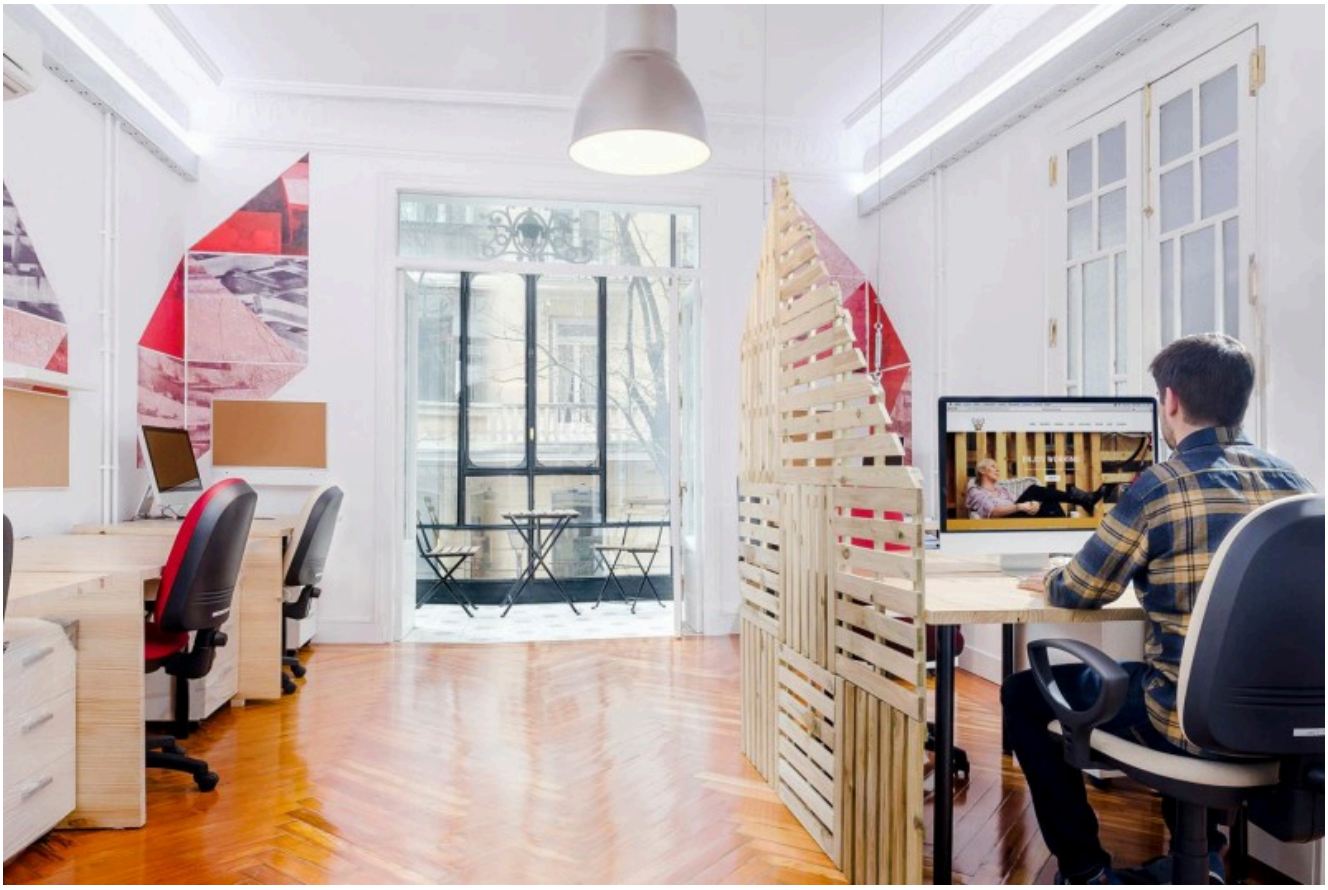


Image from The Shed

- Website, Facebook, and Instagram @theshedcoworking
- Address: 48, 1Dch Calle de Hermosilla, Madrid, Spain
- Metro: Velázquez

Located in Madrid's Salamanca district, The Shed is one of the city's top coworking spaces thanks to its positive work environment, community of creative professionals, and helpful staff. You'll find tons of natural light, plenty of workspace options, and an outdoor terrace. Members have lots of benefits, from access to the meeting rooms and kitchen to ergonomic chairs and free coffee. Workshops are also held periodically in the communal training room.

La Piscine



Image from La Piscine

- Facebook, Website
- Address: Calle Campoamor, 5

- Metros: Alonso Martínez/Chueca

La Piscine calls itself a “workplace for everybody.” It’s essentially a cute coffee shop where you pay by the hour to use the WiFi and get unlimited coffee, tea, and snacks. It also holds workshops and events. Located in the trendy and modern neighborhood of Chueca, it’s a great environment to work in. What’s most convenient is that you don’t have to commit to a month-long membership; you can just set up shop for a few hours and enjoy bottomless cups of coffee while you work away on your laptop. Packs of hours are available at discounted rates, if you become a regular.

Impact Hub Madrid



Image from Impact Hub Madrid

- Website, Facebook and Instagram @impacthubmad
- Address: 5 locations (original in Barrio de las Letras)

No article about Madrid's top coworking spaces would be complete without mentioning Impact Hub, which has been actively supporting the city's international innovators and entrepreneurs for years. Now with five giant locations around Madrid, it not only provides an ideal work space for freelancers and startups alike, but also a truly impressive calendar full of information sessions, workshops, initiatives, events, markets and more.

La Industrial

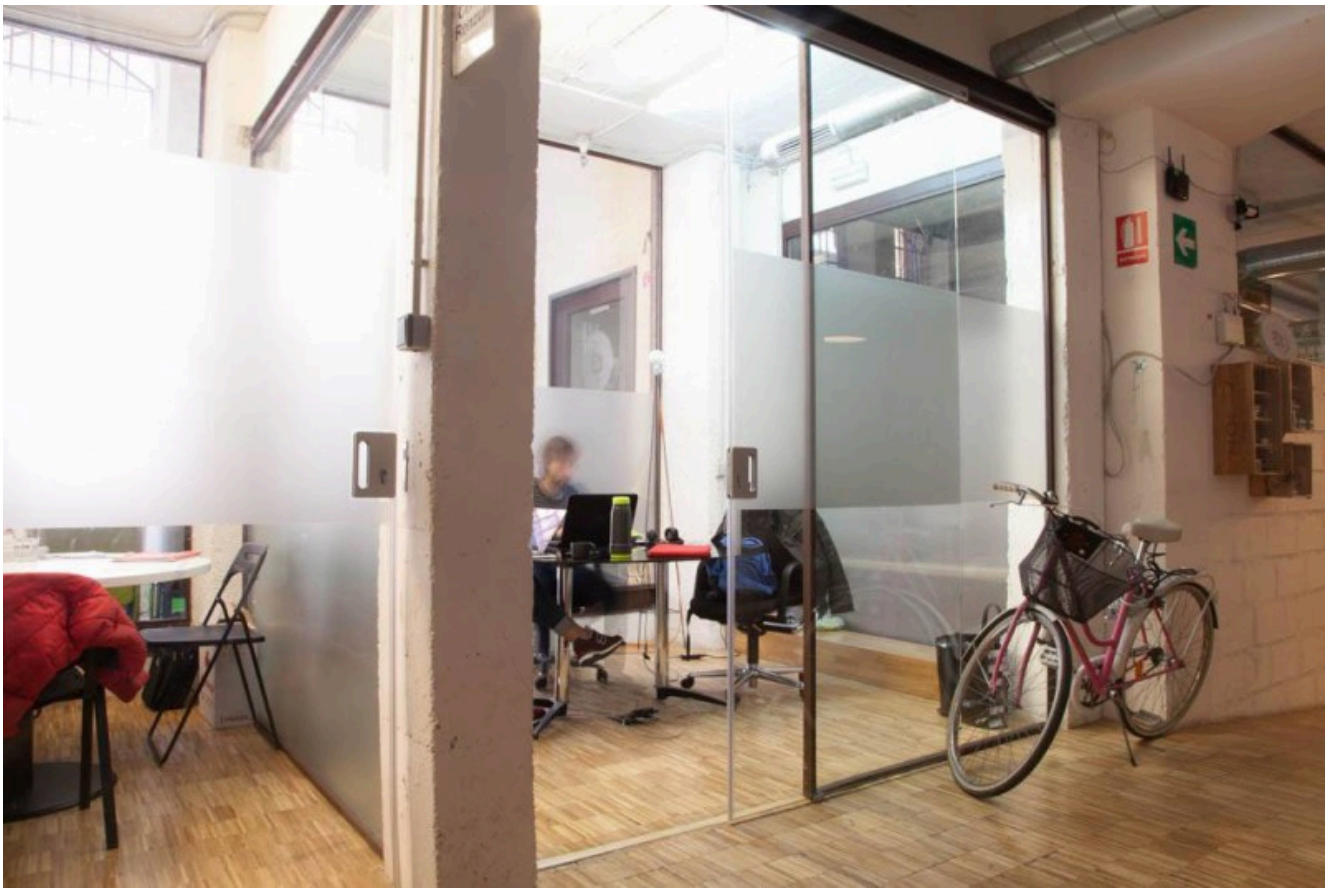


Image from La Industrial

- Website, Facebook and Instagram
- Address: Calle San Andrés 8
- Metro: Tribunal

This 400-square-meter space is located in the heart of Malasaña. It's open to all types of professionals and offers a

number of affordable member options, from daily to monthly passes (you can try out a day for free). You can rent out a spot at the open area, private workstations, meeting rooms and different spaces for workshops, events, markets, you name it. They have an additional 250-square-meter events space on Calle San Ferrer 33. Plus it's pet-friendly!

Utopic_US



- Website, Facebook and Instagram @utopic_us

- Address: 5 locations, original on Calle Colegiata and Duque de Rivas (across the street)

Utopic_US has the benefit of being one of the city's most established coworking spaces. Although it now has a number of locations, the most famous ones are on Calle Colegiata and Duque de Rivas, just across the street from each other, between Tirso de Molina and La Latina. Utopic_US offers private offices, meeting rooms, and open works areas for small businesses, startups, and freelancers. Members have access to a wide range of networking events and workshops, yoga and mindfulness classes… There's also a full café and restaurant that's open to the public.

Bee Lab



Image from Bee Lab

- Website, Facebook and Instagram @beelabcoworking
- Address: Calle Asunción Castell, 5
- Metro: Estrecho

This bright and friendly coworking space is fully equipped with everything a small business owner, startup, or freelancer could possibly ask for: both private and shared work areas, meeting rooms, a kitchen, a fast internet connection, a chill-out room, an outdoor terrace, and even a mini golf course. And it's pet friendly too! You'll be sharing your work space with people from around the world and there are a number of networking opportunities, such as Friday breakfasts.

Did we miss any? Let us know!

Also check out these 5 work-friendly cafés with reliable WiFi in the center of Madrid

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Lúa Vermutería, a charming new bar with an old spirit in Lavapiés

Serendipity. It's a funny thing. My friends and I used to go to a bar several nights a week where the head server, Alberto, treated us like royalty. It was our hangout spot.

Fast-forward a few years, and I was wandering around Lavapiés with a friend on a Saturday night and we stumbled upon Lúa Vermutería on the (very cool) Calle Doctor Fourquet. We were in the mood to try something new and this place immediately

lured us in. After squeezing through the crowd and making our way to the bar, to our surprise, there was Alberto!



At 56 years old, Alberto is now the owner of this new venture which he named after his daughter, Lúa (meaning “moon” in Galicia, where he’s from). And he took the head chef, Rosa, from the former bar along with him.

Although they completely gutted and refurbished an old night club, today Lúa Vermutería looks like a traditional *taberna* that underwent a high-quality facelift. It has an old-fashioned feel to it, with high tables and stools set out in the front, and just a handful of sit-down tables in the back.



Lúa Vermutería is located on a street that’s full of new art galleries and trendy shops in the ever-changing neighborhood of Lavapiés. That’s why it stands out for its charming and classic vibe. It’s already becoming a favorite in the barrio, with visits from the likes of celebrities including Almodóvar. The music ranges from soul to blues, and they’ve started showcasing exhibits from local artists.



As for the drinks, you'll find Zecchini vermouth on tap and a list of Spanish wines and beers. Of course, each round comes with a complementary tapa. The menu features homemade Spanish dishes, along with a number of modern and vegetarian options. For lunch, you can also order the daily special: a €5 *plato de cuchara* (usually a hearty stew), such as lentils, *cocido,* or *la olla gitana (*pictured below).



So far we've ordered the *entraña* (steak), *tacos de bonito* (tuna slices over black pasta with cuttlefish and alioli), and the *pisto manchego* on toast.



Everything was absolutely delicious. The steak was cooked perfectly and came with *patatas bravas*, one of the house specialties. Alberto also treated us to a side of caramelized onions prepared with vermouth – it was so sweet and so good.



The Italian-inspired pasta mixed with alioli and tuna was a burst of different textures and flavors. It’s one of Lúa’s star dishes that came highly recommended by Alberto.



And my favorite was the *pisto* – a slice of toast topped with a heaping portion of freshly cooked vegetables that tasted even better once the yolk from the fried egg spilled all over it.

It was wonderful to see Alberto there after so many years. We'll definitely be back again and again.

Lúa Vermutería

- **Facebook**
- **Instagram:** @lua_vermuteria
- **Address:** Doctor Fourquet, 28
- **Metro:** Embajadores or Lavapiés
- **Phone:** 637 65 27 51

Toscanaccio, gourmet Italian takeaway in Lavapiés

Toscanaccio is a cute little Italian bakery and pizzeria situated on a side street in Lavapiés, opened a year and a half ago by Guillermo (Madrid) and Federico (Siena). Out of their small kitchen and sole oven comes authentic homemade bites from Tuscany, all lovingly crafted on site, from scratch and with prime ingredients.



While you'd think the creators of **Toscanaccio** hailed from a long line of Italian bakers, their story is rather unexpected. Guillermo and Federico met over a decade ago while studying in

London, and have since travelled and lived around the world, always picking up new skills and game for new adventures along the way.



Neither of them had planned on opening an Italian bakery. That is, until a few years ago when they decided to set out on a new venture in Madrid: a Tuscan-inspired takeaway joint in Lavapiés.

Before opening, they spent months training with a *señor* who's been hand-crafting authentic Italian baked goods for over 40 years. After learning from the best, they found a place and refurbished it practically by hand. And here they are!



Toscanaccio fits perfectly into the already diverse and eclectic neighborhood of Lavapiés, full of charming gems and

surprises scattered throughout its sloping, winding streets.



When you step into Toscanaccio, you'll immediately see a tempting display of prepared foods. Options range from savory bites like pizza, *focaccia, calzoni*, and *ciaccino ripieno* (sandwiches typical of Tuscany) to a wide selection of traditional cookies, cakes and pastries like *crostatines, tarta de la nonna,* and *panello de uva*. Depending on the day, you may even find brownies and carrot cake.



The *ciaccino* filled with brie, arugula and pesto is my new favorite go-to snack.



There’s also an assortment of homemade breads, with an additional daily special. Today’s was *pan de calabaza* (pumpkin bread). All the dough is made with different types of organic wheat, rye and spelt flour, made right here in the kitchen, in plain sight.



The space is quite tiny, but it’s all you need. If you want to sit, there are only two stools and a bench outside. Otherwise, it’s best to order to go. Luckily their hours are quite accommodating: they open from 11am-11:30pm every day, and until 3:30am on Fridays and Saturdays. Tuesday is their day off.

So thanks to these two guys, we’ve now got the perfect place to grab a delicious Italian bite on the go, almost any day of the week.

Toscanaccio

- **Facebook**
- **Instagram:** @toscanaccio_
- **Address:** Calle de la Fe 16
- **Metro:** Lavapiés

- **Phone:** 912974729
- **Hours:**
    - Monday through Thursday 11:00 AM – 11:30 PM
    - Fridays and Saturdays open till 3:30 AM
    - Closed on Tuesdays

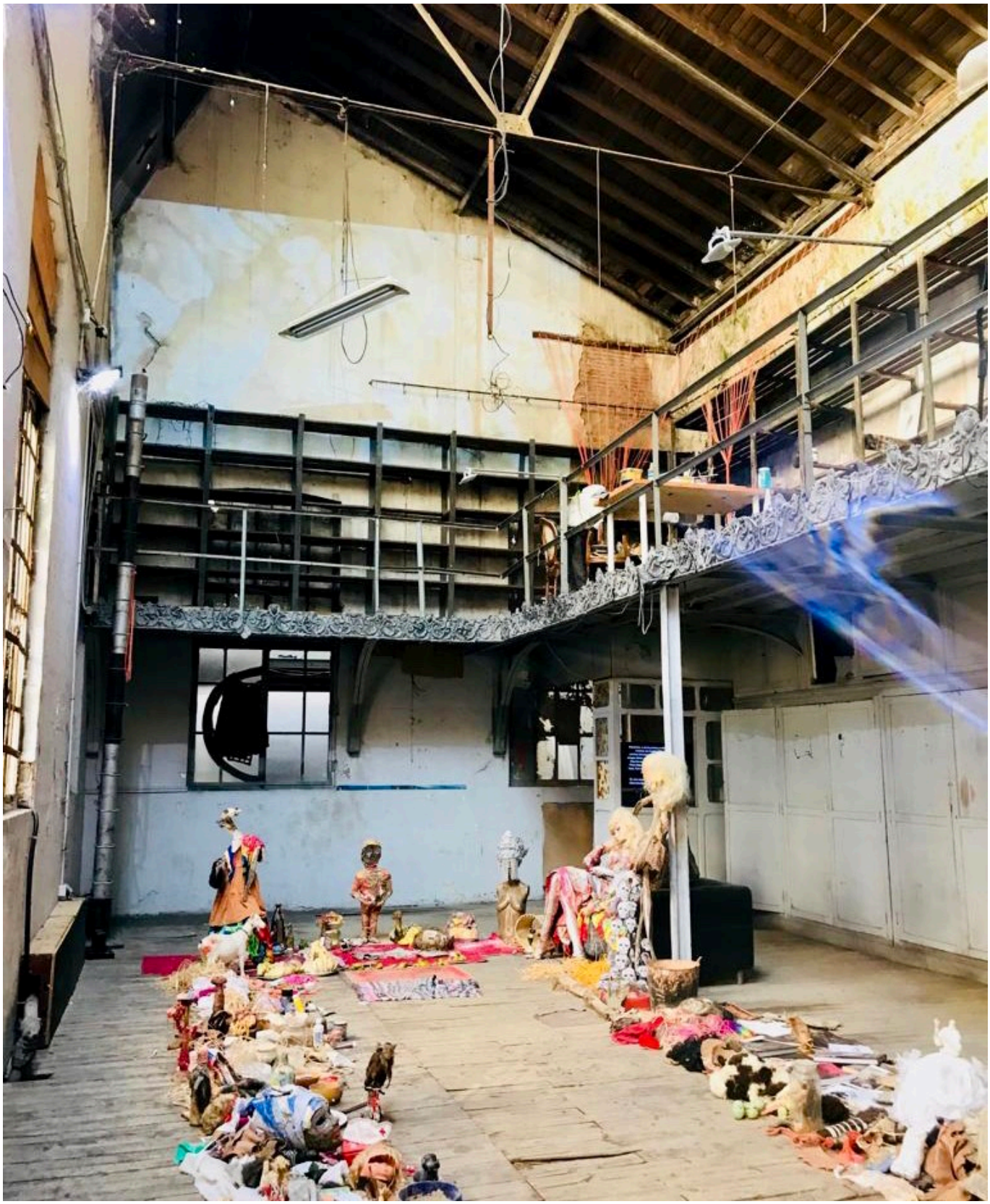
La Neomudéjar, a spooky, avant-garde arts center near Atocha

If you're into experimental art and transformed industrial buildings, then this is the place for you. **La Neomudéjar** is a rather eerie **museum**, located behind Atocha train station. It occupies a massive building that was the former offices of Spanish railway company Adif, and was converted into an international arts center and residency five years ago.

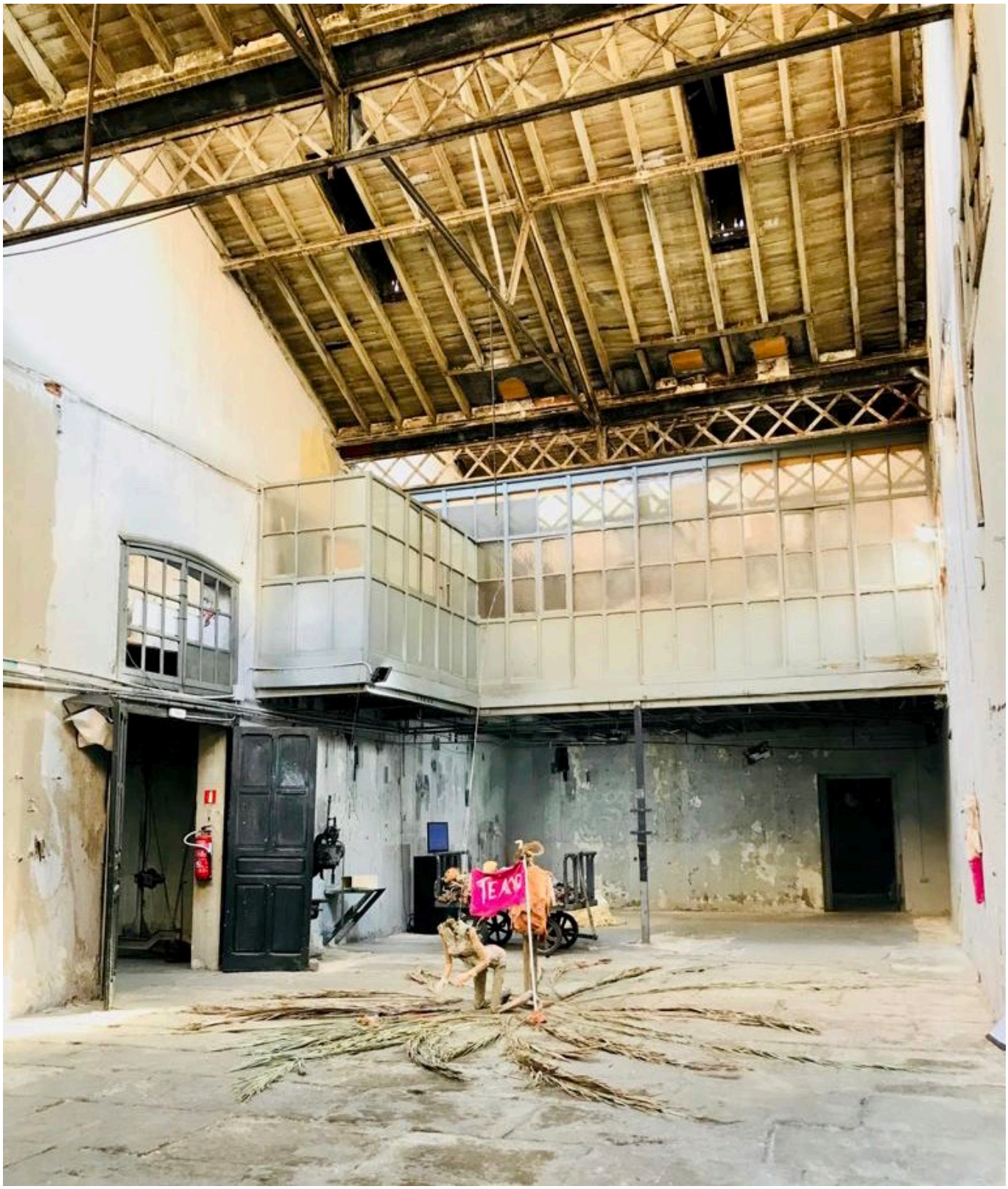


A renovation was clearly not top priority upon its reopening, as it feels like a completely abandoned old factory, taken over by bold artists. You might even think you're in the wrong place as you enter through the unassuming gate located on a side street, just a few blocks away from Atocha.

But keep walking down the little stairway and through the unadorned outdoor area with plastic tables and ashtrays, and **you'll find the main door to a unique addition to Madrid's thriving arts scene, featuring art exhibits, performances, residencies and more.**



In the entrance, you'll find a gift shop with art books and other materials. Through there you'll start off in the main room where your gaze will immediately begin to scan the entire space from floor to ceiling… Both the exhibited art and the building itself are worth marvelling at.



Tiptoe around the items scattered across the floor as you look at paintings and displays with rather surprising written phrases, scenes, and messages. Continue entering through dark rooms, stained walls, and creepy corridors that lead you to dynamic art installations, film screenings and exhibits from international artists. **The current exhibit is called Dollhouse**

by Dutch artist Fardou Keuning, featuring life-size dolls.



In addition to the contemporary exhibits on display, you'll

also see clear remnants of the building’s former life as a railway company.



One last tip: this is a great place to take a photo for your instagram story and scare your friends.



La Neomudéjar

- **Website** & **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle Antonio Nebrija
- **Metro:** Menendéz Pelayo / Atocha Renfe
- **Entrance fee:** €5
- **Hours:** Wednesday-Sunday, 11am-3pm/5pm-9pm

You may also like:

- **Madrid museums: the obvious and not-so-obvious (and how to get in for free!)**

Best Madrid lunch spots south of Atocha – VeraContent staff picks

When it comes to great restaurants and bars in Madrid, it's common to go no further than Lavapiés. But that's quite sad because there are a number of wonderful eateries just south of Atocha. How we do know this? Because the team at **VeraContent** (Naked Madrid's mom), has been to pretty much all of them since **opening our office space** last year near metro stops Delicias, Palos de la Frontera and Embajadores, also known as the neighborhood of Arganzuela.

So we've decided to make a roundup of our favorite Madrid lunch spots in the area, each one nominated and written by a different **staff** member at VeraContent. Hope you enjoy them!

1. Atocha Tandoori





The management teem at Atocha Tandoori!

- **Recommended by Melissa Haun**
- Website
- Address: Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza 27

This place might just be Madrid's best Indian restaurant south of Lavapiés, with a wide variety of traditional dishes to suit every taste. It's the perfect place to go out for a special—but not too expensive—lunch, thanks to the different *menus del día* offered. Each one includes some combination of starter, main dish, drink, and optional dessert or coffee. All the favorites are there: chicken tikka masala, tandoori lamb, chana masala, vegetable korma, samosas, and much more. There are plenty of veggie and seafood options, as well as various kinds of naan and rice. For dessert don't miss the mango lassi. The last time we went there as a team, they also

brought each of us a complimentary digestif! When it comes to overall quality and variety, Atocha Tandoori never disappoints.

2. En Porciones



- **Recommended by Meagan Gardner**
- Website
- Address: inside Mercado de Santa María de la Cabeza, on Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza, 41

I eat here twice a week—and not just because it's directly in front of our office (though that doesn't hurt). En Porciones is a small stand in the market that sells fresh and unique meals cooked by the owner and chef, Arturo. Here you can find anything from eggplant lasagna to blue cheese and beet salad, peanut and honey-glazed turkey, honey mustard 'secreto,' artichoke risotto…. Arturo's common thread seems to be classic Mediterranean recipes with a twist. The best part? You choose your food from huge bowls and pay by its weight. An amazing lunch for under five bucks.

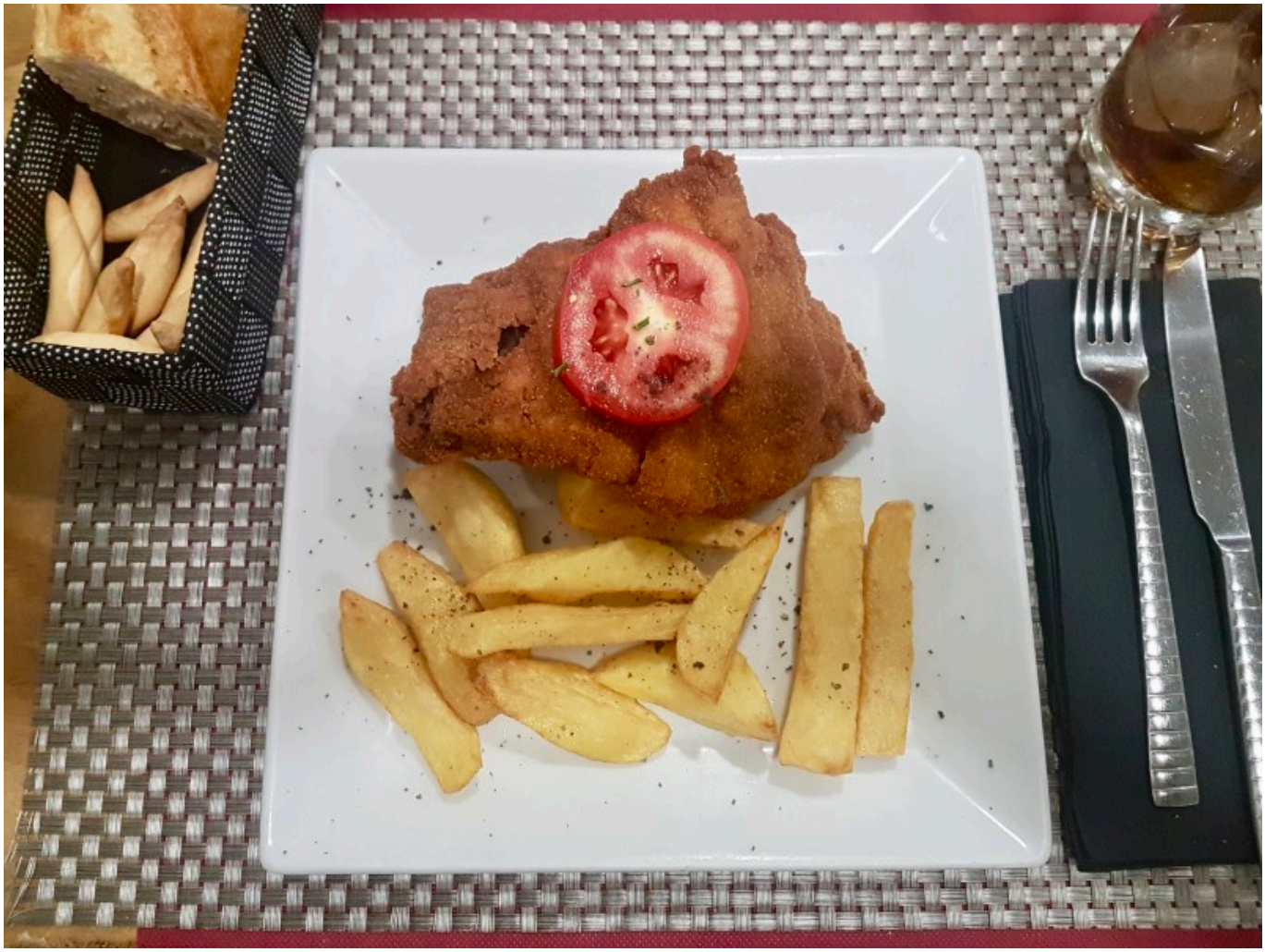
3. Restaurante Buen Gusto



- **Recommended by Kyler Canastra**
- Website
- Address: Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza, 60

From time to time, we all crave a little bit of Chinese food. And when you can’t resist the temptation, you need to head to Restaurante Buen Gusto. You might be wondering why this Chinese restaurant is different from the hundreds of others in Madrid. Firstly, the service is quick and the staff warm and friendly. Trilingual in Mandarin, Spanish, and English and attentive, the servers make sure your experience is high-quality and efficient, which is great when you are in a rush to head back to work. Secondly, the numerous food options are all tasty and delicious. From lemon chicken and spring rolls to sweet and sour soup to an orange-style duck, your mouth will simply water. And the best part, they have two daily menu options. For just €7.95 or €8.95, you will have a three-course meal with a drink and dessert included. Talk about a bargain!

4. Restaurante Gastrobar la Sal



- **Recommended by Joss Burns**
- Facebook
- Address: Calle Embajadores 143

€10.50 for a weekday menu—this fact alone would make this place worth a visit. At least, that was my logic when I went there for Friday-afternoon lunch with my colleague. The beautiful brickwork facade stands out as particularly ornate when you walk down the street but, when you go inside, the place is surprisingly unassuming. The decor is delicate and understated, with a few carefully chosen pictures on the wall. At first glance, it seems unimaginably tiny—that is, until you notice the larger dining room partially hidden to the right. We started with salmorejo and *fideuá de marisco*. I had never had the small Catalonian pasta before and wolfed it down hungrily before the *segundos* came in: chicken in a light vegetable sauce and Asturian *cachopo*, breaded beef with cheese and ham. It wasn't long before we were leaning back and rubbing our bellies, refusing the dessert in favour of coffee. La Sal is a fantastic find. It's one of those places where you come for the price, but you return for the quality.

5. Pui's Thai Tapas





- **Recommended by Nikole Hyndman**
- Facebook
- Address: Calle José Antonio de Armona, 7

Pui's Thai Tapas is for lovers of Thai cuisine, and anyone looking to get a little taste of Thailand. Here, you'll enjoy a laid-back dining experience and authentic Thai food prepared by Pui himself. While you can expect to spend around €15 a dish, rest assured that the impressive portion sizes and magnificent flavours make it worth every penny. Prepare to drool over their extensive menu (with pictures for those among us less experienced with the delights of Thai food), complete with a variety of appetisers, deserts and traditional Thai soft drinks. If you're feeling overwhelmed by all the possibilities, try one of the favourites like Pad Thai, Tom Kha Gai and Pork Panang. In most cases, you can decide the spice level, or even to substitute meat for tofu. Their

friendly staff is very accommodating, and more than willing to help you navigate their menu selection.

6. Bar Ávila



- **Recommended by Eva Alfonso Movilla**
- Address: Calle Ferrocarril, 15

If you just want a quick drink and a tapa for less than 2 euros, any bar on Calle Ferrocarril is a good bet. The street is lined with bars with outdoor seating. My favorite is Bar Ávila, where the tapas portions are generous and you get a couple of small snacks with each drink, ranging from *empanadillas* to mini hamburgers. It's nice to spend your lunch break enjoying some fresh air on the *terraza*, but it's an even better place to meet up after work and have some *cañas* with

your colleagues.

7. El Salon de Otoño



- **Recommended by Shaheen Samavati**
- Facebook

- Address: Calle de Murcia, 5

This restaurant serves up traditional Ecuadorian dishes, but you wouldn’t know it by its booth seating, stained glass faux windows and soft tungsten lighting, which are reminiscent of the classy American chain restaurants of my childhood. This is a place to go for its *menu del día.* It’s just €10.80 and most of the dishes come in extremely generous portions. If you’re not feeling so hungry, you can get a half menu for just €8. That represents a huge bargain compared to their dinner and weekend prices, which start at around €15 a dish. For the first course I almost always go for some variation of *ceviche,* which comes loaded with fish and a side of roasted corn and dried plantains. For the second course, they offer excellent combinations of fish, roasted and grilled meats usually with rice, potatoes and/or plantains. (This place is not ideal for vegetarians.) The desserts are also fantastic—try the *mousse de maracuyá*. This gem isn’t at all hidden—it’s packed just about every day of the week. Make sure to get there before or after peak lunch time if you want to be seated quickly.

8. Taco y Burro Maya



- **Recommended by James Leahu**
- Facebook
- Address: Paseo de Santa Maria de la Cabeza, 60

This place feels like a typical Tex-Mex bar but without being a chain. For €9 you'll get yourself a massive burrito with pork, beef or chicken, plus rice, cheese and avocado. Unlike Chipotle-style chains, you don't have to make lots of decisions: that's how it comes, and it's really good. If you're not too hungry, I recommend sharing one with a friend. The extremely simple menu features variations of essentially the same dish: quesadillas or tacos made with the same meat options. Everything is made with quality ingredients and at

reasonable prices. They offer about six different types of Mexican salsas to add to your burrito with varying levels of spice, and there are a range of Mexican drinks to try. I've been here twice so far. Each time I ordered my burrito to go and ate it at the office—convenient, delicious and filling. It's a pretty small place with just a handful of high tables, but the staff is friendly and the service is good.

9. Bodegas Rosell



- **Recommended by Daphne Binioris**
- **Website & Facebook**
- Address: Calle del General Lacy 14

This is one of those beloved long-standing restaurants that has preserved the spirit of Madrid's old-school *tabernas* in every corner. Opened in 1920 by the Rosell family, the decor, food, and service will take you back in time. Bodegas Rosell

is perfect for when you're craving traditional Spanish dishes and generous portions. You'll find *croquetas*, *tortilla*, *callos* (tripe), *cocido madrileño* (Madrid-style stew), and *solomillo* (pork tenderloin), as well as a variety of *tostas* and tapas. This charming tavern is great for a quick meal on a stool by any of the barrel tables, or for a quieter lunch or dinner. **Read our full article about Bodegas Rosell**.

10. Taberna las Sobrinas





- **Recommended by the [VeraContent](#) team**
- Address: Calle Palos de la Frontera 38

Taberna las Sobrinas is a great old-fashioned Spanish bar. It's one of the spots that the VeraContent team hangs out most at after work, mainly because the amount of free tapas they give you with each round is insane, plus it's right around the corner from the office. You won't need to order any food here, even if you're hungry. Along with your order of *cañas* and *vinos*, you're likely to get an entire tortilla, a plate of croquetas, slices of manchego cheese, you name it. There's also a spacious outdoor seating area. As for lunch, you can find a typical menu of *bocadillos* and Spanish dishes.

Have any more tips on where to eat south of Atocha? Let us know!

And if you aren’t familiar with VeraContent, find out more about us on our website, and check us out on Facebook and Instagram!