

Hattori Hanzo, Japanese food straight-up. No sushi.

I rekindled my love for Japanese food when I went for dinner at [Hattori Hanzo](#) with friends on Tuesday night. Our group of seven had no reservation, yet the waiters fit us in at the bar and then moved us to a table just in time for our first round of dumplings.



Located a few steps from Gran Vía, **Hattori Hanzo** is a Japanese *izakaya*, meaning a casual bar that acts as a

gathering place for coworkers and friends. It's similar to a Spanish tapas bar; food is served to accompany drinks, not the other way around. That's why the ambience here is rather laid back.

Hattori Hanzo specializes in a variety of traditional Japanese dishes such as *okonomiyaki*, *takoyaki*, and grilled meat and fish skewers, offering a number of combination platters and sizes. Plus it's vegetarian-friendly, affordable, and has a big space with a great seating arrangement.

In the front room, you can dine at the bar (note: no sushi!) or at a six-person table under a red canopy, where we sat. The red canopy sheds a fiery red hue over everything, so we apologize for the red-tinted food pics you're about to see.



You can also sit in the back room at tables sunken into the

floor. I can't quite explain it so please have a look at the photos below.



When it comes to food, you've got a ton of options. The menu is separated into three parts: the first includes starters such as **Nira Gyoza** delicious pork **dumplings** with a spicy sesame sauce.



The second part includes larger plates meant for sharing between two or three people, such as the **Omu-yakisoba** (Japanese yakisoba noodles in a thin and flavorful tortilla) and **Dorayaki Shuriken** (Japanese pancakes).



Lastly, the third column offers tapas-sized skewers of Japanese delights such as chicken ginger meatballs and marinated eggplant and salmon. You can order these skewers individually (ranging in price from 2-5€). Or you can order them in platters: the **7 Samurai** platter includes Hattori's seven most popular skewers for **€16.20** (which I ordered with James) and the **3 Imperial Treasures** platter (which I'll try next time) includes three Japanese delicacies such as **Unayi Kabanaki** (grilled eel) and **Taro** (tuna) for €18.90.



For dessert, we got **Kuro Goma Matcha Ice Cream** (black sesame and matcha ice cream) and **Matcha Ichigo Roll Cake** (rolled pastry with matcha, strawberry and anko, meaning red bean paste).





So you're probably wondering about the price. Each of us had a few drinks, split a starter and shared a main dish and dessert. The bill came out to **18€ per person**. For the quality and the ambience, I'd say it was absolutely worth it.

Info

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Mesoneros Romanos 15

Metro: Callao or Gran Vía

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked

Madrid:

- [Ramen Kagura, Madrid's \(almost\) perfect ramen bar](#)
 - [Kintaro – Oy Vey](#)
 - [Sumo – This Japanese restaurant's name says it all](#)
 - [Tuk Tuk – Asian-inspired street food](#)
 - [Chuka Ramen Bar – Madrid's hottest ramen restaurant](#)
 - [Nippon 2 – top quality yet affordable sushi, finally!](#)
 - [Soy Kitchen – a fusion of Asian flavors](#)
 - [Karachai – A cozy and elegant Thai restaurant in Alonso Martínez](#)
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Madrid's action-packed English-language comedy scene, interview with Josh and Rusty

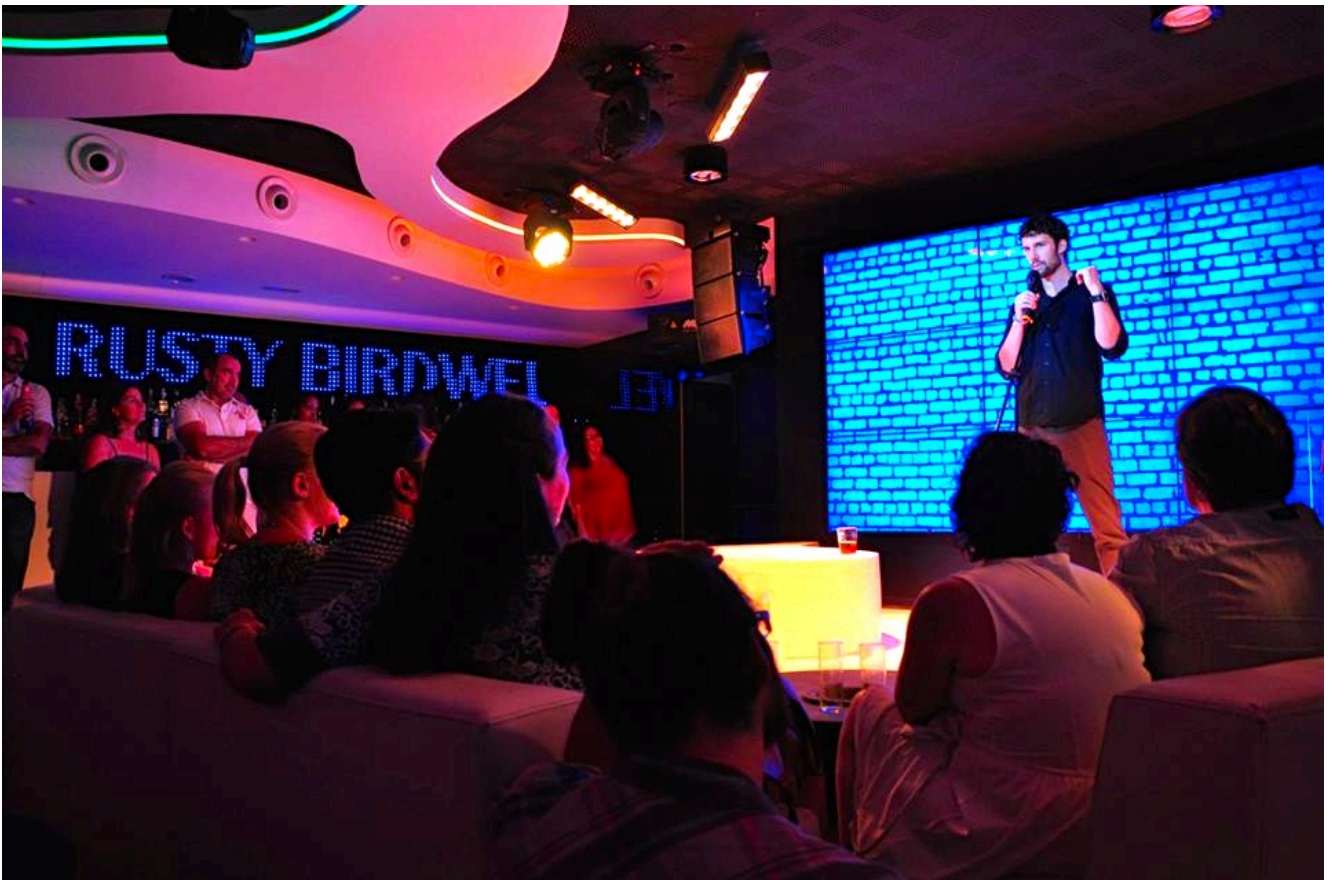
Thanks to a whirlwind of stand-up comedy shows, improv groups and international festivals, you can enjoy live comedy in English in Madrid every week! This year alone, the city hosted an international comedy competition and received a visit from the world-famous stand-up comedian, Eddie Izzard, himself.

So, how do I find out about shows and get up on stage?

You can check out our [calendar](#) for upcoming events, but first, get to know the city's three main English-language comedy

groups:

1. **Ace Comedy Factory** was founded by Joshua Saxon (from London) and Rusty Birdwell (from Tennessee) last March with monthly open mic comedy showdowns at [Triskel Tavern](#) in Malasaña. They've also launched an event called "Comedy Super Team, Go!" which Josh calls the "*best of*", as they perform their most polished sets and feature comedians such as Archie Bezos and Kirk Bonacci.



Rusty on stage at Comedy Super Team, Go! at [Ancora](#)

2. **Freshly Comedy** prides itself on being Madrid's first English-language comedy group. It has two different shows: "*Freshly Squeezed*" (45 min stand-up/45 min improv) and "*Freshly Baked*" (90 min pure improv). At all of these events, expect lots of drinks, jokes and games, plus audience participation...



Freshly Comedy – doing what could only be improv – at [Beer Station](#)

3. MAD Improv is an English improv group that meets every Saturday afternoon. The first three weekends of the month are free, while the last is a 4-hour masterclass given by Benjamin Nathan-Serio, costing €25. Anyone can join; you don't have to be a native speaker or have any previous experience. In fact, one Spanish woman joined because she had to do public speaking in English at work. (check out their [meetup group](#))



improv workshops in English near Puerta de Toledo on Saturdays from 4:30-7:30pm

Inside scoop on Madrid's English-language comedy scene

To give you a roadmap, I sat down with Josh and Rusty, the guys who founded [Ace Comedy Factory](#) and collaborate with [Freshly Comedy](#). Rusty is one of the leaders of [MAD improv](#) and Josh organized this year's [Festival Internacional de la Comedia \(FIC\)](#), which featured an outstanding line-up including Reginald D. Hunter, one of the UK's best known comedians whose 200-seat show sold out. The festival also included the [Funniest FICer competition](#), Spain's premiere English-language comedy competition held in Madrid and Barcelona, plus a free inaugural event in Retiro – [The Big Comedy Picnic](#) – in which eighty people set up picnics on the grass.



seen at The Big Comedy Picnic in Retiro

First impressions

When I first met Rusty, I asked him how he got his name. His answer: "Well, my parents just couldn't decide. My father wanted to call me Chainsaw and my mother, Butterfly!" It turned out this was an "elevated truth", a tactic both Rusty and Josh use in their sets.



doing improv I assume...

Oh, and Josh likes to be called Batman if possible. He likes bats.



the batman of comedy indeed

Sitting down with Rusty and Batman for coffee at [La Ciudad Invisible](#) felt like a behind-the-scenes glimpse into their free-style warm-up; the shenanigans that go on when they hang out together often lead them to come up with their best lines.

What's the crowd like?

They get a lot of regulars and people from all over the world. One of the regular comedy-goers, Amy Flippant, from the UK, said: "I remember thinking it was cool to see so many nationalities and accents [on stage] in one event. There were Brits, Americanas, Canadians, and Spaniards, so it's very welcoming." She also witnessed all sorts of comedy, from loud and slapstick to very very surreal (especially at the picnic), and lots of first-time performers, too.

Why do you think Madrid has such a widely popular comedy scene in English?

Both Josh and Rusty agreed that the amount of stuff going on is quite unexpected. It shows the city's welcoming nature as well as the power of Madrid's expat community to start new things. Unlike cities like New York and London, there's little competition for English comedy in Madrid; it's a niche market here. What started out with a few English-language comedy nights a month has since turned into an action-packed micro-culture of stand-up and improv groups that are at it all year long. Not to mention the many English-language theater groups. That's a whole other story...

How did you get into comedy?

Both are pretty new to comedy. For Josh, who has a background in Journalism, it was always on his bucket list. On a whim, he participated in the [FICer Competition](#) last year and has been hooked ever since. Rusty calls Josh "super multi-talented," as he's not only a comedian and host, but also handles the web, organization and PR for many events. Rusty grew up doing theater and improv, and some film acting, although he stopped when he went into writing. While living in Madrid, he got the urge to get back into it and began organizing [Ace Comedy Factory](#) with Josh last February.

Do you get nervous?

"Yeah, of course," said Josh. He's had a few tense moments on stage, but it's part of the game. "I compare it to getting punched in the face. Once it's happened, you can stand up for yourself." Rusty followed with a quote he had recently heard: "The master has failed more times than the beginner has ever tried."

Their advice for anyone who wants to start something new in Madrid

“Go for it!”

Images from [Ace Comedy Factory](#), [MAD Improv](#), [Freshly Comedy](#) and [Madrid International Comedy Festival](#)

Los Chuchis Bar, Downright Good Food in Lavapiés

[Los Chuchis](#) is a sweet little bistro bar that sits on calle Amparo, one of those typically narrow and sloping streets in Lavapiés. The bar lures you in with its white-and-blue-striped awning and funky decorations. Although it seats no more than fifty people – you may have to squeeze in at the bar or pounce on one of the few tables – what it lacks in size, it truly makes up for in quality. If you are a foodie, then dining at **Los Chuchis** is a must.



Los Chuchis was opened by Scott, an Englishman who has called Madrid home for about three years. Scott not only owns and runs the restaurant, but the kitchen, too. **Los Chuchis'** cuisine is British at heart; many dishes are inspired by Jamie Oliver, although touches of Spain can be noticed in its ingredients, drink selection and ambience.



The first time I heard of [Los Chuchis](#) was when Spain's newspaper, [El País](#), came out with an article on [10 Madrid Expats' Favorite Bars](#). A photo of [Los Chuchis and Scott](#) was featured at the top of the article. That photo stuck with me.



Since [Los Chuchis](#) had been lingering on my list for weeks,

James and I went for a *menú del día* (€11.50), which, I can assure you, is the best time to go. When I saw the menu, I was blown away by the number of succulent ingredients in each and every dish. Everything was so fresh and the presentation was delightful. I was smitten.

After much deliberation, here's what we ordered for lunch:

For starters, I had a salad with fresh greens, watermelon and fetta cheese. James went for the cold avocado soup.





For the main course, I ordered **hake fish with pesto and clams** and James got the **breaded veal with a lovely side salad of mango, tomato, avocado and onion**.





While we could have written this post right then and there, we decided that it was only fair that we try out **Los Chuchis** for dinner too. We just wanted to make sure it was as good as we thought it was. So we went back for dinner the other night and guess what? It was.

Dinner at Los Chuchis means *raciones* with friends

At night, **Los Cuchis** serves *raciones* (large dishes which you can either share or eat on your own). As we entered the bar on a Tuesday night, James and I were hit with all types of wonderful smells and instantly started gazing over at the patrons beside us, admiring the dishes they were devouring. The star dish that kept on coming out of the kitchen was the **potato skins with sour cream and hot sauce** (€8.50).

The menu also featured tantalizing concoctions such as **Stinking Bishop cheese with grapes** (€13,50), **Isle of Mull**

cheddar with chilli peppers (€13.50), oven-baked Camembert cheese with roasted garlic and rosemary (€12.50). Then there were the more classic dishes such as roasted chicken with lemon and rosemary (€10.50) as well as arugula salad with roasted tomato, red onion and Stilton cheese (€11.50).

James and I decided to share the lamb chops with yogurt and mint sauce (€14.50). James liked the sauce so much that he took it home with him in a coffee cup.



Los Chuchis should be on the top of your list if you're into food, want to satisfy your tastebuds and appetite, and like discovering unique little restaurants that truly surprise you.

I recommend making a reservation for lunch and dinner. You can eat at the bar too.

Price range & hours:

- Lunch: *menú del día* – weekdays €11.50 & weekends €14.50. From 2pm-4pm.
- Dinner: *raciones* – 20-25€/person. Kitchen opens at 8:30pm.

[Facebook](#)

Address: c/ Amparo, 82

Metro: Lavapiés

Phone: 911 27 66 06

Taberna Lamiak, my favorite Basque pintxo bar with Tuesday night wine tastings

If you've got the urge to fight those beginning-of-the-week blues, go to Taberna Lamiak on Tuesday nights for a free wine tasting and a few heavenly *tostas*. You will love it.

A few months ago, my sister-in-law, [Laura](#), told me I had to go to this bar called [Lamiak](#), and write about it for Naked Madrid. So I went, and ever since, Lamiak has turned into one of those bars that I actually have cravings for. This beloved Basque tavern has two locations—one near metro Antón Martín and the other on La Latina's most popular street, La Cava Baja. Both locations boast brick walls, tiny stools, a great wine list and delicious food.



[Taberna Lamiak](#) serves some of the tastiest **tostas** and **pintxos** I've ever had in this city (better than [Lateral](#)'s), and they only cost **€1,90 each**. The photos below can attest to the beauty and generous portions of these simple, yet delicious treats. And while a picture alone may speak a thousand words, I still hope you'll trust me when I say that the food here at Lamiak is so good, I sometimes wonder why it is that I ever eat anywhere else. It would seem the word is already out. **Lamiak**'s divine offerings are no secret amongst Madrileños, who keep the place packed every night, clamouring for their weekly pintxo fix! Don't let the hungry throngs stop you, as this boisterous atmosphere is all part of the fun.

My favorite tostas here are the **queso de cabra con tomate y cebolla caramelizada** (goat cheese with caramelized onions and tomato) and the **empanada de confit de pato con pasas** (duck and raisin empanada). James' favorite is the **solomillo con cebolla y oporto** (pork tenderloin with onions cooked in a port wine sauce). James is a big meat eater, so he also orders the **jamón ibérico con tomate** (Iberian cured ham with tomato), but there are plenty of **vegetarian options** here too, such as roasted vegetables, smoked salmon, cod and hummus.





Last Tuesday night, as I had my usual craving for Lamiak, James and I went to get my goat cheese fix at the location near Antón Martín, and were lucky enough to find a seat. At 9pm, mid-way through our second round of drinks and *tostas*, a man from [Vinocora](#) came up to us and said they were about to give a free wine tasting. Everybody in the bar got a free glass of Rioja to drink during the 30-min presentation. After that, a glass of that same wine cost just €1 for the rest of the night. What a lovely surprise!









[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Locations:

- C/ Cava Baja, 42. Metro: La Latina
 - C/ de la Rosa, 10. Metro: Antón Martín
-

Bolero Meatballs... You Gotta Try These Balls!

‘Spicy balls?’ ‘Juicy balls?’ ‘I want cheese on my balls.’ Let me explain...

I first stumbled upon [Bolero Meatballs](#), a fun new meatball shop in the center of Madrid, while walking around town with James. I saw the red MEATBALLS sign and my heart jumped. See, in New York (where I’m from), a restaurant called “The Meatball Shop” opened up a few years ago and it got so popular that it now has several locations. Whoever came up with this idea is a genius. Who doesn’t like meatballs?



I asked the two young ladies who own and run [Bolero Meatballs](#) – Nina, from Russia, and May, from Spain – if they had gotten the idea from The Meatball Shop in NYC, but they said they had gotten it from elsewhere, as meatballs were already becoming trendy in Moscow and Paris too. In fact, when I asked Nina if she was nervous about opening up a restaurant dedicated solely to meatballs in Madrid, she said no. She was more afraid that someone else would beat her to it.

Prior to opening **Bolero Meatballs**, both Nina and May had worked a few different jobs (among them, May had been a pastry

chef and Nina, a translator), yet both wanted to do something else. As roommates, they spent a lot of time in the kitchen preparing meals. But it wasn't until Nina returned from a trip to Moscow, where she witnessed the meatball craze, that she returned to Madrid and, coincidentally, May was cooking up a batch of meatballs for dinner. They saw it as their sign. The two foodies immediately began experimenting with meatball recipes in their home and soon started looking for a place to open a shop. And now, thanks to these two brave ladies, we in Madrid can feast on **meatball sandwiches and platters** too!



Opened in April and located on Calle de las Conchas, Bolero

Meatballs has a few tables outside and a few stools inside. Their friend from [newmadprojects](#) did the design, making the place look colorful, inviting and fun. It's a great place for a quick bite on the go or to get a few balls to take away. All their meatballs and desserts are homemade from original recipes. Apart from their regular menu, they also serve a weekly special, such as **Greek balls with yogurt sauce, mint and Greek herbs**. Last time I went, they had a dessert special too—**red velvet cheesecake**, which was beyond delicious.

At **Bolero Meatballs**, you can choose from **four types of homemade *albondigas* (meatballs)**—***La Abuela*** (veal, garlic and parsley, in a roasted vegetable and tomato sauce), ***Oriental*** (pork balls dressed with cilantro and ginger, in a coconut milk and peanut sauce), ***Parm & Chick*** (chicken parmesan balls in mushroom sauce) and ***Vegana*** (quinoa, tofu, rice, shiitake mushrooms and caramelized onion).





My favorite so far are the ***albondigas orientales***, because the coconut and peanut sauce is heaven, and James' favorite is ***la abuela***, as he thinks his grandmother might have actually made them. I recommend ordering the ***ración*** (platter) of four balls so you can try each one, and it also comes with your choice of potatoes or rice for **6.50€**. You can also get a ***bocata*** (meatball sub) for the same price. Lastly, do not miss out on the homemade desserts here which range in price from 1.20€-4.50€—***Oreo Brownie with Ice Cream, the Cookie, the Cookwich or Banana Bread.***



[Facebook](#)

Address: Calle de las Conchas, 4

Metro: Callao, Opera, Santo Domingo

Hours: 2pm-4:30pm & 8pm-11:30pm. Closed on Tuesdays.

Phone: 911 10 60 41

Sumo, this Japanese

restaurant's name says it all

Eighteen packed punches of flavor... three rounds... **This Japanese restaurant near metro Bilbao** will have you scrambling to the finish line and gasping for air, making you and your friends feel like sumo wrestlers. Dining at Sumo is an experience.



ooh... the lamb chops

If you've ever been to [Kintaro](#), an all-you-can-eat Japanese/Chinese buffet we wrote about in a previous post, you'll find that [Sumo](#) has a similar vibe, leaving you with the same overly-full feeling without taking too big a bite out of your wallet. However, at Sumo, all this comes with better

quality food, friendlier service and a nicer atmosphere.



If you pass the sushi bar, you'll find an enormous dining room providing space for plenty of hungry eaters

One of the reasons why [Sumo](#) is so unique is that you can have a 3-course meal consisting of 18 dishes. Yes, you heard correctly. That's 18 dishes. Plus it's inexpensive and you have tons of options, ranging from sushi and soups to salad and rice dishes. All this will cost you **13,50€** (lunch, Mon-Friday) and **15€** (dinner, Mon-Thurs) and **17,95€** (Fri night-Sun). Although Sumo's dishes are delicious, we dare you to eat 18 of them, as portions are not skimpy.



My favorite are the tuna and avocado rolls. Anything with avocado actually.

You should know that Sumo's ordering process can be a little complicated. Your table gets one sheet of paper with three columns and a list of numbers for each dish on the menu that you tick to order. Everyone orders three times (6 dishes per round) using the same sheet of paper.

This seemingly hectic procedure will become a piece of cake (or a piece of sushi) in time. We've developed a system in which one person is appointed scribe (make sure he or she is up to the challenge) and then each person can start out by calling out his or her smallest number, then if someone else hears the same number, the repeated dish can be jotted down. Final check is also done to ensure the number of dishes is correct before turning it into the waiter.



Steamed dumplings... a must



So many choices of sushi! Good thing you have 18 chances to find your favorite...

By the third round (that is, if we make it to the third round), we usually can't order all six dishes. Our friend, Edison, has a great technique to make it all the way—during the last round he orders salads and small, light dishes such as *navajas* (razor clams) and *mejillones* (mussels). I, on the other hand, start off with salad and make sure to include at least three light dishes in every round.



Seaweed salad, also a great lighter dish to order at Sumo

A few more things you should know about Sumo—there's a **2€ penalty for any plate left uneaten** (it can be half finished, don't worry). While you may find this annoying (as did our friend, Kyle, who was really ticked off about that), it does make sense. You shouldn't order all 18 dishes if you know you can't finish them, as it really is a waste of food. So, if by the third round, you've already had 12 dishes and your stomach tells you that you can only have two more, then just order two more. You will still feel like you got what you're paying for, trust me.

Lastly, if the 18-dish menu is too daunting, you can order individual dishes off the menu, which cost from 3-8€ each. But if you do that, the whole table has to follow suit. You can't have one person at the table ordering the 18-dish menu, and others not (no sharing nor taking away allowed). It's all or nothing. Again, Kyle found this to be very irritating, but I get it. It wouldn't be very economical for the restaurant, nor would you feel like a sumo wrestler...

Up until now, I've had the pleasure of going to Sumo twice, although Edison goes so often with friends that he's on a first-name basis with the owner. It's a great place to take people with **gigantic appetites** and those who enjoy new gastronomic experiences. It's hands down one of our favorite restaurants in Madrid.

Info

[Web](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Twitter](#)

Address: c/ Fuencarral 116

Phone: 910864497

[Reserve online](#)

Restaurant Hours: Sun-Thurs 13:00-00:30, Fri/Sat/Holidays
13:00-01:00

Sushi Bar Hours: 16:30-19:30

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

- [Ramen Kagura, Madrid's \(almost\) perfect ramen bar](#)
- [Kintaro - Oy Vey](#)
- [Tuk Tuk - Asian-inspired street food](#)
- [Chuka Ramen Bar - Madrid's hottest ramen restaurant](#)
- [Hattori Hanzo - Japanese food, straight up. No sushi.](#)
- [Nippon 2 - top quality yet affordable sushi, finally!](#)
- [Soy Kitchen - a fusion of Asian flavors](#)
- [Karachai - A cozy and elegant Thai restaurant in Alonso Martínez](#)

Where to enjoy good film in Madrid

You'll find cinemas all over the city, but there are a few independent movie houses that deserve special mention. If you're looking to see good film in Madrid, whether that means independent, foreign, blockbuster or simply in original version (versión original, i.e. V.O.), check out the list below.

A great website to find out about free or €3 film screenings in original version every week is madridfree.com. You can also use entradas.com for complete listings and buying tickets online throughout the city.

Also note that most cinemas have a "*día del espectador*" when tickets cost less, and if you have a "*carnet joven*" or one of many types of discount cards, you can usually get a few euros knocked off.

1. Plaza de los Cubos, (metro Plaza de España)

Right by Plaza de España, you'll find two cinemas – [Cines Renoir](#) (c/ Princesa, 3 & Martín de los Heros, 12) and [Golem](#) (c/ Martín de los Heros, 14) – showcasing films from around the world in original version, with subtitles in Spanish. Prices are standard. [Cines Renoir](#) has another location near **Retiro**, on calle Narváez, 42 (metros Goya & Ibiza).

I recommend getting a drink before your movie starts at the film-bookshop across the street, [Ocho y Medio Libros de Cine](#).

2. Yelmo Cines Ideal, Plaza de Jacinto Benavente (metros Sol & Tirso de Molina)

Cine Ideal is perhaps the most popular movie theater in Madrid showing films in original version. I highly recommend this cinema because they feature great blockbuster movies as well as independent films, from Spain and around the world, and they're never dubbed.

3. La Filmoteca Española (Cine Doré), c/ Santa Isabel, 3 (metro Antón Martín)

One of Madrid's most special places, **Cine Doré** sits in a very old theater and revives all types of films from different eras and corners of the world. Here you can see movies from the 50's from Korea, to the 90's from France, and even more recent films from the US – you never know! Nevertheless, if you go, you'll be happy to find yourself in a charming atmosphere and tickets are extremely cheap, just **2,50€!** (and only 2€ if you have a student ID or *carnet joven*)

4. La Cineteca, Plaza de Legazpi, 8 (metro Legazpi)



Inside [El Matadero](#), a former slaughterhouse turned cultural hub, La Cineteca is an awesome theater showcasing all types of films, from documentaries to independent foreign film festivals, at an unbeatable price: **3,50€**. Some are even free. Plus you get to walk around [El Matadero](#), which, if you haven't been, is an absolute must.

5. Sala Berlanga, c/ Andrés Mellado 53 (metros Islas Filipinas & Argüelles)

If you're looking to see Spanish films, this is the place. Sala Berlanga showcases Spanish-language films for **3€**, and it is a hallmark of Spanish cinema culture in Madrid.

6. Cultural Centers

You can also see screenings at some of Madrid's most welcoming cultural centers and embassies (usually for free), such as the [French Institute](#), [Korean Cultural Center](#) and [Russian Cultural Center](#).

7. Outdoor Summer Cinema

Madrid's cultural centers, museums and municipal buildings are also great at putting on films outside, either on their terraces or rooftops, or in their indoor patios, making the most of the city's cool summer nights. [Espacio Madrid](#) usually puts up a good listing.

**What's your favorite cinema in Madrid?
Have we missed something? Let us know!**

Also check out: [Salaquis, a former XXX theatre that's been transformed into one of the city's hotspots near Tirso de Molina](#)

Madrid's 10 Most Beautiful Surrounding Towns

One of the best things about living in Madrid is that you can easily escape the city center and take a day-trip or weekend getaway to one of the beautiful nearby towns.

These towns have some of the world's oldest universities, cathedrals, monasteries and historic monuments. You'll also

find [natural swimming pools](#), mountains, hiking trails and other [adventure activities](#). And make sure to try special dishes like Segovia's *cochinillo*, suckling pig, or Ávila's sugary egg yolks, known as *yemas*.

Here's a list of the most popular nearby towns, plus a few things you should know about each one. Click on each town name below or our category link "[How to get to](#)" for a more in-depth post on each one, and all the different ways to get there.

Madrid's surrounding towns

1. [Alcalá de Henares](#): *free tapas and [Cervantes' home](#)*
2. [Aranjuez](#): *royal gardens and palace*
3. [Avila](#): *old surrounding wall from medieval times, cathedral of Avila*
4. [Buitrago de Lozoya](#): *castle and large reservoir*
5. [Cercedilla](#): *mountains that are great for hiking, biking, swimming (natural pool) and other adventure activities*
6. [Cuenca](#): *cathedral of Cuenca, hanging houses and lamb*
7. [El Escorial](#): *monastery, Valle de los Caídos (20th-century war memorial)*
8. [Rascafría](#): *nature, restaurant El Paular, monastery of El Paular, hiking trails, natural pool, and a waterfall*
9. [Segovia](#): *Roman aqueduct, cochinitillo (suckling pig), The Jewish Quarter, Alcázar of Segovia (castle) and a nearby town called La Granja*
10. [Toledo](#): *beautiful old streets and architecture, museums, and the synagogue of El Transito. Where three cultures lived in harmony for centuries (Jewish, Christian and Muslim).*



How to get to Madrid's airport

Barajas International Airport has been recently renamed after Spain's first democratically-elected president, **Adolfo Suárez**. The airport is absolutely enormous, covering two different metro stops. Its 4 terminals are spacious and spread out, which is why they're connected by train and bus services inside the airport itself. Luckily, Madrid's airport isn't located far from the city center and there are plenty of ways to get there.

Here are the 6 main ways to get to Madrid's Barajas (Adolfo Suárez) Airport:

1. Metro: Línea 8



The airport has two metro stops: the first stop is dedicated to Terminals 1, 2 and 3 (T1, T2 and T3) and the second stop is dedicated solely to Terminal 4 (T4). Take **line 8** (the pink line) from **Nuevos Ministerios** and you will be there in about **15 minutes**, depending on if you get off at the first or second stop (just a few minutes difference). To enter or leave Barajas airport by metro, you will have to buy a single ride ticket (around 1,50€ depending on destination) as well as an extra airport supplement of **3€ (bought at the machines)**. In total you'll pay around **5€**. However, if you have an **abono de transporte** (monthly travel pass), the fee is waived! Remember that the metro closes from 1:30-6am, so if you have a flight at that time, you can take our next and favorite option, the **24/7 airport express bus** that costs the **same price**.

2. Airport Express Bus:



from esmadrid.com

For just **5€**, you can hop on an incredibly convenient [Airport Express Bus](#) from the city center! During the day, from 6am-11:30pm, it leaves from **Atocha**, and makes stops at **Plaza de Cibeles** (next to the Palacio de Cibeles building) and **O'Donnell** (at the intersection with Doctor Esquerdo). At night, the bus leaves from **Cibeles** and continues to stop at **O'Donnell** (all night long). The express bus goes to terminals 1,2 & 4. The journey takes around **40 minutes** and runs every 15 minutes during the day, and every 35 minutes at night (you pay the 5€ on the bus in **cash**). Here's the bus [schedule](#).

3. Cercanías: Línea C1

Príncipe Pío - Atocha - Recoletos - Chamartín - Aeropuerto T4

C-1



SÍMBOLOS - SYMBOLS

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estación accesible
Accessible Station Aparcamiento de disuasión de pago
Paid Park & Ride Línea de Metro
Metro line Oficina de gestión
tarjeta transporte público
Administration office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Línea de Metro Ligero
Light Rail line Terminal de líneas de autobús interurbano
Suburban bus terminus Terminal de líneas de autobús de largo recorrido
Long distance bus terminus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estación de ferrocarril de largo recorrido
Railway station Línea de Metro al Aeropuerto
Airport Metro Line Tarifa especial estaciones Aeropuerto:
Billete sencillo y bonotrén
Airport special stations fare:
Single ticket and rail bono |
|---|--|---|

from mapamadrid.net

For **2.55€**, you can take the Cercanías train line 1 – **Línea C1** – to Terminal 4 (it doesn't go to the other terminals, but there is a free bus service within the airport that goes to all terminals). The C1 comes around every 30 minutes and can be picked up at the following main stations: **Chamartín, Nuevos Ministerios, Atocha, Méndez Álvaro, and Príncipe Pío**, plus a few more.

4. Taxi

A taxi-ride to and from the airport to anywhere in the center of Madrid costs a flat rate of **30€**. For no extra fee, you can pick up a taxi at the indicated taxi lines that you'll find throughout the airport and city center. You can also download the [free app MyTaxi](#) so you can have a taxi pick you up from your home at a certain time for the same set price.

5. Public City Bus

You can pick up the **200 bus at Ave. de América** for 1,50€. Here's the [200 bus schedule and stops](#), which runs from 5am-11pm, every 10-20 minutes depending on the time of day.

6. Private Airport Shuttle Bus

With [Aerocity](#), a 24/7 airport bus shuttle service, you can hire a van to pick you up from your house and drop you off directly at the airport. This service is good for groups, and especially if your flight is at an odd hour (i.e. late night/early morning) or if you have a lot of luggage. It usually costs around 10€ per person, but you can [put your address here](#) and get a quote.

Madrid Neighborhood Overview

Getting to know any city is easier if you get a general sense of the personality and location of each neighborhood. Madrid is enormous, so here's a roughly drawn map up top and a brief description of Madrid's central neighborhoods, which are often divided by just one street or overlapping. Sometimes, there are even disagreements as to where certain neighborhoods begin and end. However, Madrileños often associate *barrios* with their respective metro stops, so this is a good way to get an idea of where everything is. Happy exploring!

Also, you can watch a short [video series on Madrid's best neighborhoods](#) made by our friends at [Spotahome](#), an online housing booking agency. Enjoy!

SOL is the city-center and home to Madrid's most popular meeting-point: "*the bear statue*" or as it's called in Spanish, "*El Oso y el Madroño*". Sol also marks *Kilometer Zero*, meaning that all of Madrid's building numbers and highways stem from there. It's literally the middle-point of the entire Iberian Peninsula. Sol is also the center-point of the city when it comes to transport, shopping and tourist destinations. All of Madrid's most popular shops are located within walking distance from Sol, and there are plenty of restaurants, both new and old, to dine at. The **Plaza Mayor** is a hop skip away, and a ten minute walk from Sol will conveniently bring you either to the [Prado Museum](#) or the **Royal Palace**. Watch a video about Madrid's historic center [here](#).



Metros: Sol, Sevilla, Ópera, Gran Vía, Santo Domingo, Callao, Tirso de Molina (Lines 1, 2, 3, 5)

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in Sol](#)

CHUECA is a stone's throw from *Gran Vía* and one of the best places to go out in Madrid. Its main street is **calle Hortaleza**. Known as the gay neighborhood for the past two decades, Chueca is undoubtedly one of the trendiest nightlife destinations in the city. During the day, Chueca offers fabulous restaurants, outdoor terraces and boutiques, especially a whole street of shoe stores on **c/ Augusto Figueroa**. Also along this street is another highlight—**Mercado**

[de San Antón](#)—a 3-story gourmet food market offering all types of delicious food and a fantastic [rooftop bar](#). Chueca is also proudly home to one of the world's largest Gay Pride Parades, as well as many other city activities. For its mix of edgy and high-end nightclubs, restaurants, bars, stores and ambience, Chueca is easy to fall in love with. Watch a video about [Chueca here](#).



At Mercado de San Antón's rooftop, just across the street from Plaza de Chueca



Metros: Chueca, Gran Vía & Alonso Martínez (Line 1 & 5) and **Tribunal** (Line 1 & 10)

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in Chueca](#)

MALASANA is known as the hippest part of town, especially for its history. Its main street, **Fuencarral**, runs parallel to calle Hortaleza, making Malasaña and Chueca very friendly neighbors. Its main plaza, **Plaza de Dos de Mayo**, was home to the battle in 1802 when the Madrileños rose against Napoleon on the same day. Now the plaza is full of cafés and restaurant terraces. **Malasaña** was also home to Madrid's breaking experimental movement known as **La Movida Madrileña** which sparked after the fall of Franco's dictatorship in the late 1970's. The highly drug-ridden and sexually-open movement ran throughout all of the 80's, and well into the 90's, leaving a heavy imprint on the neighborhood. It also seeped into Chueca. Remnants of graffiti can be seen as you walk through its tiny streets, and the seedier places have since been replaced by high-end tattoo parlors, vintage shops, and uber-trendy cafés, bars and restaurants. You could call it the **East Village** of Madrid. Here's a [video to watch about Malasaña](#).



Plaza de Dos de Mayo in Malasaña



Metros: Tribunal (Line 10 & 1), **Bilbao** (Line 1 & 4), **Noviciado & San Bernardo** (Line 2)

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in Malasaña](#)

HUERTAS is colloquially named after its main street, Calle Huertas, although its official name is Barrio de las Letras. More than a neighborhood, we should call Huertas *a place to go out*. It's five minutes walking from Sol, and the perfect place to start your night. Huertas street is lined with all types of bars, some upscale and some divey, plus lots of great

restaurants too. There are many other little streets to discover such as **Calle Leon** (on the left in the photo below) also lined with fun bars and old-school delicatessens, boutiques and more. One of Huertas' highlights is **Restaurante Meceira** (amazing Galician food) and **Bar Populart** (often called Madrid's best jazz bar), though the list goes on. If you walk down **Huertas street**, you'll end up on the **Castellana**, Madrid's largest boulevard which at that point is actually called **Paseo del Prado**, full of museums and sightseeing activities, thus turning Huertas into a good day-neighborhood as well.



where calle huertas meets calle leon

BARRIO DE LAS LETRAS usually refers to the neighbourhood just above **calle Huertas**, and it is named after the many writers who lived there, such as Cervantes, Quevedo and Lope de Vega. You can actually visit Lope de Vega's former house which is

now a museum on **c/ Cervantes, 11**. Oddly enough, **c/ Lope de Vega** is parallel to it just one street down, where Cervantes is buried. This neighbourhood is slightly different from Huertas, as it is less of a party town. There are many arts and crafts fairs and cultural sites hidden away here.



Metros: Sol, Sevilla, Atocha, Tirso de Molina, Antón Martín (also too many metro stops here)

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in Huertas & Barrio de las Letras](#)

LA LATINA boasts the city's oldest architecture (hence the name, the Latin Quarter) and some of its finest cuisine. Especially beautiful are the small alleyways nestled between 18th century buildings, and the tiny streets that turn into staircases, where restaurants put tables out on each individual stone step. On Sundays, La Latina's most famous street, **La Cava Baja**, turns into Madrid's place to be. This charming street is lined with tiny bars serving up cañas (draft beer), wines and tapas. It's tradition to go here on Sunday afternoons after the city's flea market, **El Rastro**, and hop from bar to bar until late.



Metro: La Latina (Line 5)

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in La Latina](#)

LAVAPIÉS is fast becoming Madrid's trendiest neighborhood, though it still has an underground and rugged feel, as it's been home to an influx of immigrants for many years, namely from African and Middle Eastern countries. Once considered the dodgier side of town, Lavapiés is now being embraced for its

edgy culture, diverse cuisine and alternative (oft-artsy) nightlife. Just one stop from Sol, Lavapiés is the perfect place to check out Madrid's changing personality, especially for its amazing Indian restaurants. In fact, I like to call Lavapiés street **Curry Row** because it is lined with Indian restaurant after Indian restaurant. The other famous street in Lavapiés—c/ Argumosa—is lined with more hipster bars and tantalising outdoor seating area. It stretches right to **Atocha Street** behind the **Reina Sofia Museum**.



Metros: Lavapiés (Line 3, yellow), extending to Tirso de Molina, Antón Martín & Atocha (Line 1)

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in Lavapiés](#)

MONCLOA & ARGUELLES are fantastic neighborhoods to live in, especially for young people. Madrid's main university, **La Complutense**, is very close by. The area is packed with neighborhood bars and shops. Plus it also has an important main street, **Calle Princesa**, which has all the major shops from Zara to El Corte Inglés. In fact, Calle Princesa turns into the **Gran Vía** right after **Plaza de España**. It's also a relatively quick walk from Sol (anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes depending on where you are, the neighborhood is quite large), and it is right next to the two most happening neighborhoods—**Malasaña** and **Chueca**. It also borders **Chamberí**, a slightly more expensive and residential neighborhood.



Metros: Moncloa (Line 3 & 6) and **Arguelles** (Line 3, 4 & 6)

CHAMBERI is located just to the East of Moncloa and stretches to the **Castellana**, after which it becomes Salamanca (see below). You could call it Moncloa's older brother, as it is a much prettier neighbourhood and caters to a slightly older crowd. Chamberí boasts beautiful architecture—some of its buildings are absolutely gorgeous, such as Museo Soroya, Instituto Internacional and even the British Council. It also has quaint plazas such as **Plaza de Chamberí** and **Plaza de Olavide**, the latter being my favorite **plaza for drinking and terraza time in all of Madrid**. Chamberí is also a business district with many offices and thus plenty of restaurants and bars throughout the area. One of the best streets for wining and dining is **Calle Ponzano**, where you can find great restaurants like [Bar Lambuzo](#) and [Sala de Despiece](#)



my favorite plaza in Madrid, Plaza Olavide



Metros: Bilbao, Iglesia and Rios Rosas, Alonso Martínez, Gregorio Marañón, Colón, Rubén Darío, San Bernardo, Quevedo, Canal

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in Chamberí](#)

RETIRO is Madrid's most popular city park and also refers to

the **residential neighbourhood** which borders the park's eastern side. It's a great neighbourhood to live in if you enjoy the **quiet**, as you can leave the city's hustle and bustle on the other side of the park. Inside Retiro you can enjoy plenty of beautiful attractions, such as the lake in the photo below, as well as a **glass palace**, **rose garden** and inviting **green lawns**. Also, many free activities are held regularly, from **bootcamp** and **running clubs**, to **roller skating** and **yoga lessons**.



Metros: Retiro, Príncipe de Vergara, Ibiza and Sáinz de Baranda

SALAMANCA is Madrid's most upscale neighbourhood. Let's call it Madrid's "**Upper East Side**" (a.k.a. where Carrie Bradshaw lived in NY). Located just above Retiro Park and to the East of the Castellana, this neighborhood's two main streets are Serrano and Velázquez (as are the metro stops with the same name). It is much quieter than the other neighbourhoods mentioned on this list. As in most fancy neighborhoods, you will find the high-end shoe stores, top-notch restaurants and prime real estate. Barrio Salamanca is no exception. However, chique nightclubs and lounges aside, you will also be pleasantly surprised to find many hidden gems. After all, Salamanca is a neighborhood where people live in, and they too have mom and pop shops and friendly bars. You just have to search for them... Here's a [video about Barrio Salamanca](#).



Metros: Príncipe de Vergara, Retiro & Goya (Line 2), Serrano, Velázquez, Lista & Goya (Line 4) Núñez de Balbao (Line 5)

[see all our posts about places to go and things to see in Salamanca](#)

Hope this list is helpful! It's one of those articles that is going to keep growing and growing, by way of adding photos, more posts and more neighborhoods! If you have any specific requests don't think twice about letting us know.