

Best Places to Break a Sweat in Madrid

In addition to keeping fit, a big plus of joining a gym, dance class or fitness group in Madrid is getting to meet people – I honestly can't recommend a better way to make friends in the city, especially if you're no longer at university. And if you're only passing through Madrid for a short while, I still recommend dropping in on a dance class or going for an organized hike or [bike ride](#), as a non-conventional way to get a feel for the city.

The best place to find out about group fitness activities is through [meetup.com](#). And if you want to go **cycling**, **running** or **swimming**, check out our previous posts: [Cycling in Madrid: A beginner's guide](#), [Exercise opportunities in Madrid](#) and [Where to swim in winter in Madrid](#).



Now, here's a guide to Madrid's best gyms, dance and fitness clubs.

Before signing up, we recommend taking a look at a few different gyms (they usually offer a free trial), considering which one is closest to your home, work or university, and trying to get a long-term contract (careful with this one, make sure you really like the place before you sign up).

Madrid has three types of gyms and studios:

- (A) Public
- (B) Private (including dance & yoga studios)
- (C) Big Chains

Here are a few examples of our favorite places to keep fit, as well as useful links to find out about other options:

A) Public GYMS

1. [Casa de Campo's public gym](#) has one of the best facilities in the city, especially for its swimming pools (winter and summer), which make this place perfect for pool lovers.

- [Official Madrid Site](#)
- **Address:** Pase Puerta del Angel, 7 (metros: Lago, Puerta del Ángel)

2. Another great swimming pool can be found in the heart of Chueca, at a public gym called [Centro Deportivo Municipal Escuelas de San Antón](#). Although this gym is small and does not have fitness classes, its glass-covered indoor pool is gigantic and the neighbourhood is unbeatable!

- [Official Madrid Site](#)

- **Address:** c/ Farmacia, 13 (metros: Chueca/Tribunal/Alonso Martínez/Gran Vía)

Madrid public GYM [full list](#) (in Spanish).

B) Private GYMS, fitness clubs & groups. For something special

These private gyms are for those seeking something different, a friendly ambience and not-your-average fitness class. Here are my top three private gyms in Madrid, plus our recommended dance and yoga studios, and fun fitness groups.

1. [Club Deportivo Metropolitano](#). This one is really convenient for those who live close to Complutense University, as it has a huge variety of activities such as martial arts, boxing, capoeira, wall climbing, pilates, yoga, a pool and much, much more.

- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- **Facilities:** swimming pool, weight and fitness room, pilates & yoga room, martial arts room, boxing ring, climbing wall
- **Address:** Calle Aravaca, 7 (Metro: Guzmán el Bueno)

2. [Centro el Horno](#). My favourite spot in the city, “The Oven” is both a full dance studio and gym. At **Centro el Horno**, you will find every type of dance class under the sun, for both professionals and amateurs who just want to have fun in Madrid. Please stop by the **acrobatics** class, it will make your day! There’s also pole dancing, zumba, classical ballet, flamenco, crossfit, contemporary, hip-hop, you name it.

- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Esgrima, 11 (Metro: Tirso de Molina)

3. CrossFit Krig. I came here once and, literally, I couldn't move my body after one session. You have to be really tough to keep going here. There is no gym in CrossFit Krig, instead you will find the most hardcore sports center—they only offer CrossFit, straight-up.

- [Website](#)

- **Address:** two locations:

- Cuatro Caminos: Calle Guipuzcoa, 11 (Metro: Cuatro Caminos)

- Retiro: Calle Vicente Caballero, 10 (Metro: O'Donnell or Sainz de Baranda)

*Another gym recommended to me by others is [Soho Studio](#), great for cross-fit, pilates and all that, **near metro Bilbao**.

Recommended Dance Studios:

1. [El Horno](#), for all dance styles (mentioned above)

- Although dance classes at El Horno are almost always open levels, meaning it's hard to find an advanced class, you'll find an amazing quantity of dance styles here and wonderful teachers. This is our favorite dance studio by far. Here you can really delve into new activities, from pole dancing and acrobatics, to classical ballet or hip hop.

2. [Amor de Dios](#), for the best flamenco dance classes

- Want to take a flamenco class in a studio that actually smells like flamenco? Well, this is your place! As you step inside the dance studio, which is situated atop a fish market, you will immediately feel the authentic flamenco vibe. It's the real deal.

3. [Karen Taft & Madrid Dance Center](#), for serious and more traditional dance classes

- If you're looking for high quality ballet, jazz, modern

or contemporary dance classes, try either of these two studios, both of which offer a young professionals program and top instructors.

Recommended Yoga Studios:

Madrid is full of yoga and pilates studios, thus finding the right one for you can be tricky. Luckily, most yoga studios offer a free first class or inexpensive trial week, so don't be afraid to drop in on a few different classes before picking your studio:

- For Yoga outdoors:
 - [Yoga at Retiro Park](#) has become very popular, and isn't limited to vinyasa. You can also find acroyoga and more. Check out the link.
- For Bikram Yoga, you can go to:
 - [Bikram Yoga Center](#): in the hip neighbourhood of Chueca.
 - [Bikram Yoga](#): in the hip neighbourhood of Malasaña (this web also offers info on workshops)
- For Ashtanga Yoga:
 - [Yoga at Espiritu 23](#): For a very inexpensive and good quality yoga class, you can go to a cultural center in Malasaña called Espiritu 23

Recommended Fitness Clubs & Groups:

If you're not into the standard kind of workout, not to worry. You can join running groups in Retiro, weekend hiking groups to Madrid's mountains and even go rock climbing in the outskirts. The best place to find out about fun fitness groups is at [Meetup.com](#) (make sure to look under all the different categories: [health & well-being](#), [fitness](#), [sports & recreation](#), and [dance](#)). Here you can find long-boarding, salsa classes, yoga, everything!

Here are two clubs that I've heard particularly good things

about, being great ways to get to know new people and the city:

1. Running Company Madrid:

- Organised running and training sessions starting near Atocha.
- Check out their [schedule](#) and different levels. [Facebook](#) and [Web](#)

2. Skating (Roller Blading)

- [Skating classes in Retiro and Madrid Rio](#), they also have free routes and activities.
- [Facebook Skating Meet-up Group](#) where people organize free meet-ups to skate around the city every day

C) Big chains

As in any other city, you will find some of the big GYM chains. I personally don't find them to be that cool, but they do have great prices and some have swimming pools and passes that allow you access to various locations around the city. Here is a list of them:

- [Holiday Gym](#)
- [McFit](#)
- [Body Factory](#)
- [Centro Wellness](#) (the Manuel Becerra location has a huge pool)
- [Altafit](#)

Also check out:

- [Cycling in Madrid: A beginner's guide](#)

- [Exercise opportunities in Madrid](#)
- [Where to swim in winter in Madrid](#)

What's your favorite place to keep fit in Madrid? Let us know so we can add it to this list!

Madrid Museums: The Obvious and Not-so-obvious (and how to get in for free)

Here's a long list of Madrid museums worth visiting while you're here. And to make things easier, we're breaking it down into two parts: the obvious (like the Prado) and the not-so-obvious (like Cerralbo). We'll also tell you how to get in for free!

If you've already read up on the famous Madrid museums, then scroll down...

The Obvious:

All of these Madrid museums are classified as "obvious" because they're situated along the two great boulevards – Paseo del Prado and Paseo de Recoletos – where you'll find the city's finest arts institutions, including the *Golden Triangle of Art* which refers to the first three institutions on this list. Only one place is not situated here – the Royal Palace.

1. Prado Museum

Spain's national art museum houses a wide collection of European art from the 12th to the early 19th centuries, and its most notable works are by Spanish painters, Diego Velázquez, Francisco de Goya and El Greco. Considered one of the best museums in the world, the Prado's most famous piece is *Las Meninas* by Velazquez. Do give yourself a few hours to walk around – the Prado is gigantic!

Website

When is it free? Always for under-18-year-olds and students ages 18-25 (with valid ID); Sundays and holidays from 5pm-7pm; and Mon-Sat from 6pm-8pm.

Prices & Hours: General admission 14€. Open Mon-Sat from 10am–8pm. Sundays and holidays from 10am-7pm.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Paseo del Prado (s/n)

2. Reina Sofia Museum



Spain's national museum of 20th-century art is located at the bottom of El Paseo del Prado, near Atocha train station. The Reina Sofia's permanent collection consists of art by Spanish painters such as Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí, and its most famous piece is Picasso's *Guernica*. Temporary exhibits feature works by international artists, plus the building's impressive architecture and free-access art library are alone worth a visit!

[Website](#)

When is it free? Sundays from 1:30pm-7pm; weekdays from 7-9pm (except Tuesdays).

[Prices & Hours](#): Mon-Sat from 10am-9pm and Sundays from 10am-7pm. Closed on Tuesdays.

Metro: Atocha

Where: c/ Santa Isabel, 52

Additionally, you can visit a glass palace situated in the middle of Retiro Park featuring works from the museum.



3. [Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza](#)

This is my brother's favorite. In fact, he loved the Thyssen so much that he actually visited it two days in a row (during a five-day visit). The Thyssen is named after its founder and houses one of the largest private collections in the world. You'll find an amazing permanent collection of more than 1,600 masterpiece paintings spanning seven centuries of art and representing a myriad of genres, as well as must-see temporary exhibits showcasing Van Gogh to Pop Art.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Mondays 12-4pm.

Hours: Mondays 12pm-4pm; Tues-Sun 10am-7pm.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Paseo del Prado, 8

4. [Caixa Forum](#)



Created by the Catalonian bank, La Caixa, the first thing that stands out about Caixaforum is its impressive exterior design, including an urban garden wall. As you step inside, you'll notice that the building's interior design follows suit. Architecture aside, here you'll see outstanding temporary exhibits on everything from up-and-coming photographers to Pixar!

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always free for La Caixa clients and under-16-year-olds.

Prices & Hours: General Admission €4. Open Sun-Mon from 10am-8pm

Metro: Atocha

Where: Paseo del Prado, 36

5. [The Royal Palace](#)

The Royal Palace is one of the most beautiful spots in the city, situated in Plaza de Oriente, facing the Royal Opera House and overlooking the Gardens of Sabatini. It's the

official residence of the King of Spain, although he doesn't actually live there. Used today for national ceremonies and as a popular museum, Madrid's Palacio Real is the largest royal palace in all of Western Europe, boasting 3,418 rooms which are ornately decorated with fine paintings, sculptures and tapestries. One last thing – if you go here, you absolutely must pay a visit to its gardens, called “**El Campo del Moro**”, located just behind the palace (always free and open to the public at the same hours as the palace).

[Website](#)

When is it free? For anyone with an EU or Iberoamerican passport/residency card/work permit from Mon-Thurs from 4pm-6pm during April-Sept; and from 6pm-8pm during Oct-Mar.

Prices & Hours: Normal entrance fee is 10€. Students with valid ID get a discount (5€). In Winter (Oct-Mar) open daily from 10am-6pm and in Summer (Apr-Sep) open daily from 10am-8pm.

Metro: Ópera (line 5 & 2) and Principe Pio (line 10)

Where: c/ Bailén (s/n)

6. [Palacio de Cibeles](#)



Madrid's most emblematic building, Palacio de Cibeles is situated in the famous Plaza de Cibeles which joins Madrid's two boulevards – Paseo del Prado and Paseo de Recoletos. One wouldn't imagine that this ornately decorated palace was once Madrid's post office, but it was indeed! It was turned into a cultural center in 2013, and now holds free exhibits throughout its first four floors. It also boasts a café, restaurant, and [a rooftop terrace on the 6th floor](#) that offers breathtakingly beautiful views of the city. You can also visit the lookout point at the top of the building for just 2€, where you'll surely get one of your best pics of Madrid.

The lookout point (mirador):

When is it free? Free entrance every first Wednesday of the month.

Price & Hours: 2€ for adults and 0,50€ for children under 12 years of age. Visits are held every thirty minutes from Tues-Sun from 10:30am-1:30pm and from 4pm-7pm. Closed on Mondays. You must reserve tickets at the CentroCentro office

situated near the main door of the building.

The exhibition spaces:

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: Mon-Sun from 10am-8pm. Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Plaza Cibeles, 1

The Not-So-Obvious

Madrid has some wonderful art havens scattered about the city which are less spoken of, although still much deserving of a visit. Here are some of our favorites:

1. [La Casa Encendida](#)

Created by the bank, Caja Madrid, you'll find "The Burning House" located just a five-minute walk from the Reina Sofia Museum. This arts and cultural center showcases modern and contemporary art exhibits, and also hosts many cultural events, screenings, workshops concerts, and more. Entrance is always free, and the café is very nice too.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: 10am-10pm everyday

Metro: Embajadores

Where: Ronda de Valencia, 2

2. [El Matadero](#)



This is one of our absolute favorite spots in Madrid. A former pig slaughterhouse, El Matadero was turned into an arts and cultural center in 2006. It has many warehouses (naves) showcasing film, theater performances and art galleries, as well as events and a great café called “La Cantina” where you can taste local food products from Madrid. We highly recommend going here, and taking a stroll along Madrid’s river (Madrid Río) afterwards which is just across the street. [Here’s a more in-depth article we wrote about El Matadero.](#)

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always

Hours: Tues-Fri from 4pm to 10pm; Sat-Sun from 11am to 9pm

Metro: Legazpi (line 3, yellow)

Where: Paseo de la Chopera, 14

3. [Museo Naval](#)

Although Spain’s maritime museum is situated on the Paseo del Prado, we don’t consider it as obvious as the ones listed above. Many people are surprised when they go here, precisely because it’s not talked about enough. The exhibits take you

through Spain's maritime history in chronological order, showcasing artefacts such as old coins, maps, books, weapons, and more.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always (recommended donation of 3€)

Hours: Tues-Sun from 10am-7pm. (During August it closes at 3pm). Closed on Monday.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Paseo del Prado, 5

4. [Museo del Romanticismo](#)



Located in the heart of Madrid's trendiest neighborhoods – Malasaña and Chueca – you should definitely stop by this museum if you're in the area. El Museo del Romanticismo gives you insight into the history, art and daily life in Spain

during the Romantic Era (European intellectual movement during the 19th C). And I must admit that my favorite thing about this museum is its quaint and hidden garden café. If you're not into museums, at least pop in for a coffee or tea.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Saturdays from 2pm onwards and Sundays

Prices & Hours: General admission 4€. Closed on Mondays. Sundays from 10am-3pm. In Summer (May 1-Oct 31) Tues-Sat from 9:30am-8:30pm. In Winter, (Nov 1-Apr 30) from 9:30am-6:30pm.

Metro: Tribunal or Alonso Martínez

Where: Calle San Mateo, 13

5. [Museo Sorolla](#)

This charming museum is my mother-in-law's favorite, not only for its beautiful art pieces but also for the old architecture of the building itself, which was the former private residence of Spanish painter, Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863 – 1923), who is especially famous for his portraits and landscapes. Another note – my mother fell in love with this museum too.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Saturdays from 2pm onwards, and Sundays.

Prices & Hours: General admission 3€. Tues-Sat from 9:30am-8pm. Sundays from 10am-3pm. Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Iglesia and Rubén Darío

Where: Paseo del General Martínez Campos, 37

6. [Museo Cerralbo](#)

[The Cerralbo Museum](#) is by far one of my favorite places in Madrid. Tucked away on a side street near Plaza de España and Templo de Debod, this stunning little museum was a former residence of the Marquis of Cerralbo, who lived here with his family in the 19th century. As you walk through the mansion's corridors and up the elegant stairwell to the ballroom, you'll

find everything remains exactly in tact, from the furniture and art pieces to the wall colors and lighting. Read our full post: [Museo Cerralbo, an art lover's dream house](#).

[Website](#)

When is it free? After 2pm on Saturdays; Thursdays from 5pm-8pm; Sundays.

Prices & hours: General admission €3. Open Tues–Sat 9:30am-3pm; Thursday also from 5-8pm; Sundays and holidays from 10am-3pm. I highly recommend [booking a guided tour](#) in English, Spanish or French

Metro: Plaza de España

Where: Calle Ventura Rodríguez, 17

7. [Casa Museo Lope de Vega](#)

This 16th-century house was the former home of Spanish writer, Lope de Vega, who was famous during the “Golden Age” of Spanish literature. His house is located in Madrid’s “Barrio de las Letras”, a central neighborhood whose streets are named after the several famous Golden Age writers who also lived there, such as Miguel de Cervantes, Quevedo and Góngora. Lope de Vega resided in this house during the last 25 years of his life, from 1610-35. His home was turned into a national monument and museum in 1935. Here you can see his private collection of art, furniture, books and more. To visit, you **must make a reservation in advance** for a free, guided tour (see details below).

[Website](#)

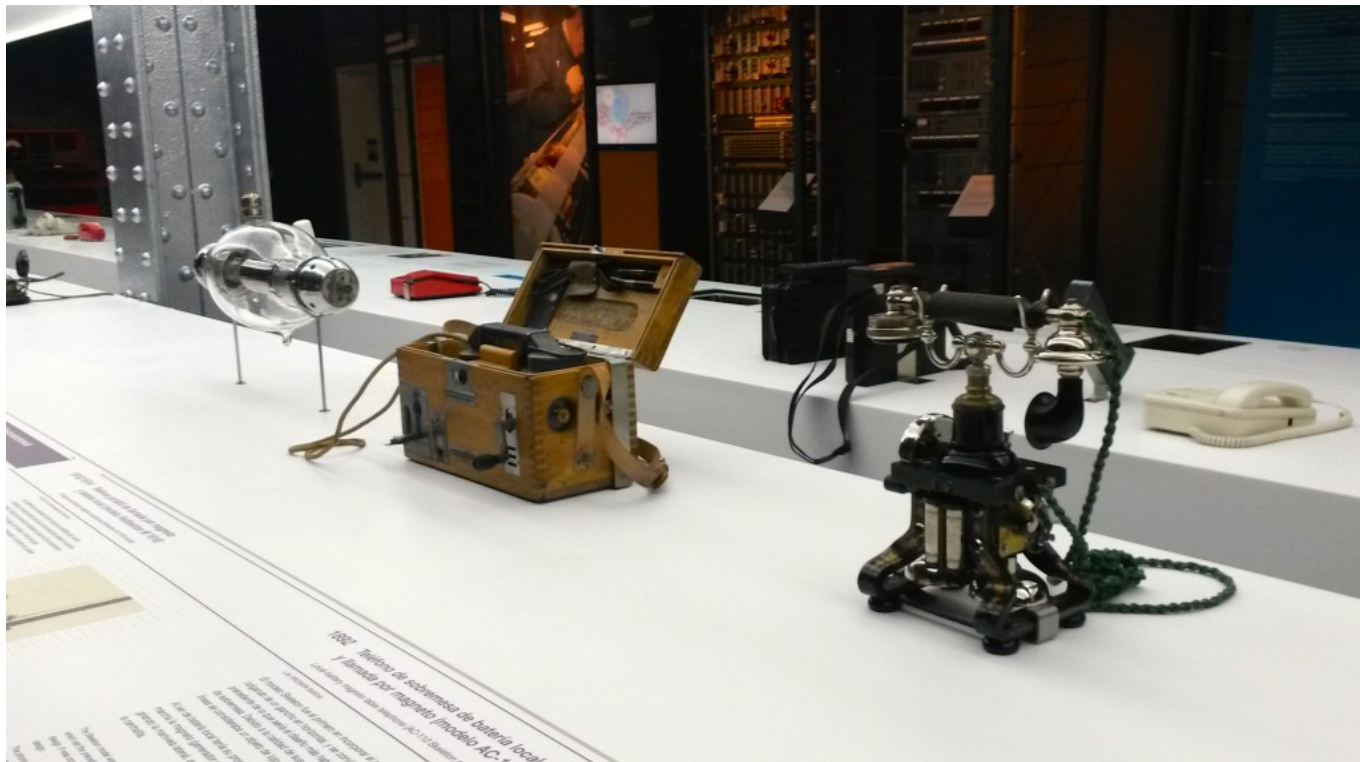
When is it free? Always.

Hours: Tues-Sun from 10am-6pm. Guided tours begin every half hour and are available in Spanish, English and French. [Make a Reservation by](#) telephone (91 429 92 16) or email (casamuseolopedevega@madrid.org).

Metro: Antón Martín and Sol

Where: Calle de Cervantes, 11

8. [Espacio Fundación Telefónica](#)



This arts and cultural exhibition space was created by the telecommunications company, Telefónica, and is always free and conveniently located on the Gran Vía. We highly recommend paying a visit, not only because it's free and has good air conditioning, but also because you'll find surprisingly current and interactive art exhibits. Plus, one of our Naked Madrid writers, Alex, recommends this place as a [great first date idea!](#)

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: every day from 10am-8pm.

Metro: Gran Vía (line 1 & 5)

Where: c/ Fuencarral, 3

9. [Museo de América](#)

This national museum houses 25,000 pieces of art and historical artifacts from the American continent. My friend, Ryan, wanted to make sure that I mentioned the shrunken heads

on display here (apparently, native Americans used to shrink dead humans' heads and use them as talismans).

[Website](#)

When is it free? For under-18-year-olds, over-65, university students and unemployed (with valid ID), holders of carné joven.

Prices & Hours: General Admission 3€. Tues-Sat from 9:30am-3pm; Thurs from 9:30am-3pm; Sundays from 10am-3pm; Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Moncloa

Where: Avenida de los Reyes Católicos, 6

10. [Fundación Mapfre](#)

This foundation was created by the insurance company, Mapfre, and exhibits art mostly from the last third of the 19th century to after World War II. It also showcases a lot of photography. The foundation has two rooms, both located next to each other.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: Mon from 2pm-8pm. Tues-Sat from 10am-8pm. Sun/holidays from 11am-7pm.

Metro: Colón

Where: Paseo de Recoletos, 23

11. [Conde Duque](#)



I have particularly fond memories of this cultural center because I used to go here often during university. Located in one of my favorite neighborhoods – Conde Duque – this building served as the former barracks of the Royal Guard Corps and was turned into a cultural center in 1983. Ever since, it has used its enormous space wisely. Here you can see free exhibits including large scale art projects, photography and documentaries. Its space is also used for concerts, performances, dance rehearsals, book archives, and even [outdoor cinema](#) which runs from July through September.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: Tues-Sat from 10.30am-2pm and 5.30pm-9pm.
Sundays/Holidays from 10.30am-2pm.

Metro: Noviciado, Plaza de España, San Bernardo and Ventura Rodríguez.

Where: Calle Conde Duque 11

12. [Museo del Traje](#)

Madrid's fashion museum showcases different modes throughout

the centuries. Although its current name is rather recent, the museum first opened in 1925 as “Exposición del Traje Regional e Histórico”, meaning the *exhibit on regional and historic attire*. Today it showcases a wide range of collections as well as cool activities and events which you can see [here](#).

[Website](#)

When is it free? Saturdays from 2:30pm on; Sundays. If you're under 18, over 65, a student between 18-28 years old.

Prices & Hours: General admission is 3€. Open Tues-Sat from 9:30am-7pm. Sundays and holidays from 10am-3pm.

Metro: Moncloa

Where: Avenida de Juan de Herrera, 2.

13. [La Tabacalera Promoción del Arte](#)

[La Tabacalera](#) is a very unique community center in Madrid that occupies an abandoned factory and holds free activities on a daily basis, from salsa and capoeira classes to concerts and markets. Adjacent to the community area is an exhibition space that is free and open to the public, and mainly showcases photography and contemporary art works. Warning: it's a large and almost spooky space.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always

Hours: Mon-Fri from 12pm-8pm. Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 11am-8pm. Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Embajadores

Where: Calle Embajadores 51 (the community center is number 53)

General Information:

*Most museums allow free entrance to under-18-year-olds and over-65-year-olds, as well as free entrance or a considerable discount to university students with valid ID and groups of over 5 people.

**All of Madrid's museums allow free entrance on the following holidays: April 18th (World Heritage Day), May 18th (International Museum Day), October 12th (National Spanish Holiday) and December 6th (Day of the Spanish Constitution).

As always, if we've left out any of your favorite art institutions or museums, please let us know! We intend on expanding this list.

Desperate Literature, for book lovers in Brooklyn, Santorini and now Madrid

Madrid has a new second-hand bookstore thanks to three men – Michael, Corey and Craig – whose unique concept to provide insatiable readers with good books and a literary haven has already won a loyal following in Santorini, Greece, and Brooklyn, New York. Just opened in May, **Desperate Literature** comes to Madrid as a new-found treasure for tourists, expats and Madrileños alike.

Editor's note: in 2018 we published a new article – [Desperate Literature: so much more than just a bookshop](#)

What's in stock?

Desperate Literature has a wide selection of **used books in English, Spanish and French**, and vinyls too. They get most of their books from library sales in New York and then ship them over, which is why half of their floor is currently usurped by

boxes. The shelves are stocked with novels ranging from fiction and crime to philosophy and even *erotica*. Although they're not against best-sellers (you'll find **50 Shades of Grey** and **Game of Thrones**), the space is small, so they do turn down books, aiming for quality rather than quantity. When I walked in, the first three books I spotted were by **Franz Kafka**, **James Joyce** and **George Orwell**, to give you an idea.



on Calle Campomanes 13, near metros Opera, Callao and Santo Domingo

Why Desperate Literature?

As quoted by Joaquín Font on their [web](#), there are books for all occasions—for when you're bored, sad, or calm. Whatever

mood you're in, if you're passing through Madrid or live here and find yourself desperate for a good read, you can either swap the book you've just finished or buy a new one for 3-9€. You can also say hi to Michael, the California-raised and Brooklyn-adopted owner; and Jamie, who works there and is also from Brooklyn. Plus they play good music and host events where they experiment with cocktails—one of the ways they're getting to know Madrid is by making homemade vermouth!

What's the story behind Desperate Literature?

All three partners are avid readers and part of the so-called *international booklovers connection*. Corey had sold books on the streets of New York for many years, where he met Michael, who joined in to open used bookshops in Brooklyn. Ten years ago, Craig started [Atlantis Books](#) in Santorini, Greece. **Atlantis** is an international bookshop that, despite being tiny and hidden away on the island of Santorini, is quite well-known. My mother bought her favorite book there—*East of Eden* by John Steinbeck. My sister, Amanda, actually lived and worked there for a month, as did my sister-in-law, Erin. Every Summer, **Atlantis** showcases a film festival on their roof, where the projector is set up against a backdrop of red sunsets and the Aegean Sea.

Of course there's more to the story, but the philosophy at **Atlantis Books** goes: if you're a book-loving traveller, you can work there and in turn, live and get taken care of for free. It's kind of like *WOOFING* for books instead of farms. It's also a place for travellers to meet, hang out and hold book readings and concerts. Under the same joint venture, these three young partners own two locations in Brooklyn, New York: [Book Thug Nation](#) and [Human Relations](#); and just opened [Desperate Literature](#) in Madrid in May.



Who came up with the whole idea?

It started with **Atlantis Books** in Santorini, opened by Craig and a bunch of friends (if you check out their [web](#), Atlantis' opening involved a lot of luck and a bit of whisky). Michael says the idea is based off **Shakespeare and Company**, Paris' famous book store and writers' institution. Opened in 1919 by American expat, Sylvia Beach, **Shakespeare and Company** was frequented by the likes of Gertrude Stein, James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway, and became a **gathering place for literary culture**, selling high-quality English-language books, some of which were banned, such as Joyce's *Ulysses* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Although it was closed during WWII, it was reopened in 1956 by American expat, George Whitman, who had amassed a huge collection of English books and wanted to return the generosity he had experienced while travelling the world as a young *vagabond*, by creating a **friendly place for English-speaking expats and bohemian culture**, allowing writers to stay there if they helped out. Today, **Shakespeare & Company** is run by Whitman's daughter who continues the tradition.

Why did they open Desperate Literature in Madrid, and not... Amsterdam?

Michael says 'it was kind of happenstance.' He and Corey have an affinity for the Spanish language, and both knew people in Madrid. The location was perfect as it was an already-established international bookstore, Petras; and is situated a stone's throw from the Royal Palace.

At the moment, only Michael is living at **Desperate Literature** and hopefully Corey will take his place in November. Michael says that when he visits a city, even for a day, he always checks out the local book stores. He expects that visitors to Madrid will do the same and that **Desperate Literature** will be their literary home away from home.

They're here, so come and say hello!

Desperate Literature

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

Hours: Mon-Sat 12pm-9pm

Address: Calle Campomanes, 13

Metro: Santo Domingo, Opera and Callao

Please also read our 2018 article – [Desperate Literature: so much more than a bookshop](#)

Best Cafe-bookshops in

Madrid, Round 1!

Coffee shops selling books? Bookshops selling coffee? However you call them, here are five wonderful café-bookshops in Madrid where you can enjoy a cup of coffee or a glass of wine while surrounded by good reads. (See [round two](#) for more!)

1. [Ocho y Medio Libros de Cine](#)



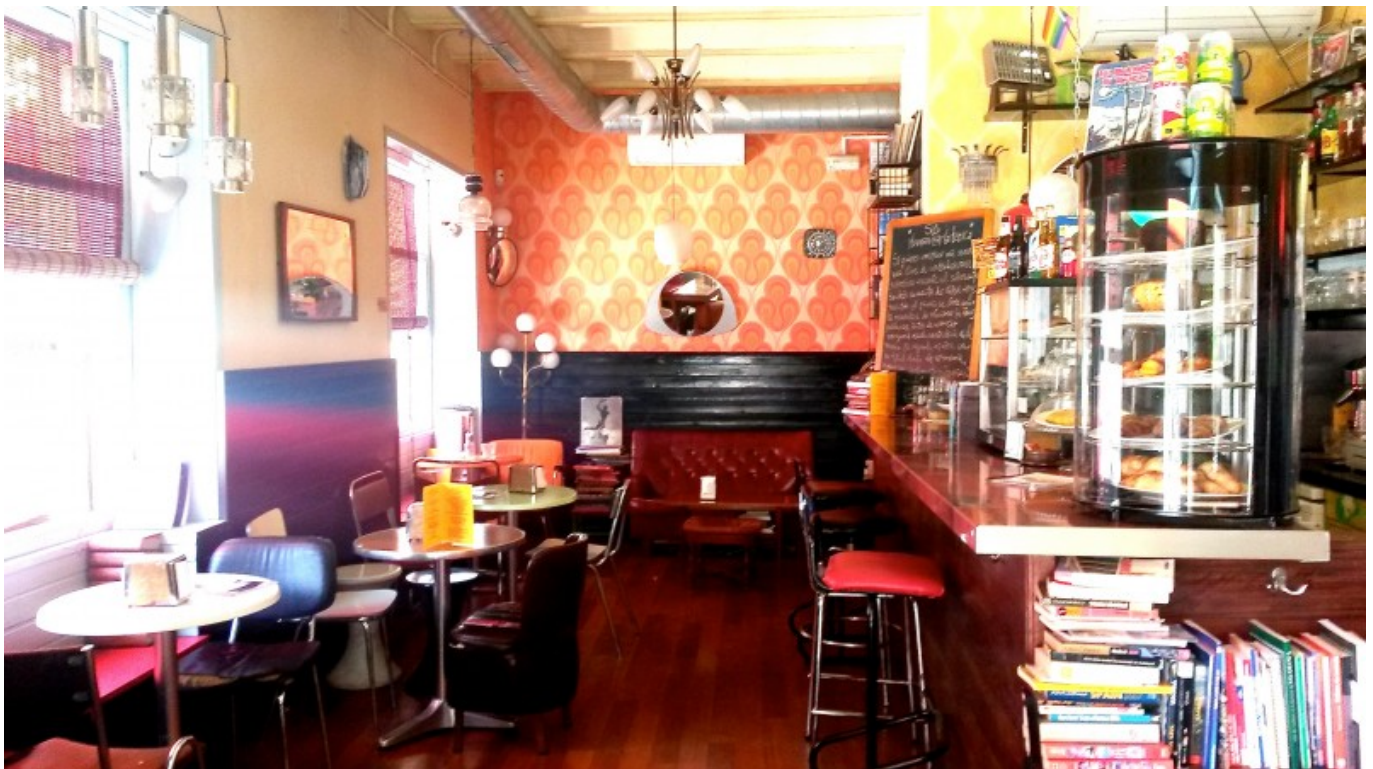
This charming bookshop (featured in the cover photo) specializes in cinema, and boasts a cozy café and outdoor seating area. I love going here for a drink and a *tosta* right before [seeing a film](#) at one of the independent movie theaters just across the street. All screenings are in original version with Spanish subtitles. A tip: this makes

for a great date night!

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Martín de los Heros, 11
- **Metro:** Plaza de España

Also read: [Where to enjoy good film in Madrid](#)

2. [La Libre](#)



This is my mom's favorite cafe in Madrid. Why? Because a few years ago while she was visiting me in the dead of winter, we went in to warm up after a visit to the [Reina Sofia Museum](#) around the corner. When she ordered a coffee, the server said, "No ma'am, I think you need a whisky." He couldn't have been more right! They also have nice teas and snacks to nibble on, from breakfast pastries to empanadas.

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** c/ Argumosa, 39
- **Metro:** Atocha

3. La Infinito



This little café-bookshop lies on a corner in Lavapiés and serves up coffee, books and art on a daily basis. Not only does it have a welcoming ambience and lots of light streaming in through its tall glass windows, but it also throws great events, from **micro-theater performances** (one of which took place in the café's bathroom!) to popular weekend brunches.

- *image from La Infinito*
- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** c/ Tres Peces, 22
- **Metro:** Antón Martín & Lavapiés

4. La Fugitiva



Books are the centrepiece at this cafe, and I love how its window seats and tiny bar are nestled between towering bookshelves and overflowing tables displaying bestsellers and rare reads. La Fugitiva has all you need from a café (coffee and sweets) and all you could ask of a bookstore – readings, talks, workshops, and of course, that distinct smell of books.

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** c/ de Santa Isabel, 7
- **Metro:** Antón Martín

5. Tipos Infames. Libros y Vinos



Wine and books? Quite a killer combination in my opinion. Located right off the popular Calle Fuencarral, this trendy bookshop, café and wine bar is a favorite of many in Malasaña. Tipos Infames offers a much appreciated rest from the bustling shops and streets in the area. It has a lot of seating area, a full bar and high ceilings, making it feel open, friendly and comfortable. It's a great place to go with friends for a quieter conversation in the afternoon. Plus they throw fun events, so make sure to follow them on social media.

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** c/ San Joaquín, 3
- **Metro:** Tribunal

Keep reading Round 2 of Madrid's Best Cafe-bookshops

And if you're looking for a few of our favorite cafe in Madrid *without* books:

- [Pepe Botella, a coffee place where you can think](#)
- [Toma Café, fuel up, feel hip](#)
- [Acid Café, seasonal, minimalist and just good coffee](#)

Electric City Bikes in Madrid, a city that's turning bike-friendly

Madrid's public bike stations had been lonely for weeks, but yesterday morning we woke up to see the much-awaited electric bikes finally parked in their slots! So here's a look at all

you need to know about getting tickets, finding stations and participating in Madrid's rising bike scene.

Although far from being comparable to Amsterdam, Madrid is in the midst of a fast transition towards becoming biker-friendly. In recent years, bike lanes have appeared on main streets such as **calle Alcalá** and **calle Mayor**. Community biking groups and blogs such as [En Bici Por Madrid](#), [Ecomovilidad](#) and [Ciclosfera](#) encourage city biking culture in Madrid by providing info on the best cycling routes, workshops and how to lock up your bike properly. [Bici Crítica](#) organizes a free meet-up on the last Thursday of every month at 8pm, when cyclists gather at **Plaza de Cibeles** for a pleasant ride around the city. Now the new **electric city bikes** should be another fun way to explore, get through traffic, and tackle those relentless hills!



What's BiciMAD?

[BiciMAD](#) is an initiative launched by Madrid's **Ayuntamiento** (City Hall) to provide affordable, public rental of electric-powered bikes, allowing city-dwellers to move around Madrid on **eco-friendly wheels 24/7**. Electric-powered means there's a small engine that helps you pedal, especially when starting off or going up hills. The engine automatically shuts off when

you reach a speed of 16km/hr. The first phase of the initiative consists of 1,580 bikes and 123 stations, in the following neighborhoods: Center, Retiro, Salamanca, Arganzuela and Moncloa.

Important links:

- [BiciMAD's web](#) and [facebook](#)
- [Madrid city's official info on BiciMAD](#)
- [Google map of all the electric bike stations](#)
- Interactive [map of Madrid for bikers](#), including calmest streets and bike paths

How does it work?

All transactions—registration, payment, getting and charging your card, bike pick-up & drop-off, and reporting of problems—can be carried out at each **bike station**, where you will find a machine (**tótem**) with instructions in English and Spanish. What's more, you'll be able to check availability and routes on your mobile device: IOS, Android and Windows P, and download a handy **app**.

How much does it cost?

Price depends on if you buy an annual pass (**abonado**) or not (**no abonado**).



For **abonados**, you will have to pay **25€/year** and only **15€/year** if you already have the monthly **abono transporte** (public train and bus pass), plus an additional cost per ride of 0,50€-0,60€ (see all rates above). For **no abonados**, also called *usuarios ocasionales*, rides up to an hour cost **2€-4€**.

All rates include insurance. Sanctions are established for abuse or misuse.

How do you sign up & get your card?

Whether you're an **annual user** or an **occasional user**, you still need to sign up. Here are the steps:

1. Sign up to get your code:

- [Online](#)
- At any station's totem
- By phoning 010
- In person at Línea Madrid offices

2. With the code, pick up your card (*tarjeta*) and charge it at the station

*As an annual user (*abono anual*), you're automatically part of the public bicycle club of Madrid ([Club de la Bicicleta Pública de Madrid](#)), a virtual forum for other biking fans to find out about events, workshops and exchange info.

How do you use it?

- Once you're signed up and put money on your card at the station, you're ready to start riding.
- To pick up the bike, there should be a Green light indicating that the bike is available. Swipe/hold your card close to the light until you hear a beep. Then gently remove the bike from its slot.
- To drop off the bike, there should be a red light at the slot meaning it's empty. Push the bike in until the light turns green, hear a beep and voilá! Just make sure that the bike is stationed well by pulling at it slightly.
- If it's blue, that means that the spot has been reserved by another user.
- If there's no light, it means that it's disconnected and you can't use it.

What happens if you return a bike and the station is full?

- Check in so you don't get penalized, and then you will be given 10 more minutes to go to the next station.

**We'll be updating this post as the new initiative sets in... stay tuned!*

And if you're looking to take these city bikes out for a spin, check out: [4 Best City Biking Routes in Madrid](#)

Madrid's Best Public Bathrooms When You Gotta Go

'Where do you go to the bathroom in Madrid?' is one of those important questions that's not often talked about. Of course you can go into any bar you wish, but we're focusing on those easy and clean bathrooms, where **you don't have to ask for permission** to enter and you know **there will always be toilet paper**.

While this list of **Madrid's best public bathrooms** should be useful for tourists, it will be particularly handy for **Madrid's language teaching community** who are out all day travelling to their students' private houses and it's just plain awkward to ask if you can use their toilet.

So here's a list of Madrid's best public toilets!!

1. [El Corte Inglés](#)



Madrid's major department store, **El Corte Inglés**, is a true godsend when you're out in the city and nature calls. I can't think of any neighbourhood in Madrid that doesn't have a Corte Inglés, especially in the center. So just look for those green letters and know you're in good hands!

2. [Markets and city shopping malls](#)



Most neighbourhoods have **indoor markets** and **shopping malls** such as **ABC Serrano** in **Salamanca** and **Mercado de Fuencarral** in **Malasaña**, the latter being the favorite of my friend, Sarah, who actually gave me the idea for this article. She said their bathrooms are perfect for English teachers who are constantly on the move. I used to frequent **Moda Shopping** near **Santiago Bernabeu** along the **Castellana**. Here's a link to all **7 Madrid shopping malls** so hopefully you will find one near your classes!

3. **Museums and Cultural Centers**



pristine toilets at Espacio Telefónica on each floor of this free cultural center on calle Fuencarral, right off the Gran Vía

Madrid is full of **museums** and **cultural centres** which have large and clean public bathrooms conveniently located in their entrances and cafés. **Fundación Telefónica** on calle Fuencarral, right off the Gran Vía, has pristine bathrooms and free entrance. Just walk in, take the elevator to any floor and find the restrooms to your right. The **Reina Sofia** museum on calle Atocha has a beautiful café with entrance on street level, where you will also find the bathrooms. Here are some other similar places, **Conde Duque, Caixa Forum, El Matadero, Palacio de Cibeles**, just to name a few.



The Reina Sofia Museum's café on calle Atocha. Great public bathroom.

4. [FNAC](#)

Madrid's huge technology store near Callao and Sol has a newly renovated bathroom on the fifth floor. It's so clean, so easy and so convenient. They have a nice café too, by the way.

5. [Casa del Libro](#)



Can't go wrong with a bookstore! **Casa del Libro** has plenty of locations around Madrid as well and people don't usually think to go here, so I've hardly ever seen a queue. I used to go to one near **Goya**, but there is also one right on the **Gran Vía** (restrooms on the second floor).

6. **McDonald's**

I personally steer clear of McDonalds' bathrooms, most likely because I immediately think of the one that's on calle Montera (yikes!). But my husband, James, says there's a nice one near metro **Begoña**, right below the **4 towers in Plaza de Castilla**.

Fellow Madrid language teachers and wanderers, do you know of any other good bathrooms in Madrid?

7. Hotels

As in any other big city, you can always pop into a hotel too.

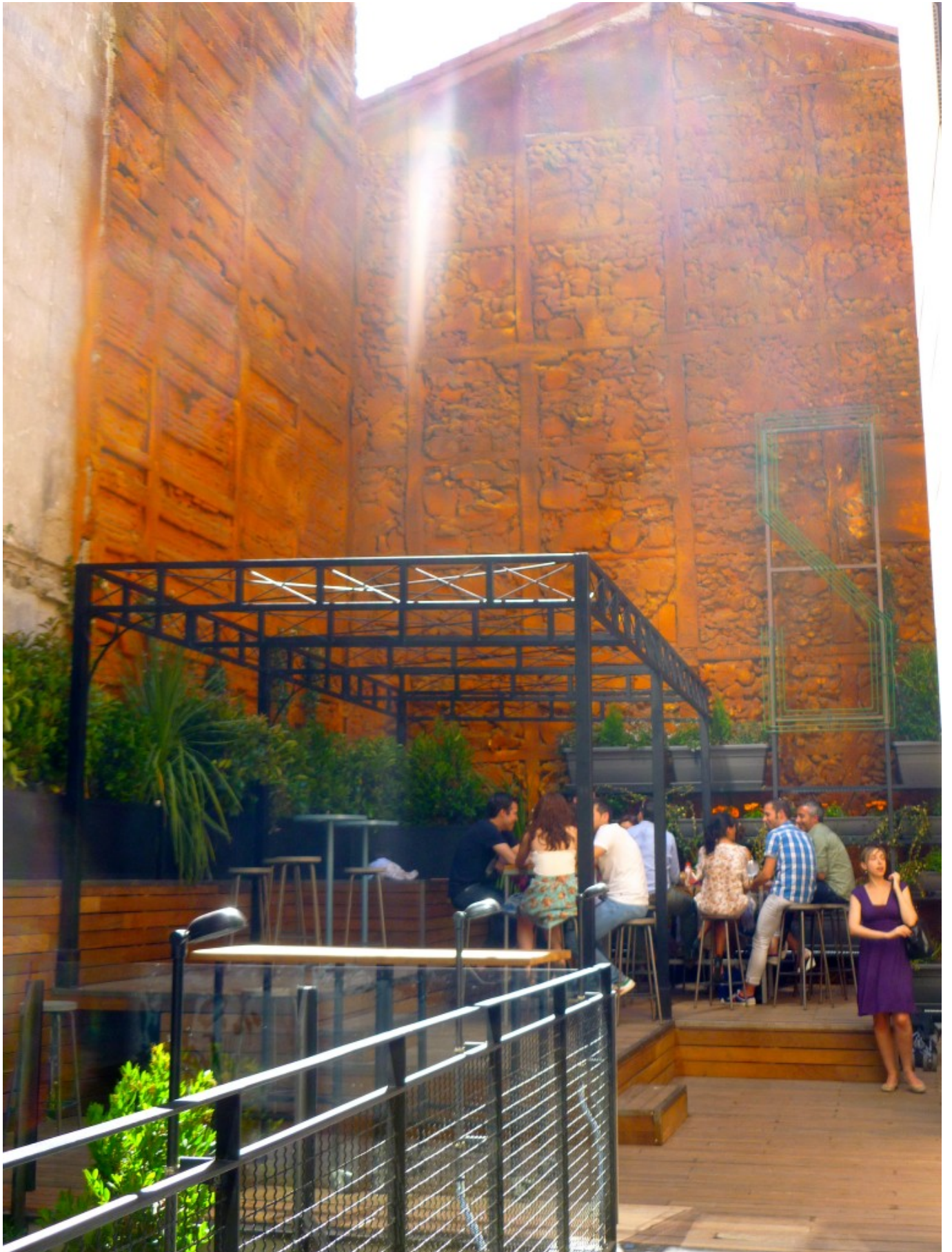
San Ildefonso Market, Malasaña's new food palace

[Mercado del San Ildefonso](#), a three-story food emporium, has just opened on calle Fuencarral, 57, in Madrid's trendy area of **Malasaña**. Its open architecture and urban design are so cool that I think this market is already looking as good, if not better than Madrid's other amazing food markets—Mercado de San Antón and Mercado de San Miguel. Here's a look!

As you enter you find food stalls and a few stools. And then...



As you walk up to the second floor, you'll find a cozy outdoor seating area sandwiched between the market's neighbouring buildings.




On this floor you can delight in little food stalls serving up simple dishes, such as croquettes, meat skewers, seafood and

more. At the tables you can look up to see beams, lights and windows.

Va de Gamba

Le Croqueteries

myVeg 

GRANIA
DP1
TAITE

B







On the top floor there's a full bar which also gives you views to the floors down below. You've just gotta go!



Here's the facade, since it's not as pretty on the outside, we've saved this photo for last...



[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Fuencarral, 57

Metro: Gran Vía and Tribunal

If you are into food, markets and eating outdoors, here are some other posts you might like:

- [Lavapiés and its market, the real food emporium](#)
- [Mercado de Motors, Madrid's coolest monthly market](#)
- [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#)
- [Beer state of mind in Madrid \(best craft beer\)](#)
- [Top 4 swimming pools](#)

Tandoori Station, a raved about Indian restaurant

Having heard wonderful things about [Tandoori Station](#) from so many people, I finally went there the other night with a group of friends, one of whom had previously written about the restaurant in her own food blog, [Las Mesas de Vanessa](#).



Tandoori Station is located in [Barrio Salamanca](#). Now I must admit that I was reluctant to eat Indian food that far from **calle Lavapiés** (if you don't know this street, it's lined with cheap and fun Indian restaurants that I like to call *curry row*). But **Tandoori Station** is different. One, it's higher-end and thus pricier, which is well worth it for its **generous portions** and **outstanding quality**. And two, **the service is very good**—you will be asked how everything is and given recommendations. If you go often enough, your name will

be remembered and after-dinner shots will be on the house. And lastly, it's the kind of **comfortable place** where you can linger over drinks and dessert as long as you wish. So needless to say, **it lived up to my expectations indeed!!**



Just one last note before I talk about the food—the **décor** includes features of a train station (as its name implies) and they have a **spacious outdoor seating area** which was very alluring even though we decided to sit inside.



from Tandoori Station's web

So here's what we ordered:

To start, they give you the typical crispy bread with three sauces to choose from. To drink, we ordered Indian beer called **Crown** and Vanessa ordered her favorite, **salted lassi**. We then ordered two appetizers—**Samosas** (filled with potato, peas and cilantro seeds) and **Aloo Tikkia** (mini potato hamburgers with paneer cheese). The ingredients tasted fresh and delicious, plus the sauces added a great kick to each bite.



When it came to the main course, I was planning on ordering **lamb curry**, because my friend Alondra told me it was out of this world. But as I looked at the menu I instantly fell in love with **Murghi Ki Balti** (curried chicken with yogurt sauce, tomato, cilantro, anis and other spices). It was really nice, but I still want to go back for the lamb!



Murghi Ki Balti chicken curry

We shared several other dishes too. Our table was full of colours and smells, and it took some creativity as to what sauce and rice to mix with what chicken or vegetable. We had **Murgh Ka Tikka** (marinated tandoori chicken) which I liked even more than the **Murghi Ki Balti**.



Murgh Ka Tikka (marinated tandoori chicken)



curried spinach

We also ordered **Kashmir Ka Pulau** (rice dish with raisins, nuts, and saffron), **curried spinach**, **aubergines** and **Madras Wali Machli** (swordfish curry, mildly spicy with a touch of coconut milk), and some **naan bread** too, of course. What can I say? It was all delicious! I don't think you can go wrong with anything here.



Madras Wali Machli swordfish



Kashmir Ka Pulao rice

Although I've only been here once, my friends have been back many times and say they've always enjoyed it thoroughly. So if you're looking for **great quality Indian food in Madrid**, I would definitely recommend **Tandoori Station**. It's especially **good for groups** (I noticed that many of the tables around us were either large groups of families or friends, and there was plenty of space). **Do make a reservation!**

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: c/ José Ortega y Gasset 89-91

Phone: 914 01 22 28

Price Range: (20-30€)

Best Gifts from Madrid

Buying gifts for friends and family in Madrid can be a difficult task. Pretty much everything can be found everywhere nowadays. I often see the same Spanish brand names and products when I walk around my neighborhood in New York. So I think to myself, why did I even bother lugging that bottle of *Marqués de Riscal* all across the ocean? If you find yourself faced with this same problem (and not inclined to buy your mom a keychain or a magnet), here's a list of well thought-out **gift ideas from Madrid**. Hope it helps!

First let's quickly name some of the **more obvious gift ideas**, which are also good but run the risk of being found in your hometown (scroll down if you're all too familiar with these):

Handheld fans, flamenco shawls, ceramic tiles and dishes, paella pans, recipe books, aprons with a flamenco dancer or the flag of Spain, **football/soccer jersey, wine, cured ham and sweets** with long shelf-lives such as *mazapán*, *turron* and

polvorones (can be bought at [El Riojano](#) or [Casa Mira](#), two very traditional pastry shops in the city center) or a **swiss army/pocket knife** (best from Toledo but also sold in Plaza Mayor). While it's always best to buy these items from independent sellers (which you will find below), if you're pressed for time you can find absolutely everything at **EL Corte Inglés**, the country's major department store with locations all around.

Now let's move on to the **more original gift ideas**:

1. Anything from La Violeta



La Violeta is a candy shop located in the center of Madrid. It must be included in this list because it is a typical place **where Madrileños buy gifts for other Madrileños**. **Las violetas** are purple-colored sucking candies wrapped in pretty little boxes and ribbon. You can buy them plain or **escarchadas**, meaning sugar-coated. You can also find **cajas de bombones** (boxes of chocolates) and many other sweet treats. Prices range from **€5** to **€15**.

Web

Address: Plaza de Canalejas, 6

Metro: Sol and Sevilla

2. Saffron or a pack of mixed Spanish spices for anyone who likes to cook

My sister, Amanda, actually gave me this idea. Her boyfriend's family is originally from the Basque Country. Her father-in-law loves little trinkets from Spain and also makes **paella** every year for the whole family. So she had the bright idea of buying him a pack of **azafrán** (saffron). **Yes, saffron!** It costs peanuts in comparison to what it costs in the States. She bought it at **Corte Inglés** and he was over the moon when he received it. For non-purists, you can also buy **sachets**, which is a bag of mixed Spanish spices, also used for making **paella**. Anyone who likes to cook will enjoy this gift!

3. Berets; can be bought at a charming century-old hat shop right in Plaza Mayor



Founded in 1894, Madrid's oldest hat shop—[La Favorita C.B.](#)—is now in the hands of its family's fourth generation. It remains in its original location in Plaza Mayor and sells all types of traditional Spanish hats that make for fun and useful gifts. Amanda gave me this idea too. She bought a **black beret** for her stylish sister-in-law which cost **€19**. Although the black beret is traditionally worn in the Basque Country, where it's called

a **Boina**, it very well looked like it could have been bought at Top Shop. I'm sure anyone could rock this look in any city around the world, and they'd have a nice story to tell when someone asked them where they bought it.



[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Plaza Mayor, 25

Metro: Sol or Opera

4. Chocolate for dipping churros; can be bought at the famous Chocolatería San Gines (near Sol)

In Spanish, this is simply called **chocolate a la taza** or **chocolate caliente**. However, for English-speakers this can be quite confusing—this is not just hot chocolate. It refers to the thick chocolate that you **dip churros** into. When my husband's relatives from California were visiting, they bought bags and bags of this chocolate as a present for all their friends back home. It was a hit! And it's not exclusive for dipping **churros**, you can also use it for dipping

strawberries, bananas—anything you like! You can buy it in bags by the kilo at Madrid's most famous churros shop, **Chocolatería San Ginés**, open 24/7 and just a stone's throw from Sol.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Pasadizo de San Gines, 5

Metro: Sol

5. Peseta; for millions of small gift ideas made in Madrid, using fabrics from around the world (in Malasaña)



Named after Spain's former currency—*las pesetas*—this charming store was founded by Laura Martínez del Pozo around ten years ago. She collects fabrics from all over the world and uses them to make unique, creative and very handy items, from **tablet and laptop cases** to **handbags and wallets**. They even sell beautiful shoes, also typical from Spain—**espadrilles** and **alpargatas**—though with a nice twist as the fabric is a hundred

percent unique. Seeing as these everyday items are useful for everyone, you're sure to find great gifts here.



You can also find Peseta's products sold at an awesome book store and cafe near Callao called [La Central](#), which will talk more about below.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Noviciado, 9

Metro: Noviciado

6. Summer shoes; can be found in stores everywhere (also in Peseta)



alpargatas at the top and mallorquinas at the bottom

Esparto (espadrilles), ***alpargatas*** and ***mallorquinas*** are the **three most popular summer shoe styles** originating from Spain. All can be found in any colour and in any standard shoe store (the center is littered with typical shoe stores, especially around **Plaza Mayor** and **Calle Carmen** which is right off of Sol). The latter two styles are unisex, so you're bound to find something for both your male and female friends and family. Since Spain is well-known for its amazing shoes, why not wow them with some Spanish summer footwear they can strut around their own city in style? Plus you don't have to limit yourself to the traditional ones. You can find snazzier versions too. You can also check out our post on "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)" for more recommendations.



This photo is from a new store called [Alpargatus](#) which is located just off of Plaza Mayor on Calle Postas. They have all types of *alpargatas*, *espadrilles* and *mallorquinas*, plus other souvenirs. It's really convenient.

[Facebook](#)

Address: *C/ Postas, 20 (just a few steps away from Plaza Mayor)*

Metro: *Sol or Opera*

Or check out another post of ours dedicated solely to espadrilles: "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)"

8. Traditional gloves with silk lining from 100-year-old glove shop in Sol

Just a note—I couldn't get a photo because the owner closed the shop for the whole weekend to go to Lisbon and watch the football match...

Believe it or not, Spain still has entire shops dedicated solely to **gloves**! One of Madrid's most well-known and oldest glove shops is called [Guantes Luque](#), nestled between the streets of Sol and Sevilla. Entering the shop is an experience in and of itself. These elegant gloves take you back to

another era, when items were not mass produced and were meant to last a lifetime. Understandably on the **expensive** side, these traditional **Spanish gloves** are not only beautiful, but have silk lining which is a godsend in winter.

No web, but they're on [Yelp](#)

Address: c/ Espoz y Mina, 3

Metro: Sol, Gran Vía or Sevilla

7. Gift Basket – 3 simple and delicious ingredients



image from gastronosfera.com

When I asked around for good gift ideas, one expat said that he always brings home a basket of 3 items: **pimientos de piquillo** (roasted red peppers), **aceitunas campo reales** (olives) and a really fancy **aceite de oliva** (olive oil). After speaking with many foreigners living in Spain, it became clear that **campo real olives** are a major hit among the gift-giving crowd. Though if you don't like olives, you can always replace them with a bottle of wine (my favorite red is **Ribera** and my favorite white is **Albariño**), a box of **marzipan** from Toledo or

sweets from **La Violeta** (mentioned #1).

Where to buy: while you can buy these items all over the city and of course at **El Corte Inglés**, we recommend you go to [Mercado de Antón Martín](#) or [Mercado de San Fernando](#). These markets are very traditional, unlike many of the others that have become over-priced and over-touristy. You can also go to Qué Rico Tó, mentioned #2 on this list.

Mercado de Antón Martín

[Facebook](#)

Address: C/ Santa Isabel, 5

Metro: Antón Martín

Mercado de San Fernando

[Facebook](#)

Address: C/ Embajadores, 41

Metro: Lavapiés or Embajadores

8. Spanish Comic Books



For your alternative or comic-book loving friends, a **Spanish comic** could be a really cool gift. It's always fun to read comics in other languages, especially because the drawings and images help you figure out the story. But of course this gift isn't for everyone. The above photo is of [El Coleccionista](#), a well-known **comic shop in Lavapiés** with a wide collection. My sister, Amanda (also in the photo), bought a few rare books for her friends here. When I asked Amanda if I could include her photo in this article, she said of course—she'd be happy to support any type of independent shop like this one which make up the backbone of a city's personality and charm. I've also just found out that one of the world's best comic stores is located in Madrid too, it's called [Akira Comics](#) and is located a bit further out in the city.

[El Coleccionista](#)

Address: C/ Tribulete, 5

Metro: Lavapiés

9. Second-hand books with personality from Desperate Literature



At [Desperate Literature](#), a new international bookstore located in the center of Madrid (close to the Royal Palace), you can find good quality used books in English, Spanish and French, many of which are related to Spain and can make for a great, personalized gift. Also, this bookstore has a nice story behind it, as its three young owners—Michael, Corey and Craig—have opened used international bookstores in Santorini,

Greece and in Brooklyn, New York. With the recent opening of Desperate Literature in Madrid, they aim to provide a literary haven for travellers, expats and Madrileños alike. [Here's a long article on Desperate Literature.](#)

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: c/ Campomanes, 13

Metro: Santo Domingo and Opera

10. New books and much more from a La Central, an ultra hip bookstore/cafe near Callao



While my first suggestion would be to go to Desperate Literature, if you're looking for all kinds of new books in

Spanish (i.e. children's, novels, poetry, you name it) or other gift ideas such as **board games, notebooks and fun nicknacks**, then this is the store you should be going to.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Postigo de San Martín 8

Metro: Callao

11. Trinkets from a Funky Madrid Gift Shop called Curiosity

As far as gift shops go, this one is quite original. At [Curiosity](#), you can get maps of Malasaña and Chueca for €12, which look great framed, as well as tons of other fun little *tchotchkes*. This gift is recommended for someone who has lived or spent a good amount of time in Madrid.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Corredera Alta de San Pablo, 28

Metro: Tribunal

Any other gift ideas? Please share! We'll be happy to add more to this list

Madrid's best rooftop bars, round 3

Welcome to **round 3** of **Madrid's best rooftop bars!** We hope that by now you've already visited and enjoyed some of the ones we've mentioned in [round 1](#) and [round 2](#). This third list

includes **5 magnificent rooftop bars**—all but one of which are located right smack in the center of Madrid. Thus if you find yourself strolling along the Gran Vía or the Royal Palace, please know that there is a rooftop terrace with champagne and wine awaiting you!

**all photos are from each place's official webpage, unless noted otherwise*

8. Apartosuites Jardines de Sabatini

Address: Cuesta San Vicente, 16

Metro: Príncipe Pio and Plaza de España



Named after the **Gardens of the Royal Palace (Jardines de Sabitini)**, this hotel has a very nice advantage, as it overlooks both the beautiful **Jardines** and stunning **Palacio Real**. What's more, during the summer, the royal garden plays host to a series of traditional theater, music and dance performances, from flamenco to *Zarzuela*. This hotel rooftop gets a private concert as it's a stone's throw from the stage!

9. Bar Terraza Palacio De Cibeles

Address: Plaza de Cibeles, 1 (Palacio de Cibeles 6ª Planta)

Metro: Banco de España



Overlooking **Plaza de Cibeles**, **Paseo del Prado** and **Madrid's breathtaking skyline**, this iconic and postcard-perfect building used to be the city's main post office, although it has just recently been refurbished and turned into a museum and cultural center with free entry. The building's interior is beautiful; the first few floors are dedicated to art exhibits, while the 6th floor is now known as **Terraza Cibeles**, a fancy restaurant & cocktail bar overlooking the city with stunning views. Prices on drinks are high, as you can imagine, but the whole experience is a real treat. What's more, every 30 minutes there are **scheduled visits to the *mirador*** (lookout point) for just €2 and €0,50 for under-12-year-olds. Opened to the public for the first time, the visit takes you to the highest point of the building, situated at the very top of the tower on the 8th floor.

10. [The Roof](#) at ME Madrid Reina Victoria Hotel

Address: Plaza de Santa Ana, 14

Metro: Sol, Sevilla



I've never been here, mainly because it's way too fancy and exclusive for my taste, but The Roof is one of Madrid's most famous rooftop bars, located atop the high-end Meliá Hotel in Plaza de Santa Ana, one of Madrid's most famous squares full of bars and restaurants. Take the elevator up to the top floor and you'll find beautiful views, purple lighting contrasted against the building's white tower, expensive cocktails, fine cuisine and lounge chairs. It must make for a truly glamorous experience.

11. [Hotel Urban](#)

Address: Carrera de San Jerónimo, 34

Metro: Sevilla



As its name entails, **Hotel Urban** is extremely fashionable and modern. The hotel also prides itself on having an art deco look and contemporary-style interior design. Its high-end restaurant is named [Europa Decó](#), its oyster bar is named [The Glass Bar](#), and its spectacular rooftop is named [La Terraza del Urban](#). If you like sipping on cocktails in chic bars with exquisite views, you will absolutely love this place..

12. [Hotel Silken Puerta América Madrid](#)

Address: Avenida de America, 41

Metro: Cartagena



image from societeperrier.com

This is the first rooftop terrace we've mentioned that is not within walking distance from Sol! **Hotel Silken** stands out along Madrid's major highway for its multicolored facade and unconventional shape. Making it even more unique, **each of the hotel's 12 floors was designed by an internationally acclaimed architect**, including Arata Isozaki from Japan, Zaha Hadid from Iran and Norman Foster from the UK. Highly modern to say the least, this hotel is situated near **Avenida de America**, a transport and business hub that draws in all kinds of crowds. The **hotel's rooftop terrace** is absolutely incredible in summer; it is an open-air nightclub that offers a much appreciated breeze, plus a significant drop in temperature as it's so high up!

If you're looking for more of Madrid's best rooftop bars, check out [round 1](#) and [round 2](#) of this series.

And of course, if we've missed any, let us know!

Also check out a few of our other "best of" Madrid

lists:

- [Madrid's best cocktails](#)
- [Madrid's best bars for craft beer](#)
- [Madrid's best first date ideas](#)
- [Madrid's best gift ideas](#)