

Lockdown diaries: Dan, CV writer & proofreader, stranded up north in the Basque Country

Here's the second story of our new series on what it's like to be in Spain right now during the lockdown. Daniel Catalan is a professional CV builder and writer specializing in career services. He's been living and working in Madrid on and off for almost a decade, and is currently on lockdown in País Vasco, as he was away on holiday there when the state of emergency was declared.

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

A week ago I was at home in Madrid, attending to a surplus of several clients back-to-back in anticipation of a trip that I embarked on Wednesday morning to San Sebastian. The purpose of this trip was to become immersed in the local gastronomy, to take long walks on the beach and in the nature of the surrounding villages. I succeeded in these objectives during the first two days of the trip before embracing the gravity of the situation. Prompted to prolong the trip, I've been quarantining myself in a comfortable apartment here that I obtained via the online community of *Auxiliares en Pais Vasco*.

What does the street look like?

My window looks out to a nearby store of local Basque products where I'm able to stock up on essentials. The apartment is situated in the Old Town, which I was able to see in its regular lively state on Wednesday and Thursday before the country shut down. I took one of the last Pintxos and wine walking tours of this neighborhood with Devour Tours before they put a pause on all operations and I had a very positive experience. The contrast between then and now is like night and day.

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

When shopping for essentials at the nearby store, unfortunately, they had no coffee to sell. The store is owned and managed by the staff of a popular pintxos bar called Gandarias which is situated next door. The shopkeeper and I made small talk at a safe distance, and he told me to wait outside for a moment after I paid for my purchases. He alerted the bar owner, who opened the shuttered establishment and emerged with a cup full of coffee grounds, and two bottles of wine which he gave to me for free.



How are you coping?

I have had a good fortune that my work is not interrupted and I can continue to attend to my clients remotely. I cherish the calls with them as they are meaningful interactions that give me a sense of purpose. If I'm being honest, I only feel completely distracted and at peace when immersed in my work. Many educators and tourism professionals have lost their jobs due to these volatile circumstances and have turned to my service for support as they seek to land on their feet. My mission is to provide the support that I wish I myself had received when I was abruptly sacked from a job in the past. Now that we're all in quarantine, this time can be used productively to reflect on aspirations and the finite nature of the human experience.

My days are filled with video calls with my loved ones in their various global corners. I have caught myself being more forgiving and even nostalgic when reflecting on persons from my past who I've consciously or mutually severed contact with over recent years. I have continued to see my therapist remotely, as that was how we would meet prior to this debacle. Rather than simply sharing memes, I've been consciously creating them myself.

My crucial tip to anyone reading this, and I cannot emphasize this enough, is to seize this opportunity to watch HBO's *The Wire*, a masterpiece of a series that had an enriching impact on my life and shaped my worldview when I first watched it in 2010.

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

Breathe clean air in the nature of any of the gorgeous villages that surround San Sebastian.

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

To the Spanish government, my counsel would be to place an indefinite pause on the **autonomo* tax to give all freelancers room to breathe. All creative professionals are suffering greatly due to the indefinite pause in their income stream and I think it is unjust to give them an additional strain. Here's a [petition that we're signing](#) to hopefully make this happen.

**for all registered freelancers in Spain, you must pay a monthly fee of €280/month, regardless of income*

- Dan is also one of the most active writers on Naked Madrid, and has helped write several Madrid lockdown diaries. [Check out all his articles.](#)

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

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

Lockdown diaries: Cat, primary school teacher & Naked Madrid contributor

Madrid is on its third day of lockdown. For 15 days we aren't allowed to go outside unless it's to the supermarket, to walk our dog, or to the pharmacy (or for urgent matters, i.e. going to the hospital). And we must go alone if possible. This has all happened very abruptly and it seems as though the rules keep changing every day. It's hard to explain what it feels like to be here right now, which is why I'd like to share personal stories of Madrid residents who are currently living through this.

First up is Cat Powell, a primary school teacher who works at a British school in Madrid. Originally from the UK, Cat has been living in Madrid for nearly a decade and she's also a key contributor to Naked Madrid.

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

So this time last week looked a whole lot different to today. I'd never really spent time thinking about my freedom; only now do I realise how much I took it for granted. My workdays always start by grabbing a coffee on my morning commute, followed by a post-weekend catchup with colleagues and then

being cheered by the faces of the children in my class. My evenings would more than likely be spent at a spin class or having a *caña* with my partner at our local. As of today, none of that is an option. We're on lockdown in Madrid and now it's painfully clear to me how much of my daily life (and the seemingly mundane activities that it's made up of) are actually a true source of pleasure.

What does the street look like?

I live on Calle Ponzano, a street that even has its own hashtag #ponzaning. You usually can't move for revellers enjoying post-work drinks, tapas with friends and hives of *madrileños* sitting on benches watching the world gone by. It's now a ghost town, eerily quiet. I'm already longing for the days when we can all be fighting for a spot in the sunshine. Madrid without people on its *terrazas* truly feels like a city without its soul.

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

I'm a primary school teacher so I'm receiving daily acts of kindness from my students who are sending in their work with sweet little notes and well wishes. As a natural extrovert and someone who loves to socialise, not having human contact is tough, but being able to give students praise (even from afar) is now raising my spirits as the first weekend of lockdown was tough. I'm not really a homebird and more than a few hours at home does not come naturally to me. In addition, the applause for healthcare workers at 10pm on Saturday was also incredibly uplifting and it really helped to create a feeling of unity

within the city that I call home.

How are you coping?

If you ask my boyfriend, he'd probably say not very well! We've gone through a few moments of panic and wanting to go home (to the UK) but I think we're now in a place of knowing that this situation is for the greater good. We've slowed down and we're going to try to find the simple pleasure of having more time, as really that's all we now have. I never had a breakfast that isn't rushed, so today we've just enjoyed pancakes. My skincare routine has ramped up as I've really no excuse now not to luxuriate in doing a face mask. I love reading, but it rarely happens with any regularity unless it's during the summer and on a sun lounger. I plan to read lots now and try to limit my screen time. Aside from that, I think my flat will never have been cleaner, I'll enjoy these days of 8 hours sleep and I'm thinking about signing up for an interior design course – let's see how much of Netflix I can work my way through first though!

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

The first thing I'll do when lockdown is over is get to the beach. It's my birthday this coming Saturday and I was due to spend it in Valencia. I'm craving time with sea and sand, so my plan is to book a trip to Tarifa (my happy place) and throw caution to the wind – meaning treating myself to the fanciest hotel I can afford after being cooped up. Bring on room service and a glass of fizz on a rooftop.

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

If I could tell the government to do one thing, it would be please allow the elderly or high-risk members of society to go to the supermarkets for one hour each day before the general public. I cannot imagine how overwhelming it must be to be swept up in this state of unknown and panic as an 80-something-year-old. I think that having that time period before others can go out would help to lessen the feeling of potential chaos in the few public places that are open.

- Cat Powell is also a key contributor to Naked Madrid. [Check out all her articles!](#)

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