Bootcamp in Retiro: Good things come to those who sweat

When it comes to exercise, I’m definitely what you’d call, a ‘late bloomer’. The thought of having my booty kicked had never been my idea of fun. Fast forward to now, and my weekly bootcamp sessions are locked into my diary, along with all other commitments.

For those reading who perhaps aren’t Madrid dwellers, during lockdown we were unable to exercise. Of the many things that I missed from my pre-Covid life, being able to work out was up there. Home workouts just didn’t cut it for me, in the same way that training with a professional does.

So, that leads me to bootcamp: 60 minutes of intensity in the open air, followed by that much longed for endorphin high, that sends you off sweaty, and with a spring in your step.



So how did bootcamp come about? Jye, the British-born and British-qualified personal trainer (who you can follow at

@nico.s_fitness), relocated from the south of Spain to Madrid. Taking advantage of the wide open spaces that Madrid has to offer, coupled with people's newfound desire to train outside, bootcamp was born.

If like me, you have the attention span of a toddler, it's the perfect way to train. No two sessions are ever the same; from circuits, to 500-rep challenges, to merging animal flow, with stretching. It's a whole body approach that's tailored by the trainer, ensuring that you're working towards your fitness goals, whilst being kept (quite literally) on your toes.



Last weekend, bootcamp had a birthday. It's just turned one. Aside from the obvious benefits to my physical wellbeing, it's been a hugely positive presence on my social life. The groups

are fun, friendly and welcoming. Essentially, when training, the common ground that you share is a given: you’re there to get fit.

However, the additional happy side effect (in addition to buns of steel), has been the multiple post-bootcamp brunches; culminating in a celebratory picnic in Retiro this past weekend. Having completed our Saturday morning burpees, we switched from squats to spritzes, and toasted the progress that we’d made and the friendships that had been formed.

As we move into the summer holidays, session timings are subject to change. However, the Wednesday sessions tend to suit those looking to get a post-work sweat on in Retiro. Whereas the Saturday morning session, combines the peace and tranquility of seeing the city wake up from Templo de Debod.



So if you're looking for a way to get your heart pumping and to challenge your mindset, bootcamp is for you. With a new workout each week, the sessions are designed to push you harder than you would clearly push yourself, and to always keep your body guessing.

Bootcamp got this sloth off the sofa and into the park. Leggings are now my much favoured fashion staple, thanks to my burpee bunch (and coach), and long may it continue. Jye also offers one-on-one sessions, if that's up your street. But my one main takeaway from the past year is that bootcamp is just as important for my head, as it is my heart.

For further info contact nico.s_fitness on Instagram

James’ ongoing guide to killing time at home in Madrid

Step zero. Chill. There’s nothing better than drinking a few beers or having some wine with your besties – your cats, maybe dogs, and occasionally, a few humans (inspired by Niki). Once you’ve got this down, you’re ready to start my personal ongoing guide to killing time in Madrid while supporting local business at the same time. Let’s go!

Treat yourself to good food and drinks

1. Get local beer delivered to your home

My go-to beer is from Madrid’s local brewery Cervezas La Virgen. It’s definitely more expensive than my also-beloved Mahou, but also a lot better. Check out their *Jamonera* beer and the classic *Lager*. Thanks for the inspiration, Helen.

2. Learn from the real food experts, Devour Tours



Back in 2015, we went on one of Devour's awesome tours (Huertas neighborhood food and market tour) and Lauren Aloise and James Blick's team have been just killing it ever since then.

Today, they're also offering tons of online food experiences where their local tour guides tell you how to make their city's classic dishes over Zoom. And you get to cook with them in real time. I just took the "Cook Pasta Like a Roman with Abbie" where I learned how to make two Italian sauces. Here's a glimpse of the end result – I was way too hungry to set up better pics but wow, they were good.



I also want to give a shout-out to my good friend Melissa who lives in Lisbon. She's giving an online tour called **Discover Portugal's History Through 10 Dishes.** I haven't taken it yet but knowing her, I can only expect an absolutely kick-ass experience full of passion (inspired by Melissa, *claro*).

3. Make your own bread



Lots of my friends have taken up bread-making these past few months and sharing mouthwatering photos with me. So I started making my own recently, too. Although I'm far from becoming an expert on this, here's an easy way to start:

- Take two cups of flour: I mix strong bread flour – ask for *harina de fuerza* at Spanish supermarkets – and wheat flour.
- Add two teaspoons of yeast (I guess it won't be the end of the world if you can't find it, but your bread won't rise as much), olive oil (one spoon is fine!), sugar and salt (plus a little pepper if you're like me).
- Mix it with one cup of beer (I made it once with *La Jamonera* mentioned above, and it rocked my world). You can also mix it with water, which is… *meh*.
- Let it rise for a couple hours in a bowl covered with

dry cloth. Then deflate the air (check this technique out) and let it rise again.

- Last step: put your dough in a pot (make sure you add some flour so the dough doesn't stick to the bottom) and make a cut in the dough with a knife. Then cover it and put it in your oven at 225º C for 45 minutes. After that, take the cover off and keep it in the oven for 10 more minutes.

Perhaps "easy" wasn't the right word. But trust me, it seems more difficult than it actually is (I made it after all!). Let it cool for a bit and you're good to go (inspired by Carmen and Joss).

4. Add even more great carbs to your diet (why not??) by making your own pizza from scratch



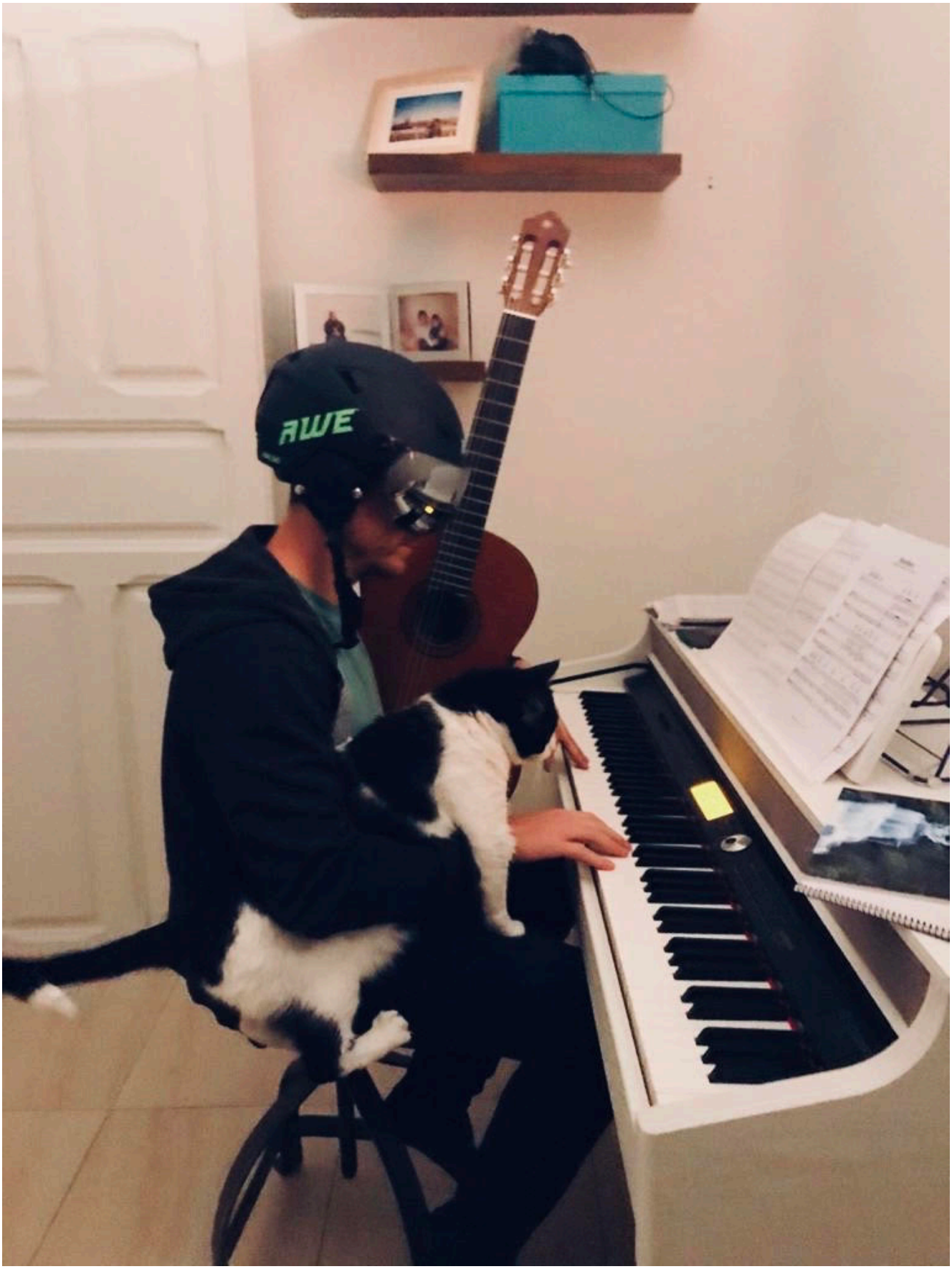
To make my own pizza dough, I followed Jaime Oliver's 5-min recipe (I used beer instead of water, because beer simply makes everything better). I also added my family's *Bolognese* sauce recipe – meat, onions, soy and "Worcestershire" sauce (or "*salsa perrins*" for my Spaniards out there who also find that to be the most frightening word to pronounce in English). Feel free to add whatever else works for you (arugula is also great, inspired by Jake).

Burn those extra *kilos* at home

Get moving with **Stacy Quick (Mustard Fitness)**'s home workouts. I briefly met this guy a few years ago, and I can only say the dude is legit. Stacy contacted me a few days ago with his free

home workouts and they’re bananas!

Put some art in your life



1. Practice your (new?) favorite instrument

I've been having regular piano and violin classes online with my private teachers. But if you're looking to start from scratch or learn a new instrument on your own, Fender is offering a free trial period. I normally use Ultimate Guitar to learn my favorite songs, yet the Fender app is useful when it comes to picking up a new instrument (inspired by Meag and Bea).

2. Join my local choir!

Singers in Madrid, join me and my choir buddies at the *Coralavapies* (Lavapiés Choir), a non-profit organization founded by Osvaldo Ciccioli in 2003. Me and my ridiculous friend Kyler found out about them a couple months ago. Ever since, we've been singing mostly Spanish folk songs, every Wednesday night. Followed by drinks, of course (inspired by Kyler).

3. Get interactive with the Mad Improv crew!

Mad Improv is a local English-speaking theater group that usually performs in theaters around the city and holds really fun workshops. Now they're offering online classes. For more info contact Steve Loader (inspired by Daphne).

4. Get your dance groove on every day at 6pm

My friend Martín, who happens to be a professional DJ (and teaches people how to mix), has been broadcasting live DJ sessions daily at 6pm, Madrid time. Watch big Helen and small Helen get their groove on (you'll understand when you join the

party).

Thanks for reading. Can’t wait to hug you all again.

Madrid Art Week 2020: a handy guide to make the most of it

It’s the most wonderful time of the year! It’s Madrid Art Week and that means that this weekend will be chock-a-block of art fairs. But how to you know which one to choose? If, like me, you have a *puente* and a free schedule, you might consider just hitting up as many as possible and it’s certainly do-able but if you don’t have as much time, money or energy, here’s a handy guide.

7 Madrid art fairs to check out this weekend:

1. Drawing Room



I'm going to start out with Drawing Room which is my personal favourite and the one I try to head to every year. I like Drawing Room because it's smaller and a bit more intimate than a lot of the other fairs. It takes place at the Palacio Santa Barbara at Alonso Martinez which has 2 stories, I believe. As the name suggests, Drawing Room focuses on illustration and so you often get to see art that's a lot more naturally inspired, a bit more minimal and often very intricate. Drawing Room is open to the public from Thursday Feb 26th and runs until Sunday March 1st. General entrance is 10 euros.

2. Art Madrid



Next up is my second favourite, Art Madrid. If you want a bigger art fair feel with more diversity of art styles and mediums but don't want to go for broke with ARCO, Art Madrid is a good alternative. I have come across many of my favourite artists there like Lino Lago and Alejandra Atares (seriously check their work out!) but as it's bigger, it does warrant a bit more time. I would say you should expect to spend at least 2 hours there. Art Madrid takes place at the Crystal Gallery part of Cibeles and it is already open to the public. It runs from Wed 26th to March 1st and a general ticket will set you back 15 euros. There is a student discount available though which will cost you 12 euros.

3. Urvanity



Next up, I would recommend Urvanity which takes place at COAM. If you like your art to be a little out there, brighter and more unusual, then Urvanity is the one for you. I went to Urvanity for the first time just last year and I quite enjoyed it. The art there is bursting with colour and a lot of the art was very political. There were lots of messages about the excesses of capitalism, feminism, the costs of war, and concerns about the environment.

Urvanity doesn't pull its punches and that social consciousness often carries over into the art talks that they have every day throughout the fair. These talks are FREE and completely open (unlike at most of the other fairs where you have to reserve in advance) and they discuss challenges and concerns facing the contemporary art world and today's artists. Urvanity also takes art to the streets by sponsoring major street art projects throughout the city which you can find on their website under Art Walls. Urvanity is only open to the public from Friday 28th to Sunday March 1st. A one day ticket costs 10 euros while a 3 day *abono* costs 25 euros.

4. Hybrid



The other big alternative art fair is Hybrid. Hybrid is the cool kids art fair. It takes place in a swanky hotel in Malasaña, the art is set up in rooms on multiple floors and it boasts a ton of musical guests and a cool hang out/party space as well. Hybrid welcomes the more provocative works. If you're looking for art that's more experimental and if you want to get real up close and personal with the artists, then you would probably love Hybrid. Hybrid takes place at the Hotel Petit Palace and is open to visits from Friday February 28th to Sunday March 1st. A one day ticket will cost 9 euros while the 3 day *abono* is just 14 euros. You can save a euro if you buy your ticket online.

5. Salon de Arte Moderno



Image source

Now if you want to get off the beaten path and head to an art fair that's a little bit less well known, head down to Salamanca for the Salon de Arte Moderno. This art fair takes place at a nondescript building at Calle Velazquez, 12 which is actually where Drawing Room was held the first year I attended it. SAM is open from February 24th to March 1st. If you want some help navigating the artworks on display, you can sign up for one of their twice daily guided tours. There is also a fantastic gastronomic component to SAM where selected restaurants in the Salamanca neighbourhood like Amazonico or El Perro y La Galleta have a special, art-inspired dish just for the duration of the fair. SAM is free! You just need to sign up for an invitation on their website.

6. Just Mad



Just Mad is another pretty big fair which has a little bit of everything. I would particularly recommend it for fans of sculpture as I saw quite a few sculptural pieces there last year. It takes place at Palacio Neptuno just off the Triangle of Art. For me, Just Mad was the most impersonal art fair that I went to. I feel that it is garnered more towards art buyers and collectors instead of just the casual viewer but there are a lot of great pieces so if you're happy to let the art speak for itself and you don't necessarily want to meet a lot of artists, don't let me dissuade you. And of course, you can have wonderful, enlightening conversations with the gallery representatives as well. There are also guided tours you can sign up for on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. General entrance tickets cost 13 euros while the reduced tickets (for students) are just 7!

7. ARCO



And the last one is the elephant in the room, the big Kahuna, the mother of all art fairs in Madrid, ARCO. I have never been to ARCO, although I want to, but I'm sure it's a tremendous experience and something you need at least half a day to visit. There are discussions and meetings between Spanish and international museums. It takes place at IFEMA and is open to the public from midday on Friday until Sunday 1st. General entrance on Friday and Saturday is 40 euros while it's 30 on Sunday. Students meanwhile pay only 20 euros any day!

Hope you enjoy Madrid Art Week!

Whoo, we made it to the end of the list! If you read all of this, I salute you and I hope you have a wonderful weekend, discovering new artists and talking to them about their work. Don't be shy! Remember, artists *want* their work to be seen and I have honestly never come across an artist who wasn't happy and excited to talk about their pieces with me. Art is for everyone, including the non-industry casuals like you perhaps and me. Enjoy! But be sure to pace yourself and wash your

hands.

*Most images are from Esmadrid.com, Madrid's official tourism website. Feature image is from @artmadridferia

By Kristen Wiltshire (IG: @makidocious)

When she's not at a museum or the movies, Kristen can usually be found trying to make headway in her giant pile of books or her miles long Netflix queue. She also runs Madrid Art and Culture, a Facebook group dedicated to Madrid's myriad cultural offerings.

Also check out:

- *Art lover's guide to Madrid: 7 resources to keep you up to date*

Madrid Artist Showcase: Diego Salas, Creative Audiovisual

Director

Madrid, a hub of creative talent, is the home to artists working across disciplines, wielding various forms of expression. Local artist Diego Salas is the architect behind *Synesthesia,* a series of recorded visual productions in which he creates an immersive projected environment for Madrid's community of performing artists to use as a stage. Diego is proud of this project which has granted him the opportunity to collaborate with respected artists.



As an active member of Madrid's international community, Diego has designed **the Brotha CJ and the Othahood cover for their 2018 album *Everybody Eats.*** The animation from this album cover was brought to life when it was rendered on the stage behind this group as they performed at Las Fiestas de San Isidro.



Additionally, Diego has acted in and produced **relatable web series** and short films.



His artistic capacity is not limited to grassroots creative projects. I have collaborated with Diego myself to build visually appealing infographics and corporate content for my clients, and he has also crafted logos and branding campaigns for companies in Madrid and beyond.

Several prints, visual designs and other creative works made by Diego will be presented to the public at **VeraArt**'s upcoming art show, curated by Maegan Gardner **at VeraContent on February 7th**. Those in attendance can bear witness to local dancer **Daphne Binioris** dancing in synchrony with visual projections controlled by Diego in real-time in a postmodern performance. This will be followed by a performance by **Brotha CJ**.

Diego hails from Lima, Peru. Like many of us, he has been in the trenches as a teacher and became fond of his adopted home of Madrid, navigating bureaucracy to establish roots here. He is deeply familiar with the process of starting a new life in a foreign country and just recently he celebrated his 14-year anniversary in this city.



Diego opened up about the challenges that he has faced as a freelance artist.

> *There's a romanticized image of an artist who is always inspired. People don't see the hours or the process behind the scenes, sharing work on social media and building a community with other artists with a similar vision. These less glamorous parts of the process require constant attention.*

As we sat for the interview, Diego gave me a sneak peek of the new pieces he will present at VeraArt's upcoming event and talked about his creative process. Diego's lived experiences play a role in some of his pieces where he depicts the emotional aesthetic components of memories in surreal animations. His visuals are often inspired by music and nature. Stimulation from music evokes colorful mental images that Diego quickly recreates onscreen.

Diego had this to say about the volatility of creating art under capitalism:

> *You will inevitably encounter negative feedback. Don't let imposter syndrome and the other haters and failed projects discourage you. Failure is part of the process and you can learn from it.*

Diego's advice to aspiring artists is:

> *Don't stop creating. Passion projects that are non-lucrative are valid forms of expression. Don't feel obligated to profit from your art or gain visibility and acclaim immediately, it happens with time and dedication.*

Upcoming art show in Madrid



Be sure to catch Diego at VeraArt's event on February 7th in Madrid. Here's all the event details and make sure to sign up here on Eventbrite.

Diego Salas, Madrid-based

audiovisual artist

- **Instagram** | **Website**

All photos by* **James Stiles of Labl Foto.

Mad Improv – shows and courses of the unexpected

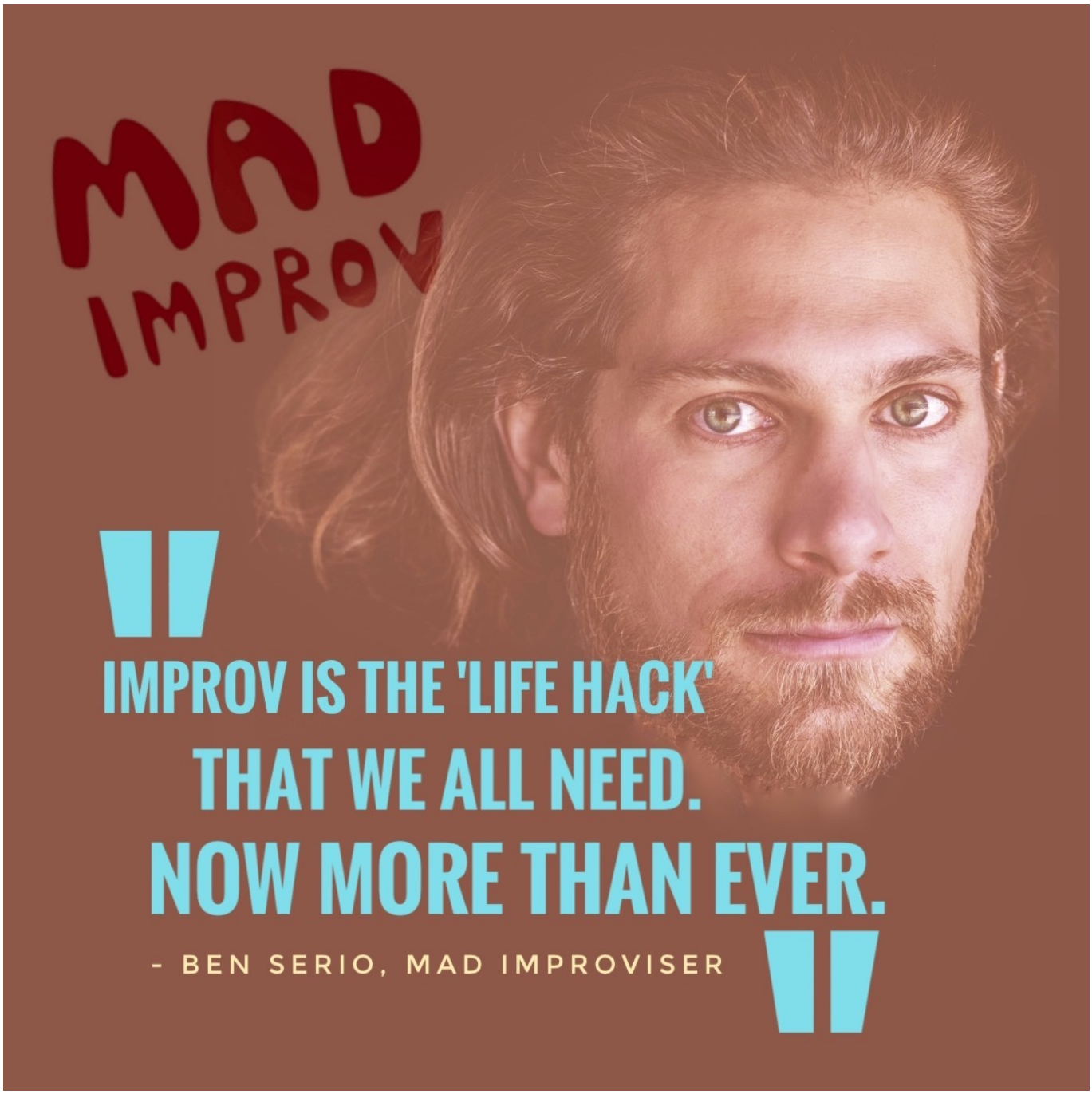
If you've ever ventured to Lavapiés on a Thursday night you may well have felt the vibrant pulse of English language entertainment beating to its own rhythm at **La Escalera de Jacob**. The long-established indy theatre hosts **MAD Improv** – Madrid's go-to group for all things improv in English. The group offers up their **weekly show** (now in its third season) to audiences of native and non-native English speakers alike, as reflected in the multiple reviews on their **Trip Advisor page**.

They're now the 44th highest-rated show in all of Madrid, no less.



Their show formats include MAD About You, an improvised chat show complete with improvised interviews with audience members and an improvised house band, and MAD Monologues where fresh stand up material from comics on the local stand up scene inspires the mad improv that follows. But coming to see a MAD Improv show on a Thursday night is, for some, just the beginning of a deeper and ever-surprising journey into doing improvisation themselves.

Improv training



That’s because MAD Improv, which began life in 2014, run **courses and workshops**. This month their flagship Green Course for beginners and near-beginners starts for the 7th time, as well as their Blue Course, specially designed for those with existing improv training, such as their own Green Course.



Steve Loader, one of the founding members of MAD Improv, is the teacher of their beginners course. He describes the experience as:

> *Witnessing a brilliant whirlwind of personal discoveries and magic Eureka moments as participants grasp the basics of improv and run with them. The feedback we get from our alumni is proof that not only anyone can learn improv but also that improv turns out to be much more than just a type of performance, but something that feeds into everyday life.*

One student from their last Green Course, Carlos, put it like this:

> *It’s such a good environment, Steve is so enthusiastic and patient that we are all relaxed and lose our shyness and inhibitions. It’s more than educational, it’s therapeutic. I’ve received a training in spontaneity and I love it!*

Flexing creative muscles



As committing to regular participation on a course isn't for everyone, every Sunday at **Espacio en Blanco** the MAD Improvisers offer their weekly **MAD Improv Gym**, an open drop-in session for anyone who wants to try their hand at improv. The Gym also attracts a group of regulars and is always followed by post-improv drinks. According to Steve:

> *Between 10 and 20 people come every week to our Gym. It's always formed the foundation of our community. We love offering the sessions.*



Steve has been a Madrid resident for 6 years and also runs **courses in clown**, physical theatre and **scripted theatre**. In fact, the MAD Improv community acts not only as a meeting point for anyone interested in improv in English, but also as a skills hub for the wider English-speaking arts community.

So, maybe 2020 is the year to find your own creative beat with some mad improv of your own.

MAD Improv

- **Website**, **Facebook** **& IG: @mad_improv**
- **Show listings**
- **TripAdvisor**

A look at the history and food of Aragón, Spain

Between the Spanish metropolises of Madrid and Barcelona, forgotten from Michelin-guided itineraries focused solely on the Basque Country, and otherwise seen as a pass-thru city, lies Zaragoza, the capital of Aragón. If you've seen *The Tudors*, maybe you remember Henry's first wife: the pious Catherine of Aragón, played by Irish actress Maria Doyle Kennedy. Perhaps that is all you've ever heard of Aragón, a region whose middle and southern depths were once described by a friend as "a nuclear wasteland."



View of Zaragoza from one of the towers of the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar

And yet, Aragón’s southern capital, Teruel, is famous for its

cured ham, effortlessly produced in the dry, windy climate of Aragón. The “Lovers of Teruel” were supposedly Shakespeare’s inspiration for Romeo and Juliet, even. And there’s certainly no love lost by Spaniards for Aragón’s northern territory, cities like Huesca and Jaca, lush and green and gateways to the Pyrenees and affordable skiing.



Teruel (image source)

For tourists or non-Spaniards unfamiliar with the Pyrenees valley, knowing little to nothing about the once-mighty kingdom of Aragón is not surprising. Similarly, feeling overlooked or forgotten is not a foreign sensation to the Aragonese, beset on every side by regions more famous for various reasons: Cataluña, Castilla y León, Navarra, Valencia, and, of course, Madrid. And yet, Aragón was once, arguably, one of the most important and powerful regions in Spain.

History of Aragón, Spain



Aragoń, Spain | ©Jrpvaldi / Wikimedia Commons

In 1469, in the capital city of Valladolid (Castile and León), Ferdinand II of Aragón and Isabella I of Castile were married. Seventeen and eighteen, respectively, these two monarchs were known as the "Catholic Monarchs" (los Reyes Católicos) and, one falsified papal bull later, Isabella and Ferdinand went on to rule an Iberian peninsula many historians credit as being unified under their influence.

Americans, Barcelona tour guides, and other history buffs may also recognize them as being the monarchs that Christopher Columbus sought financial support from in his mission to colonize the Indies, originally, and whose trips and conquests would end up for the benefit of the Spanish crown. Or rather,

the Castilian crown, since it was Isabella who had provided the money, not Ferdinand and his Aragonese court.

The imbalance in the power of their kingdoms, Castile and León richer and more powerful, was heightened by the fact that both Castile and Aragón retained their respective autonomy despite Isabella and Ferdinand's marriage. So to amend an earlier, arguable statement, perhaps it is better said that Aragón was a *part* of the most powerful and important union in Spain.

Cuisine of Aragón, Spain



Zaragoza



Aragón’s supporting role in the unification of Spain during the Middle Ages and relative present-day anonymity among the

Iberian regions notwithstanding, Aragón has maintained a proud culinary tradition.

Ham from Teruel

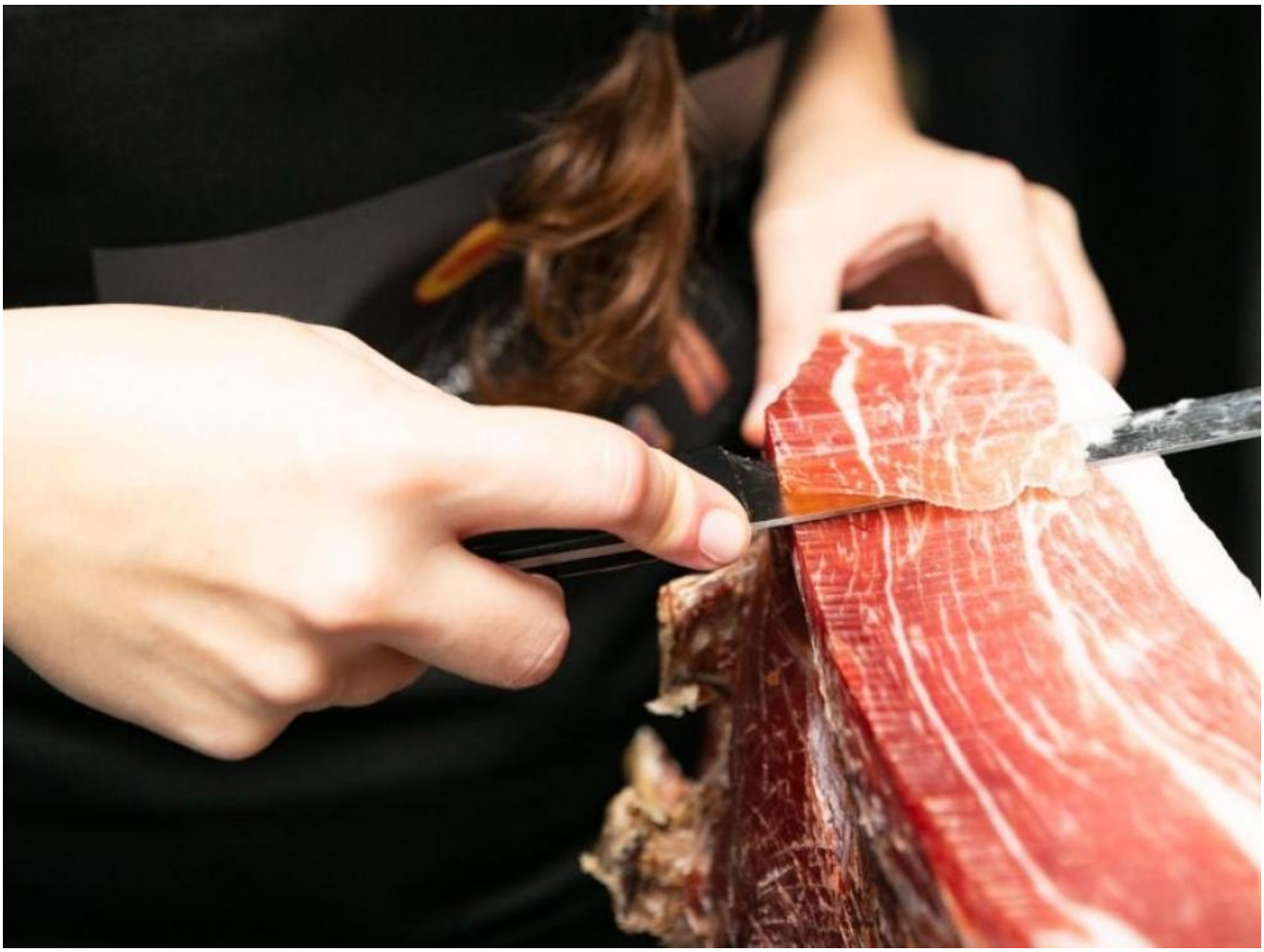


Image credit

Teruel is indeed known for its ham, dark and richly-colored with an unmistakable pork taste and, if cured long enough, jerky texture. In fact, Teruel hams were the first in Spain to be regulated by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA – *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*), an office in Spain that ensures the regulation and controlled production of items originating from a certain region, giving them the coveted DOP seal (*denominación de origen protegida*). In the case of Teruel, for a cured ham leg to be considered a ham from Teruel, and to legally be marked with the eight-pointed star of Teruel and thus the DOP, the

pig must have been bred, raised, and then cured to certain specifications. This regulatory and strict adherence to established protocol applies to cheeses from DOP Castilla-La Mancha, wines from DOP La Rioja, and more.

Purple olives



Image credit

Aragón's purple olives are also known the peninsula over for their bitter, sharp taste. Small and round, colors ranging from dark purple to almost black, they're often sold in huge bags at supermarkets in Aragón. They're salty, dry, and, the more wrinkly the olive, the stronger the taste when it comes

to these olives (some even look like huge raisins).

Sweets



Image credit

Every Spaniard loves a good *dulce* during fiestas and the Aragonese are no exception. Popular during Pilares, Zaragoza's own festival in honor of its patron Our Lady of Pilar, are "frutas de Aragón" which, despite the word fruit in the name, are actually only fruit-flavored candies encased in chocolate. Soft and a bit like jelly bonbons, these candies are made in the traditional way by coating the candy in sugar and dipping in chocolate. Some confectioner's even use small diced orange pieces (with rind intact) for the orange ones.



Image credit

And no post-baptism party is complete in Aragón without another popular treat: trenza de Huesca. Especially the Trenza de Almudévar brand. Originating in the northern province of Huesca, this braided sweetbread is a cross between a danish and a flaky pastry, striped with cinnamon and coated in a thick sugar glaze. Its traditional flavors are cinnamon with raisin and nuts, however, orange-infused and chocolate trenzas are also popular varieties.

Roast lamb



Image credit

Another delicacy Aragón is known for is its roast lamb, called “ternasco” or “paletilla.” Walking into the big, main central market in Zaragoza, an entire section of the butchers’ aisle is dedicated solely to lamb. They have any and every cut you might want, and several organs as well. A shock to some might be the sight of piled lamb heads at the meat counter of a grocery store in Zaragoza, but this is very standard here.

The key to the lamb roast is minimal working of the meat; allowed to come to room temperature, seasoned usually only with salt, garlic, perhaps some herbs of preference, and served with a side of well-salted potatoes. Or, in true Spanish fashion, letting the ingredients speak for themselves.

Culinary traditions of Aragón

Aragonese cuisine is, like its region, not well-known but still celebrated and valued within its borders. There is a fierce pride to the restaurants in Zaragoza, serving hearty,

uncomplicated dishes that are a marker of Aragón's food culture. Disregarding the new age and high-brow experimental cuisine restaurants to focus on the traditional spots that close on Sundays right beside them, one notes the richness of dishes which, on the surface, seem quite simple.

Take "migas," for example. Though translated to breadcrumbs, this dish is actually the fluffy inside of bread, crust removed, that's broken up and pan-fried in olive oil with chopped onions, garlic, red pepper, sausage, and many other ingredients according to taste. It requires no fancy cookware, radical ingredients, or incredible skill to make, and yet it remains flavorsome and capable of vast interpretation. Something as simple as varying the bread used can produce a wide variety of results, from especially crispy to more tender, to say nothing of the type of olive oil and accompanying sauté ingredients.



Plate of “migas” at the popular La Miguería restaurant in Zaragoza’s tapas bar district known as “El Tubo”



The plate of “migas” after being mashed up

Migas are all over Spain, and there is much contention over which region, exactly, is the originator, but green grapes, blood sausage, and a fried egg (for good measure) are decidedly Aragonese toppings to it.

Perhaps, if not blood sausage for your migas, you’d like “longaniza,” Aragón’s proprietary sausage. Unlike many Spanish sausages, longaniza is not made with pimentón (sweet paprika) but heavy on the pepper and, depending on the Aragonese producer, even hints of nutmeg or parsley make it in the mix. You might want this longaniza fried and topping not migas but “huevos rotos”, an uncomplicated and incredibly satisfying dish of thinly-sliced, fried potatoes with fried eggs whose

yolks have been broken. Equally common is eating huevos rotos with cured ham… from Teruel, if you're a real maña/o.

Aragón has a lengthier list of traditional dishes, but the markers of simplicity and heartiness pervade it. Overlooked and sorely underrated, Aragón and its three provinces have been able to preserve and cherish their culinary histories without great external influences that uniquely shape other culinary traditions. The largest changes to Aragonese cuisine comes from the cooks of the meal themselves, who on one day might decide to fry up migas with hojiblanco olive oil instead of arbequina, or flavor a candy with fig and chili pepper instead of cherry.

By Alegra N. Padrón

Alegra N. Padrón is a creative who loves to write about food, travel, and culture. Living between Spain and the US, she documents food and fun on Twitter @an_padron

You may also like:

- **¡Ostras! Spanish Food Phrases for Aspiring Natives**

Be there or be square: 8 of Spain's best plazas

Bullfights, sangria, paella… So many of the things that, to the uninitiated, epitomise Spain's culture are actually outdated, tourist traps, or limited to just one of the country's regions.

But there's one Spanish heavyweight that fully deserves to be celebrated alongside *tortilla de patatas*, *siestas*, and Rosalía

on the list of the best things ever to emerge from the Iberian Peninsula. A cultural icon with adoring fans all over the country, from the hills of Asturias to sunny southern seaside towns, and in every metropolis and pueblo in between. I'm talking, of course, about the Spanish *plaza*.

Some squares slip under the radar of anyone who doesn't know to seek them out. Some are the perfect place for a protest; some are best suited for locals and blow-ins alike to meet for a beer, a gossip, and a people-watching session. Others have become tourist attractions in their own right, be it thanks to their historical significance or just because they make for an awesome photo op.

Whatever you're after on your next day trip or weekend away, here's a list of eight of Spain's best plazas you should make sure not to miss.

1. Plaza Mayor, Almagro



Green and gorgeous, this recently-restored medieval plaza is one of the country's favourites – and provided a beautiful backdrop for post-class coffees or *cañas* back when I worked in a nearby school.

Thanks to its flowers and fountains, Almagro's Plaza Mayor regularly features on lists of Spain's top ten most beautiful squares, and I monitor its progress like a proud *manchego* mother, rejoicing when it moves up a spot and sulking when it's relegated.

Make sure to try the local delicacy of pickled *berenjenas* at any one of the tapas bars dotted around the plaza – they were slightly too green and bitter for my liking, but they're a regional favourite and *sobre gustos no hay nada escrito,* so you might enjoy them.

What's more, Almagro is home to the annual Festival

Internacional de Teatro Clásico, and tucked away next to the square’s shops and restaurants is the entrance to the *corral de comedias*, a 17th-century playhouse and hidden gem of a tourist attraction which is more than worth the €3 entrance fee.

2. Plaza Dos de Mayo, Madrid



It’s no surprise that Spain’s capital has a square for every taste – Plaza de España (gone but not forgotten), colourful Chueca, floral Plaza de la Villa, Santa Ana for the literature

lovers, and Plaza Mayor if you're a fan of Baroque architecture and, eh, multi-coloured goats.

But a particular stand-out is Dos de Mayo, just ten minutes' walk from Sol.

This plaza is a crucial one for history lovers: it marks a key date in the Comunidad de Madrid's calendar, when the people of Madrid rebelled against occupying French troops on 2nd May 1808.

Annual street parties marking the uprising liven up the already-bustling barrio of Malasaña, but this square is worth a visit at any time of the year – it boasts playparks for the *peques*, a weekly vintage and craft market, and plenty of places to stop for a snack or drink (Pizzería Maravillas is a stand-out).

3. Plaza Mayor, Ciudad Real



Source: Image by © Rob Cousins/robertharding/Corbis

The small city of Ciudad Real is often overshadowed by its province's more picturesque pueblos, but I maintain that my former hometown's central square is still worth a visit, if only for its *Reloj Carrillón* – a huge clock from which life-size figurines of Cervantes, Don Quijote and Sancho Panza emerge to the sound of bells chiming at regular intervals throughout the day and night.

This manchego capital isn't known for being the most Instagrammable of towns, but it has a plaza that pays artistic homage to the stars of its regions, friendly locals, and more tapas bars than you could shake a stick at. What more do you need, really?

4. Plaza del Taller, Santiago de Compostela



Source

Whether you've trekked part of the epic Camino de Santiago or are just up north on a pilgrimage for Galician *pulpo* (guilty), this isn't a square to be missed. Plaza del Taller – or, to use its *gallego* name, Praza do Obradoiro – is a spot in the rainy, atmospheric Galician capital.

Located to the west of Santiago's enchanting casco viejo, this square marks the end of the road for pilgrims who've walked St James' Way, and it provides peak people-watching opportunities – I'd challenge anyone to watch pilgrims rejoicing at the completion of their journey without getting emotional. For travellers holy or secular, the plaza's architecture, sheer size, and its magical (and traffic-free) atmosphere are definitely worth a trip next *puente*.

This square is also home to the beautiful, baroque Catedral de Santiago de Compostela, where hikers participate in the post-walk ritual of the *abrazo al Apóstol Santiago* – a tradition that was temporarily outlawed in 2009 after an influenza outbreak. Maybe stick to a quick high-five if you're a germaphobe.

5. Plaza de Cervantes, Alcalá de Henares



Cons of Alcalá's most famous public space: the storks (if, like me, you're a wimp who's scared of birds). Pros: literally everything else.

This square pays homage Alcalá's most famous son: the writer Miguel de Cervantes, who was born in the university city in 1547. The city's central plaza hosts regular literary and cultural events in his honour, such as the annual Mercado Cervantino.

Plaza de Cervantes also bridges two of the city's most significant streets: the newly pedestrianized Calle de Libreros, and the Calle Mayor. On the latter street, which is the former hub of the medieval Jewish Quarter, you can find the Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes and the city's most photogenic bench, featuring bronze statues of Cervantes' most famous characters.

Have a stroll through the surrounding area – don't think about leaving without taking in the university's impressive façade – and you'll understand exactly why Alcalá has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

> *Also read: 7 Reasons why Alcalá de Henares is worth more than a day trip from Madrid*

6. Plaza de España, Sevilla



Oh, this one's *gorgeous*. Constructed in 1929, the Andalusian capital's Plaza de España is practically a newborn compared with some of the old-timers on this list, but in terms of impact and beauty, it can definitely give the classics a run for their money.

This plaza's most famous feature is the breath-taking range of multicoloured tiled alcoves, which depict almost every province in Spain. Photos can't do them justice, but even the briefest of trawls through Google Images will show you exactly why the good people of TripAdvisor voted it the world's *segundo lugar más spectacular del mundo*.

Film buffs (not me) might recognise this square from movies like Lawrence of Arabia and the Star Wars franchise, while Instagram lovers will be more familiar with its pretty canals, where you can row your boat for just €6. The Plaza de España is also located in the Parque de María Luisa – a beautiful spot to seek out the shade during the infamously hot Sevillian summers.

7. Plaza Mayor, Salamanca



Golden hour enthusiasts, this one's for you. Salamanca is known far and wide as one of the most gorgeous places in Spain, and its main plaza is no exception. Built between 1729 and 1755, the sandstone square still shines – and if you ever want to hear several hundred people simultaneously say 'Ahhhhh!', make sure you're standing in the centre when its buildings get illuminated at dusk.

The plaza is adorned with medallions bearing big names from Spain’s history. In fact, until it was removed in 2017 under the Historical Memory Law, you could even spot Franco’s defaced, paint-splattered face lurking beneath a plastic bag in the corner.

Salamanca’s Plaza Mayor also has plenty of bars and restaurants where you can sample the city’s distinctly un-spicy, but delicious, take on patatas bravas after you’ve finished frogspotting at the nearby Universidad de Salamanca.

Speaking of which, try to time your trip for December, when the legendary Nochevieja Universitaria sees the Plaza Mayor packed with thousands of students downing their drink and midnight grapes before heading home to their pueblos for Christmas. Or, if you prefer hot drinks to alcoholic ones, walk south from the plaza for ten minutes to the café of the Casa Lis art deco museum, where you’ll find the world’s tastiest cup of hot chocolate and the only glass ceiling that’s not for smashing.

8. Esta Es Una Plaza, Madrid



This urban oasis is a bit different – and for that reason, it might be my favourite plaza ever. **Esta Es Una Plaza** is a neighbourhood initiative designed to tackle the lack of green space available in the busy Madrid barrio of Lavapiés, and has gone from strength to strength since its creation in 2008, thanks to the group of dedicated volunteers who work hard on maintenance and upkeep.

According to its website, the community-run public space focuses heavily on community building and promoting cohesion between social groups, regardless of nationality or religion, and over time the plaza has transformed into a cultural hub which promotes ecology, self-sufficiency, literacy, culture and sports.

It mightn't represent the same flashy, tourist fodder as some of the more high-profile squares on our list, and it's unlikely you'll see it be flogged on a postcard any time soon.

But if plazas are meant to promote harmony, facilitate socializing, and provide an insight into the beating heart of its local community, then Esta Es Una Plaza is definitely a dark horse.

By Emer O'Toole (IG: @_emerotoole)

Would you add any other of Spain's best plazas to this list? Let us know!

Summertime and the livin is easy in Los Caños, Cádiz

So, for those of you who are up to speed with my slightly sporadic Naked Madrid musings (here's looking at you Mum and Dad), you may have noticed that my insta handle is @littlemissmadrid, so I'm asking you to forgive me in advance for this post; I'm going somewhat off piste.

Having recently celebrated living in this ferociously fun and frenetic city for a decade, I do consider myself to be an adopted Madrileña. But even us city folk need to escape the bright lights from time to time, and as summer sadly begins to draws to a close (I am not a jeans and jumper gal), I headed south to seek out the dregs of summer and to have some fun in the sun.



With my AVE ticket purchased to Malaga (seriously, Spain’s high-speed train is undoubtedly one of the greatest inventions known to man, up there with Netflix and hair serum I reckon), the train takes a paltry 2 hours 20 and you’re down on the coast before you can say sundowner. However, Málaga was merely where I alighted before heading to the hidden gem that is Los Caños de Meca for the weekend.



Now having been living on Spanish soil for a while, I’ve started to twig that all the best places are reached by car.

In spite of this, it’s in all motorists’ interests that I remain firmly off the road, so with a willing (and driving) partner in crime, we set off towards Los Caños armed with swimwear and SPF. The beach itself is a beauty – turquoise tides and golden sand prevail.

As we’ve just edged into September, it had also lost the patchwork quilt effect that comes with swarms of tourists, and it now had an all together more sedate vibe which I was all in for; less tourists equals less time spent queuing at the bar for those all-important beach beers.



Before having road tripped to Los Caños, Tarifa well and truly had my heart in the seaside stakes – but now it’s getting too close to call. Having travelled to the Caribbean coast of Columbia back in July, Los Caños de Meca has more than a touch of the quirky cool that can be found there. There’s a stretch of bougainvillea lined road called Avenida Trafalgar that hosts a number of surf shack-type bars – where folks spill out

onto the street as easily as the drinks flow.

My hands-down favourite beach bar is cocooned in the Mercado de Artesania and called **La Perlita**. It's hard to describe just how picture perfect it is – but I'll give it a go. Imagine your ideal back garden, by the sea and the dreamiest piña colada/carrot cake combo and yeah, you're about halfway there.



Pic from @streetfoodcadiz

Now I love a food truck as much as the fellow millennial, but this one can't be beat. The cocktails are fantastic, the food fresh (we had falafel, prawn dumplings, veggie noodles and a veggie burger – yes, I'm aware that gluttony is one of the seven sins) but with prices that definitely don't match

Madrid, it was nigh on impossible not to over order. The menu is what I’d call healthy hipster and the nice touch is that’s everything’s recyclable. As we all try to slide into sustainable socialising, La Perlita is ahead of the curve, with their food being served in paper bags and the gently lulling reggae tunes that swayed in the background added to my food coma.



No trip to Los Caños is complete without a trip to the infamous beachside mecca, La Jaima. Birthplace (I imagine) to

thousands of insta stories, it’s so idyllic even the most hardwired stresshead would struggle not to be lulled into a zen-like state here – the views can’t be done justice on an iPhone (and god knows, I tried) but as the golden hour kicked in and the *café del mar* type tunes ramped up, I was positively horizontal on my beanbag and felt about a million miles away from the chaos and crowds of a city. The bar boasts live music and quite possibly the friendliest staff I’ve ever met – although who wouldn’t be beaming from ear to ear if you got to call the beach your ‘office’.



Feeling satiated having spent the day bar hopping and getting bronzed, we decided that we should try to find a place stay.

Word of warning: it’s not easy. Los Caños is clearly not one for mass tourism, as we painfully discovered.

Spontaneity doesn’t always pay off so what I will say is book ahead. Clearly we weren’t the only ones hoping to sizzle our way into September so, sadly, there was no room, quite literally at the Inn(s) for this Mary and Joesph, but I did spot Hotel Guadalupe, a gorgeous looking boutique hotel on the aforementioned Avenida Trafalgar. Seriously, I can sniff out a decent-looking hotel like a bloodhound. Sadly, I just don’t seem to have the foresight to book them.

So whilst I didn’t get get to stumble back to a beachfront abode, I did get to enjoy a pretty perfect day that filled my cup right up and should keep me feeling warm and fuzzy into autumn (or maybe that was just my slightly sunburnt nose). Either way, cities are great and all, but sometimes your bod just craves some Vitamin Sea and ultimately the heart wants what the heart wants. In this case it was a delicious dose of daiquiris and downtime.

Los Caños de Meca, Cádiz

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

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

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

Wining & dining

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

Food markets

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

Mercado de San Miguel: The city's prettiest and most famous food market, situated right off Plaza Mayor. The quality here is excellent, although you'll usually find hordes of visitors.

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



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

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

- Tip: just one flight up you'll find the most important flamenco dance studio in Madrid, Amor de Dios! Pop up to feel the vibe.

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

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

Cebada





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

Restaurants, bars and cafés:

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



Three more Spanish eateries we love:

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



Typical tapas at Bar Lambuzo

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



Egeo, a popular Greek place in Lavapiés

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

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



Delicious and seasonal Iranian dishes at **Banibanoo**

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



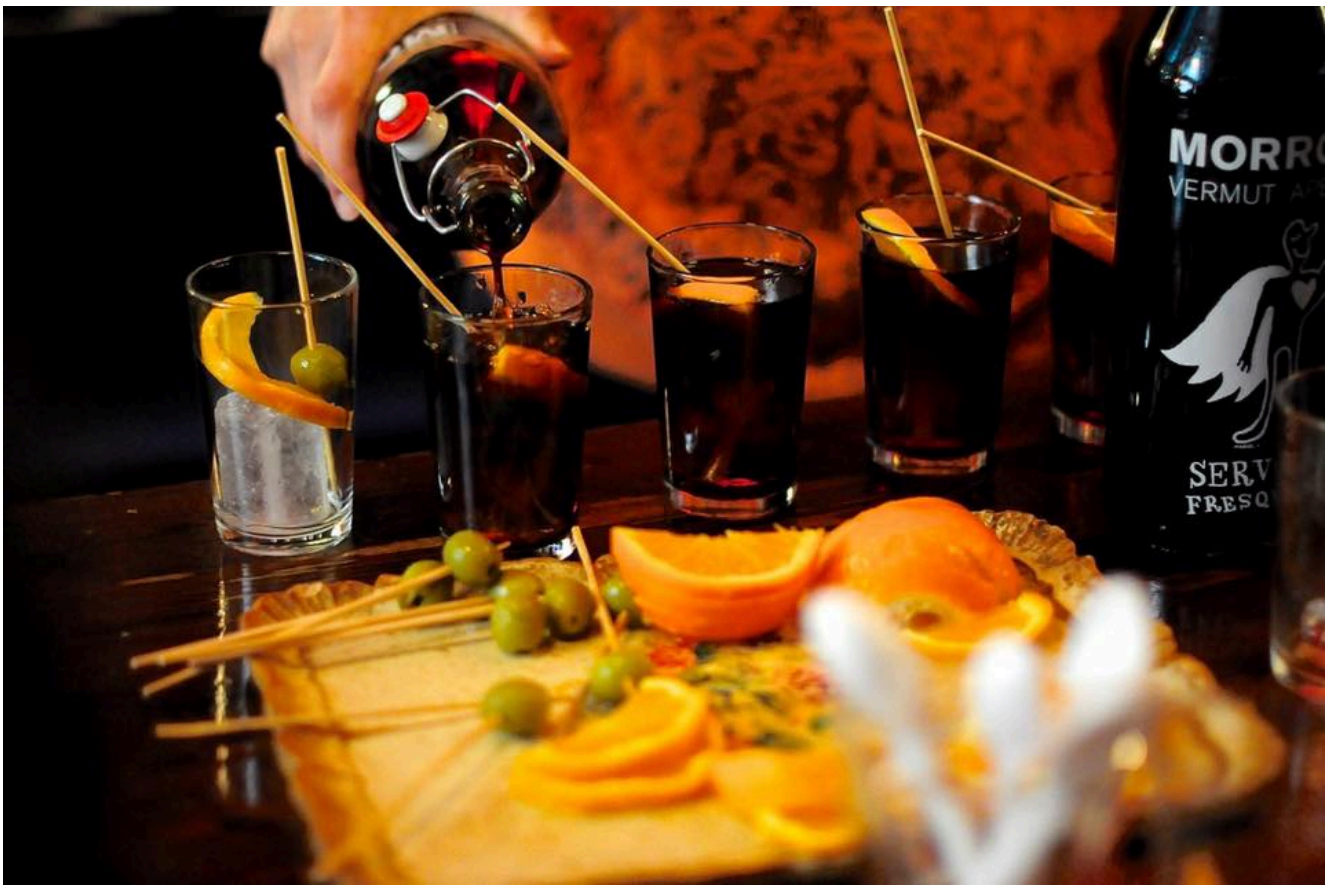
Sip on sherry at La Venencia: Please don’t leave the city without visiting this truly unique bar in Barrio de las Letras. Entering La Venencia means traveling to another time period. They only offer sherry (four types).

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

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



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



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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

Cultural activities

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



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



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

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

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



This mini-house was set up for Madrid Design Festival

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

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



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

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

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



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

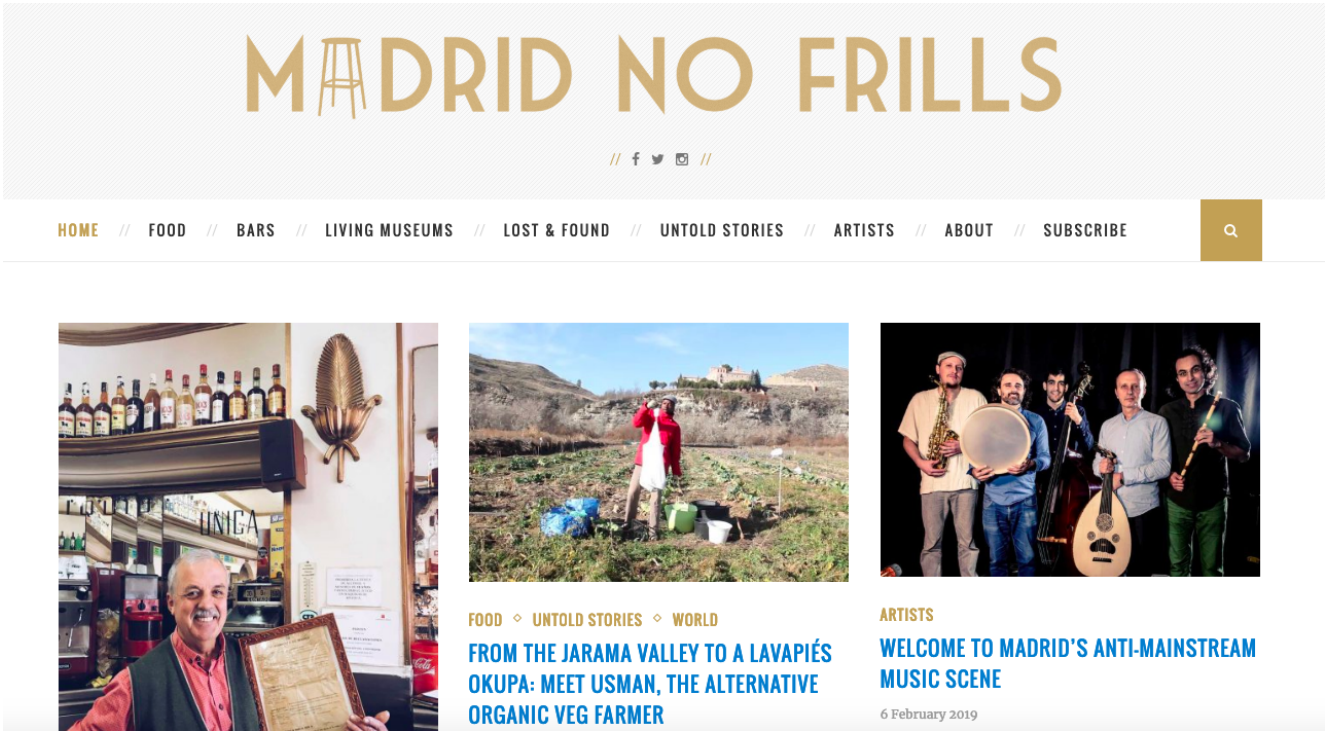
- If you're looking for theater in English, check out the interactive shows put on by **Mad Improv**. Lots of fun!

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



Image from Mercado de Motores

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



madridnofrills.com, the city's most insightful blog

Museums

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

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

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



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

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



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

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



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



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

Plazas & streets

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



Jardín del Príncipe de Anglona

Staircase streets of La Latina

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



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

Streets of Lavapiés: Explore this vibrant, multicultural

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



Calle Embajadores, pic by @jessiesusanna



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

Parks

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



Glass Palace at Retiro Park, pic by @os_car_a

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



Sunset at Templo de Debod, pic by @meagamind

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

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



Parque del Oeste, pic by @os_car_a

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

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

swimming pools, open in summer.

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

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

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



Rooftops

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

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



View from Círculo de Bellas Artes, pic by @os_car_a

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



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

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



Shopping

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

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



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

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

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

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

Tour

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



Exploring Mercado de Antón Martín on a tour with Devour Madrid

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

Travel

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

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



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

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

It's Madrid Art Week, one of the biggest cultural events of the year!

It's Madrid Art Week, one of the biggest cultural events of the year. And I've come to break down some of the major art fairs happening this weekend for you.

Here are six incredible art shows in Madrid that you should definitely check out:

1. ARCO Madrid



image from ifema.es

First up is the big one, ARCO Madrid. ARCO is open to the public on Friday 1st to Sunday March 3rd at IFEMA from 12–20:00. I have never been to ARCO but it's the biggest art fair hosted by the city with work exhibited from over 200 galleries from 30 countries. You can see a wide range of art, including video art, installations, drawing, photography, giant sculptures of the Spanish King and more.

The invited country this year is Peru. General entry is €40 euros on Friday and Saturday, but €30 on Sunday. However, if you're a student, you can get in for €20 any day.

More info on ARCO Madrid

2. Art Madrid



image from Art Madrid on Facebook

Another major art fair is Art Madrid which is taking place this year at the Crystal Gallery in Cibeles. This fair is open to the public from Wednesday February 27th to Sunday March 3rd. This year the focus of the fair is on video art so if this is something that you've wanted to get into for awhile, now is the perfect time!

General entrance is €15 but there is a reduced price of €12 for students, pensioners and unemployed people.

More info on Art Madrid

3. JUST MAD

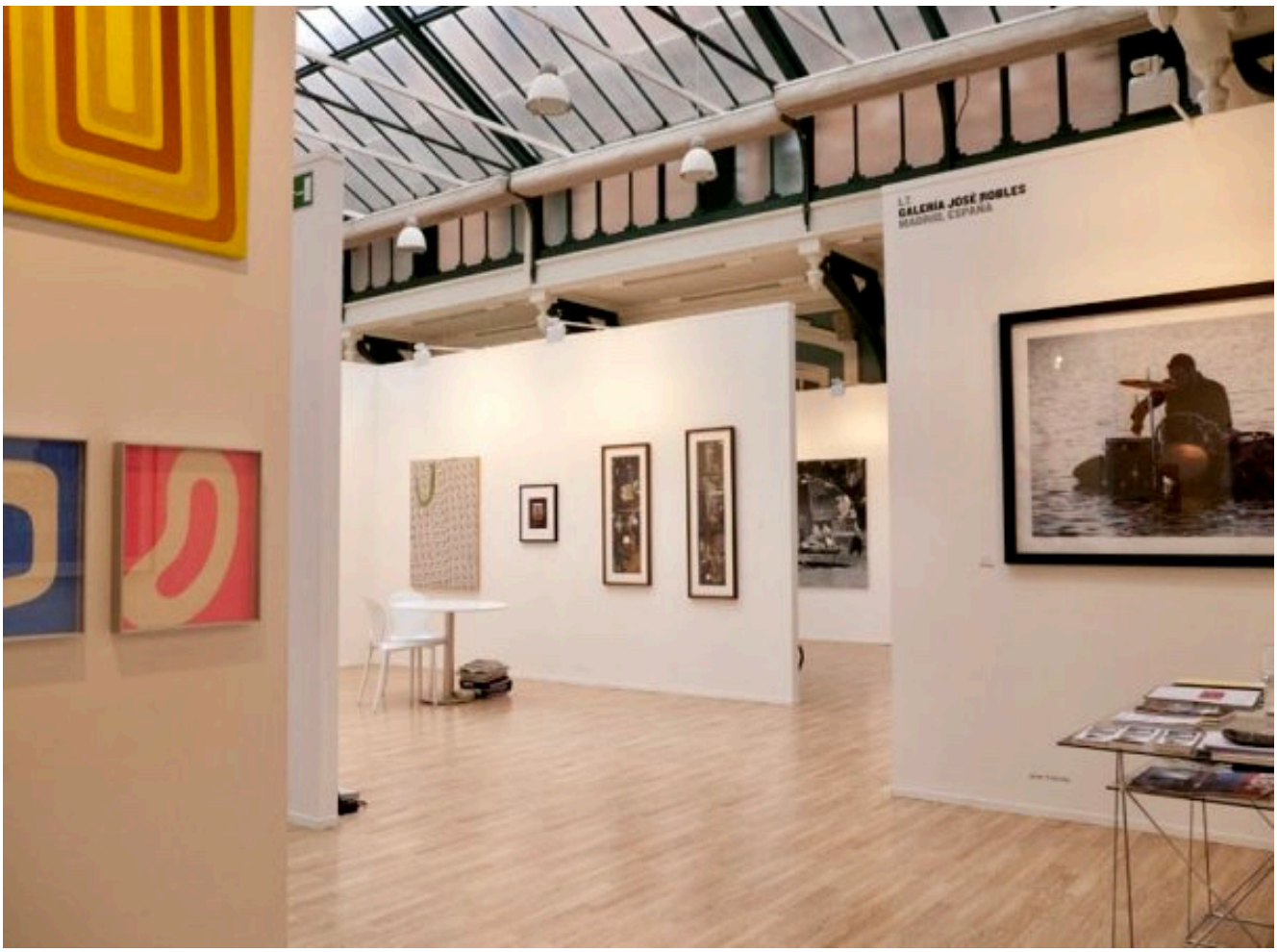


image from [Just Mad on Facebook]

My personal favourite art fair is JUST MAD which has moved to the Palacio de Neptuno this year. I've been to JUST MAD two years in a row and I always really enjoy the selection of art on offer. It often has a wonderful group of paintings and photography. While it's not as big as ARCO, it's still fairly sizeable and I would recommend dedicating at least 2 or 3 hours to be able to see everything.

In an attempt to strengthen ties with their closest neighbour, Portugal is being featured at the fair this year. Just Mad is open to the public from Wednesday 26th to Sunday 3rd. General entry is €15 but it goes down to just €7 for students, pensioners and the unemployed, making it the most affordable one if you're on a student visa.

[More info on Just Madrid]

4. Drawing Room



Image from Drawing Room on Facebook

Another art fair that I usually try to attend is Drawing Room, which, as its name suggests, primarily highlights works of illustration. I'm always impressed by the selection of pieces I have seen there and it's one of the smaller events so if you don't think you could spend a whole day or several hours at an art fair, Drawing Room would probably be more to your liking.

This year Drawing Room takes place at the Palacio de Santa Barbara and it's open to the public from this Thursday to Sunday. Tickets cost €10 but are half price for anyone under 18 or over 65.

More info on Drawing Room

5. Urvanity Art Fair



art installation on Calle Fuencarral by German artist 1010

You may have seen some of the urban art installations that are taking the centre by storm right now like the cat in Callao or the colorful forms on Calle Fuencarral. Well, those installations are part of the Urvanity Art Fair. If you want

really contemporary, cutting-edge work, this is the fair for you. It's celebrating just its third edition this year and showcases post graffiti, new pop art and surrealist pop. If you have no idea what any of those words mean, no worries. Go to the fair and find out!

Urvanity takes place at COAM this year and it is open to the public from Friday to Sunday. Tickets cost just €10.

More info on Urvanity

6. Hybrid Art Fair



Image from Hybrid Art Fair on Facebook

Finally, I'm going to wrap this up with HYBRID Art Fair which also takes place from Friday to Sunday. If you like your art provocative and genre-bending, then this is the fair for you.

To make it even cooler and more intimate, it actually takes place inside a hotel, the Hotel Petit Palace Santa Barbara. If you're going to Hybrid, I highly suggest buying your tickets online in advance as it's a bit cheaper and if you want to go to more than one of these fairs, every bit counts!

More info on Hybrid Art Fair

So if you've got a puente this weekend and you're not traveling, don't feel bad! There's so much for you to do in the city thanks to Madrid Art Week! You'll need Monday off to recover. Enjoy!

By Kristen Wiltshire, admin of the Facebook group Madrid Art and Culture