Best Coworking Spaces in Madrid

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

Espíritu 23



Image from Espíritu 23

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

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

Plázida – Loom



Image from Plázida

- Plázida: Website, Facebook & Instagrram @plazidacowork
- Loom: Website
- **Address: Calle Vandergoten, 1 and Calle de la Princesa, 5**
- Metro: Atocha and Plaza de España

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

Google Campus



- Website
- Address: Calle Moreno Nieto, 2
- Metro: La Latina or Puerta del Ángel (it's a bit of a

walk from the metro)

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

The Shed Coworking

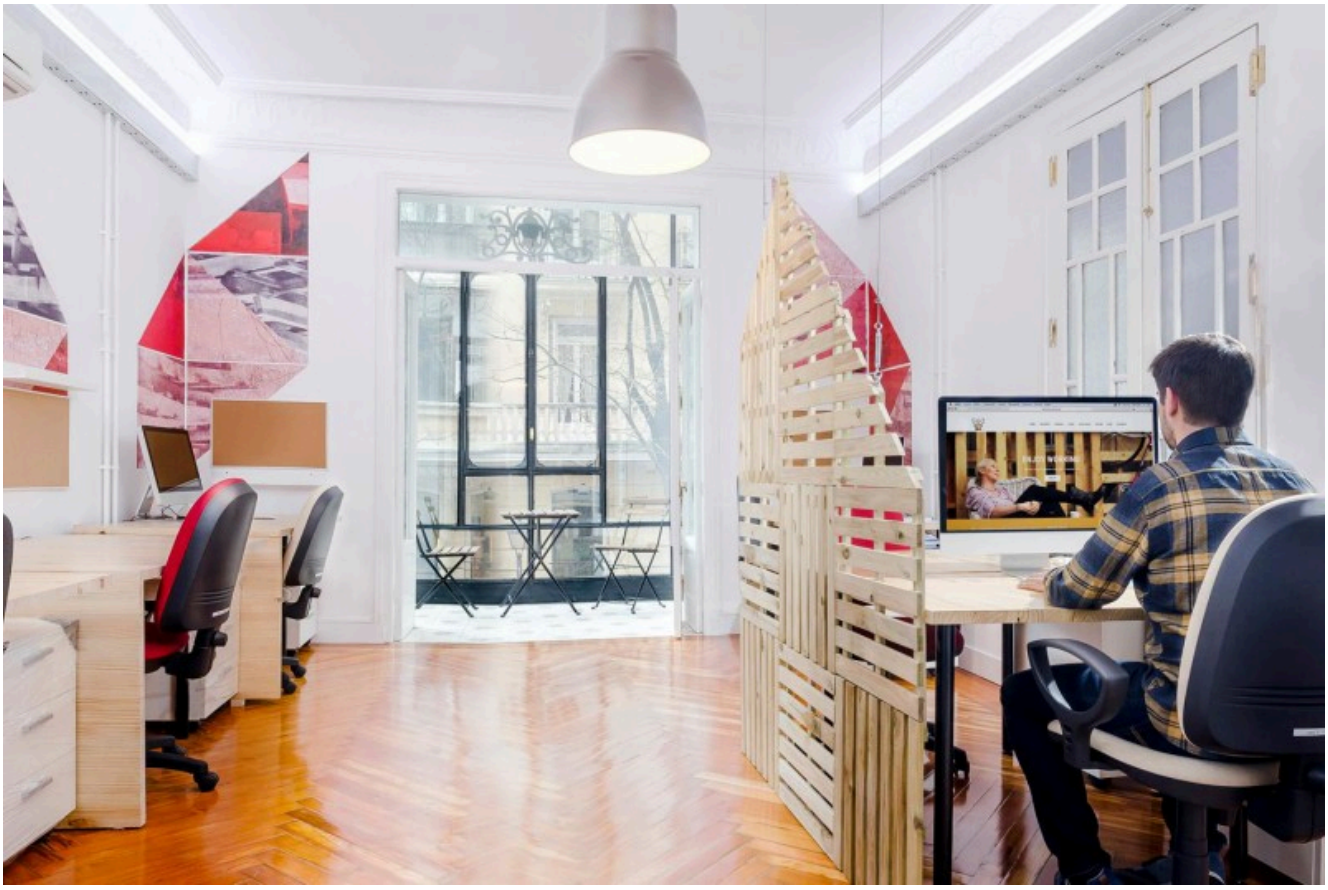


Image from The Shed

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

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

La Piscine



Image from La Piscine

- Facebook, Website
- Address: Calle Campoamor, 5
- Metros: Alonso Martínez/Chueca

La Piscine calls itself a "workplace for everybody." It's essentially a cute coffee shop where you pay by the hour to

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

Impact Hub Madrid



Image from Impact Hub Madrid

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

No article about Madrid's top coworking spaces would be complete without mentioning Impact Hub, which has been actively supporting the city's international innovators and

entrepreneurs for years. Now with five giant locations around Madrid, it not only provides an ideal work space for freelancers and startups alike, but also a truly impressive calendar full of information sessions, workshops, initiatives, events, markets and more.

La Industrial

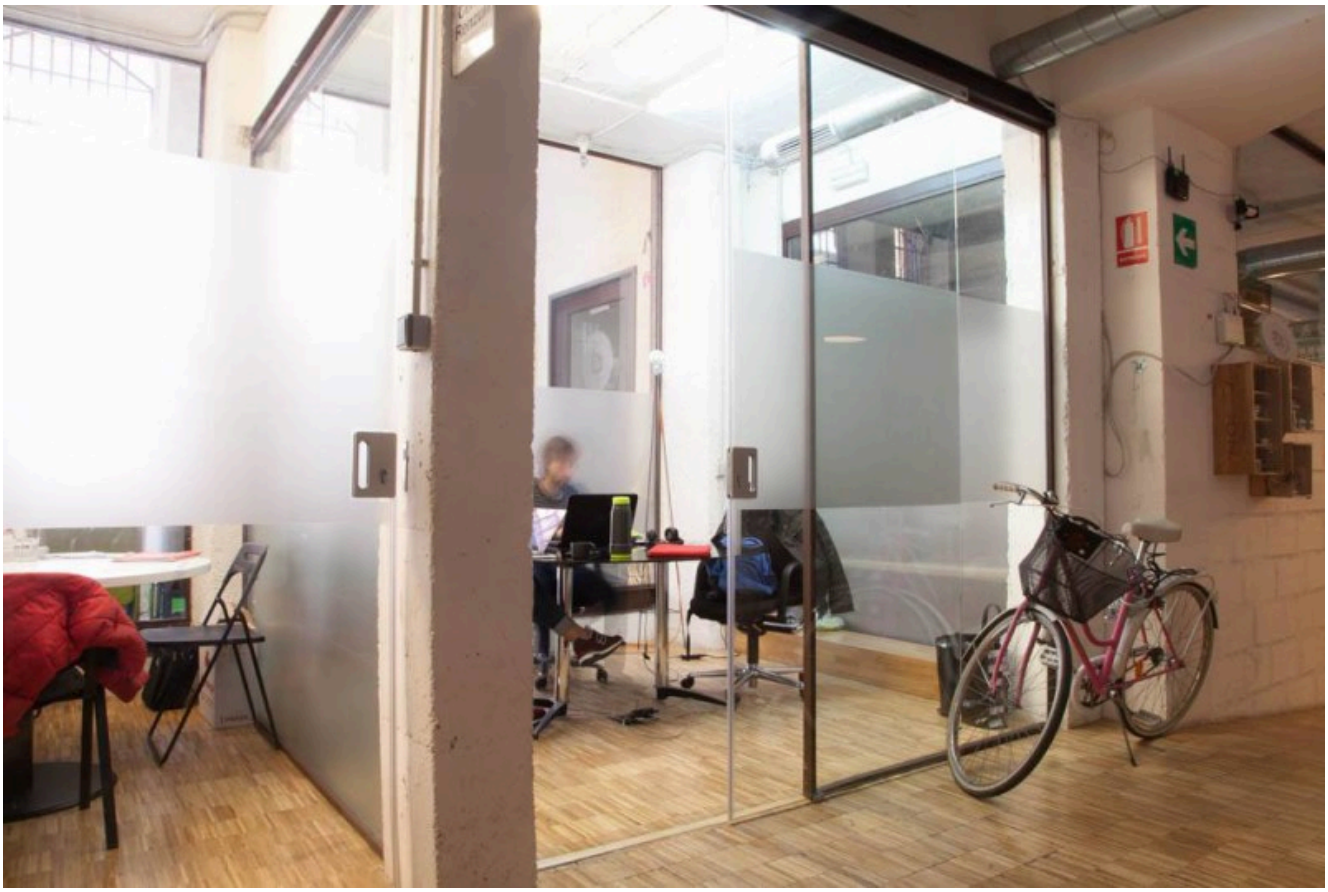


Image from La Industrial

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

This 400-square-meter space is located in the heart of Malasaña. It's open to all types of professionals and offers a number of affordable member options, from daily to monthly passes (you can try out a day for free). You can rent out a spot at the open area, private workstations, meeting

rooms and different spaces for workshops, events, markets, you name it. They have an additional 250-square-meter events space on Calle San Ferrer 33. Plus it’s pet-friendly!

Utopic_US



- Website, Facebook and Instagram @utopic_us
- Address: 5 locations, original on Calle Colegiata and Duque de Rivas (across the street)

Utopic_US has the benefit of being one of the city’s most

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

Bee Lab



Image from Bee Lab

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

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

Did we miss any? Let us know!

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

---

7 Reasons Alcalá de Henares is worth more than a day trip from Madrid

I recently organized a weekend **getaway for WABAS, a writers' group** that I form a part of, and we decided to hold it in the beautiful city of Alcalá de Henares. As a Madrid resident, I've met a lot of people from Alcalá over the years, and even gone there for the day on more than one occasion. However, it wasn't until staying there for a full two nights that I truly got to know the city.

Being only 35 kilometers from Madrid – and a quick 40-minute local train ride away – many of those who live in the area take for granted that we have this jewel in our backyard.

Alcalá is often thought of as a commuter city more than a tourist destination.

It’s home to nearly 200,000 inhabitants (making it about the same size as Granada!), many of whom commute into Madrid every day on the many trains and buses that go into the big city. However, Alcalá is certainly an important city in its own right – one with a LOT to see and do and that’s on par with other historical cities in central Spain.

I thought I’d share some of the reasons I think it’s totally worth staying in Alcalá de Henares for a night or two.

1. Breathe in the history



From the hotel, to the meeting rooms, to the streets and restaurants – every place I stepped into during my weekend in Alcalá was filled with historic charm. I stayed at the **Evenia Alcalá Boutique,** a three-star hotel housed in a 16th-century building with a charming courtyard located near the city's Cathedral.

The pedestrian **Calle Mayor** is a main street of shops and restaurants that connects the Cathedral to the city's main **Plaza de Cervantes**. Its cobble stones and wood-framed buildings take you back in time. It is on this street that **the birth house of Miguel de Cervantes** can be found, right next to the medieval hospital where his father used to work.



And of course, you have the **Archiepiscopal Palace of Alcalá de Henares**, which is famed for being the place where Christopher Columbus first met with Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. For our writers' meeting, the city of Alcalá was gracious enough to loan us a meeting room in the Casa de la Entrevista, which is a medieval monastery that has been converted into an exhibition space. I could feel the history literally everywhere we went.



It makes sense for a city that was completely rebuilt and planned as a university city in the 15th century. Many of the buildings from that era are still in use today. While Alcalá's University of Complutense was moved to Madrid in 1836, today it is a university town once again. The **University of Alcalá** opened there in 1977 and brought many of the original university's buildings back to academic use. The original university was named after the Roman city of Complutum that was the original city built on the site in the 1st century BC.

To learn more about the region's ancient history, be sure to visit the **Archeological Museum of the Madrid Region,** also located in Alcalá.

2. Enjoy free tapas with your drinks



The tradition of receiving a **complimentary tapa** (small plate) with your drink order may have died out in much of Spain – but not in Alcalá! Several places in Alcalá still take part in this fabulous tradition. **Indalo** is by far the most famous place in town to go for a tapa. You order a drink and then you can choose a generous tapa from the menu, all for 2.50 euros, if my memory serves me right.

We also visited **La Posada Magistral** which gives you a surprise tapa with each drink (they also have a very economical set menu, even on weekends, that they serve in their upstairs dining room). Other bars, such as **La Taberna de Rusty**, charge separately for the tapas, but at very modest prices.

3. Party all night long



By staying overnight in Alcalá I was able to discover how bustling the place is after dark! I didn't expect for there to be so much happening at night; but I guess thanks to its large population – which includes students of the University of Alcalá – there are a ton of options.

The most emblematic of Alcalá's night spots is **The Green Irish Pub**. But, don't be fooled, this isn't your typical Irish bar – it's a proper nightclub. There's a little something for everyone at The Green Tavern and it attracts a diverse crowd. The first floor features rock music and a pub-like atmosphere, but with a massive dance floor, and the second floor is more of a traditional club scene with latin pop and dance music.

In case you get late-night munchies, you don't even have to leave the party complex: in between the two different zones there is a stand selling hot dogs and other snacks.

Meanwhile, the youngsters flock to **Bar TDK**. Here you'll find cheap mixed drinks at 4 euros (and even a bit cheaper if you show a valid student ID!), as well as pool tables, dart boards and foosball, that will keep you entertained all night long.

If you're looking for a more upscale evening, you can check out the **Hanoi House**. Here you'll find a more mature crowd, and a bit pricier cocktails in a large club fitted with Vietnamese-themed decor. It's definitely worth visiting in summer for its fantastic outdoor bar and terrace that offer nice views.

Like many cities in Spain, on any weekend night you can find lots of party people traversing the streets. You can make lots of new friends without even entering a club! I only went out one night in Alcalá so I didn't get to try everywhere, but other places that looked interesting were **La Champa 2.0 Karaoke Bar** and **Mi Niña Lola**. I'll have to stay another night soon to try them out!

4. Experience fine dining without breaking the bank



While researching different possibilities for lunch and dinner in Alcalá, I came across several excellent options, it was difficult to choose. We ended up having lunch at **El Hemisferio Loft** and it was an amazing choice. The service and the quality of the food were excellent. But make sure to book ahead – the place gets packed!

On the weekend, you're able to choose from different set menus for lunch or for dinner, which are an excellent value. Our group chose el "Menu de temporada" which included an amuse bouche, a starter, a main dish, a dessert and a coffee for 25 euros. I ordered a seafood rice dish as the starter, and sea bass with mashed potatoes as the main and both were excellent. On weekdays a similar set menu goes for only 15 euros.

We also enjoyed dining at **El Tempranillo**, which was right by our hotel and has a fantastic wine selection. We had a light

dinner of croquetas, as well as a plate of meats and cheeses. They also had a nice selection of entrees, for a more formal sit-down dinner. The owner, Inma, is very friendly and an excellent sommelier, who makes you feel at home in a cute and cozy atmosphere.

Other restaurants that came highly recommended were **Lucrecia** and **Martilota**. I definitely plan to check them out the next time I'm in town.

5. Take part in Alcalá's many cultural events



When I was trying to choose which weekend to go to Alcalá, I was hard-pressed to find a weekend where there wasn't some kind of special event happening. I chose the only weekend of the season that was relatively calm (sandwiched between the

Alcalá Film Festival, and the **Don Juan performance**, when hotel prices were higher). Even so, we still caught celebrations for the **20th Anniversary of Alcalá being named a UNESCO World Heritage site** (which took place on December 2, 1998), as well as a pre-Christmas parade.

If you're planning a trip to Alcalá, make sure to check **the city's cultural calendar** and find out what may be going on at that time. Among the most well-known events is the city's **Mercado Cervantino**, or **Medieval fair**, where the Calle Mayor is filled with old-fashioned stands and people dressed in period attire. Definitely worth checking out if your timing lines up.

6. See (and hear) storks!



Ok, so you can see them whether or not you stay the night in Alcalá, but **I can't write an article about Alcalá without mentioning the storks**. Alcalá de Henares is said to be home to

around 90 pairs of migrating white storks – although each year they are said to stay longer. The best time to see them is between mid-October and the beginning of August, when you'll hear them snapping their beaks like castanets throughout the city. They love this place, thanks to the many steeples that are perfect for building their nests.

You can spot the large birds circling over the city and perched atop buildings. The the city's tourism office has even created a special **"Storks Route" touristic itinerary** that features the birds' most notable nesting spots atop already impressive historical buildings and around the beautiful Plaza de Cervantes.

7. Indulge in sweet treats



If you like Spanish sweets, **Alcalá is one of the best places**

to try them! A must-visit is the **Convent of the Clarisas of San Diego** where the cloistered nuns sell candied almonds from behind a small door without showing their faces. In addition to candied nuts, convents across the city sell homemade marzipan, similar to nearby Toledo.

Another typical sweet from Alcalá is a flaky puff pastry called ***costrada***. It has a sweet cream filling and is covered in soft meringue that is finally topped with crushed sugared almonds. *Costrada* is said to have originated from the famous **Pastelería Salinas** in La Plaza de Cervantes. You can find it in their window display, as well as those in several other bakeries across town – where it's usually just as delicious!

And, you can't leave Alcalá without trying a ***Rosquilla de Alcalá***, a round puff pastry glazed in sugary egg yolk. Try one at **Pastelería Lupe**. It's a level up from a glazed doughnut, that is sure to leave you in a sugar coma.

How to get to Alcalá de Henares from Madrid

Alcalá de Henares is super easy to get to. Here are the different options:

- **By train**

Take a Cercanias commuter train (Line 2 or Line 7) from Atocha Station to the Alcalá de Henares train station. During rush hour, trains depart every 5-10 minutes, and the journey lasts about 40 minutes.

- **By bus**

There is also a bus that leaves from Avenida de America bus station. It is line 223 run by Continental Auto, Line 223, and tickets are sold near the bus stop. The bus ride takes about one hour.

- **From the airport**

If you are coming from the Adolfo Suárez Madrid–Barajas Airport, I recommend going by taxi. While it's more expensive, it's worth the time savings. It's only about a 25-minute drive from Barajas to Alcalá. There is no direct public transportation line from the airport to Alcalá. You'd have to first go into the city of Madrid, and then take the aforementioned bus or train, which would take over an hour and a half.

- **By car**

Of course, if you have access to a car, Alcalá is just a short drive away.

As you can see, Alcalá is no sleepy commuter town. While it's an easy day trip; there's also enough to see and do to make it worth spending a night or two. I hope my experience helps you get the most out of your time in Alcalá de Henares.

Looking for more places to visit near Madrid? Check out our list of Madrid's 10 beautiful surrounding towns.

*Thank you Russ Pearce from **anythingbutpaella.com** for many of these lovely photos!*

Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid – Round 2

Knowing where to take your mom in Madrid can be tough, especially if she's already visited you five or six times. So here's a follow-up to my **first version** of this post with some

fresh ideas, some favorites, and some recommendations from fellow Naked Madrid writers – and my mom, too, of course. She also helped me edit this whole piece. Thanks ma!

Not to mention these ideas are great for any out-of-town guests. Here goes:

1. Museo del Romanticismo for an intimate art experience



Madrid has several charming museums worth visiting, and if you're like me, you'll appreciate their small size. My mom and I loved **Museo de Artes Decorativas** and **Museo Naval**; but we enjoyed **Museo del Romanticismo** the most. Something about wandering around someone's former mansion makes it unique, and each room tells a different story. Just stay on the grey carpet or the attendant will scold you, like she did my mom

when she wanted to take a closer look at the 19th-century furnishings and art! Plus it has a wonderful tea room.

For more ideas, check out **Madrid's obvious and not-so-obvious museums (and how to get in for free!)**

2. Mad Improv events for fun and laughter



This was such a great discovery. My mom has been to Madrid several times over my ten years of living here, yet we never quite found the right way to spend an evening out that didn't just involve food. **Mad Improv** is an English-speaking theater group that holds shows (right now on Thursdays at La Escalera de Jacob) and regular workshops and jams at **VeraContent** (Naked Madrid's sister company).

Jams cost 3€ and include a first drink. Anyone is welcome to get up and join in on improv games, or you can just watch if you're on the shyer side – understandably so, as you'll see

some pretty impressive improvisors up there. Either way, you're going to laugh a whole lot. I promise.

Here's a **full post on Mad Improv** to find out more.

3. Juana la Loca for excellent Spanish food



Juana la Loca is an exceptional family-run restaurant in La Latina, serving Spanish food with lots of fusion and lots of love. Everything you eat here is exquisite, from the *pintxos* at the bar to the main dishes. I had been several times before I finally got the chance to speak to one of the family members, the son, who explained everything on the menu with such passion. Culinary arts clearly run in the family.

4. Bosco de Lobos and Ana la Santa for cozy and chic dining



I wanted to include a few more restaurants on this list so I asked for recommendations from **Cat**, one of Naked Madrid's most active writers. With no hesitation at all, she said: "**Bosco de Lobos** and **Ana la Santa** are both mum pleasers!" Bosco de Lobos is situated in a beautiful courtyard of an architecture school in Chueca, and its casual-chic look immediately lures you in. Ana la Santa also has a great location, right in Plaza Santa Ana. Cat especially recommends going here when it's cold outside, as it's the perfect place to warm up.

Check out **Cat**'s articles on **Bosco de Lobos** and **Ana la Santa** – I'd definitely take her word for it.

5. Chuka for Japanese ramen and gyozas



Once you've had your taste of Spanish food, you shouldn't feel bad about going to an **international restaurant**. Really, it's okay. Madrid's culinary scene is full of fusion cuisine from all over the world, and Madrileños love it. **Chuka** is one of our all-time favorites for ramen, gyozas and baos. And we just found out the owners are actually two Americans who have been living in Madrid for over a decade. Go figure!

Here's a full post on **Chuka**. Another great restaurant nearby is **L'Artisan Furansu Kitchen**, offering French-Japanese fusion cuisine and a *menú del día* that changes daily.

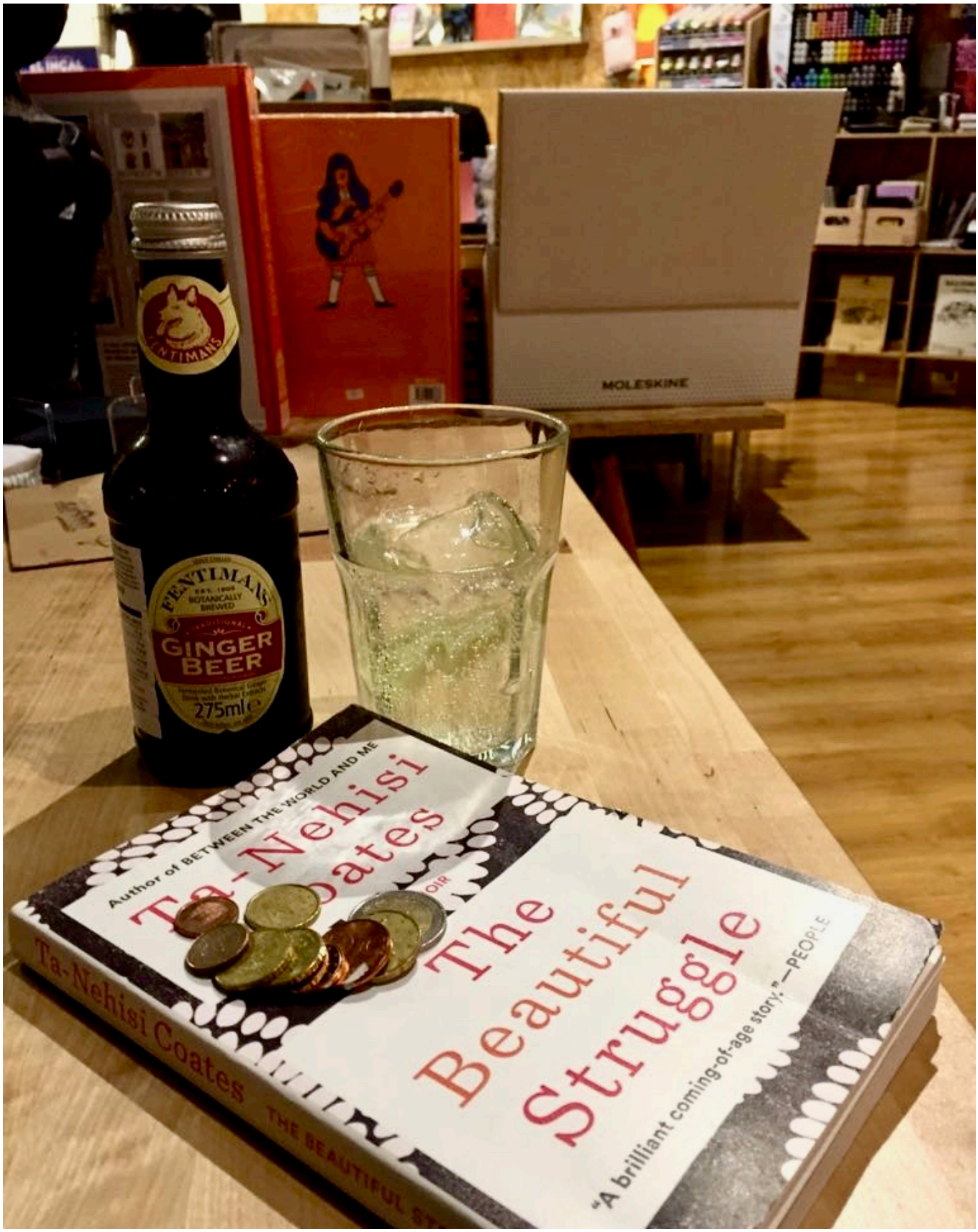
6. Salmon Guru for fun cocktails



Before going into Chuka we had a half hour to kill so we walked down the street and got a drink at **Salmon Guru**. This funky bar has a great cocktail selection and truly unique decor. If we'd stayed a little longer and sampled another round, my mom thinks we might have solved the mystery of what "Salmon Guru" actually means.

Read our full post on **Salmon Guru here**.

7. Swinton & Grant for when you're working



Coffee shops are always great places to park your mom while you're working (or napping). If she hasn't brought her own book with her, she'll surely find something to read at **Swinton & Grant** – a café that sells art books and also has a

downstairs gallery – while enjoying a *cortado*, a spicy ginger soda, or a beer.

Another one of my mom's favorites, mentioned in the **previous article**, is **Café La Libre**, right by the Reina Sofia museum. She couldn't resist going back twice on her most recent visit. And we always make a pit-stop at **Desperate Literature** to check out their international book selection and delightful event calendar.

8. Templo de Debod for stunning views



This beautiful ancient Egyptian temple is perched on a hill providing breathtaking views of the city, making it the perfect spot to watch the sunset or have a picnic. **Templo de Debod** is also a great place to walk to after a visit to the Royal Palace or the **Cerralbo Museum** which are both a hop skip away. You'll find a free-entrance museum inside the temple – one of **Mad Improv**'s organizers, Summer, said her parents loved

it.

9. Casa Pueblo for another cocktail



I’ve been going to this bar since my first year in Madrid. You can bring anyone here – a date, a friend, a colleague. There’s something warm and special about **Casa Pueblo** that makes me keep coming back. And my mom couldn’t agree more. There’s also a small stage in the back where they regularly put on live music.

10. The Rastro for a Sunday flea market experience



pic from Madrid No Frills

When I asked for a recommendation from **Leah**, she said: “My mum absolutely loves the Rastro, of course. She wants to buy everything but can’t fit it in her suitcase, but she always manages to squeeze something in like a spoon!”

Leah has been writing about and capturing the Rastro for years on her awesome blog, **Madrid No Frills**, and instagram accounts **@rastrolife** and **@portaitofmadrid**. Here’s her latest Rastro-inspired post: **Seven eccentric museum-worthy collections found only in the Rastro**

11. Shopping day in Malasaña – and a mandatory drink afterwards



Mojitos at Cubanismo, a rooftop bar in Malasaña

When it comes to shopping, I like getting it over with in one shot on Calle Fuencarral (which merges with Gran Vía if you want to hit all the big stores like Zara and H&M). Afterwards, there's beer and tapas waiting for you at some of our favorite spots. I recommend going into one of the happening food markets in the area – **Mercado de San Ildefonso** or **Mercado de San Anton** – both with great outdoor seating areas.

Another amazing place for a post-shopping drink is El Paracaídas. This multi-story and multi-purpose concept store actually has two rooftops – our favorite is **Cubanismo, a tropical rooftop escape**!

12. Food tour for insight into Spanish

bar culture and cuisine



Another Naked Madrid writer, Melissa, recently went on the **Context Tavernas and Tapas Tour** in Barrio de las Letras. Melissa is a true foodie, and works as a full-time writer and translator at **VeraContent,** where she researches Spanish food on a daily basis. She said the culinary tour was truly insightful, and a wonderful way to better understand the history and nuances behind Spain's delicious cuisine as you enjoy every bite.

Read Melissa's full article on the **Context Travel Tours** here.

Don't forget to read round one of Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid for more ideas!

You might also like: Take a Peek Inside 5 Historical Madrid Bars

Of course Madrid is full of more options that mothers will love, so please feel free to share in the comments!

Volunteer Opportunities in Madrid for Everyone

If you're looking for ways to get involved in the Madrid community and help out – from donating clothes to teaching English in city jails – here are a few non-profit organizations recommended by international volunteers who live here. While some require long-term commitments and knowing Spanish, others can benefit from just a few hours of your time and have no language barriers.

So whether you're new to the city or have very little spare time, there are plenty of ways to give back – even the smallest gesture can make a difference.

Casa Solidaria

While Madrid operates government-run food banks for its residents in need, there are many people who can't take advantage of this service due to lack of paperwork. **Casa Solidaria** aims to fill this void, organizing volunteers who prepare food in their own homes and deliver to 150+ people in **Plaza de Tirso de Molina every weekday at 8:30pm**. Each person gets a hot meal, a sandwich and a piece of fruit.

One volunteer said: “For most of these people, this is their primary source of food for the day. Without this, they are at serious risk.” With no regular funding, the charity—which also operates in Barcelona and Lleida—is always always looking for **volunteers and donations**.

- **Website**

Robin Hood Restaurant



Pablo Blazquez Dominguez/Getty Images

Another noble organization feeding the hungry of Madrid is the Robin Hood restaurant on Calle Eguilaz. During the day, Robin Hood is run like a typical Spanish café. But **by night, the chefs and waiting staff use the profits to feed Madrid’s most in need residents.**

At this catholic charity-run eatery, the idea is to offer the homeless of Madrid not only their daily bread, but also the

civility of dining at a restaurant. Father Ángel García Rodriguez told NPR, “I want them to eat with the same dignity as any other customer. And the same quality, with glasses made of crystal, not plastic, and in an atmosphere of friendship and conversation.” The restaurant is attracting the talents of celebrity chefs and staff from the city’s top hotels.

Support Robin Hood by dropping in for a bite to eat—just be sure to make a reservation first as it’s booking up months in advance.

- **Facebook** & **Website**

CONCAES (Confraternidad Carcelaria Española)

CONCAES is a Madrid-based NGO that works to provide support to people affected by crime, whether they’re prisoners, victims or family members. One of their main initiatives is giving educational workshops for inmates, to provide or increase skills and help with rehabilitation. English classes are currently run in two different penitentiary centres and give inmates the opportunity to learn English, or improve their level with native teachers.

As a volunteer you are responsible for planning and leading the classes, while you are accompanied by other volunteers or coordinators. According to one volunteer, “It can be challenging at times but it is without a doubt the most rewarding thing that I’ve done since moving to Madrid. In my experience the students are very motivated and the classes have a great atmosphere. The English workshops take place on Friday mornings so it’s easy to combine with work. It can take a while between signing up and getting permission to enter the centres so this is definitely one for people who are in Madrid for more than a few months.”

- **Website**

Madrid for Refugees



Madrid for Refugees is run by a group of international volunteers who work closely with refugee centers in the Comunidad de Madrid. Their main goal is to help refugees from all over the world to build a life for themselves here in the city, from finding housing to work. One way to support Madrid for Refugees is by attending a **Chefugee event – monthly dinners organized where the entire menu is prepared by a refugee** seeking work opportunities in Madrid's culinary scene. Other ways to get involved include donating clothes and doing language exchanges as well as running errands and being a chauffeur. You can also attend their fundraising events and concerts which are announced on the **MfR Facebook page**, and all benefits go to helping refugees.

Facebook & Website

Serve the City

Serve the City is an international volunteer movement that began in Brussels in 2005, and is now located in over 95 cities around the world. It aims to connect people with local opportunities and events in their cities, so they can show kindness in practical ways to people in need, including refugees, the homeless, orphans, victims of human trafficking, the disabled and the poor. Serve the City believes that even the smallest efforts can make a big difference, and we agree.

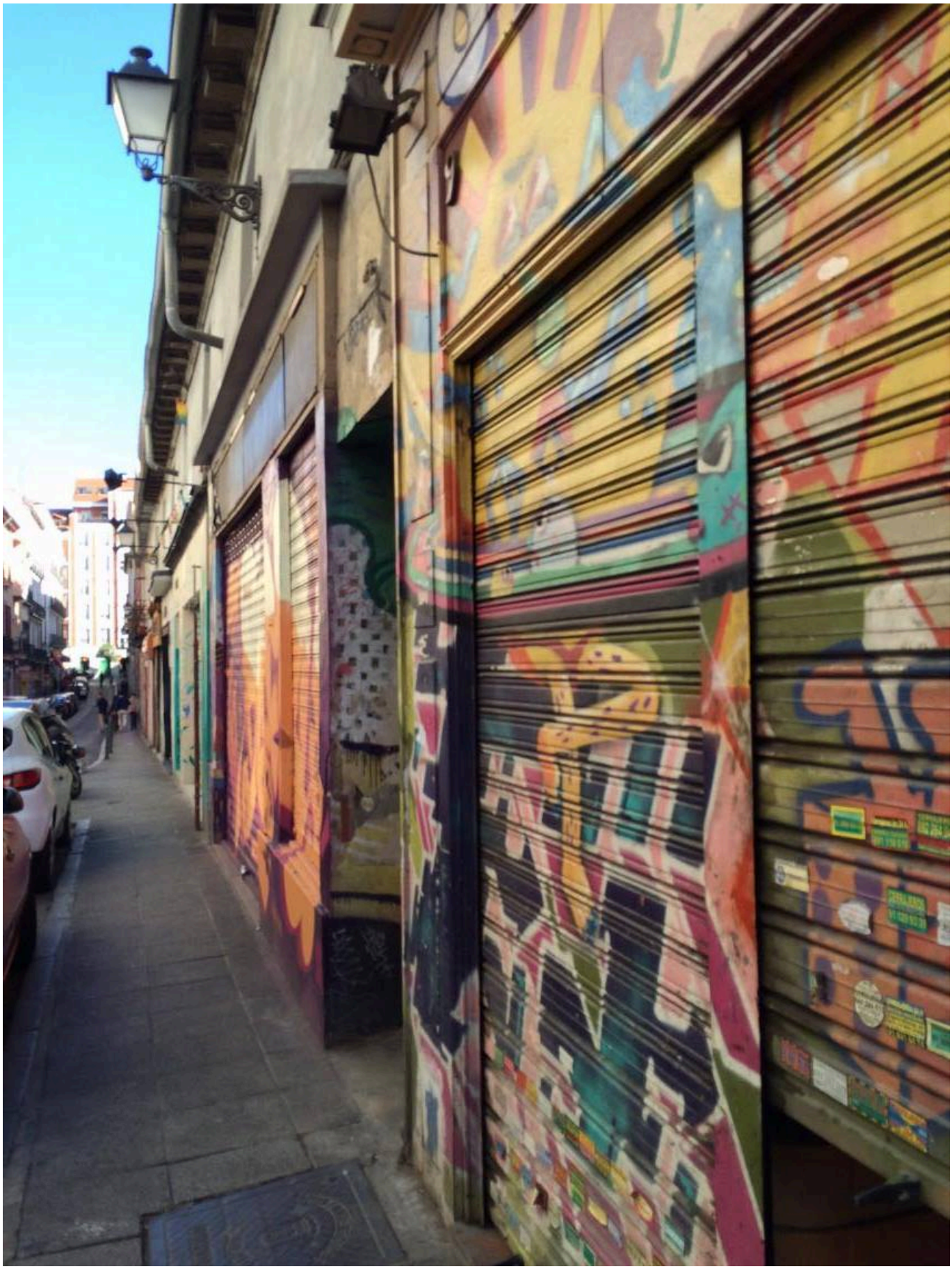
Website & **Facebook**

Know of any other organizations to add to this list? Let us know!

A Mini Guide: how to make the most of rainy Madrid

When the sun shines on the big city… Madrid is spectacular, especially in the sun. The authentic Spanish architecture on every building looks picturesque against a backdrop of blue skies, and even the areas coated in graffiti look artistic and vibrant in a summery light. You can walk pretty much anywhere; take a stroll in El Parque Retiro; sip sangría in Plaza Mayor; visit a rooftop in almost any barrio.







But with some Autumnal showers it can be difficult to experience Madrid to the full, so here are a few ideas to keep

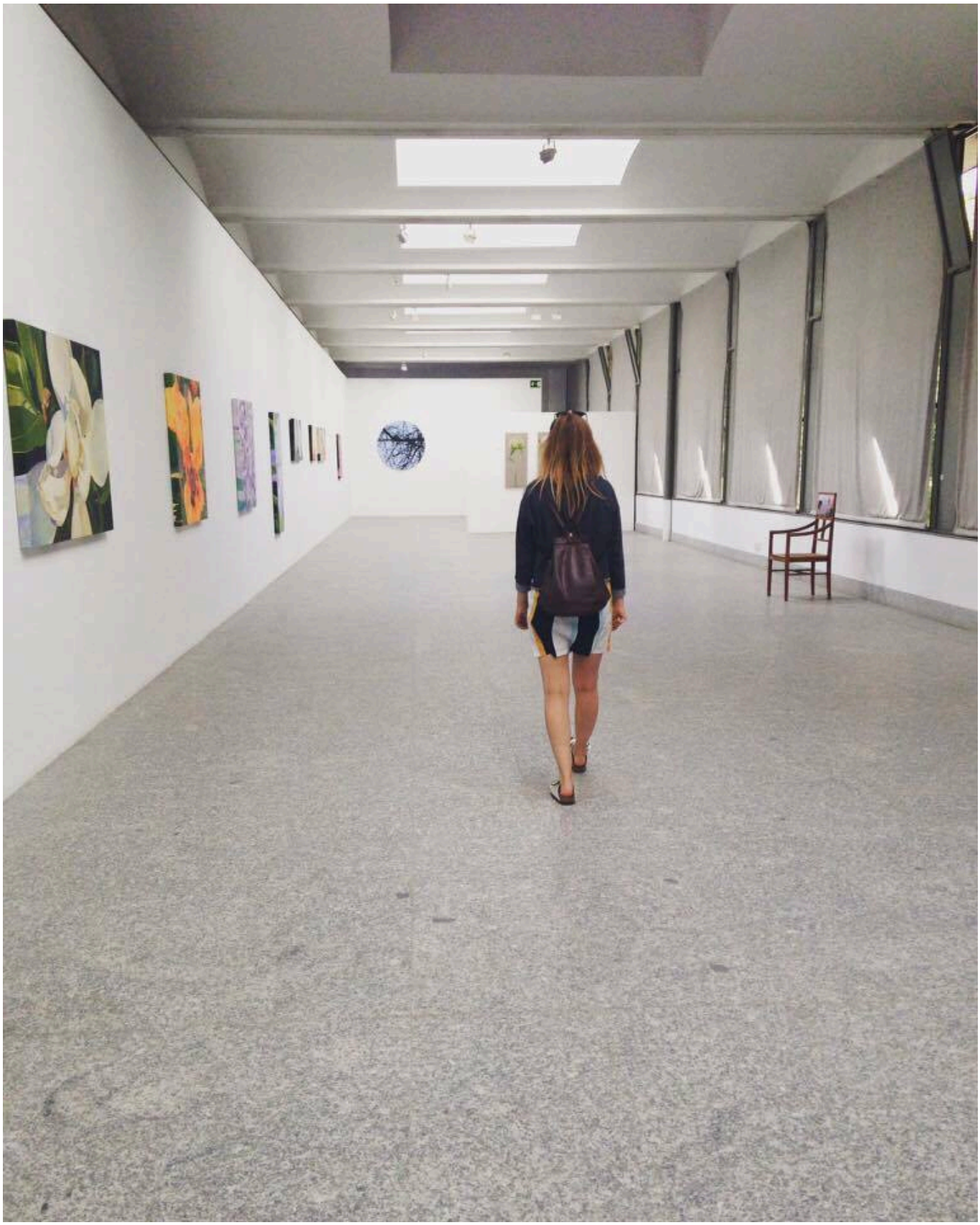
you busy come rain or shine…

Get even more culture in you

It goes without saying that rainy days are perfect museum days. Stay warm and dry inside beautiful exhibition rooms, and feel like you have really experienced at least a snippet of the art and culture that Madrid has to offer, even on a miserable day.

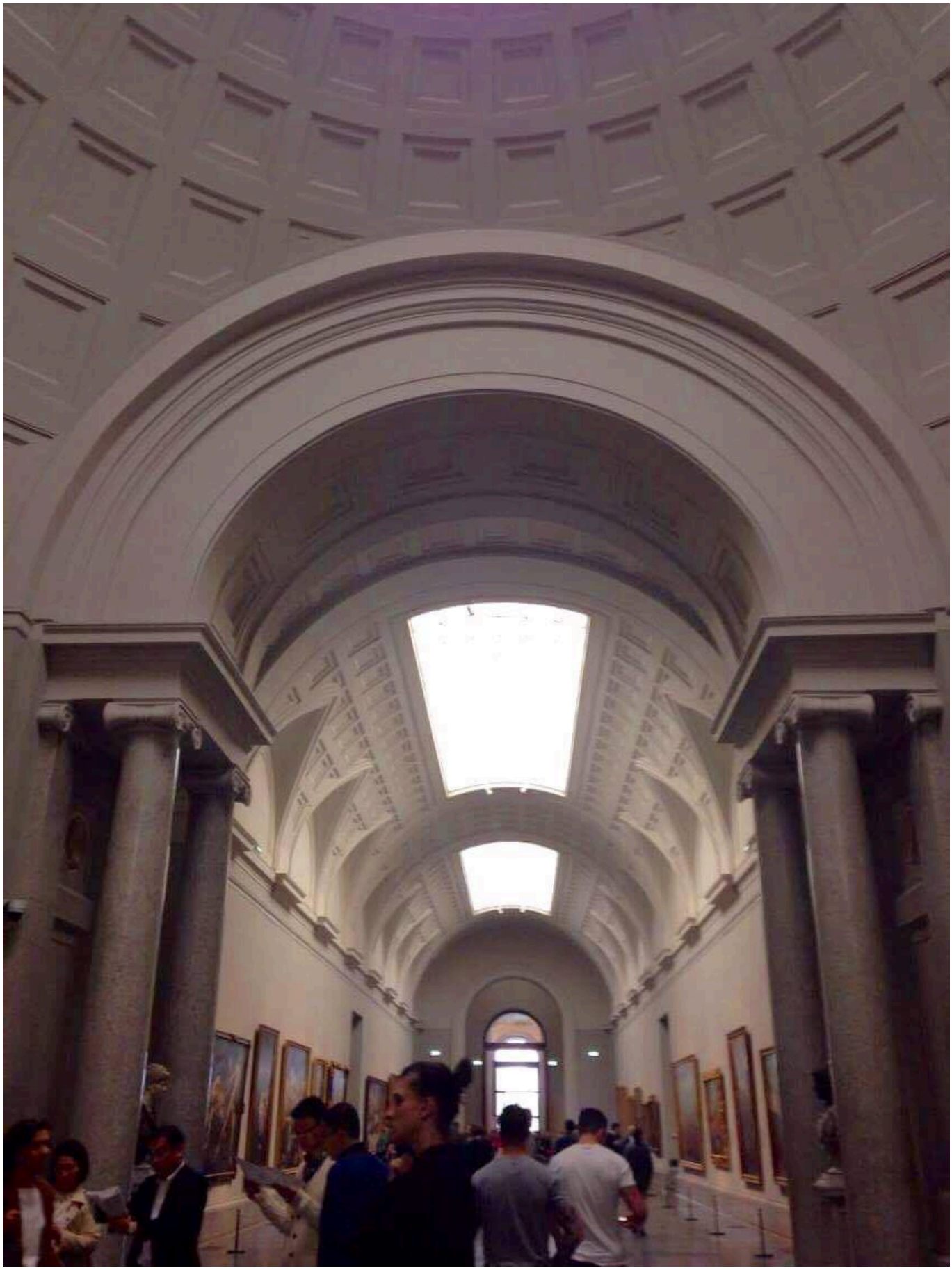
This can also be a free way to enjoy Madrid! Just as though you were wandering through tourist sites in the sun, like the grounds of Palacio Real or within Plaza Mayor, many art exhibitions in Madrid are free to the public.

To get started with art in Madrid, a true tourist or cultured expat must visit the **city's main art museums**. **El Museo del Prado** houses Spain's finest works ever produced, and is free from 6 to 8pm every day. **La Reina Sofia** boasts the breath-taking Guernica (*Pablo Picasso*) and four floors of thought-provoking artwork; it is free on Sunday mornings and afternoons. To get even more authentic, **El Museo Taurino** is Spain's bullfighting history museum, and is free to the public every day of the week.



For **less well-known exhibitions**, keep checking websites to find the best ones, as lots are exhibited for limited time periods. Photography exhibitions seem to populate the Embajadores area: **La Tabacalera** is home to many temporary

shows for renowned Spanish photographers and artists.



When you think of Spanish culture, you think of Flamenco. A quintessentially Spanish dance art that is both vibrant and dynamic. **La Villa Rosa Flamenco** is the oldest flamenco bar in the *world*. It opened in 1911, and has since promoted the Flamenco art with regular shows. Enjoy a class of vino in this relaxed, lively atmosphere.


PRIMERAS FOTOS
1977-1982

Fooooooooood: cake, churros and tapas with a twist

When it’s rainy, chilly, or just a bleak day, we often entertain ourselves with food. I mean, eating is great at any time, but there seems to be something about a miserable day that makes you feel peckish for a tasty gastronomic experience. Luckily, any street in the centre of Madrid is largely populated by tapas bars and restaurants. But these can too often feel very same-same.

When it comes to eating tapas and savouring every single taste because you have never tasted anything quite like it before, think: **LA MUSA**. It’s what foodie dreams are made of. Forget your standard croquette, and think *Croqueta 2.0*. Forget your standard patatas bravas, and think of *La Patata Bomba* filled with meat and served on bread crumbs and a magical pea puree. If you are lucky enough to go to **La Musa** you will enjoy the fusion of Asian and Spanish cuisines in one, revolutionary tapas menu. Find La Musa in both La Latina and Malasaña.



As well as typical Spanish bars, Madrid boasts a plethora of cool artisan cafes to choose from. Cosy up on a Central Perk

style sofa with a caramel macchiato and a slice of red velvet cake. There is always a buzz running through such places, whether that be from the coffee grinder or the many chatty customers: they really seem to be a hub for expats and travellers sheltering themselves from the drizzle. Some personal favourites in Malasaña include:



La Bicicleta: an industrial-chic, modern and artistic café with homemade cake and great coffee. It has a work station for those with laptops, and slowly transforms throughout the day from a bustling café to lively and casual bar by night. Here, I would recommend their **Chai Vanilla Latte** (not many places do it Madrid!) and a slice of **fluffy carrot cake**. Be careful not to head there in peak hours (2-5pm) as you will struggle for a table.



HanSo Café: a hidden gem. By hidden I mean there is literally no sign on its exterior. Inside it is pretty minimal too, with

concrete walls, floor and bar area. The grey tones are contrasted with the warm low-hanging lighting, and the soft sound of music and subtle smell of sourdough toast adds some atmosphere.

Fresh cakes are constantly brought out by HanSo's friendly owners, with some *postres* looking colourful and fruity with an Asian twist. There is a large central table for social hipsters and a few window seats for more private coffee dates. They have a never-ending list of frappes – so you will be spoilt for choice.

When you think of Madrid in cold or rainy weather, you will warmly dream of **chocolate con churros.** In fact, you can kill two birds with one stone. You get your daily dose of 'culture' by trying typical Spanish delicacies, whilst also satisfying your chocolate cravings…



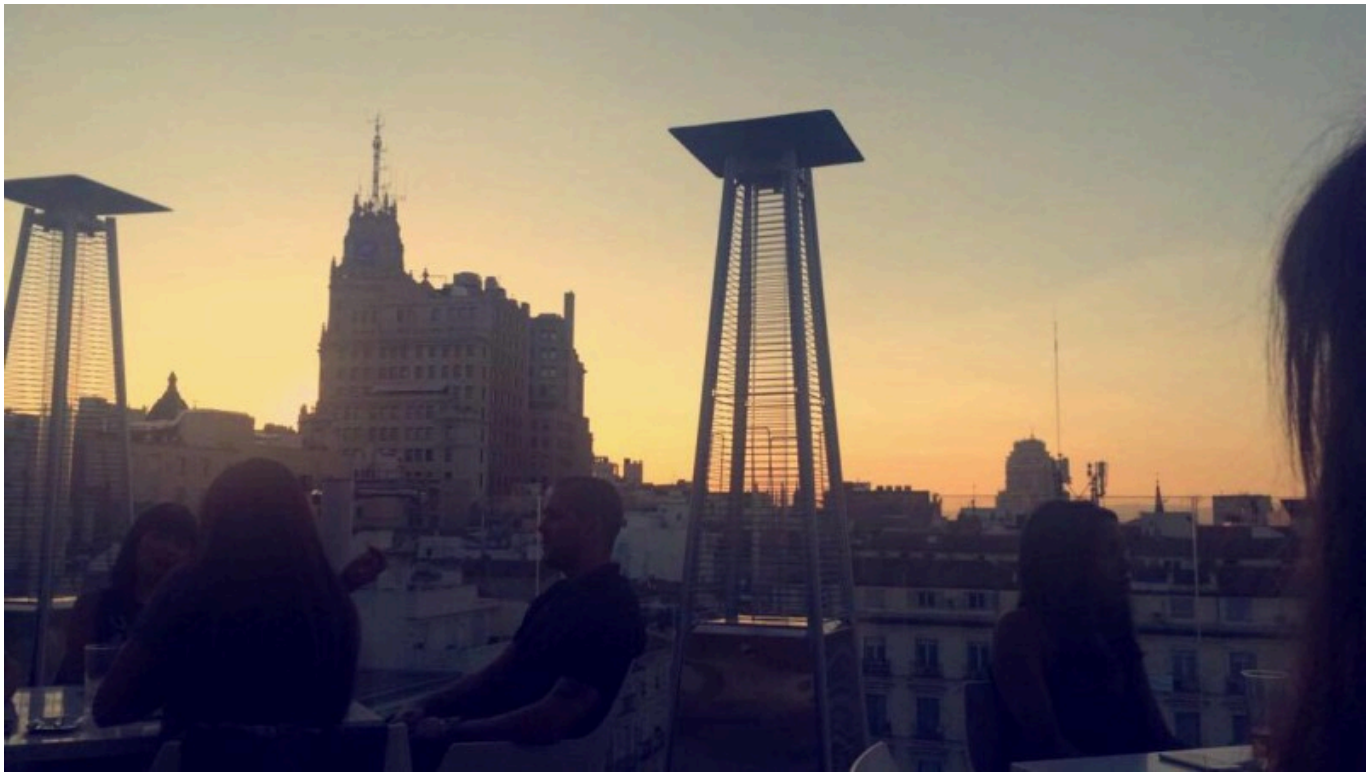
Artesanos 1902: ‘La mejor churreria’ – this churros joint stands wide and proud on Calle San Martín (between Sol and

Opera), complete with twinkly fairy lights that make it all the more inviting. What better way to spend your day eating churros than in a place that has made them their speciality for over 100 years?

They serve their rich chocolate accompaniment in either dark of milk flavours, and also have waffle and crêpe options just in case their mouth-watering churros don't tickle your fancy.

Still up high: panoramic views without getting soaked

One of Madrid's main attractions is the ability to take in the majestic skyline at sunset from one of its **many rooftop terraces**. In the rain however, this is still possible! Just find somewhere *indoors* that is still high up with panoramic views of the city.



To many, **El Corte Ingles** is just a large department store with everything you may want from furniture to fashion. But it can also be on your list of 'things to see and do' in Madrid. The

9th floor in Sol is a foodie hub, with many street food stands and joints offering all types of world cuisines.

Called **Gourmet Experience**, El Corte Ingles' 9th floor has cafes and restaurants with window tables that provide customers with an almost birds-eye view of the city. It provides a warm and dry haven to enjoy while feeling on top of the world.



Mercado San Anton, Chueca: here you will find 4 floors of foodie market heaven, topped with a rooftop restaurant and bar. Fear not, 70% of this floor is covered to keep you dry from the rain, and you still feel as though you are high up in the city air with the ability to take in the views.



Faro de Moncloa: a viewpoint standing tall in the heart of Madrid's university district, Moncloa. Visitors have access to two panoramic lifts that will take them up to the 92-metres-high, glass viewing room. Although yes, a view so high of Madrid would probably look better on a sunnier day, it's still a tourist activity that grants a breathtaking view sheltered from rain or wind.

By night: secret gardens and sandy beaches

A problem with rain is that you can't access a sandy beach or an enchanted forest without getting soaked. That's where Madrid's bohemian and artistic student area, Malasaña comes in handy.



El Jardín Secreto: a bar disguised by indoor plants, trees, fairy-lights, unicorn heads, bird cages and swinging princess-style chairs. For a simple cocktail with friends, you can enter this enchanted world *and* keep dry from the rain. It's most definitely Instagram worthy: you won't be able to keep your eyes from gazing around the room at all the Midsummer-Night's-Dream-style décor.



Ojalá: a tastefully decorated cocktail bar and eatery upstairs, and a sandy beach downstairs. I don't know who came up with the idea to create an indoor beach bar, but it's genius. Relax on their floor level seating whilst running your hand through the sand and enjoying a nice copa, cocktail or milkshake. Who says Madrid doesn't have any beaches?!

So here you have it: just my personal selection of the endless activities available in this amazing city, during rainier weather. Other indoor pursuits include Madrid's many cinemas

and theatres, but the list could go on forever.

It is often way too easy to opt for a day in bed watching Netflix when the weather gets miserable, but that's no fun is it? You may be able to take advantage of Madrid's frequently fine weather and stunning outdoor spaces most of the time, but rainy Madrid weather brings with it the chance to discover quirky bars and cafes, taste amazing food and appreciate Spanish art in all its glory. Enjoy!

By Rosie Dowsing

You might also like:

- **Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid**
- **Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars**
- **Madrid's Obvious and Not-so-obvious Art Institutions**

Madrid with Kids! – Tips from a Mom

Whether you're planning a trip to Madrid or a long-time resident looking for new ideas, Madrid is full of great options to keep your little ones entertained.

You might also like my article on **workout tips for moms in Madrid**.

Parks

Madrid is home to several great parks that offer lots of fun activities.



Madrid Rio: Why not go for a run with your baby along the park lining the Manzanares River? Parents running with a jogging stroller in Spain used to get a lot of odd stares. The running boom has changed all that and made jogging strollers a trend that's here to stay. Get yours at **Baby Running** – an online store with top-of-the-line sport strollers.

Casa de Campo: Casa de Campo is a huge park housing the **amusement park**, **zoo aquarium** with more than 6,000 animals, and

a scenic lake with outdoor cafes and boats for rent. If you'd like to avoid traffic jams and screaming kids on the metro, try the **cable car** for a scenic view of Madrid along the way. You may want to make sure you are out of the park before it gets dark as escorts tend to make their appearance later in the day.

Retiro: Look for a puppet show at the **outdoor theatre** on weekends and enjoy the many other street performers surrounding the pond at the center of the park. You can also rent row boats if you're feeling confident in your deltoids, or sit back and relax on the solar boat. If you are looking to get some exercise, **Diverbikes** across from the O'Donnell entrance rents all different kinds of bikes, and surreys. Rain driving you and your kids up the wall? Check out the second floor of the **library** in the park for a space dedicated to babies and children.

Theme parks and zoos

In addition to the amusement park and zoo aquarium in Casa de Campo, your children will also love seeing the animals at **Faunia** in Valdebernardo. Visitors can interact with cage-free animals, and even feed them. The manatee exhibit and petting zoo tend to be a big hit.

If you have a car, the 30 kilometer drive to **Warner Theme Park** is the worth the trip. With five different park areas, including Hollywood Boulevard, Superheroes World, Cartoon Village, the Old West and WB Movie World Studios, there are plenty of options to keep everyone in your family happy. Younger kids will love seeing Batman, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Superman while older kids and parents check out the latest roller coasters, log fumes and rapid rivers.

You also have the largest water park in Europe about 15 minutes from Madrid in Villanueva de la Cañada. **Aquópolis** can get very packed during the peak season so you may be better

off going to one of Madrid's **outdoor pools** on hot summer weekends.



Summer pool by UCM

Sports fans

Kids dreaming of becoming the next Cristiano Ronaldo will forever thank you for taking them to the tour of the **Santiago Bernabeu stadium**. Mini Real Madrid fans will be in heaven as they visit the players' locker room, the President's Balcony and even sit on the players' bench.

Little ones hoping to join Cholo's squad will love seeing the **Atlético de Madrid Museum**. Atlético fans will adore looking at the trophies, memorabilia and collection of shoes and balls dating back to 1903.

Kid-friendly museums

If your kids hear the word “museum” and start to groan, several museums in Madrid could change all that.

The **Wax Museum** has over 450 figures including Harry Potter, Snow White, The Simpsons and Frodo from “The Lord of the Rings”. Look online for special discounts for families.

The **Madrid Railway Museum** contains a selection of 19th century trains, related exhibits and a wide range of family friendly activities. Take a break afterwards and have a snack in the café located in a 1930s carriage. In Spring and Fall you can also take a ride to Aranjuez on an old-fashioned train, the **Strawberry Train** (*Tren de la Fresa).*

Madrid’s **Planetarium** lets little explorers observe other galaxies, planets, stars and black holes. Children’s workshops are also available for Spanish-speaking little ones.

With huge dinosaur skeletons and weekend workshops for children, the **National Museum of Natural Sciences** is another good option for families.

Theatre and concerts for babies and kids

Madrid offers a wide range of theatre and concerts designed for babies and children. The bill is constantly changing so check **BabyTribu** and **Sapos y Princesas** for the latest options.

Other ideas

Older kids who are into go-carts will love the **Carlos Sainz Center** in Madrid and Las Rozas.

Little ones may enjoy visiting **The Casa Museo del Ratoncito**

Pérez – the Spanish version of the tooth fairy. The hours change so check their website before going.

Located inside the **Kinépolis** movie theatre, **The Magic Forest** is a children's park with slides, climbing trees and mazes.

Nearly every neighborhood in Madrid has a **play center** (***ludoteca***). Find the one closest to you **here**.

By Marybeth Redheffer

Marybeth is the founder of **Baby Running**, an online store selling sport strollers so you can stay fit with the little ones in the city! Check out her **website** and **facebook**.

You might also like: Workout tips for moms in Madrid!

Workout Tips for Moms in Madrid!

If you are a former gym buff wondering how you can get some exercise that doesn't involve changing diapers or pushing a swing, fear not! Your workout days don't have to be over.

Also check out my previous article on **great child-friendly activities in Madrid**!



Yoga

Mom and baby yoga is a great way to get out of the house, recover strength and flexibility and spend time with your baby. Most yoga classes go from 6 weeks until the baby starts crawling. Check out the Mom and Baby yoga classes at **Centro El Patio** near the Bilbao metro stop and **Zentro Yoga** close to the Retiro on Calle Claudio Coello.

Yoga for families is another good option for toddlers and children (the age requirement varies from center to center). **City Yoga** offers classes for parents and toddlers from 1-3 years and **Centro Infantil Nariz Roja** starts at 4 years.

Gyms with daycare

Unfortunately gyms with daycare are few and far between in Madrid. Why deep-pocketed entrepreneurs aren't investing in gyms with daycare remains a mystery. If you are lucky enough to live near one of the gyms that offer daycare, be sure to ask the minimum age before going. Some won't take babies or

toddlers.

- **Virgin Atlantic Capitán Haya (Tetuán)**
- **Zagros Puerta Europa (Chamartin)**
- **Holmes Places (Moraleja)**
- **Reebok Sports Club (Pozuelo)**

Try Baby Running

Going for a run with your baby or toddler is probably the most convenient way to get some exercise. Just make sure you have a proper jogging stroller – you don't want to hurt your little one in the process! If you're tight on space, opt for a model that can go from swivel to fixed wheel and it can also serve as your everyday stroller. Check out **Baby Running** for a selection of top-rated sport strollers.

Try Baby Blading

If rollerblading is your thing, the BOB Revolution PRO is the first stroller to be certified for rollerblading. Get yours **here**.

Rent bikes

Places to rent bicycles are popping up all over the city. Go for a bike ride with your kids in a nearby park, or if you live in the center, the Paseo del Prado is closed for cars from 9AM-4PM on Sundays. Located across from the O'Donnell entrance to the Retiro, **Diverbikes** is also a fun way for the whole family to get some exercise.

MamiFit classes

MamiFit classes are designed to help new moms in their postpartum recovery, with an emphasis on hypopressive exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor and core. The best part is that you can bring your baby, a few of his or her favorite toys and get in a workout (if your baby cooperates☺).

Go swimming

Take your children for a swim at one of the many **indoor** and **outdoor** public pools. If your little ones could use some help learning to swim, some pools offer swimming lessons. Take advantage of class time to do some laps yourself!

YouTube

Ignore your to-do list and use nap time to release some endorphins doing exercise at home. There are tons of good full-length exercise videos on YouTube. Some favorites are **All Around Fitness** and **Body Rock**.

By Marybeth Redheffer

Marybeth is the founder of **Baby Running**, an online store selling sport strollers so you can go out for a run with the little one in the city! Check out her **website** and **facebook**.

You might also like: Madrid with kids – tips from a mom!

The Rogues Gallery part 1: 4 Recurring creepers you may encounter in Madrid

The **Auxiliares de Conversacion en Madrid** group on facebook is a hub where the 10,000+ (of past, present and future) members of the expatriate community congregate online to share advice, refer clients to one another, or collaborate on creative projects. It's not uncommon to see the occasional rant about the failings of Spanish bureaucracy, nor is it uncommon to read a thread of comments stemming from ruckus caused by provocative trolls. Community members can recommend establishments that they hold dear, or warn each other about the programs, academies and individuals that they've deemed exploitative an untrustworthy. Group members have shared their experiences with some of Madrid's more noticeably **curious characters.**

Below is information that I have gathered about these usual Madrid suspects.

1) The Birthday Boy

The modus operandi of the Birthday Boy is neither creative nor is it subtle. This **shadowy figure** prowls tusclasesparticulares.com in search of English and Italian lessons. Upon contacting female teachers he insists on having the class at night and on his birthday after confiding in them that he is a new arrival to Madrid and is responsible for taking care of his sick father. The **Birthday Boy** claims to be lonely as he has no friends to celebrate his birthday with. He calls the women he preys on at unseemly hours, fixated on arranging the class at the rendezvous point of the *Estatua del*

Oso y Madroño in Sol. **Countless women have come forward on the Auxiliares group to warn our community about his unnerving behavior.** What remains baffling to me is that the Birthday Boy continues to use the same story and schtick despite it being what makes him immediately recognizable. One can only speculate about his motivations and backstory. Perhaps he truly is cripplingly lonely, has a sick father, and was magically frozen in time to believe that each day is the anniversary of his birth.

2) Marta the blotchy-faced bandit



Marta, a **parasitic criminal** who can be identified by a blotchy

mark on her face, responds to apartment listings on idealista in order to subtly **steal** whatever she can upon the viewing. She has been active for years and clearly makes a living this way. **This woman has been reported to the police** countless times and is apparently well known to them as a career criminal. Upon hearing her description I initially theorized that the blotch pattern that is the defining feature of her face was applied with stage make-up, in order to make it harder for the authorities to identify her. I gave her too much credit, my theory was disproven when one of her victims encountered her in the street months after the crime, and unless she was coming directly from a job, her face is indeed her face. Whether the pattern is a birthmark or battle scar is yet to be revealed. It appalls me that she continues to elude capture despite being both easily recognizable and a known threat. A member of our community, who is the real MVP, managed to take her picture when she entered his home upon realizing who she was. If she attempts to enter your home under the guise of a flat-viewing my advice is to slam the door in her face and tell her “ya sé quien eres.”

3) The Note Man



The Note Man is a **quirky** absurdity. He operates out of **Malasaña**, but has been sighted in all parts of the city. He can be recognized by his Dumbledoresque beard and tattered clothing. He is known to approach people and present them with hand-written notes. Although I have never engaged him myself I have observed him perform his gimmick from a distance in **Plaza dos de Mayo** and have taken a picture of him in action. My friends Diana and Sean once wandered into the Note Man's path and he shadily handed them a menacing note that said **"DON'T RUN".** His origins and motivations are an enigma. It is unknown if he simply prefers nonverbal communication or if he is incapable of speech. **Approach with caution.**

4) La Cabra de Plaza Mayor



The “goat” of Plaza Mayor startled me when I first visited Madrid as a tourist in 2008. I was not surprised to see that it remained active when I returned in 2012. I can’t imagine **Plaza Mayor** without this shiny-bodied, wooden-faced, goat creature. The cabra is a **parasite** that envelopes a human host. It screeches to attract attention to itself in the hopes that passersby will give it their loose change . What does this goat-human creature spend its money on? What becomes of its host? Does it produce shiny cheese? How does it reproduce? These valid questions to be answered upon further research.

Any other people to beware of in Madrid?

Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid – Part 1

Wondering where to take your mom when she comes to visit you in Madrid? Here's a list of places (aside from the Prado and the Royal Palace) that are all hand-picked, tested and approved, if not by me then by my friends. All these ideas have definitely worked – and not just for my mom, but for a lot of out-of-town guests and other family members, too. Here goes!

1. Madrid Food Tour, for a culinary experience full of insight



I can't recommend this tour enough. The guys at **Madrid Food Tour** are young and passionate about the city's food culture and history. They offer a variety of tours that take you through the city's most authentic neighborhood markets, tapas bars and restaurants. Plus you get to walk around the city while the tour guides give you insights into Madrid's history. I went on the **Huertas market tour** and wrote about it in **a previous post**.

But you can check out all the tours **here** and then choose the one that appeals to you most! The tours are given in English and can be personalized if you have particular food preferences or needs. Just ask them! Another note – I recommend **starting out the trip with this tour** so your mom can get a better feel for the city and its gastronomic offerings.

2. Bar Lambuzo, a family-run Andalusian restaurant



This is one of **my favorite restaurants in Madrid**. What makes Lambuzo perfect is that it is an authentic, Andalucían-style taverna in the heart of Madrid, run by a whole family, and each member has his or her role. For example, you'll find Pepe, the father, working the front and Luis, one of the sons, working the bar. They specialize in food from the South of Spain, so get ready for a variety of fried fish, rice dishes and other delicious treats. Lambuzo now has two locations, although my favorite is the one near Opera, which you can read more about in my previous post **here**.

3. Museums, Museo Sorolla & Thyssen in particular



My mother has been to the **Prado and Reina Sofia** twice now and although they're of course worth visiting, she actually preferred the **Thyssen** (so did my brother and sisters) and **Sorolla museums**. While the Thyssen's collection is considered one of the best in the world, the Sorolla's is less

expected – it is in the painter's former home and houses an outstanding collection of pieces that you can see as you walk through the charming rooms. Here's a post on all of **Madrid's obvious and not-so-obvious arts institutions (plus how to get in for free)** so you can add more to your list.

4. El Matadero & Madrid Río, for an off-the-beaten-path experience



I always jump at the chance to take friends and family to this place. A former slaughterhouse turned cultural center, **El Matadero** is a must for anyone into contemporary art and cultural activities. It is a huge space with different warehouses, each dedicated to their own type of art. For example, there's the theatre nave, the reading nave and the music nave, among many others. The Matadero also holds wonderful farmers' markets with local products and food trucks, as well as live music and activities for the little

ones. It's also situated along Madrid's river so if the weather is nice, I recommend taking a stroll afterwards or even hopping on a bike.

5. Casa Mingo, an old-school Asturian cider house



I have too many good memories of Casa Mingo, a century-old Asturian restaurant serving roasted chicken and cider by the bottle. Please take your mother here if she likes the good-old kind of restaurant that cannot be imitated no matter how hard you try. This is the real deal (plus it's incredibly cheap!) Here's a **previous post** I wrote on it.

6. Food markets, not just Mercado de San Miguel



Madrid has a thriving indoor and outdoor market culture. My mother's first experience with Madrid's market scene was Mercado de San Miguel, naturally. While I do suggest taking your mom there, don't forget about Madrid's other markets. On my mom's most recent visit, we went to **Mercado del San Ildefonso** in Malasaña and she was stunned by the architecture, vibrant food scene and open-air seating areas. Then there's **Mercado de San Antón** in Chueca which is never a bad idea for its gourmet food stands and amazing rooftop bar (check out other **rooftop bars here**). Plus, virtually every weekend there's an outdoor market (aside from **the Rastro**) and food festival in Madrid. Some of my suggestions are **Madreat, Mercado de Productores** and **Mercado de Motores.**

8. Desperate Literature, a charming international bookstore



My mom adored this place, mainly because the owner, Craig, gave her a glass of whisky to drink as she browsed through the paperbacks and hardcovers, used and new. There's more to the story, though. **Desperate Literature** was opened in Madrid about a year ago by the guys who run a very special international bookstore in Santorini, Greece, where my mother had actually visited and my sister had previously worked for a summer. Maybe it's the music, the high quality book selection or the people from all over the world who run Desperate Literature with such care and love, or maybe it's because it's nestled in between the streets that bring you to Madrid's Royal Palace and Opera House…. I guess it just has that *je ne sais quoi*.

And if your mom is an avid reader, she'll get to donate the book she finished reading on her flight to Madrid and find herself a new one for the trip home! Here's a **full post on Desperate Literature.**

9. Toni 2 or Bar Cock, for cocktails and more…



If you're wondering where to get a drink late at night, you can try **Toni 2**, a sort of piano bar mostly for patrons of a "certain age" – only the classics are sung here, accompanied by a live pianist. It's an old-fashioned kind of bar with an extra long grand piano in the center (here's a full article on **Toni 2**). If your mother isn't so into the vintage karaoke scene, then I'd definitely recommend getting a cocktail at **Bar Cock**, another beautiful old-fashioned bar off the Gran Vía. The only time I went here, Harrison Ford was there! Also,

across the street from Bar Cock is La Barraca, the restaurant mentioned next.

10. La Barraca, for paella and other Valencian dishes



I've been asked a lot about where to get paella in Madrid and never knew what to say, until recently. One of Madrid's most active writers, **Dan Catalan**, just discovered a place that his grandmother took him to in Madrid. It's a Valencian restaurant located in the city center called La Barraca, which specializes in rice and seafood dishes like paella, which he says is definitely mother-worthy. Just note that this restaurant is on the pricey side – maybe you'll take your mom here, but she'll have to pick up the tab… Check out Dan's post **here**.

11. Rooftop bars, like Casa Granada or Mercado de San Anton



Madrid has an impressive number of **rooftop bars** and we've written about 20 or so in our **4-part series**. If I had to recommend just a few, I'd say **Palacio de Cibeles** and **Circulo de Bellas Artes** for stunning views, and then **Casa Granada** and **Mercado de San Anton** for great food and ambience. My mom loved **Casa Granada** back when it was in such desperate need of renovation that we actually felt our chairs were going to slip off the roof. It's since been refurbished so you'll still get the dining experience, just without the fear…

12. La Cava Baja, for “tapas bar” hopping



Lined with tapas bars and restaurants, La Cava Baja is the most happening street in La Latina. The first time I walked along it with my mother was during winter and it was very foggy outside. She said it looked like a fairy tale – as if a knight on a horse was going to appear riding through the mist. Even on a clear day, La Latina is a must if your mother (like mine) enjoys going into Madrid’s charming little bars and walking through the area’s old and windy streets. For specific recommendations on bars in La Latina, check out this article: **Coziest Wine Bars in La Latina (with gluten free options!)**

13. Flamenco, when in Spain…

I personally can’t recommend any particular flamenco performance in Madrid, but if you think your mother would

enjoy experiencing a tablao, our friends at **Madrid Food Tour** have compiled this list of **Where to See Flamenco in Madrid** and we trust them.

14. A nearby town, beyond Toledo



My mom went on a guided tour of Toledo a few years ago and didn't enjoy it so much because she didn't get to "roam around freely" as much as she would have liked. So while I'm not against taking a tour, I do think you should make sure to have enough time to wander around and explore the nooks and crannies of wherever you go. I've taken my mom on a number of day trips around Madrid and her favorite was when we drove to **Segovia and El Escorial in one day**. If you can get your hands on a car, I highly recommend it. You can also check out our article on **Madrid's 10 most beautiful surrounding towns** which all link to a description, map and transport details.

15. Pepe Botella & Plaza del Dos de

Mayo, for coffee and tea



Pepe Botella has long been my **favorite café in Madrid,** as anyone who's ever visited me will already know. Its ambience, location and simple drink menu has always set it apart from the rest of Madrid's cafés, for me at least. I recommend going here either before or after lunch and sitting with a book or a newspaper, or just chatting away. When I go in the afternoon, I like starting with a **coffee or tea**, and then welcoming in the evening with **a glass of wine**. Here's a **full post on Pepe Botella**.

Any other suggestions? We'll be coming out with a part 2 so all recommendations

are more than welcome!

You'll also like:

- Eating our way through Huertas with Madrid Food Tour!
- Madrid's Obvious and Not-so-obvious Museums (and how to get in for free)
- Madrid's 10 Most Beautiful Surrounding Towns (and how to get to there)
- Madrid's best rooftop bars – part 1

Stunning Local Olive Grove Tour, in English! – Proyecto Los Aires

In 2013, biologists **Guillermo and Laura** – Spain's newest generation of **olive farmers** – took over the family business and embarked on an innovative mission: to connect the local countryside with the city of Madrid and make farming a **sustainable way of life** once again.

How it all started:

Over a century ago, in a small town in the region of **Toledo**, Guillermo's great grandfather planted his first grove of around 200 olive trees, and between the evenly spaced olive saplings grew rows of sun-drenched grapevines.

A hundred odd years later, only the footprints of the old vines are visible, but the olive trees have grown beautifully gnarled and twisted, with silver miniature leaves and shiny

hard fruit, ready for the annual harvest of some of the tastiest **organic extra virgin olive oil** in Spain.



The centenarian olive trees

Guillermo and Laura’s story:

Olive farming has been in both of their families for generations, inspiring them to study biology at university, which is where they met. From early on, they drew sketches on scraps of paper illustrating grand ambitions to re-bond our booming capital with its rural backyard, enthusiastically telling anyone who will listen about the genius that is the organic farming ecosystem (it’s genius).

By mid 2014, their dream had gathered enough steam for them to **quit their jobs** and make ***Proyecto Los Aires*** their life, and for being in the midst of an **economic depression**, it’s incredible how much they’ve already achieved.

The tour:

On Saturday, we headed out to their stunning olive grove in **Arcicóllar**, about an hour south of Madrid. When we arrived, we met up with our fellow tour buddies and set off on our educational meander through the olive trees.

Guillermo and Laura led us around their oldest plot and explained the **process of creating olive oil**: from planting and harvesting to filtering and bottling. Their scientific angle on the entire practice is fascinating, but I won't say any more – the oohs and aahs are all part of the fun!



The walking tour begins



Taking a closer look at the trees

After the walking tour (and tanning opportunity), we sat down at a shaded table nestled idyllically among the centenarian trees. It was time for the **tasting**. This involved professionally sampling several olive oils in little blue glass cups, and learning how to tell the difference between generic **supermarket oil** and **top-quality organic oil** such as theirs.

And then came the food and wine. Through local connections and friends and family, Guillermo and Laura brought together a plethora of **Iberian foodie gems** for us to eat. A *mercado* on a table came to mind, and our tour companions' similarly delighted reactions included lots of "mmm"s and "oh my God"s and jokey squabbles over who liked the **pumpkin *morcilla*** most. We chatted, talking about Guillermo and Laura's endeavours as well as our own, then gratefully accepted Guillermo's offer of

a top-up of wine to accompany our final wander through the trees (and take a few grove-selfies). Finally, we had the opportunity to buy some of the delicious products we tasted that day.



The tasting (and eating and drinking)



The quaintest little market stall in the world

After an **eye-opening and mouth-watering experience**, we said our goodbyes to the lovely Guillermo and Laura and hopped on the bus back to Madrid, desperate to get the word out to you!

The project explained:

Proyecto Los Aires aims to **promote local agriculture** by running **educational tours** & **tastings** on their farm and forging a direct link between urban consumers and the rural economy. Their oil (Los Aires Extra Virgin Olive Oil) can be found in **gourmet shops** such as Oleoteca Murúa at Mercado San Antón. Guillermo and Laura also regularly sell their oil in **markets across Madrid** such as Mercado de Motores, Mercado Central de Diseño, Nómada Market and Gastro Market. Next time you're there, **go and say hello**!



Los Aires olive groves

How to get there:

The **meeting point** for the tour is the bus stop in the town of **Arcicóllar** (see location here). Regular buses (see timetable here) will get you there from Madrid's **Méndez Alvaro** bus station in **just over an hour**. If you're driving, it takes around **50 minutes** from central Madrid.

Details & Contact Info:

Tours run **year-round** on **any day of the week or weekend** and must be booked at least **48 hours in advance**.

> **Facebook & Web**
>
> **The website is in English and Spanish! For more information about the tour, pricing, and to book, click here.**