Ostras! Spanish food phrases for aspiring natives

Want to sound like a true *madrileño/a*? Then you'd better learn about food. When foreigners first arrive in Madrid, eavesdropping can confuse. Why is everyone talking about milk? What do politicians have to do with cured sausages? Why do my students shout "oysters!"?

The answers lie somewhere in Madrid's food culture.

All things Madrid revolve around food. Work, school, family, and free time all have their feet firmly planted in gastronomy. Veteran Auxiliares not-so-fondly remember that first day home from school. Bewildered that Spaniards go 8 hours between *desayuno* and *comida*, you greedily shove muesli, bread, and ham into your starving jaws—a cruel introduction into how Spaniards think of food.



Other mealtime nuances scream “welcome to Madrid!” No, you can’t find a good lunch before 1PM, or any food except cold *tapas* and coffee between the hours of 4PM and 7PM. Half of the reason for eating *cocido* is for the next day’s *ropa vieja*—always made best by someone’s *abuelita,* who fusses over you and asks why you don’t want another glass of wine at 3PM during your *sobremesa*. Sharing *churros con chocolate* with your friends at dawn after a night of *discotecas* is a rite of passage into *la vida castiza.*

Madrileños have always loved food, and their language is no

exception. Madrid's people garnish, pepper, and marinate their speech with **food phrases**. From idioms to exclamations, residents of Madrid use food and food words to discuss politics, time, emotion, death, and much more.

So, here's my guide for the aspiring hispanophone to some of Madrid's best food phrases.

You'll see the usual (I'm convinced that oblong vegetables in any language are *always* sexual) and the not-so-usual (playground bullies "give you milk" while they take your milk money). And all will help you spout the foodie Spanish of a proper Madrid resident.

We'll stick to a typical Madrid diet: a mountain of bread, a hunk of meat and seafood, good eggs, milk & dairy, a glug of booze, and a small side of greenery and citrus.

Bread

Al pan, pan, y al vino, vino



Quick-marts have plenty of idioms for the curious linguist.

Let's start with two of Madrid's favorites: bread and wine.

For these two cornerstones of Spanish food, *madrileños* would appreciate you to be direct—the meaning of this particular phrase. "Al pan, pan, y al vino, vino" ("To bread, bread, and to wine, wine") is a request to be direct. Using this phrase means you want someone else to call it like it is. Don't beat around the bush and talk in circles—call your bread "bread!"

Hostia

Speaking of bread and wine, Madrid's food phrase dictionary deserves an entire page to Communion bread (*la hostia*). The supposed body of Christ can mean anything from a grave insult to a killer descriptor. Simply shouting "hostia!" (if you're surprised, or you just smashed your toe on a sofa, or Sunday's *El Clásico* is not going your way*)* is kosher between friends or younger people, but many *madrileños* may take offense. To describe something as great or large, try *de la hostia*. After a night of a few too many, you may hear "***Hostia****! Tengo un melocotón* ***de la hostia****!*" (see "Fruit & Vegetables" to know why).

Con las manos en la masa

Even the beginnings of bread are not sacred from Spanish turns of phrase. To see someone "con las manos en la masa" ("with their hands in the dough") is to catch them red-handed. Did you just see Jesús cheating on his exam for the hundredth time? His hands were in the dough!

Estar empanado/a



This one is a great image. To describe the time when someone’s brain isn’t operating at full capacity, a *madrileño* will say “estoy empanado” (“I am breaded”). Whether that person needs a coffee, is distracted, or simply doesn’t want to focus, their brain is battered.

Un churro



While these fried chunks of bread and sugar are usually excellent, using “churro” to describe something else means that it lacks quality. For example, you may hear one of your students complaining “he hecho un churro en ese examen” (“I made a churro on that exam”), meaning he or she utterly failed.

Esto es pan comido

Is something incredibly easy? Then you may hear a Madrid resident exclaim “esto es pan comido” (“this is eaten bread”). English speakers aren’t too far off from their “piece of cake” or “easy as pie” with this one. Practice these phrases enough, and they’ll be like eaten bread.

Meat



Beautiful people and corrupt politicians.

Estirar la pata

Are there things you want to do before you go into the great beyond? Is someone going to croak? Kicking the bucket? Well, in Madrid, death is like a slaughtered animal—they lie you down, do the job, and then you "estirar la pata" ("stretch out the hoof").

Jamón

Madrid and pork go together, and so do Madrid Spanish and pork products. After seeing someone attractive across the room, you may hear them described as "el/ella está jamon" ("he/she is ham"). If you refuse to do something, shout "Y un jamón con chorreras" ("Ham with frills!") to show your disgust.

Chorizo

Pork sausage gets a special mention. While usually a spicy, smoky treat, the word *chorizo* also means "thief." A *carterista* ("pickpocket") may be described with "qué chorizo!" ("what a sausage!"). Sausage also extends to politics—protestors love the phrase "no hay pan para tanto chorizo" ("there isn't bread for all this sausage") to describe corrupt politicians.

Poner toda la carne en el asador

If you're taking a huge risk, then you're putting all your meat on the grill ("poner toda la carne en el asador"). Best used at gambling halls, or literally when at a barbeque.

Seafood



Sure it’s on sale, but who’s cutting it?

Ostras!

The quintessential exclamation of Madrid, outside of *joder*! My guess is that “oysters!” (“ostras!”) is a tamed-down version of “hostia.” Akin to the English “darn” and “damn,” just more nautical.

¿Quien corta el bacalao?

A phrase asked of mafia bosses is “who cuts the cod?” (“¿quien corta el bacalao?”). While seemingly random, the phrase has its origins in industrial traditions; in the *comidas* of old Madrid, guild masters and supervisors were the ones who served fish to their underlings. Whoever was at the head of the table carving the filet was the big boss.

Me siento como un pulpo en un garaje

Feeling out of place? Like a fish out of water? Then say that you “feel like an octopus in a garage” (“te sientes como un

pulpo en un garaje”) for the authentic Madrid vibe.

Eggs



You’re worth a lot!

Tener huevos

Aside from the obvious connection between eggs and rounded male genitalia, *madrileños* will also shout “la cosa tiene huevos” (“the thing has eggs”) if something doesn’t work properly. Did your blender just start to spark and smoke? It has eggs.

Pisando huevos

Like any big city, Madrid’s day-to-day life can be pretty fast-paced. And, like any big city, you’ll come across people on the sidewalk who are simply walking too slow. While you dodge tourists to get around them, you can mutter that they’re “pisando huevos” (walking [on] eggs).

Te quiero un huevo

Are you crazy about your significant other? Then you “love them an egg” (“querer un huevo”). It’s because “un huevo” can mean “a lot.” Don’t ask. Just say it.

Hasta luego, cara huevo

If you want to sound cutesy, try the Spanish version of “see you later, alligator”: “until later, egg face” (“hasta luego, cara huevo”). It makes about as much sense.

Milk and Cheese



Bags have this stuff printed on them.

Ser la leche

If “hostia” deserves its own page in Madrid’s food dictionary, milk merits its own chapter. As an opaque white liquid, milk has its sexual euphemisms. But, if something “is the milk,” it’s quite awesome. If everything’s going your way, try “hoy ha sido la leche” (“today has been the milk”).

Estar de mala leche

Milk is good, but all milk will go bad. In this case, Madrid speakers say someone “está de mala leche” (“is of bad milk”) when they’re grumpy. Chronic/permanent sufferers of bad milk “tienen mala leche” (“have bad milk”) in their systems.

Me cago en la leche

By itself, “I crap in the milk” (“me cago en la leche”) can be a general exclamation of disappointment or anger. But, in conversation, it can hold all the hatred and disgust that a bowl of milky waste can possess. Save this one for when you mean it: “me cago en la leche de la puta que te date la luz/la puta madre que te parió” (“I crap in the milk of the whore mother that birthed you”).

Ir a toda leche

When someone is “going full milk” (“ir a toda leche”), they’re running full out. Full milk’s opposite would be “pisando huevos” (see “Eggs”).

Dar una leche

When someone smacks or hits you, they “give you milk” (“te da una leche”).

Que no me lo des con queso

A bit of gastronomy trivia: very high-quality wine is enjoyed by itself. For the snobby, consuming cheese with wine ruins the experience of both. The fats from the cheese coat the

inside of your mouth, limiting how much you can taste the wine.

As such, *madrileños* shrewdly ask “que no me lo des con queso” (“don’t give it to me with cheese”) to tell someone to stop ripping them off. It’s to help avoid life’s various glasses of *tintorro* (see “Alcohol”).

Blanco y en botella? Leche

Do you want to say that something’s obvious? As obvious as something that’s white and in a bottle (“blanco y en botella”)? Then try this phrase. Duh.

Alcohol



Botellón

Stay in Madrid for more than an afternoon with the younger crowd, and you’ll have learned *botellón*. Part hang-out, part

pre-game, part illegal, Madrid's party crowd gather in public spaces to drink "a big bottle" ("botellón"), usually of *tinto de verano* (red wine and fruit soda), *calimocho* (red wine and Coca-Cola), beer, or something harder. Controversial yet characteristic.

Garrafón

Some people swear that some bars will "give it to you with cheese" by filling their empty bottles of fancy liquor with trashy, bottom-shelf spirits. These liquors, the ones that melt your brain and lead to the worst *resacas* you've ever had, are called "gas cans" ("garrafones").

Tintorro

There is the good stuff, and then the not-so-good stuff. The wine equivalent of a *garrafón*. Usually used to make *calimocho* during a *botellón*.

Fruits & Vegetables



Ajo y Agua

The Hispanic world likes optimistic phrases. Some choose “no pasa nada” (“nothing happens”). Others choose “resolver”(“determine”). Some *madrileños* go for the vulgar: “garlic and water” (“ajo y agua”), a shortening of *ajoderse* (“to f*ck yourself”) and *aguantarse* (to suck it up). A nice message wrapped in a bitter casing.

Campo de nabos

What did I say about oblong vegetables? A “turnip field” (“campo de nabos”) is a “sausage fest”—a party with only men. You understand the image.

Melocotón

If you “have a peach” (“tienes un melocotón”), you have a hangover. An alternative is *cebollón* (“big onion”), meaning

the same thing. Who knew having produce meant you had one too many last night?

De uvas a peras

There's someone you get along with really well, but you only see him/her once a year or so. What we'd call "once in a blue moon" in English changes to "from grapes to pears" ("de uvas a peras") in Madrid Spanish. The expression comes from the agriculture—vintners harvest grapes in September, and farmers pick their pear orchards in August. If counting from grapes to pears, there's nearly a full year before you'll see that person again.

Also check out Madrid Food Tour's post – 5 Spanish Food Idioms and How to Use Them!

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3 Best Hotel & Restaurants in Madrid: Barrio de las Letras (Huertas)

Somewhere in the U.S., in a place whose name I do not care to remember, I found myself sleeping in a motel surrounded by gangs, in a room where the sheets hadn't been washed in a while and you could imagine picking up any sort of illness from the bathroom. A few years later, the story happened again, but this time back in Europe. Since then, every time I travel, I like to check out the best hotels on Trip Advisor and read the comments thoroughly before booking a room.

Here in Madrid, you've got plenty of fantastic and affordable hotels to choose from, which is why we're breaking this list down by **neighborhood**. So, what do we look for in the perfect hotel? One, its location. Two, extra fun; those that boast **rooftop bars**, great restaurants or free walking tours. And three, if we'd personally want to stay here and recommend it to our friends and family.

3 Best Places to Stay in Madrid's Barrio de las Letras (Huertas)

We're starting this series in **Barrio de las Letras**, a central neighborhood named after the many famous Spanish writers who once lived here. This vibrant neighborhood offers tons of fun bars and restaurants, and is located close to the city's main attractions such as Puerta del Sol, Plaza Mayor and Paseo del Prado, along which you'll find the **city's finest museums**. It's also very accessible by metro, near the city's main train station, Atocha, and the **airport shuttle bus**.

Learn more about the neighborhood in our quick guide: Madrid barrio overview

**All rates are approximate, please check their webs to confirm*

1. Room007 & Restaurant Saporem



Room007 is a wonderful hostel with a hidden restaurant in a perfect location; a two-minute walk separates this whimsical and inexpensive hostel from *Plaza Santa Ana* or *Sol,* both must-see sites in Madrid. On top of that, it won't take you longer than 10 minutes to walk to the **airport bus**.

Whether you're traveling with your backpack or with a family member, at **Room007**, you will find a good range of rooms from double rooms to a single bed in a 8-bed shared room. Moreover, the different kinds of people passing through will catch your attention.

As an added bonus, you'll get the chance to hang out on the **rooftop**! You will never want to leave. Also, let Adrian, the hostess, know that you want to enjoy some of the great activities that the place has to offer: **Free walking tours, bike tours, parties** (3 bars + 1 club), **drinking games, tapas experiences, affordable flamenco tablaos** and much more!

Hostel rates:

- Bed in shared room from 18€
- Double from 50€

**See special deals on their website.*

Contact info:

- **Address:** Ventura de la Vega, 5 & Hortaleza, 74
- **Metro**: Sol or Sevilla (Ventura) Chueca (Chueca)
- **Facebook**
- **Web site**
- **Email:** reservas@room007.com





1. Saporem Restaurant

If that wasn’t enough, **Room007** also has an **outstanding restaurant** downstairs, which you will have discounts on during your stay. Here you can find all kinds of food including burgers, vegetable platters and homemade pizza and pasta dishes. The average price is **around 20€/each** without the discount.




Libre


nike



Menu

- Pasta & Pizza ……**9€-11€**
- Fish & meat……**8€-12€**
- Bottle of wine ……..**13€**

2. Hostal Persal & Ginger Restaurant



Hostal Persal is another really good option located just a stone's throw away from **Puerta del Sol.** This hostel is also close to **La Latina** neighborhood, one of the most famous areas in Madrid, well known for its charming streets and gorgeous **pintxo bars** like **Lamiak**.

Hostel rates:

- Single room from 40€
- Double from 50€

*Best price guaranteed on their website.

Hostal Persal Contact info:

- **Address:** Plaza del Ángel, 12
- **Metro:** Sol or Sevilla
- **Facebook**
- **Web site**
- **Email:** info@hostalpersal.com

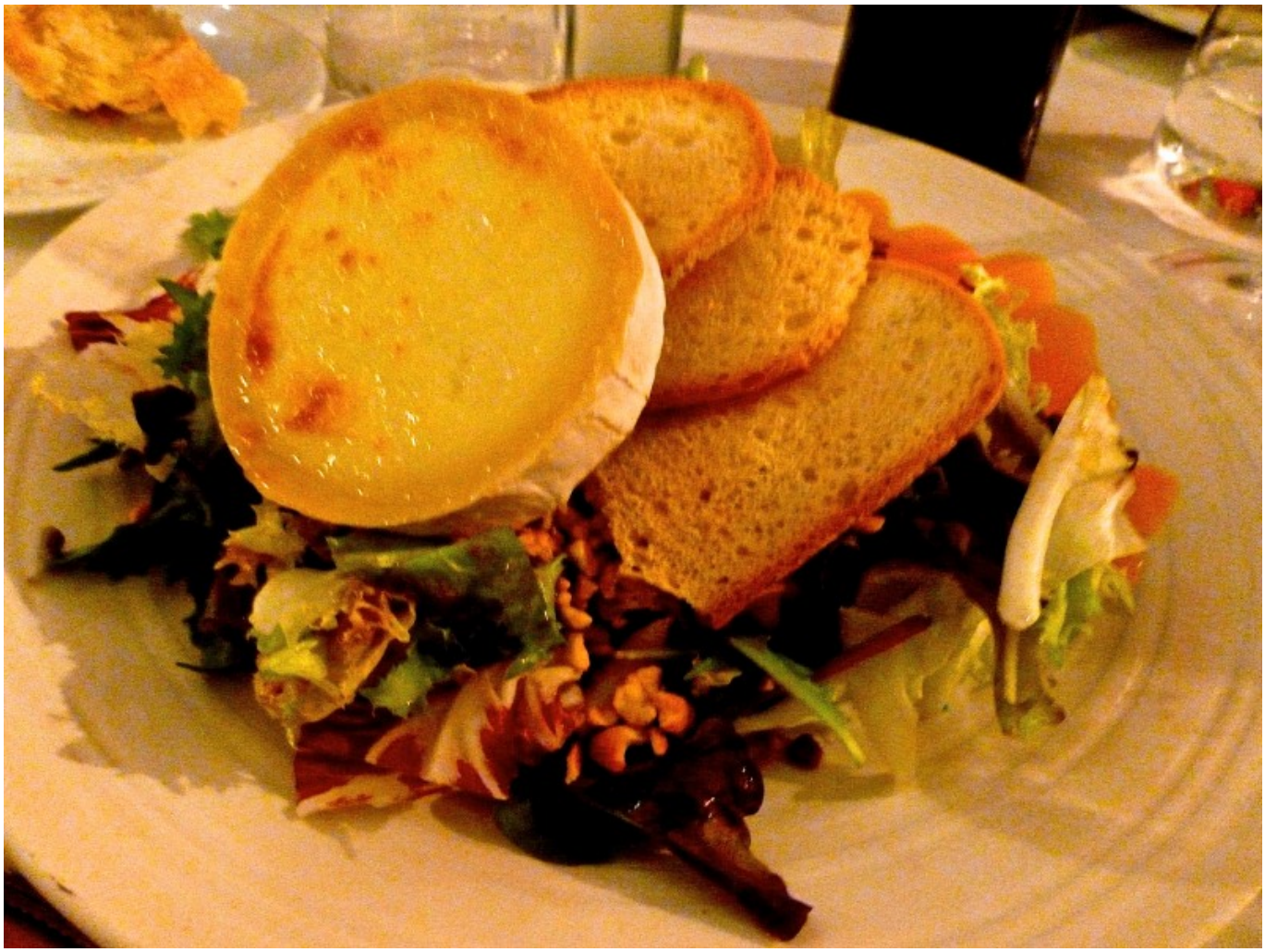




2. Ginger Restaurant

Although it may look like an expensive place, Ginger offers great quality food at an affordable price. Ginger is owned by a restaurant group founded in Barcelona that now has **6 restaurants** in Madrid, all of which deserve a try. These restaurants run a chef apprenticeship program and share the same concept: nice ambiance, top quality and inexpensive food. On top of that, the group's foundation, **Andilana**, is a large NGO that invests money into helping people reintegrate into society.





Ginger Restaurant Contact info:

- **Address:** Plaza del Ángel, 12
- **Metro:** Sol or Sevilla
- **Facebook**
- **Website**
- **Email:** ginger@grupandilana.com
- **Tel. +34 91 369 10 59**

3. One Shot 23 & Ateneo Restaurant



One Shot 23 is a modern hotel which boasts a healthy mix of luxury, convenience and affordability. The hotel has another location in **Barrio de Salamanca** and is set to open more in Spanish cities such as Valencia, Seville and Barcelona. One of the advantages of staying at **One Shot 23** is its location – it is very close to the Prado and Thyssen Museum. Although Madrid is a very noisy city, the hotel is situated in a quiet area.

Hotel Rates:

- Single room from 68€
- Double from 72€

Contact Info

- **Address:** Calle Prado, 23 | One Shot 04 (Barrio Salamanca)
- **Metro:** Banco de España & Sevilla
- **Facebook**

- **Website**
- **Email:** prado23@oneshothotels.com





3. Ateneo Restaurant

Ateneo is much more than a restaurant. Since its founding, this institution has been a private cultural center. Today it is situated on Calle Prado, where you will be transported a century back in time. If Ateneo’s walls could talk, they’d surely tell fascinating stories of the history of Spain.





Enjoy your stay!

Travelling by car in Madrid: renting cars, carsharing or

carpooling

Renting Cars

You can find all the major car rental companies in Madrid, such as Avis and Hertz. Unless you're picking up the car right from the airport, my advice is to go to Atocha train station because all the companies have offices there, so you can go in, ask for the best deals and pick up the car right then and there. Of course you can also book online at all these places.

Here are the top 5 car rental companies in Madrid (based on popularity) and links to their Madrid webs:

1. **Hertz**
2. **Europcar**
3. **Sixt**
4. **Pepecar.com**
5. **Avis**

Carsharing, Carpooling or Car Clubs (whichever way you call it)

In the last few years, a new way of travelling has appeared: **carpooling is the 21st Century version of hitch-hiking.** Online car-sharing platforms allow drivers and carless travellers to get in touch, travel together, share expenses and keep each other company during the ride. Drivers post where and when they are going and how much money you'll need to pay. If it suits your travel plans, you just contact them! Easy as pie. So if you want to go to Alicante or even Lisbon, you're bound to find someone who's already heading that way and is offering an extra seat in their car. Many websites offer this service, but **Bla Bla Car** is the most common in Spain and it's very easy to use. Also, if you're a woman travelling alone, there's the option to seek other women

drivers.

Here is a quick guide on how to use it:

Step 1# go to blablacar.es (or any other if you wish!)

Step 2# Get a user.

- You only need your facebook account or email address and a cell phone number.
- They will send you an email and cellphone text message which you will use (both of them) to confirm your account

Step 3# Select your departure city and destination.

Step 4# Select your driver. A women's section is available, if you aren't comfortable enough.

Step 5# Pay for your trip through the website. The carpooling company will send a code which you'll have to give the driver once you get to your destination.

If you can't make it, they offer a **cancellation policy:**

- More than 24 hours cancellation, you get your money back
- Less than 24 hours cancellation, you get 50% of your money back
- You don't show up, you get nothing!

Here are some links to **different websites** that work in Spain

- **Carpooling**
- **Amovens**

Check out more posts on getting around Madrid here:

1. Getting around Madrid by train: inner-city commuter train (Cercanías) & high-speed train (AVE)
2. Madrid's easy metro system
3. How to get your abono (monthly travel pass)
4. How to get to Madrid's beautiful surrounding towns

Travelling by train in Madrid: commuter train (Cercanías) & high-speed train (AVE)

The most convenient way to travel in Spain is by train. The country has been investing in train infrastructure for many years now and as a result, we have one of the largest train and high-speed train systems in the world. Spain's high-speed train, called the **AVE**, travels long distances across the country, while Madrid's suburban train, called the **Cercanías**, covers medium distances.

Thanks to the **AVE,** you can get to cities like Barcelona, Valencia or Alicante in just a couple of hours. Unlike flying into the country's airports, the **AVE** picks you up and drops you off in train stations located right in the city center. And thanks to the **Cercanías,** you can cross the city in a matter of minutes and visit **Madrid's surrounding towns** in no

time. Plus the **Cercanías** is connected to **Madrid's underground metro system**.

Here's all the info on Madrid's train services:

1. Suburban train services or Cercanias

The suburban train system – ***Cercanías*** – goes across the city connecting the main stations of Madrid with other cities near the capital. The service runs from 5am or 6am (depending on the line) until 12am. ***Cercanias*** has 10 different lines and some of them are connected to the normal metro system, which is really good because you can combine them to make your trip even faster. Before I start talking about the price, let me remind you that Madrid's pubic transportation is divided into zones (A, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, E1 and E2). Zone A includes Madrid's city-center while E2 takes you all the way to cities like Guadalajara or Toledo.



There are three different types of tickets that you can use on the suburban train system.

1. A single trip costs 1,65€ (one/two zones) – 5,40€ (Seven zones).
2. You can also buy a 10-journey train ticket and its price can also vary depending on how many zones you'll buy it for (9,85€ for 1/2 zones to 37,75€ 7 zones).
3. Finally, you can also use your monthly travel card (abono).

- **Full map**



Mapa de Cercanias by Renfe

- **Full fares (official English website)**
- **Schedules (Link to Cercanias website)**

2. High speed train or AVE



AVE Atocha by Guias-viajar.com

AVE is the Spanish high-speed-train system. These trains get you to some of the biggest cities in Spain in just few hours or less. Although prices aren't cheap, there are some ways to get them cheaper: the most advisable is to take 4 seats (a table). That way you'll save 40-50%. Also, it's good to remember that train stations are in the city center, so you won't spend money and time getting to and from the airport.

Renfe, Spain's train company, has an App for IPhone and Android called Renfe Ticket

- Check prices and buy your tickets (AVE website in English)
- Renfe Official Website



Red española alta velocidad by Wikipedia

Feature photo by guias-viajar.com

For more info on travelling around Madrid, check out these posts:

- ***Getting around Madrid by Metro***
- ***How to get to Madrid's beautiful surrounding towns***
- ***How to get your Abono (Madrid's monthly metro pass)***
- ***Travelling by car in Madrid: renting cars, carpooling & carsharing***
- ***An overview of Madrid's central neighborhoods***

Getting around Madrid by metro

A few years ago, I was running late to work as usual and I got into my *boca de metro* (metro entrance) only to realize the metro had closed for no reason. I kept walking to the next metro stop, and it was closed too! "Yes! I have an excuse for being late to tell my boss," thought the Spaniard in me. Then, I realized that something big was going on – the city's public transport workers had gone on strike.

For three days, the city looked like a scene from a Hitchcock movie. People were either waiting in lines to take the bus or walking long distances to work. To sum up, chaos reigned over the city. Finally, the transport union and City Hall came to an agreement and the citizens got back the most valued form of public transport in Madrid – the metro!!

Madrid's first metro line was opened by the former King Alfonso XIII on October 17th, 1917. Today, under Felipe VI's reign, ***El Metro de Madrid*** covers more than 300km and 12 lines (plus line "R" and the "light rail") and it is the most used form of transport in Spain.

Here's all you need to know about tickets, prices and zones!



metro by metromadrid.es

If you're in Madrid for a few days, there are three types of metro tickets to choose from:

1. **Tourist travel pass for 8,40€, one day:** unlimited rides for metro, bus and **regional train system (Cercanías)**. Before you buy one, remember that the city center is not that big and you can walk almost everywhere.

2. **Metrobús, 10-trip ticket for 12,20€:** access to all metro lines and buses.

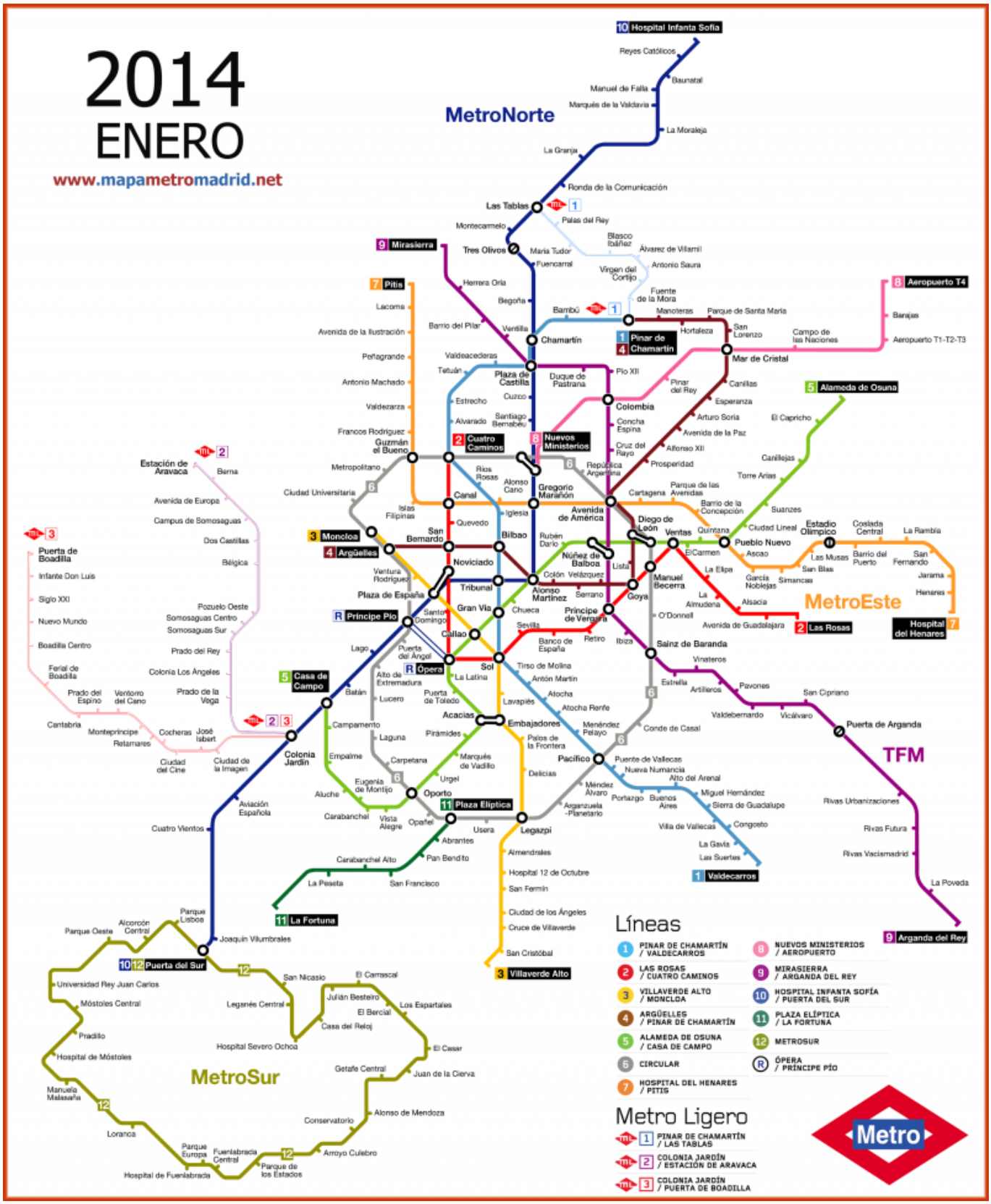
3. **Single trip ticket for 1,50€** (first 5 stops + 0,10€ every next stop, max 2€).

Our advice: if you're only here for a few days, you should buy this last option.

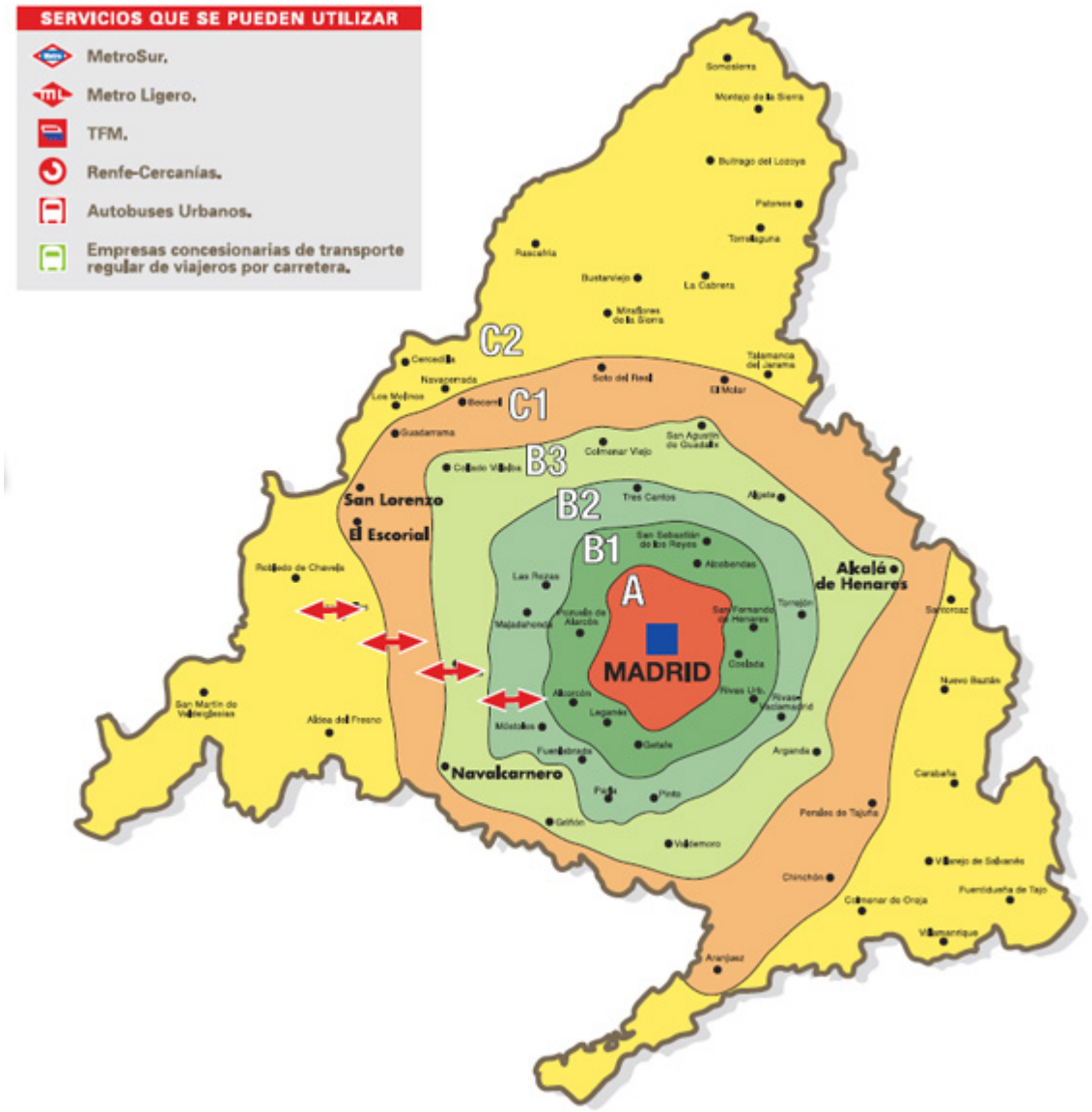
If you are planning on staying a bit longer, you might

consider getting a **monthly travel card**, called an *abono,* in which case you'll pay **54,60€ per month** for unlimited access to metro, bus and **cercanías**. For further information about this ticket, check out this article: **How to get your abono**.

- **Schedule:** the metro opens everyday of the year from 6am to 1:30am
- **Metro Map**



- Metro fares. Notice that Madrid is divided into different areas (A, B1, B2, etc). Regardless of price per ticket, getting your tickets and monthly pass require the same process explained above.



[Official Madrid transport website (All fares)]

1. Abono turístico.

TOURIST TRAVEL PASS

Zones	1 day	2 day	3 day	5 day	7 day
A	8.40 €	14.20 €	18.40 €	26.80 €	35.40 €
T	17.00 €	28.40 €	35.40 €	50.80 €	70.80 €

[*by Tarifas red de transportes]

2. Abono residentes.

TRAVEL CARD

Travel Card/Zone	A	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	B1-B2 B2-B3 B3-C1 C1-C2	E1	E2
Monthly travel card coupon	54.60€	63.70€	72.00€	82.00€	89.50€	99.30€	47.90€	110.60€	131.80€
Youth travel card coupon	35.00€	39.60€	45.00€	51.60€	56.20€	61.80€	30.30€	78.30€	97.40€
Monthly senior citizen travel card coupon	12.30€							–	–
Anual travel card coupon	546,00€	637,00€	720,00€	820,00€	895,00€	993,00€	479,00€	1106,00€	1138,00€
Anual youth travel card coupon	350,00€	396,00€	450,00€	516,00€	562,00€	618,00€	303,00€	783,00€	974,00€
Anual senior citizen travel card coupon	123,00€							–	–

*by Tarifas red de transportes

3. Metrobus and singles trip tickets.

FARES	
SINGLE TRIP	**Euros**
EMT ticket	1.50-2

10 TRIP TICKET	Euros
Metro Zone A, EMT and ML1 ticket (Metrobús)	12.20

TICKETS FROM/TO THE AIRPORT	Euros	
Single Ticket Metro+Extra charche (*)	4.50	5.00
Combined Metro Ticket+Extra charche	6.00	
Airport Surcharge Ticket	3.00	
Airport Express Bus Ticket	5.00	

(*) Routes up to 5 stations or less: 1.50 €.

Routes of 6 to 9 stations: 0.10€ extra per station.
Routes of 10 stations or more: 2.00€.
In the vending machines inside all metro stations, you pick a destination on the touch screen and it will automatically calculate the number of stations and price for the shortest route possible.

(**) Valid for the Metro Network of Madrid Region, TFM and Light Rail.

(***) Valid for 10 journeys with a SINGLE transfer EMT + EMT in a maximum of 60 minutes starting from the first validation.

***by Tarifas red de transportes**

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- **Travelling by train in Spain**
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- **An overview of Madrid's central neighborhoods**

Where to enjoy good film in Madrid

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

6. Cultural Centers

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

7. Outdoor Summer Cinema

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

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

Also check out: Salaequis, a former XXX theatre that's been transformed into one of the city's hotspots near Tirso de Molina

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Madrid's 10 Most Beautiful Surrounding Towns

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

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

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

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

Madrid's surrounding towns

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



How to get to Madrid's airport

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

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

1. **Metro: Línea 8**



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

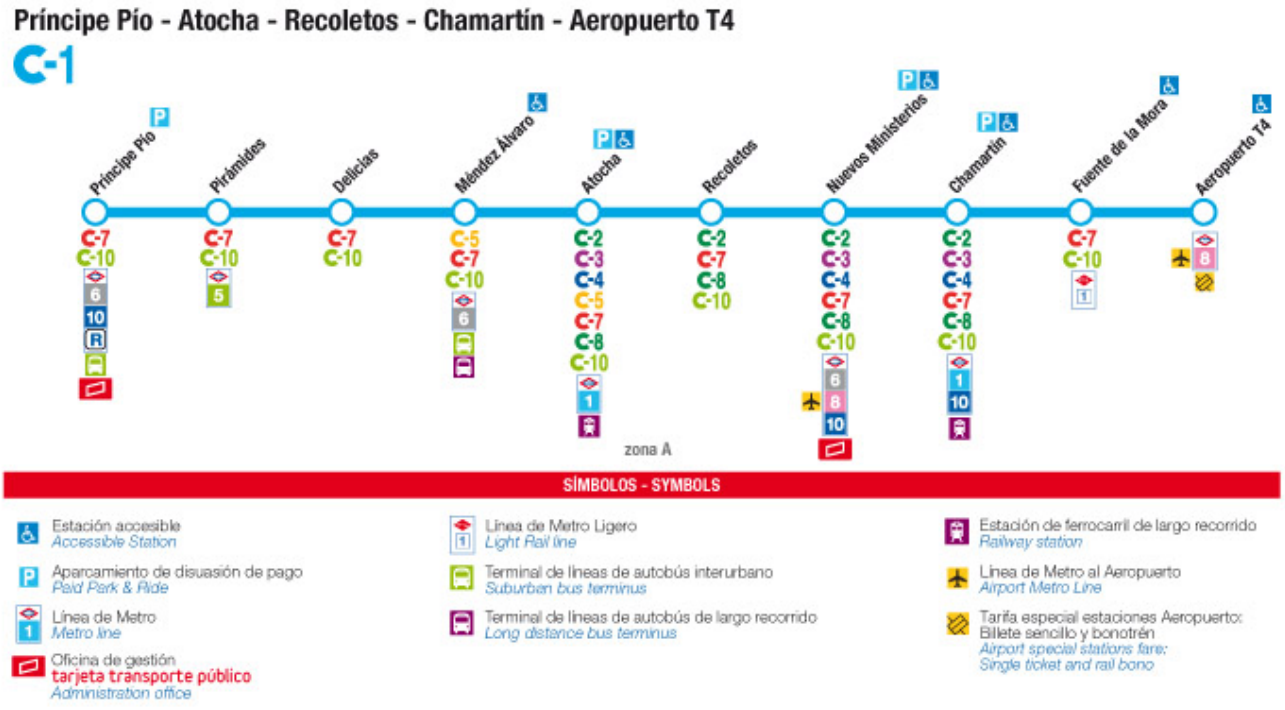
2. **Airport Express Bus:**



from esmadrid.com

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

3. **Cercanías: Línea C1**



from mapamadrid.net

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

4. **Taxi**

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

5. **Public City Bus**

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

6. **Private Airport Shuttle Bus**

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

How to Get Your Madrid Metro Card (Abono)

Not only is Madrid a great walking city, but it also has a fantastic **public transportation** system. The city offers **public buses, metro,** and **regional trains (Cercanías),** which are all fast, reliable, and surprisingly clean.

If you plan on using public transportation, we highly recommend getting an *"abono"* or monthly travel card for unlimited trips. The "**Metro de Madrid App**" is also helpful when it comes to figuring out how to get from one metro stop to another.

What is the Madrid metro card?

The *abono*, or **monthly card,** gives you full access to all forms of Madrid public transportation **for 30 days**. The price **depends on your age and what zone** of the city you want access to. The "normal" card is for ages 26-64 and covers **Zone A** (city center), for the price of **54,60€ per month.** The "youth" card, which is ages 26 and under, **is priced at 20€ for all zones** (see below for more details).

What do I need?

These are the documents you will need to get your metro card:

- **Application document**
- A standard passport sized photo (which you can get at the photo booths in most metro stations, including Sol)
- An original copy of either your, EU ID, Spanish residency card, or passport

Once you have prepared these three things, you have two options depending if you are a **first-time** Madrid metro card applicant or not.

If this is NOT your first time applying for the metro card:

- You can easily complete the process **online.**
- After entering your form of identification, click on the *Iniciar solicitud on-line* button.
- Then, all you have to do is upload a copy of all three required files and once your application has been received, your card will be sent to your address in 7 days.

If you are a first-time applicant:

- Make an appointment **online** by clicking the *Pedir cita previa* button after entering the form of identification you will be bringing to the in-person appointment.
- Then pick a metro office near you, date, and time.
- On the day of your appointment, bring the three required documents and your metro card will be given to you by the time you're finished.



Oficina de atención by espormadrid.es

Which zones do I choose?

If you are new to the province of Madrid, you're probably unfamiliar with the different zones. When applying for your card, pick the zones that you might need to travel to by public transportation. The price will vary depending on which zones you want to include. Remember, if you are applying for the "youth" card, **all zones** are included for **20€** every 30 days.

MONTHLY TRANSPORT PASS (PRICE IN EURO)

Pass/Zone	A	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	E1	E2
Normal	54,60€	63,70€	72€	82€	89,50€	99,30€	110,60€	131,80€
Young	20€							
Senior	12,30€						–	

If you're not sure what zones you might need, take a look at this map and see if there are any areas you might need access

to. Zone A is the standard zone that will give you full access to the city center. But if you think you will need to be traveling outside of zone A frequently, then it might be worth adding another zone to your card. If you're unsure of which cities are in which zones, check out the map below.



Hopefully this post cleared up any confusion on how to get your Madrid metro card. Now that you have a better understanding of the process, go get that *abono* and start exploring Madrid!

Madrid Neighborhood Overview

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

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

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





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

see all our posts about places to go and things to see in ***Sol***

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

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



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



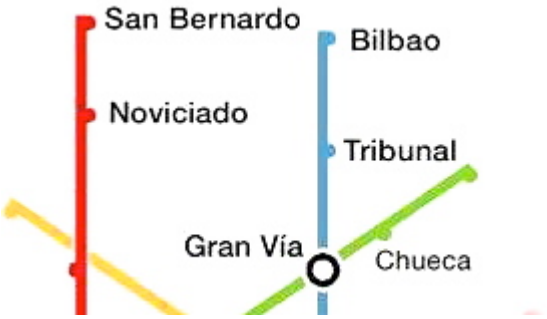
Metros: Chueca, Gran Vía & Alonso Martínez (Line 1 & 5) and **Tribunal** (Line 1 & 10)

*see all our posts about places to go and things to see in **Chueca***

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



Plaza de Dos de Mayo in Malasaña



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

*see all our posts about places to go and things to see in **Malasaña***

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

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



where calle huertas meets calle leon

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

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



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

*see all our posts about places to go and things to see in **Huertas & Barrio de las Letras***

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





Metro: La Latina (Line 5)

*see all our posts about places to go and things to see in **La Latina***

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

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



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

*see all our posts about places to go and things to see in **Lavapiés***

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



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

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



my favorite plaza in Madrid, Plaza Olavide



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

*see all our posts about places to go and things to see in **Chamberí***

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

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





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

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



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

*see all our posts about places to go and things to see in **Salamanca***

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