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

Madrid's public bike stations had been lonely for weeks, but yesterday morning we woke up to see the much-awaited electric bikes finally parked in their slots! So here's a look at all you need to know about getting tickets, finding stations and participating in Madrid's rising bike scene.

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



What's BiciMAD?

BiciMAD is an initiative launched by Madrid's ***Ayuntamiento*** (City Hall) to provide affordable, public rental of electric-powered bikes, allowing city-dwellers to move around Madrid on **eco-friendly wheels 24/7**. Electric-powered means there's a small engine that helps you pedal, especially when starting off or going up hills. The engine automatically shuts off when you reach a speed of 16km/hr. The first phase of the initiative consists of 1,580 bikes and 123 stations, in the following neighborhoods: Center, Retiro, Salamanca, Arganzuela and Moncloa.

Important links:

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

How does it work?

All transactions—registration, payment, getting and charging your card, bike pick-up & drop-off, and reporting of problems—can be carried out at each **bike station**, where you

will find a machine (**tótem)** with instructions in English and Spanish. What's more, you'll be able to check availability and routes on your mobile device: IOS, Android and Windows P, and download a handy **app**.

How much does it cost?

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



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

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

How do you sign up & get your card?

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

1. **Sign up to get your code:**
   - Online
   - At any station's totem
   - By phoning 010
   - In person at Línea Madrid offices
2. **With the code, pick up your card (*tarjeta*) and charge it at the station**

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

How do you use it?

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

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

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

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

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

Madrid's Best Public

Bathrooms When You Gotta Go

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

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

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

1. **El Corte Inglés**



Madrid’s major department store, **El Corte Inglés**, is a true

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

2. **Markets and city shopping malls**



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

3. **Museums and Cultural Centers**



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

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



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

4. **FNAC**

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

5. **Casa del Libro**



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

6. **McDonald’s**

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

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

7. **Hotels**

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