

A Heightened Beer State of Mind in Madrid

Beer lovers this is for you again! You can read my [first article on craft beer bars in Madrid](#) to explore/discover more. The main idea is to go try and find your favourites'.

There truly is a very special place just North of Metro Bilbao that I like to call the **triangle of craft beer**. It involves 3 craft beer bars that are within throwing distance of each other. It really is the perfect place to have your heart's desire of good beer satisfied without feeling trapped in the same bar the entire night. **The 3 bars are named ANIMAL, Oldenburg and Cervercería L'Europe**. What they all have in common is their huge offer of various beers from across the world. This selection of bars promises a night out where you know your next destination and be sure to arrive as well.

ANIMAL I wrote about in my [previous article](#) and you can follow the link to take a look. It is a bar that consistently offers excellent beers from all parts. Tivo, the owner, also speaks good English.

1) [Oldenburg](#), in Calle HARTZENBUSCH, 12



Famous for standing in the Guinness book of world records as the establishment that offers the greatest variety of beers per square meter. Opened some 25 years ago, this bar lets you choose among **200 varieties**. One of the very first craft beer bars in Madrid, it inspired the opening of Fabricas Maravillas and is loved by the owner of [La Buena Cerveza](#). However beware there are 2 Oldenburgs and this is the younger bar. More of an institution than an ordinary bar, the brilliant thing here is that you can order **Alt bier**. This beer is brewed according to the German “**Reinheitsgebot**” (shouting it makes the pronunciation easier) and originates from Düsseldorf. It is a dark beer that is incredibly hard to find unlike the Cologne cousin Kölsch beer. If you are familiar with the LENT beers, **Thor** is brewed after the same recipe.

Alt bier is the beer of my home city and I will always be biased to this incredible bar for stocking it. The Belgians, apart for being famous for having no one famous (name 10 famous Belgians, footballers excluded) and no government, make incredible beer. Oldenburg offers the most varieties of **Belgian beer in Madrid**. Every beer brand in Belgium has its own beer glass to drink from. The glass is designed to increase the flavour of the beer.

Metro: Bilbao

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2) [Cervercería L'Europe](#) in Calle Cardenal Cisneros 19



You enter and believe you have been transported to the German Alps to celebrate a round of après ski fun. It looks like a drinking hall with kitsch decorated around the bar so skiers are reminded there is a home away from home. Terrible decoration aside, this place does offer excellent beers on tap and even more in bottles. In fact, it claims to have the largest offer of beers on tap and in bottle, check out the website, with nearly 100. The whole menu is online. The food here is **typical German beer food on offer**. Lots of sausages, potato dishes and sandwiches to soak up the beer.

Those that like an after work delight will be happy to know that between 18 and 20h all beers on offer are half price.

Metro: Bilbao

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3) **Irreale** in Calle Manuela Malasaña 20



The other bar not included in the triangle of greatness. However this bar does feature in the same street as **La Tape**. You just have to love this city. Irreale only recently changed location to their new home a few months ago. Recently having relocated from Calle de la Ballesta 15, this place is a gem. Having taken over the space from Ave Phoenix, the bar offers 12 different beers on tap. Similar principal to **ANIMAL**, these beers will also change once the keg is empty, meaning a lot of variety. The only two beers they always serve are **La Virgen** and **Schneider Weisse**. The latter being easily one of the best wheat beers in Europe.

The real advantage with **Irreale** is that it offers you the pub feel whilst also offering food. Most, however, stick with the beer and if you prefer the smell of hops and alcohol to chorizo and tortilla I recommend you take a visit. However let's think bigger better more exciting! Media pinta beats caña, pinta beats media pinta, but the king will always be the keg. You need a place for a birthday party or a friend's leaving due, **Irreale** will let you rent the **cellar of the bar**

for free. All you need are thirsty friends and yourself if you order one keg (20 litres) and the room is yours free of charge. They will also give you a 10% discount on the keg you order. Price will range with beer type so just go in and have a quick chat. English fluency is minimal here.

Metro: San Bernardo / Bilbao

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For more articles related to Madrid's drinking culture, check out:

- [A Beer State of Mind in Madrid](#), on the city's best craft beer bars
- [Martinis, Margaritas & More](#), on Madrid's best cocktails
- [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international beer shop offering a huge variety plus tastings and more

Beer State of Mind in Madrid

A bucket of Heineken for 5€, a pint of Mahou for 1,50€ and a can of whatever offered for 1€ by the smiling street vendor. Cheap is easy, cheap is good. **Madrid** is littered with examples of how to drink to your heart's content for under a tenner. Taste, well it all tastes the same, doesn't it? The beer sold in more than 95% of bars in this city does taste similar. The name changes but it doesn't matter. The aftertaste vanishes as quickly as the first round of drinks.

Price is king and we all know it. Signs of the large

distributors are all around us in the areas of **Malasaña** and **Chueca**. What furthers this dominance is their implied demand that a very high percentage of a bar's income has to be made through their products, unless the owner wants to see a rise in price per litre. This restricts to a large extent the amount of freedom given to owners under contract with the big beer companies.

Luckily, more and more bars are coming to life in this area that are looking to rediscover flavour and verve. So don't just impress your taste buds but dive into a different and less corporate world with the below bars. *Salud*.

1) [La Bodega de la Ardosa](#) in Calle Colón 13



This precious place was one of the very **first Irish pubs in Madrid**, opened in 1892. At the bar, you're likely to meet Antonio or Victor, both friendly faces who've been at La Bodega for years. It feels like an Irish pub when you enter, yet with the unmistakable smell of tortilla in the air. This pub only serves alcoholic beers from the tap and currently serves 4 in total. It's one of the very first pubs in Spain to import **Czech beer**, with its main beer being **Pilsener Urquell** from the city of Pilsener in Czech Republic, the birthplace of pilsner beer.

Another option is **König Ludwig**, a **Bavarian wheat beer** which is excellent for the summer time as the yeast gives it a fruity beer flavour. It won the **World Beer Award** for best wheat beer in 2008. Usually available from the bottle in Madrid, La

Bodega offers this fine brew straight from the keg.



Also on offer is **PUNK IPA** from Brew Dog. **Indian pale ale (IPA)** that packs an even fruitier punch but never becomes sweet and retains its bitter finish. The last beer on offer is **Guinness**. When you enter the pub you have to turn around and face the entrance. Above the door, you'll find a **Guinness** leader board. At the top you'll find a Sebastian from Germany who drank 14 pints in under 4 hours. You would receive free pints once you had surpassed the previous top score. The competition was stopped in 1990 due to health and safety regulations.

If the front bar is too crowded, he or another waiter will offer you to climb under the bar through to the other side, which tends to be more quiet and intimate. Also, it handily places you closer to the toilets, which are at the back of the bar.

La Bodega is also renowned for having some of the best **Vermouth in Madrid**, an option for all the non-beer lovers. If you become a little peckish (hungry), order the **tortilla** or **salmorejo** which are both incredibly good. Each beer is offered

in either pints or half pints, akin to England, and will cost you between 3.50€ to 5.50€.

Metro: Chueca / Tribunal

2) [Las Fabricas Maravillas](#) in Calle Valverde 29



An American from Chicago and a Frenchman from Bretagne created this bar. Living in Madrid, these longtime friends were frustrated that the only decent bar they knew offering **craft beer** was la Cervercería Oldenburg. So approximately one and a half years ago they opened Fabricas Maravillas. Each has a master in beer brewing and all the beer is produced in the same bar you enter. You can see the fermentation tanks through the glass behind the bar.

You can choose from several varieties, some named after different areas in Madrid such as **Malasaña and Valverde**. They brew ales, stouts and pilsners. If you're unsure of your selection, just ask to have a try of the beer you fancy. The

staff speaks and understands **English**.

The bar doesn't serve food, only a few crisps (chips for those in America) and olives. It isn't a big bar and if you want to sit you'll have to go early or stand up on weekends because of the amount of people that enter. The bar enjoys a healthy mix of Spanish and **expats**.

If you find it too crowded, you can also find Fabricas' beer at [Bar Martinez](#) (Calle Barco 4), a 3 minute walk away, which is less known and much more likely to have a seat.

Metro: Tribunal

3) **EL ANIMAL** in Calle Hartzenbusch 9



With 12 different beers on tap and many more in bottles in the fridges, this bar offers a **multitude of different beers** with flavour. Tivo, one of the owners of **ANIMAL**, changes the beers on tap when the keg is empty, replacing it with another of the many craft beers he has in storage. He tastes all the beers

himself before serving them to his customers, ensuring their quality is up to his standards. If you can't get enough of discovering new craft beers, this is an ideal place to visit. ANIMAL tends to offer more **Danish, English and Irish beers**, in particular offering a wide selection of ales.



In September, ANIMAL will turn 2 years old. The bar is situated on the same street as the same La Cervercería Oldenburg that the two creators of Fabricas Maravillas used to frequent. **Tivo speaks English** and encourages it with his “we speak English” sticker on the front glass door.



He'll serve you a small portion of food with each beer you order. Tivo knows his beers and can explain to you in detail each taste profile and how the production affected this.

Not a large bar, **ANIMAL** has several tables for you to sit down and eat. It doesn't have a typical pub atmosphere due to the variety of food on offer and seating area. The food is supposed to be excellent and the smell alone made me hungry.

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Metro: Bilbao / Quevedo

4) [La Tape](#) in Calle San Bernardo 88



A craft beer bar which feels more like a restaurant than any other bar on this list. This bar offers **7 different craft beers on tap** and the best thing to do if you are entertaining visiting friends is to try the **beer tasting**. You're offered to try 4 different beers on tap for 10€. They change the beers on

a weekly basis except for the first or second. The first is La Virgen, a Spanish craft beer that is very light. The second is a German wheat beer that is both fruity and a bit bitter.

The true treasure, however, is their **huge selection of bottled beer**. They have a menu solely dedicated to beers from across the world. Be sure to look at the very back of the menu where the temporary bottled beers are displayed. They're off the menu as soon as the last one is sold.

Two Madrileños created La Tape a little over a year ago. Having travelled across several countries and continents, they both noticed the lack of different beers on offer, and continue to travel in search of new beers to stock in their bar.

My friends have told me the food is excellent. A restaurant is situated above the bar, serving mainly Spanish dishes and offering a large selection of desserts. A pint of beer will cost between 4-6€.

[Website](#)

Metro: San Bernardo

**5) [REVOLTOSA](#) on Plaza del Rey 4
(bar under contract with one of the
big guys)**



As summer time is approaching fast and we want to enjoy the sun, I mention this place as an alternative. This bar has a large terrace area outside with tables and umbrellas. They offer **Konig Ludwig** and **Grimbergen** (a Belgian beer) in bottles. It is a good place to try the more popular Spanish craft beers. Their **5 Spanish craft beers** on offer are **Cibeles**, **Aoora**, **La Virgen**, **Sagra Premium** and **Burron de Sancho Rojo**. Going early to **REVOLTOSA** has its advantages, as all beers will be 50 cents cheaper during the day. The night prices start from 21.00 onwards.

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Metro: Banco de España / Chueca

Also check out [Round 2, A Heightened Beer State of Mind in](#)

Madrid!

And...

- [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international beer shop in Chueca offering a huge selection of beers, tastings and workshops
- [Cervezas La Virgen](#), a microbrewery in the outskirts of Madrid offering tours, tastings and hot-dogs & sandwiches