

Eating Our Way through Huertas with Devour Tours

On a recent chilly Saturday morning, James and I set out on one of the city's best ranked activities, Devour Tours. I had never been on a food-inspired tour before, let alone in a city whose food culture I'm quite familiar with. Yet the chance to meet local honey and jam specialists, indulge in chocolate-soaked figs and hop from butchers' shops to tapas bars while learning historical tidbits did indeed change the way I look at the city I've called home for the past seven years.





While [Devours Tours](#) offers a bunch of different gastronomic routes throughout the city, we went on the one I consider the most enticing – [Huertas Neighborhood Food & Market Tour](#). The home of the tour was Barrio de las Letras, a central neighborhood named after the famous Spanish writers who once resided, scribbled and drank together there in the 1600's, such as Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Quevedo.

Those of us who live here today know the neighborhood as Huertas, coined after the bar-filled street that runs through it. Unlike many areas surrounding Sol or Plaza Mayor, this barrio upholds a charming and unchanged spirit thanks to its thriving delicatessens, tapas bars and traditional markets. Offerings of old and new spins on local cuisine await you as you walk through its gorgeous cobble-stoned streets. And Devour Tours will let you in on all its secrets.



Our tour guide, James Blick, was not only an expert on Madrid's history and food scene, but also made each and every person on the tour – which consisted of a young Scandinavian couple, two parents from Alabama visiting their daughter on her semester abroad and a group of middle-aged women from Ireland – feel comfortable by asking personal questions, encouraging conversation and creating a wonderful vibe throughout the three-and-a-half-hour event.

I also want to note that my husband, also James, doesn't like cheese (weird, I know) and had told the guys at Devour Tours beforehand. His eyes lit up as he saw a plate of cured meat awaiting him at the cheese tasting, showing how they clearly make it a point to accommodate different tastes and dietary needs.



James (the tour guide) also engaged in friendly chit chat with all the local market vendors and shop owners – something quintessentially Spanish, I must add. Wherever we stopped for a story and a bite, James knew the locals by name and the stories behind their businesses; those close-knit relationships make the tour truly delightful and offer insight into the city's day-to-day life. This kind of rapport and insider know-how can only be attained with a great deal of time and care.



Overall it was clear how much attention was put into designing this tour; every detail was planned to perfection, from the food portions and variety to the timing and storytelling. We had more than enough tapas to fill us all up, yet paced and served up just right so we never felt too full to keep us from walking or having a few more bites at the next stop!



Since I don't want to give too much away, I'll have to wrap things up here. The last thing I'll note is that I had walked by absolutely every place we visited on the tour on many occasions. Most of these places I had never stopped to think about nor even enter.

Now I know that as I stroll along the streets I often frequent such as Calle Huertas and Calle Leon, I'll see a different side of my adopted city. I'll also enjoy a handful of new eateries that are now going straight to the top of my list.



Madrid's best Italian restaurant is not in the likeliest of places.



So whether you're coming through Madrid for a weekend or already live here, let Devour Tours show you around for a few hours, especially if you're a foodie like me! Buen provecho!

To book a tour or read some of their tips on where to find the best food in the city, check out [Devour Tours website!](#)

Aranjuez



What to see:

In the south of Madrid, you'll feel royal as you walk through Aranjuez's lush gardens and visit its impressive Royal Palace. Built as the royal family's summer house, Aranjuez is best to visit in the spring or summertime so you can take in all the colors of its gardens in full bloom.

Unlike most towns in Spain, there are no tiny streets here. Aranjuez stands out for its large and spacious boulevards. Once you've built up an appetite, there are plenty of good Spanish restaurants right along the Tajo river where you can enjoy typical Spanish food and *carne de caza* (game food).

How to get there:

• By train (Cercanías)

Depart from: Atocha train station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Aranjuez \(RENFE\)](#))

Return ([Aranjuez – Madrid \(RENFE\)](#))

Duration: approx. 50 min

Price: 3,30€ (round trip approx. 6,60€).

• By bus

Depart from: Méndez Álvaro: Bus 423

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Aranjuez \(INTERURBANO\)](#))

Return ([Aranjuez – Madrid \(INTERURBANO\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 4,20€ (round trip 8,40€)

Where to find it on a map:



Images from turismoenaranjuez.com and wikipedia

Ávila



What to see:

There are plenty of reasons to go to Ávila. For example, the city is stunning (especially when it snows in winter), the cathedral transports you to ancient times and the old wall that still stands enclosing the city is simply amazing.

It also claims to be the Spanish city with the most amount of Romanesque and Gothic churches per capita. Plus it's the birthplace of Spain's national saint, Santa Teresa de Ávila.

But to be honest, I would go here for the following: **judías del barco** (beans from Avila), **chuletón de ternera** (large beef steak) and **yemas de Santa Teresa** (traditional sweets made with egg yolks).

How to get there:

- **By train (Renfe)**

Depart from: Chamartín train station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Ávila \(RENFE\)](#))

Return ([Ávila – Madrid \(RENFE\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour 20 min

Price: 12€ (round trip approx. 24€).

• By bus

Depart from: Estación Sur. Méndez Álvaro

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Avila \(Larrea\)](#))

Return ([Avila – Madrid \(Larrea\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour 20 min

Price: 8,90€ (fares + round trip ticket approx. 20€)

Where to find it on a map:

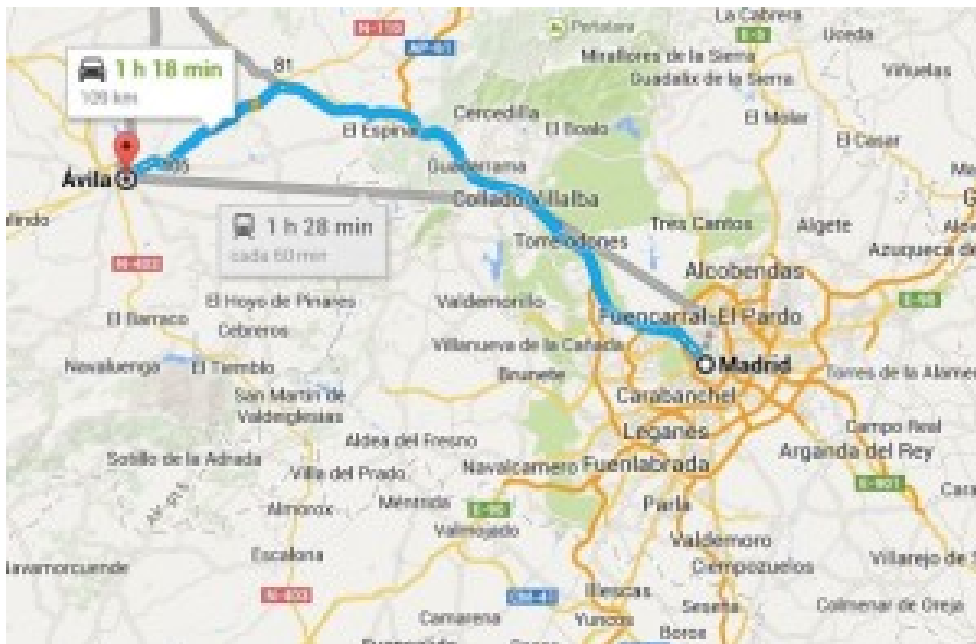


Image from Hostal Alcantara and abc.es

San Lorenzo del Escorial



What to see:

El Escorial is famous for its beautiful *Monasterio* which was built between 1563 and 1584. We recommend going inside the monastery, even though the entrance fee costs €10.

Once you've visited the monument, it's absolutely necessary to take a walk around the charming little town. Grab a seat at a *terrazza* and enjoy the pure air of the city's mountains, known as *la sierra de Madrid*.

How to get there:

- **By cercanías train ([map](#))**

Depart from: Sol, take Cercanías Line C3

Schedule:

Departure ([Horario Sol-El Escorial](#))

Return ([Horario El Escorial-Sol](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 5,40€ (round trip 10,80€). Buy tickets from machines inside Sol's train station.

**Note: you will have to walk 15 min or take another bus to get to the center.*

▪ By bus

Depart from: Moncloa, take bus line 661

Schedule:

Bus line [661](#) (every 10-15 min)

Bus line [664](#) (every 10-15 min)

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 4,20€ (round trip 8,40€). Buy tickets on the bus.

Where to find it on a map:



Segovia

What to see:

In this thousand-year-old city, you'll find one of the most famous Roman aqueducts in the world, **el acueducto de Segovia**, as well as the magnificent castle, **Alcazar**, which really resembles a castle from Disney World.

More importantly, while you're in Segovia you must try their star dish – **cochinillo asado** – roasted suckling pig which is cooked so tender that it's tradition for the waiters to slice it in front of you with the side of a plate.

Although I haven't succeeded in finding Segovia's best *cochinillo*, I highly recommend going to the restaurant [Candido](#) which is easy to find as it's situated in the Aqueduct's plaza and its ambiance is very special.

How to get there:

• By high speed train (AVE)

Depart from: Chamartín train station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid-Segovia horarios y precios \(RENFE\)](#))

Return ([Segovia-Madrid horarios y precios \(RENFE\)](#))

Duration: approx. 30 min

Price: 12,70€ (round trip approx. 25€).

**Note. Sometimes you can find special offers on the website.*

- **By bus**

Depart from: Príncipe Pío bus station

Schedule:

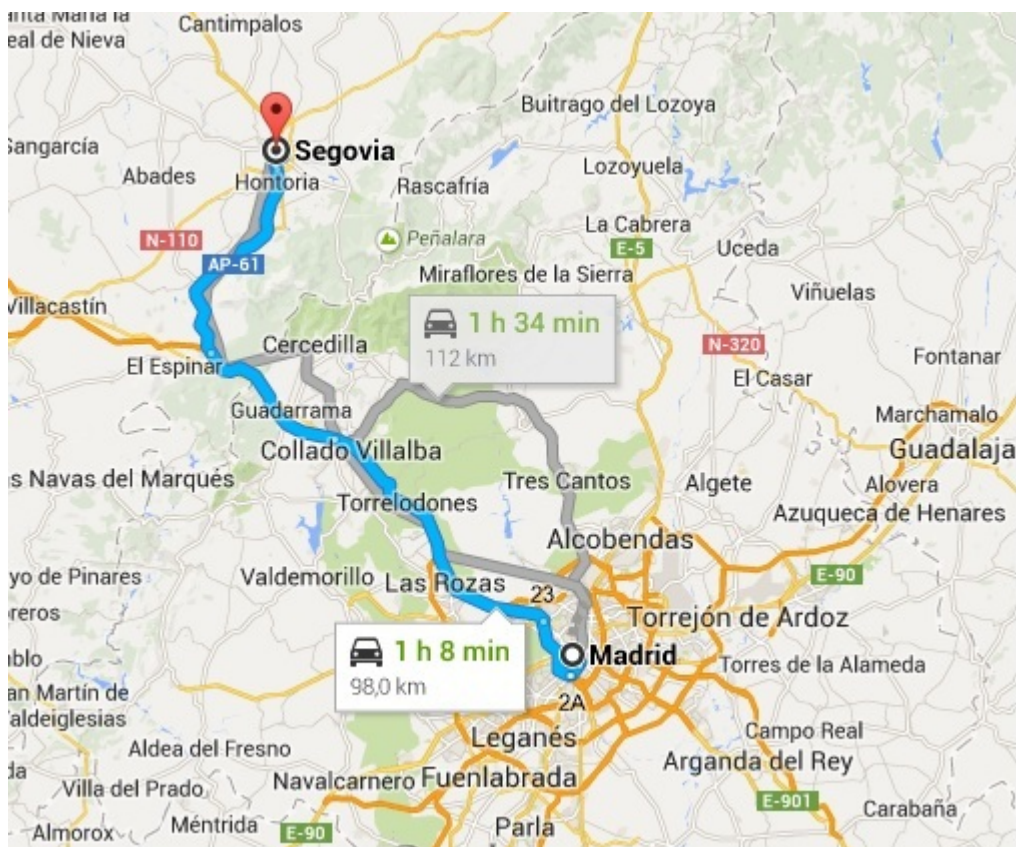
Departure ([Madrid-Segovia horarios y precios \(La Sepulvedana\)](#))

Return ([Segovia-Madrid horarios y precios \(La Sepulvedana\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour 15 min

Price: 8,09€ (round trip 16€)

Where to find it on a map:



wikipedia

Image from