

# The Hovse 2015: Christmas Calling, and better than ever

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go! The wind in the air and the need for big coats further emphasize the fact that the holidays are indeed upon us. This means that the days are being counted down to vacations or trips to various destinations with our families.



Last year I discovered [The Hovse](#), the pop-up Christmas market from Better Pop-Ups located in a vacant mansion mere minutes from my apartment in Chamberí.



After making weekly pilgrimages to the house throughout most of the holiday season, I managed to touch down in New York with amazing original Chrismukkah presents for the family, my ride-or-dies, and for myself as well (spread out for Hanukkah, Christmas, and one to open for Reyes just so I don't feel left out while jet-lagged on January 6th). I went on my first scouting mission of many to [The Hovse](#) of the year, and here's my report back:





In what looks just like any typical Chamberí mansion, you walk into this three-story house and are transported into a spacious holiday area with lots of different vendors, greeted by holiday lights and papers reminiscent of snow. Many of last year's vendors are back for another round (including [Helena Rohner](#), [Ouibyou](#), [Mr. Boho](#), and our beloved [Mr. Wonderful](#)), but there are lots of newbies as well.

**Here are the lists of the first-floor and second-floor vendors:**

BICMBO 13  
BRUBAKER  
EDMMOND  
EWAN  
FáBRICA DE CÀMISAS  
FIUMINE  
HAUS&DECC  
INés SUSaETA  
LEBONN  
LUDUS LUDI  
MR. BOHO  
MR. WONDERFUL  
ODDY NEIGHBOURS  
PAMPANALE  
PINTÓN  
SOCKETINES  
SUGAR YONKIE  
THE PIEZA  
VASITO DE LECHE  
WALK WITH ME  
WE ARE KNITTERS

ENVÍA TUS REGALOS CON GLOVO  
(PREGUNTA EN CAJA)

#THEHOUSE



A CASA BIANCA  
ARCHANGELA  
BELEN DOMECQ  
BOBO CHOSES  
BOHEMIKANS  
BRUMALIS  
CALMA CHECHU  
CUCUDUCHO  
COCKPLAY  
CORTANA  
EL MERCADO DE LA VIDA  
FAVORITO STUDIO  
FIT FOOD  
HELENA ROHNER  
IALA DIEZ  
JIMMY LION  
JOSEFINA  
KATIE LEAMON  
KREOL DESIGN  
LAS GENIAS  
LA CASITA DE MARGAUX  
LAMANTIKA  
LORD WILMORE  
MARENGO GREY  
OUIBYOU  
PENA JEWELS  
SCOTHEADS  
VAJILLAS DE ULTRAMAR

GOURMET  
BARBA ROJA  
CAN BENCH  
FRINSA  
HERCINA VIRGEN EXTRA  
MYKES GOURMET  
SANTA GADIA  
S.A. ALLET

OLIVIA TE CUIDA

(GRACIAS)  
GUELL-LAMADRID  
JESSICA BATAILLE  
SIETE FORMAS  
PAPELIMENTS DECCART  
FUNDACION CARMEN PARDO

#THEHOUSE

## But there's more...

You'll also find [Mercado de Motores](#)' mainstays **La Mantika** in case you need to get a blanket for your apartment to deal with the cold, [Katie Leamon](#) stationery, and lots of leather goods in case you want a perfect **Made in Spain leather bag, pouch, or wallet**. And below is a photo of handmade jewellery by [Helena Rohner](#), a Madrid-based jeweller whose store in La Latina I wrote about in a [previous post](#).



**There are even some really cool aprons** (I think I may have just given a spoiler alert about somebody's present, but sorry not sorry)







# This year, the biggest innovations come in two forms:

## Innovation #1: The Food

As always, **The Hovse** has dining spaces where hip eateries set up shop and you get the benefit of trying eats from these places without having to fight with all of Madrid to grab a table. Two of this year's players are in **Salesas**, aka the area behind Calle de Génova and the Plaza de Santa Bárbara in between Alonso Martínez and Chueca that's becoming Madrid's Soho: [Olivia Te Cuida](#), known for it's healthy offerings (as the restaurant's name implies), and [MEAT](#), acclaimed and written about all over town for its burgers (**MEAT's space is up on the terrace**).



If juicing or health food is more your style, you'll also find a temporary outpost of [Fit Food](#) – where you can try a big selection of the juices on offer (and perhaps tempt you to try a Detox treatment in January so you can fit into clothes you

buy during *rebajas*).

## **Innovation #2: Sybilla Atelier**

This year's *Premio Nacional de Moda* winner, [Sybilla](#), has taken over the entire top floor of The Hovse with a temporary atelier. You're transported deep inside her world, with samples of all of her different cuts with colors. The clothes look absolutely dreamy, as well as the collaboration with a French accessories label.







## And the best part?

The team at the Atelier will take your measurements and you can get something custom-made. Talk about something TRULY made just for you!

So run over to [The Hovse](#) and get the coolest [Madrid holiday gifts](#) for everyone on your list –from family, friends, ride-or-dies, and anyone else who you may find special.

## Info

- **Web:** [The Hovse](#) by [Better](#)
- **Address:** Calle General Arrando 40
- **Metro:** Alonso Martínez, Rubén Darío, Iglesia
- **Hours:** open every day from 11 AM to 9 PM until December 24th (Christmas Eve)

**For more on holiday shopping in Madrid, check out:**

- [Best Gifts from Madrid](#)
- [Casa Mira, Best Turrón in Madrid](#)
- [El Riojano, Madrid's best pastry shop](#)

---

## **An insider's guide to Sol: avoid the tourist traps and**

# beat the Christmas crowds

Madrid is a fantastic place to be at Christmas and nowhere is more festive, and more popular, than the area around Puerta del Sol, Ópera and Plaza Mayor. As well as the usual hordes of foreign tourists, Spaniards from all over Madrid and beyond flock to the city centre to see the Christmas lights, queue up at Doña Manolita for their lottery tickets, shop for nativity supplies in Plaza Mayor and take in the spectacle of Cortylandia.

If you plan on doing any of these things, my top piece of advice would be avoid going at the weekends, as the whole centre is utter chaos. During last year's December *punte* they even had to temporarily suspend metro services to Sol and make people get off at neighbouring stations, due to the sheer volume of people already in the plaza and surrounding streets.

Whatever day you embark upon your festive jaunt, you'll no doubt be in need of a break and some refreshment after a while. Christmas shopping can be thirsty work! Many of the bars and restaurants around Puerta del Sol are incredibly touristy or incredibly busy (or both!), so how do you find a decent spot?

Read on for our insider's guide to the hidden gems of the Madrid's centre.

## If you want breakfast...



You'll need a decent desayuno to set you up for a busy day of shopping and sightseeing, and in time-honoured tradition you might head to [San Ginés](#) (Pasadizo de San Ginés 5) or [Valor](#) (Calle Postigo de San Martín 7) for some chocolate con churros. Go early if you do, and certainly don't visit at merienda time as the queues are out of the door. Alternatively, you could try one of these lesser-known spots for breakfast:

**[Ferpal](#) (Calle Arenal 7)**





Many tourists eye up the delicious meats, cheeses and other treats in the windows of this top-quality delicatessen, but few realise there's also a bar inside. They serve delicious coffee, croissants, bocatas and sandwiches, all for only a couple of euros. Kill two birds with one stone and pick up a few tasty Christmas presents while you're here. They normally close on Sundays but will be open over the festive season.

**[El Riojano](#)** (Calle Mayor 10)





Ok, so it's not exactly a hidden gem, but did you know that this famous pastry shop has a secret tea room in the back? If you have a sweet tooth and you fancy a more relaxing experience than the scrum at [La Mallorquina](#) (another must-see, although perhaps at a quieter time of year!), then this is most definitely your place. Read Laura's more detailed [post on El Riojano here](#).



# If you fancy a drink...

Battling your way to the front of the Cortylandia crowd on a Saturday afternoon is enough to make anyone need an alcoholic beverage! (If you've never heard of Cortylandia I won't go into details other than that it's one of those Spanish traditions that you probably need to see for yourselves. Oh, and this year, it's penguins.) Here are a couple of my favourite places:

## [La Torre del Oro](#) (Plaza Mayor 26)



If you've been shopping for your Christmas tree or the moss for your nativity, then this bar is extremely handy for a quick beer. The terraza outside is like any other, you need to go inside for the decor that makes this bar special. The waiters are all extremely jolly and dish out tasty tapas with every drink. An Andalusian classic hidden slap-bang in the centre of Madrid.



## Matador (Calle de la Cruz 39)



Another bull-themed bar with interesting stuff on the walls, I love this place for its cosy atmosphere, great-value drinks and generous tapas. Its cave-like interior is pretty small so it can get crowded, but if you're lucky enough to grab a stool you might end up forgetting the shopping and spending all afternoon here!

## If you're hungry...

There are times when tapas just won't do and you need something more substantial. Try one of these spots for some tasty grub:

## [El Ñeru](#) (Calle Bordadores 5)



Cachopo at El Ñeru. Image from [El Ñeru's Facebook](#)

There are plenty of Asturian restaurants around this area but this one is my favourite. You can stand at the bar upstairs and gorge yourself on free tapas (try the cabrales cheese one) and dishes such as their magnificent cachopo, or you can take the weight off your feet and dine in the cavernous restaurant downstairs. It isn't the cheapest but it's worth it for the exquisite (and extremely filling!) food and excellent service.



## Bar Lambuzo (Calle de las Conchas 9)



Image from [Lambuzo's Web](#)

If you fancy something a little lighter, stop by this delightful restaurant run by a family from Cadiz. From salmorejo to croquetas to a whole array of pescadito frito, everything on the menu is absolutely delicious, extremely reasonably-priced and will inject a little ray of Andalusian sunshine into even the darkest winter day. Check out Daphne's [post for more information on Bar Lambuzo](#).

## **If you need to get away from it all...**

Even for the most die-hard Christmas fans, the crowds can sometimes get a bit much. All of these bars are just a short walk from Puerta del Sol and each provides a much-needed oasis of tranquility away from the masses.



Anticafe (Calle Unión 2)



Image from [Anticafe's Facebook](#)

Tucked away on a quiet street near Ópera, Anticafe is a great place to chill out with a coffee, caña or cocktail. The music



is great and the decor wonderfully quirky, so just sink into one of their mismatched armchairs, put your feet up and forget all about your festive to-do list.

## **Casa Pueblo (Calle León 3)**



Image from [Casa Pueblo's Facebook](#)

This cosy bar is the perfect antidote to the madness of the Christmas crowds. Let the friendly staff whip you up one of their delicious mojitos or order a tasty slice of cake if you're in need of some sugar. If you're lucky you might catch one of their live jazz sessions too.

## **Plaza Menor (Calle Gómez de Mora 3)**





Head to this fantastic little drinking den nestled right behind Plaza Mayor for a cocktail, a copa or just a cup of tea. The interior is a maze of low-roofed caves so grab a spot and maybe some of their yummy carrot cake and lose yourself for a couple of hours.

**Know of any other hidden gems in the centre of Madrid? Let us know!**