

Escape the Madrid Heat in the Mountains of Cercedilla

As someone who considers themselves a 50/50 city girl and mountain lover, I was slightly curious when moving to Madrid about where the hiking enthusiast side of me would find a place in such a massive city. I find that when most people think of Spain, their minds tend to veer more towards flamenco, sangria, paella, medieval villages, and enchanting cities.

To my surprise, the community of Madrid is also home to a vast range of world-class hiking trails. I was excited the other week to be escaping the city for a day in the mountains of Cercedilla, but was pleasantly surprised when I saw the immense beauty that La Sierra de Guadarrama beholds.

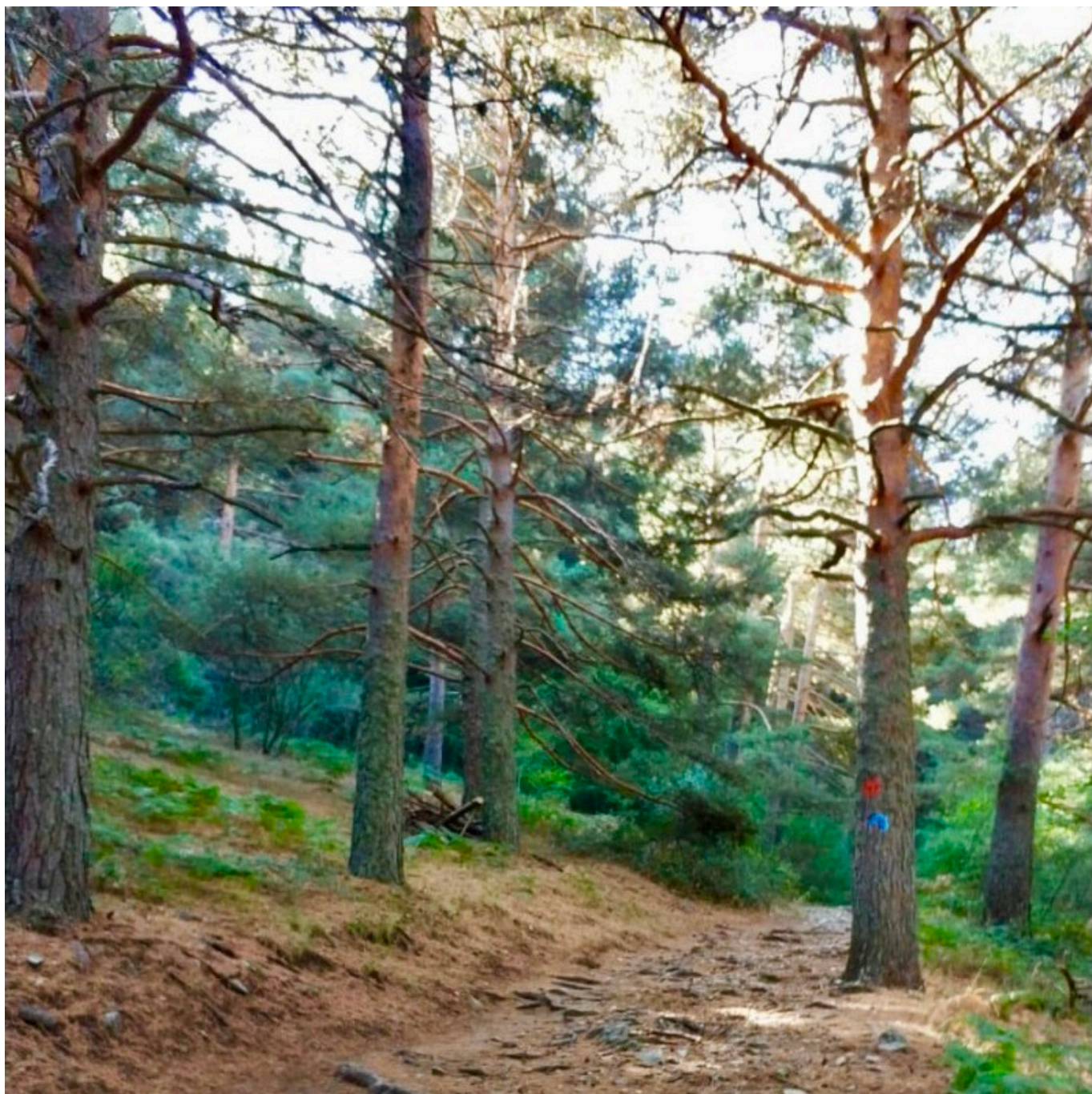


Getting to Cercedilla

Luckily, Cercedilla is only about a one-hour drive away from

Madrid and can be easily reached by [train](#), which will drop you off right in the center of the quaint mountain town. I took a car to Cercedilla and after driving through this charming destination for a bit, found my way to the environmental office.

Stepping out of the car and getting a whiff of the crisp mountain air and pine trees was the perfect welcome into the gorgeous La Sierra de Guadarrama that surrounds Madrid. If you go up to the window at the environmental office, you will meet a guide who will provide you with plenty of information and maps on the hikes that the area boasts.



Choosing Your Hike

The guide at the environmental office explained the map that contains many different color-coded trails, informing us of how long each would take, what the difficulty level was, etc. We decided to do the orange trail and then break off to go to Puerto de la Fuenfria, one of the area's peaks.

Once you leave the environmental office, if you simply drive about five minutes up the road, you will find a lovely restaurant with outdoor seating – perfect for a delicious and

well-deserved bite after your hike! It was from this restaurant that we parked and found the trailhead for the orange trail.

The first part of this hike is definitely the most challenging, which the guide prepared us for at the environmental office. It is most definitely on the steeper side but travels through the thick forest, so although you will feel the burn, you will remain in the cool shade of the trees. The views are absolutely stunning all the way up, overlooking the towering mountain peaks. The trails are also marked very well, with the color of each trail on the trees helping you to stay on track.

After about an hour and a half of hiking through lush pines and enjoying picturesque moments, we made it to our first lookout point, Mirador Vicente Alexandre. This is a fabulous spot to admire the panoramic views, while having a snack or taking a water break. We found many boulders with Spanish quotes and poems carved on them, which added to the incredible atmosphere.



Puerto de la Fuenfria

After spending about 20 minutes at Mirador Vicente Alexandre, we continued on our hike. The rest of the trail that we took to reach the Puerto de la Fuenfria was a gorgeous dirt road, rather than a typical forest trail that was the first half of the hike. "Dirt road" may not sound like something "gorgeous," but there were barely any people there and horses roaming free with breathtaking views constantly in the background.

After hiking this road and enjoying the mountain views for about another hour and a half, we arrived at the peak. The views were wonderful, just as they were through the entire hike and there is an old fountain that we sat by to eat lunch.

There is an old Roman-built cobblestone road that you will hike down when you leave, which was a different but just as beautiful way than hiking up.

We arrived back at the restaurant, where our car was parked. Here, you can enjoy a nice meal to refuel after the 10-mile hike before driving back to the city.

Explore Madrid's Many Mountains!

After experiencing my first Madrid hike, I can confidently say that living in this vibrant city does not come at the expense of a world-class hike whenever your heart desires. La Sierra de Guadarrama is just one of many fantastic mountain destinations for you to enjoy an escape from the city. Explore the many other natural wonders that surround Madrid, such as Cotos Forest, Abedular Canencia, La Pedriza, and so much more.

By Haley Grant

Also read:

- [How to get to Cercedilla](#)
 - [Madrid's 10 most beautiful surrounding towns \(and how to get there\)](#)
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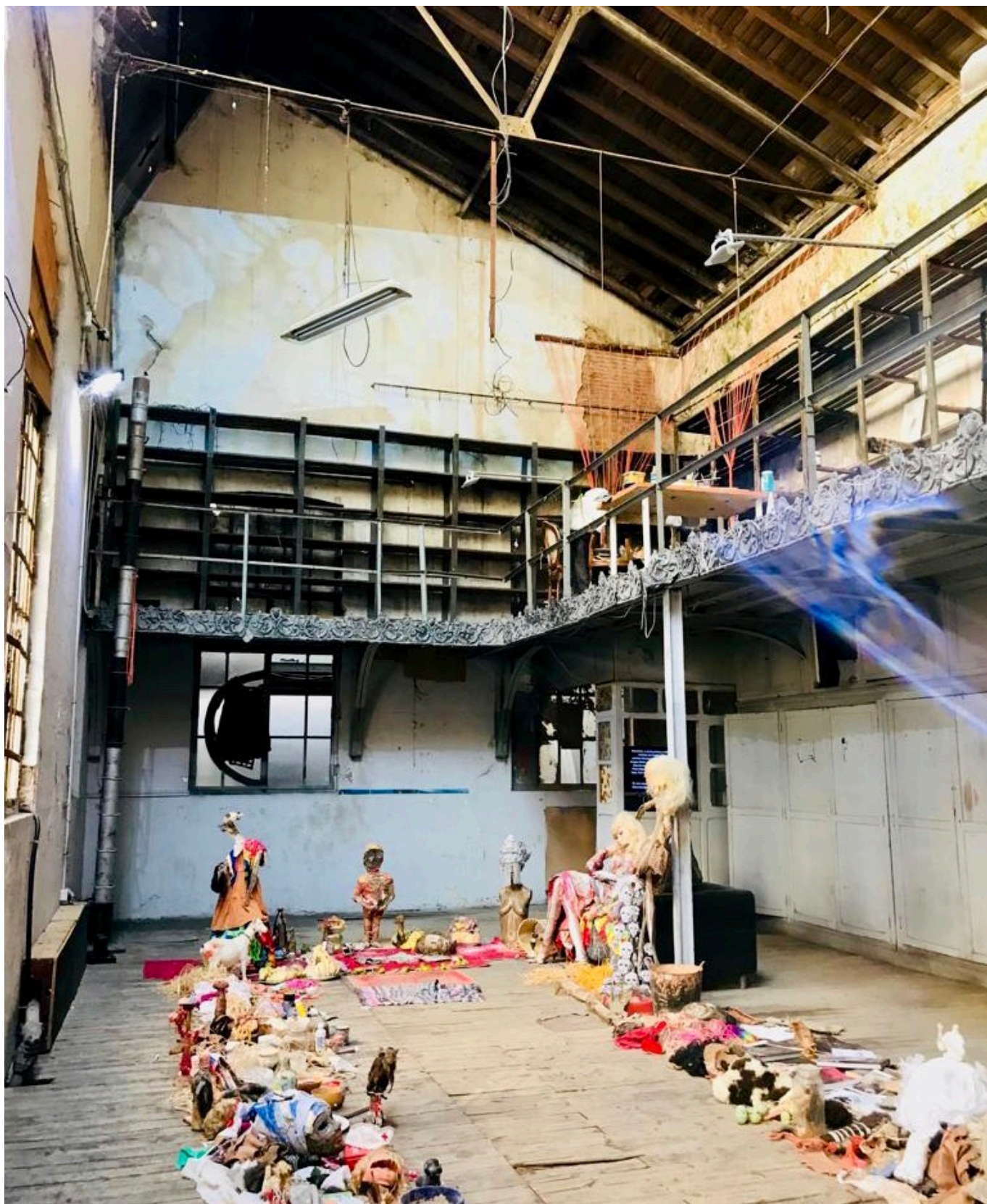
La Neomudéjar, a spooky, avant-garde arts center near Atocha

If you're into experimental art and transformed industrial buildings, then this is the place for you. [La Neomudéjar](#) is a rather eerie [museum](#), located behind Atocha train station. It occupies a massive building that was the former offices of Spanish railway company Adif, and was converted into an international arts center and residency five years ago.

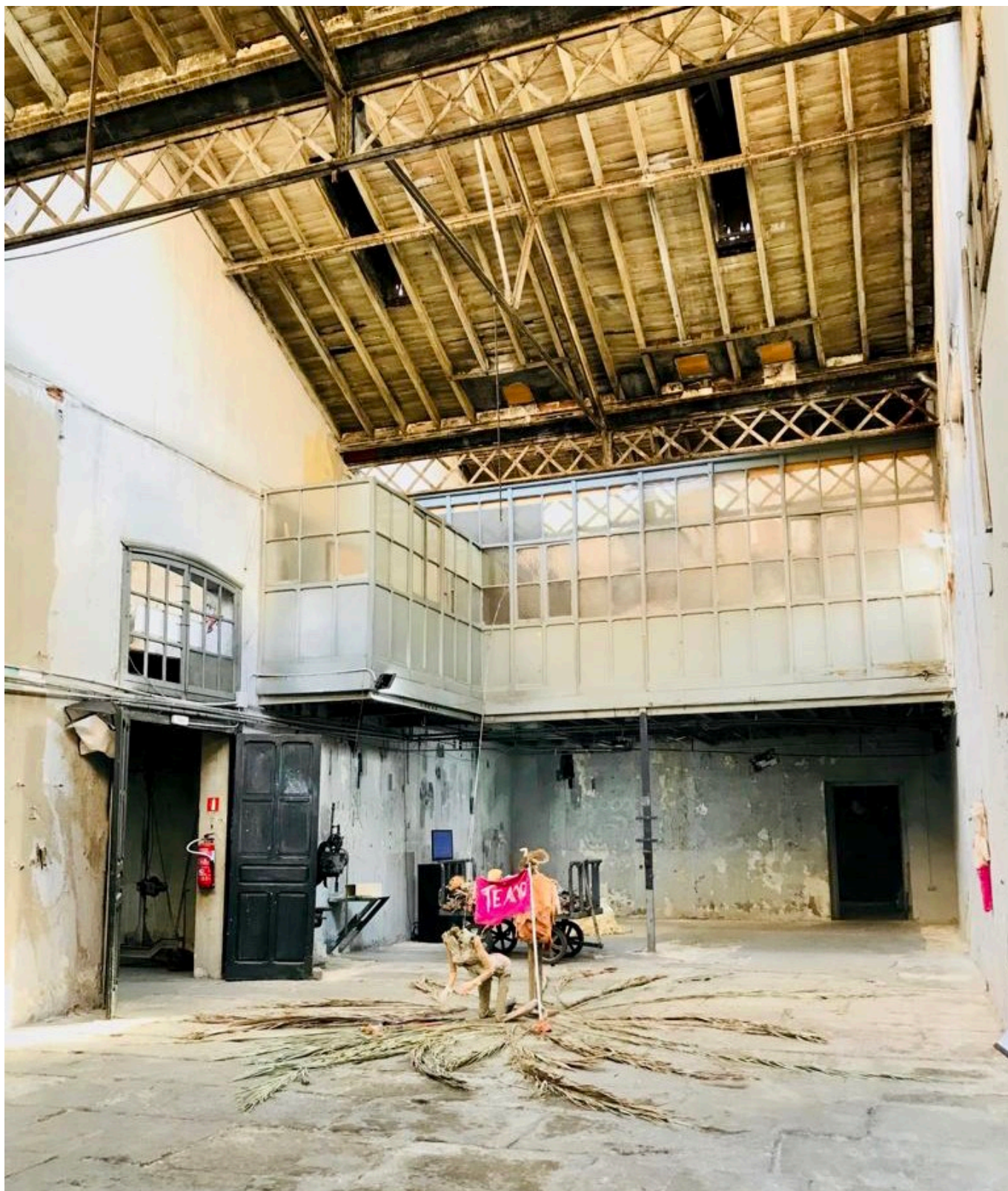


A renovation was clearly not top priority upon its reopening, as it feels like a completely abandoned old factory, taken over by bold artists. You might even think you're in the wrong place as you enter through the unassuming gate located on a side street, just a few blocks away from Atocha.

But keep walking down the little stairway and through the unadorned outdoor area with plastic tables and ashtrays, and you'll find the main door to a unique addition to [Madrid's thriving arts scene](#), featuring art exhibits, performances, residencies and more.



In the entrance, you'll find a gift shop with art books and other materials. Through there you'll start off in the main room where your gaze will immediately begin to scan the entire space from floor to ceiling... Both the exhibited art and the building itself are worth marvelling at.



Tiptoe around the items scattered across the floor as you look at paintings and displays with rather surprising written phrases, scenes, and messages. Continue entering through dark rooms, stained walls, and creepy corridors that lead you to dynamic art installations, film screenings and exhibits from international artists. The current exhibit is called [Dollhouse](#)

by Dutch artist Fardou Keuning, featuring life-size dolls.



In addition to the contemporary exhibits on display, you'll

also see clear remnants of the building's former life as a railway company.



One last tip: this is a great place to take a photo for your instagram story and scare your friends.



La Neomudéjar

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Antonio Nebrija
- **Metro:** Menéndez Pelayo / Atocha Renfe
- **Entrance fee:** €5
- **Hours:** Wednesday-Sunday, 11am-3pm/5pm-9pm

You may also like:

- [Madrid museums: the obvious and not-so-obvious \(and how to get in for free!\)](#)

Best Madrid lunch spots south of Atocha – VeraContent staff picks

When it comes to great restaurants and bars in Madrid, it's common to go no further than Lavapiés. But that's quite sad because there are a number of wonderful eateries just south of Atocha. How we do know this? Because the team at [VeraContent](#) (Naked Madrid's mom), has been to pretty much all of them since [opening our office space](#) last year near metro stops Delicias, Palos de la Frontera and Embajadores, also known as the neighborhood of Arganzuela.

So we've decided to make a roundup of our favorite Madrid lunch spots in the area, each one nominated and written by a different [staff](#) member at VeraContent. Hope you enjoy them!

1. Atocha Tandoori





The management team at Atocha Tandoori!

- **Recommended by Melissa Haun**
- [Website](#)
- Address: Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza 27

This place might just be Madrid's best Indian restaurant south of Lavapiés, with a wide variety of traditional dishes to suit every taste. It's the perfect place to go out for a special—but not too expensive—lunch, thanks to the different *menus del día* offered. Each one includes some combination of starter, main dish, drink, and optional dessert or coffee. All the favorites are there: chicken tikka masala, tandoori lamb, chana masala, vegetable korma, samosas, and much more. There are plenty of veggie and seafood options, as well as various kinds of naan and rice. For dessert don't miss the mango lassi. The last time we went there as a team, they also

brought each of us a complimentary digestif! When it comes to overall quality and variety, Atocha Tandoori never disappoints.

2. En Porciones



- **Recommended by Meagan Gardner**
- [Website](#)
- Address: inside Mercado de Santa María de la Cabeza, on Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza, 41

I eat here twice a week—and not just because it's directly in front of our office (though that doesn't hurt). En Porciones is a small stand in the market that sells fresh and unique meals cooked by the owner and chef, Arturo. Here you can find anything from eggplant lasagna to blue cheese and beet salad, peanut and honey-glazed turkey, honey mustard 'secreto,' artichoke risotto... Arturo's common thread seems to be classic Mediterranean recipes with a twist. The best part? You choose your food from huge bowls and pay by its weight. An amazing lunch for under five bucks.

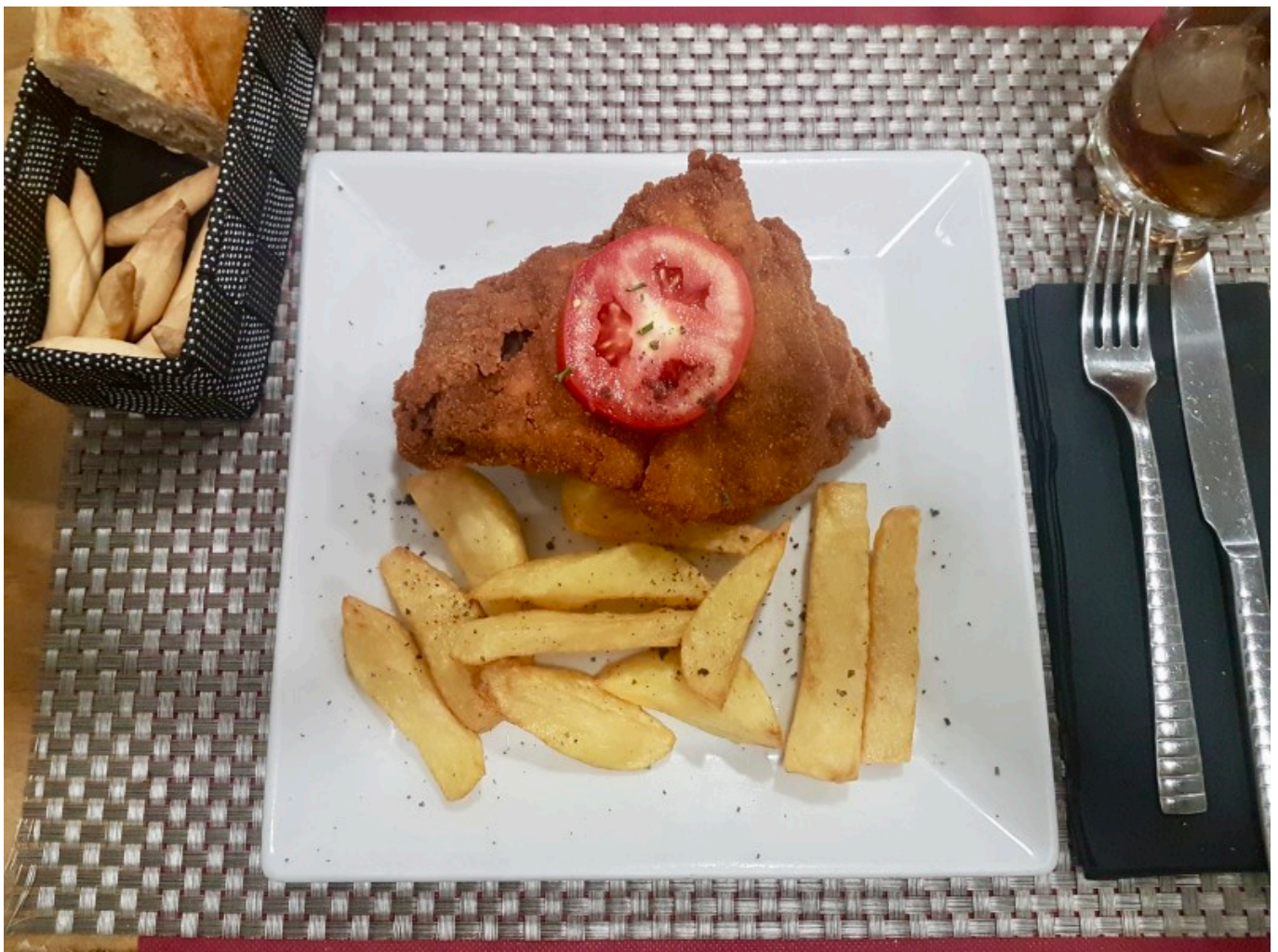
3. Restaurante Buen Gusto



- Recommended by Kyler Canastra
- [Website](#)
- Address: Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza, 60

From time to time, we all crave a little bit of Chinese food. And when you can't resist the temptation, you need to head to Restaurante Buen Gusto. You might be wondering why this Chinese restaurant is different from the hundreds of others in Madrid. Firstly, the service is quick and the staff warm and friendly. Trilingual in Mandarin, Spanish, and English and attentive, the servers make sure your experience is high-quality and efficient, which is great when you are in a rush to head back to work. Secondly, the numerous food options are all tasty and delicious. From lemon chicken and spring rolls to sweet and sour soup to an orange-style duck, your mouth will simply water. And the best part, they have two daily menu options. For just €7.95 or €8.95, you will have a three-course meal with a drink and dessert included. Talk about a bargain!

4. Restaurante Gastrobar la Sal



- **Recommended by Joss Burns**
- [Facebook](#)
- Address: Calle Embajadores 143

€10.50 for a weekday menu—this fact alone would make this place worth a visit. At least, that was my logic when I went there for Friday-afternoon lunch with my colleague. The beautiful brickwork facade stands out as particularly ornate when you walk down the street but, when you go inside, the place is surprisingly unassuming. The decor is delicate and understated, with a few carefully chosen pictures on the wall. At first glance, it seems unimaginably tiny—that is, until you notice the larger dining room partially hidden to the right. We started with salmorejo and *fideuá de marisco*. I had never had the small Catalan pasta before and wolfed it down hungrily before the *segundos* came in: chicken in a light vegetable sauce and Asturian *cachopo*, breaded beef with cheese and ham. It wasn't long before we were leaning back and rubbing our bellies, refusing the dessert in favour of coffee. La Sal is a fantastic find. It's one of those places where you come for the price, but you return for the quality.

5. Pui's Thai Tapas





- **Recommended by Nikole Hyndman**
- [Facebook](#)
- Address: Calle José Antonio de Armona, 7

Pui's Thai Tapas is for lovers of Thai cuisine, and anyone looking to get a little taste of Thailand. Here, you'll enjoy a laid-back dining experience and authentic Thai food prepared by Pui himself. While you can expect to spend around €15 a dish, rest assured that the impressive portion sizes and magnificent flavours make it worth every penny. Prepare to drool over their extensive menu (with pictures for those among us less experienced with the delights of Thai food), complete with a variety of appetisers, deserts and traditional Thai soft drinks. If you're feeling overwhelmed by all the possibilities, try one of the favourites like Pad Thai, Tom Kha Gai and Pork Panang. In most cases, you can decide the spice level, or even to substitute meat for tofu. Their

friendly staff is very accommodating, and more than willing to help you navigate their menu selection.

6. Bar Ávila



- **Recommended by Eva Alfonso Movilla**
- Address: Calle Ferrocarril, 15

If you just want a quick drink and a tapa for less than 2 euros, any bar on Calle Ferrocarril is a good bet. The street is lined with bars with outdoor seating. My favorite is Bar Ávila, where the tapas portions are generous and you get a couple of small snacks with each drink, ranging from *empanadillas* to mini hamburgers. It's nice to spend your lunch break enjoying some fresh air on the *terrazza*, but it's an even better place to meet up after work and have some *cañas* with

your colleagues.

7. El Salon de Otoño



- Recommended by Shaheen Samavati
- [Facebook](#)

▪ Address: Calle de Murcia, 5

This restaurant serves up traditional Ecuadorian dishes, but you wouldn't know it by its booth seating, stained glass faux windows and soft tungsten lighting, which are reminiscent of the classy American chain restaurants of my childhood. This is a place to go for its *menu del día*. It's just €10.80 and most of the dishes come in extremely generous portions. If you're not feeling so hungry, you can get a half menu for just €8. That represents a huge bargain compared to their dinner and weekend prices, which start at around €15 a dish. For the first course I almost always go for some variation of *ceviche*, which comes loaded with fish and a side of roasted corn and dried plantains. For the second course, they offer excellent combinations of fish, roasted and grilled meats usually with rice, potatoes and/or plantains. (This place is not ideal for vegetarians.) The desserts are also fantastic—try the *mousse de maracuyá*. This gem isn't at all hidden—it's packed just about every day of the week. Make sure to get there before or after peak lunch time if you want to be seated quickly.

8. Taco y Burro Maya



- **Recommended by James Leahu**
- [Facebook](#)
- Address: Paseo de Santa Maria de la Cabeza, 60

This place feels like a typical Tex-Mex bar but without being a chain. For €9 you'll get yourself a massive burrito with pork, beef or chicken, plus rice, cheese and avocado. Unlike Chipotle-style chains, you don't have to make lots of decisions: that's how it comes, and it's really good. If you're not too hungry, I recommend sharing one with a friend. The extremely simple menu features variations of essentially the same dish: quesadillas or tacos made with the same meat options. Everything is made with quality ingredients and at

reasonable prices. They offer about six different types of Mexican salsas to add to your burrito with varying levels of spice, and there are a range of Mexican drinks to try. I've been here twice so far. Each time I ordered my burrito to go and ate it at the office—convenient, delicious and filling. It's a pretty small place with just a handful of high tables, but the staff is friendly and the service is good.

9. Bodegas Rosell



- **Recommended by Daphne Binioris**
- **[Website](#) & [Facebook](#)**
- Address: Calle del General Lacy 14

This is one of those beloved long-standing restaurants that has preserved the spirit of Madrid's old-school *tabernas* in every corner. Opened in 1920 by the Rosell family, the decor, food, and service will take you back in time. Bodegas Rosell

is perfect for when you're craving traditional Spanish dishes and generous portions. You'll find *croquetas*, *tortilla*, *callos* (tripe), *cocido madrileño* (Madrid-style stew), and *solomillo* (pork tenderloin), as well as a variety of *tostas* and *tapas*. This charming tavern is great for a quick meal on a stool by any of the barrel tables, or for a quieter lunch or dinner. [Read our full article about Bodegas Rosell.](#)

10. Taberna las Sobrinas





- Recommended by the [VeraContent](#) team
- Address: Calle Palos de la Frontera 38

Taberna las Sobrinas is a great old-fashioned Spanish bar. It's one of the spots that the VeraContent team hangs out most at after work, mainly because the amount of free tapas they give you with each round is insane, plus it's right around the corner from the office. You won't need to order any food here, even if you're hungry. Along with your order of *cañas* and *vinos*, you're likely to get an entire tortilla, a plate of croquetas, slices of manchego cheese, you name it. There's also a spacious outdoor seating area. As for lunch, you can find a typical menu of *bocadillos* and Spanish dishes.

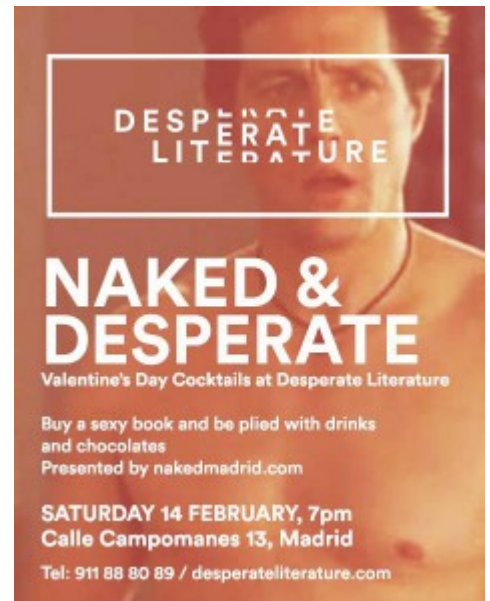
Have any more tips on where to eat south of Atocha? Let us know!

And if you aren't familiar with [VeraContent](#), find out more about us on our [website](#), and check us out on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

Desperate Literature, so much more than a bookshop

Four years ago I stumbled upon a newly opened gem, [Desperate Literature](#). I immediately went in, spoke to the staff (who were practically still building the place), and wrote an article about it: [Desperate Literature, for book lovers in Brooklyn, Santorini and now Madrid.](#)

Something about it felt so homey to me. Perhaps it was the English-speaking staff, the familiar titles on the shelves, or the fact that they were playing my brother's kind of music. It just felt like I was stepping into an avid reader's living room in New York rather than a bookshop in Madrid.



I haven't stopped going back since. Many of the times I've gone in with friends and family, we've either been offered a cup of green tea or a glass of whiskey. Naked Madrid even co-hosted a Valentine's event there in 2015. I remember there being lots of mulled wine, chocolate, and a discount in the erotica section.

So much has changed since then, yet the same wonderful vibe and essence remains. The staff is still rotating, international and friendly as ever. The book selection of both new and old titles in English, French and Spanish keeps on growing. With so many great additions, it was time for a new article, with updated pics too.

First some background info

For anyone who hasn't been yet, Desperate Literature sells by far the best selection of English books in the city, from art and philosophy to history and sociology. Plus a nice "boozy books" section where you get a shot of free whiskey with every purchase. You can also find titles in other languages, as well as handpicked rare editions, signed copies, tote bags, postcards, maps, and more. There's even a kids' section!

Desperate Literature was founded by hardcore book fanatics:

Craig Walzer (UK), Corey Eastwood (US), Charlotte Delattre (France) and Terry Craven (UK). Between them, they also own [Atlantis Books](#) in Santorini, Greece, and [Book Thug Nation](#) and [Human Relations](#) in Brooklyn, New York.

Charlotte and Terry are currently running the shop (and living upstairs). Before coming to Madrid, they both worked for several years at the world-famous Paris bookshop [Shakespeare and Company](#). Lucky for us, they're bringing the same philosophy to Desperate Literature, making it much more than a bookshop – it's also a community, event space, publishing house, and a home. According to Terry:

“Desperate Literature’s aim is to create a place where people meet for and through literature and to that end we’re developing not only our stock, focusing on having the best literature in English, Spanish and French, but a whole array of literary events, a literary magazine and all types of literary collaborations.”



Great events: readings, concerts, and more

Desperate Literature has truly blossomed into an international haven for literature and art. It collaborates with local and expat writers, poets, musicians, and artists on a regular basis. They constantly put on cozy concerts, trivia nights, chess events, readings, and talks, as well as fun holiday-themed events like Bloomsday and Christmas sing-alongs. All these intimate events are healthily booze-infused, and usually cost just €3 entry including a drink.

Children's corner

In the back you'll find a very sweet children's corner full of class titles that will make you feel nostalgic, from Dr. Seuss to Roald Dahl. There's also a cute little couch where you can curl up with a good read.



First literary prize

Desperate Literature launched its very own short fiction [prize](#) this year, receiving over 450 entries. They offered a €1000 prize, a stay at the beautiful Civitella Ranieri foundation, and publication in various literary magazines, as well as events at Desperate Literature and Shakespeare and Company.

We'll be launching again in December 2018 and (hopefully) every year to come, with the aim of putting our small bookshop on the international scene for excellent experimental fiction written today.

And first magazine and book!

The shortlist from the fiction prize even led to the publishing of Desperate Literature's first book "[Eleven Stories](#)" in April. And they put out their first magazine last year, [La Errante](#).



While all these additions are undeniably impressive (and there's certainly more in store), what speaks to me most is that the shop continues to feel as warm and cozy as ever, almost as if you were walking into a friend's personal library. Plus the music is great, the signs are quirky, and you're likely to make a friend or get offered a drink if you stick around awhile.

If you're interested in getting to know more about Desperate Literature, definitely stop in and say hello. For more info, here's an insightful article written by Katie Dycus: [Portrait of a Bookstore: Desperate Literature \(Madrid\)](#).

Desperate Literature

- [Facebook](#), [Website](#) & [Instagram](#)

Address: Calle Campomanes, 13

Metro: Santo Domingo, Opera, and Callao

Massa Pizza, perfect pizza made with pride in Chueca

The barrio of Chueca is known for many things, perhaps most famously though as the epicenter for the world-renowned Madrid gay pride festival – which is ultimately when the barrio becomes a riot of all things rainbow coloured and the always lively neighborhood really ramps things up a notch.

But over recent years I've noticed a shift from Chueca being all about bars. More foodie spots have sprung up encouraging you to part with your hard-earned cash. Just last week I accidentally sampled yet another insta-worthy poke bowl place which continues to be all the rage across the city. But what

I'm getting to with this review (and I will get there eventually) was **the most perfect pizza place that I stumbled across a few weeks back.**



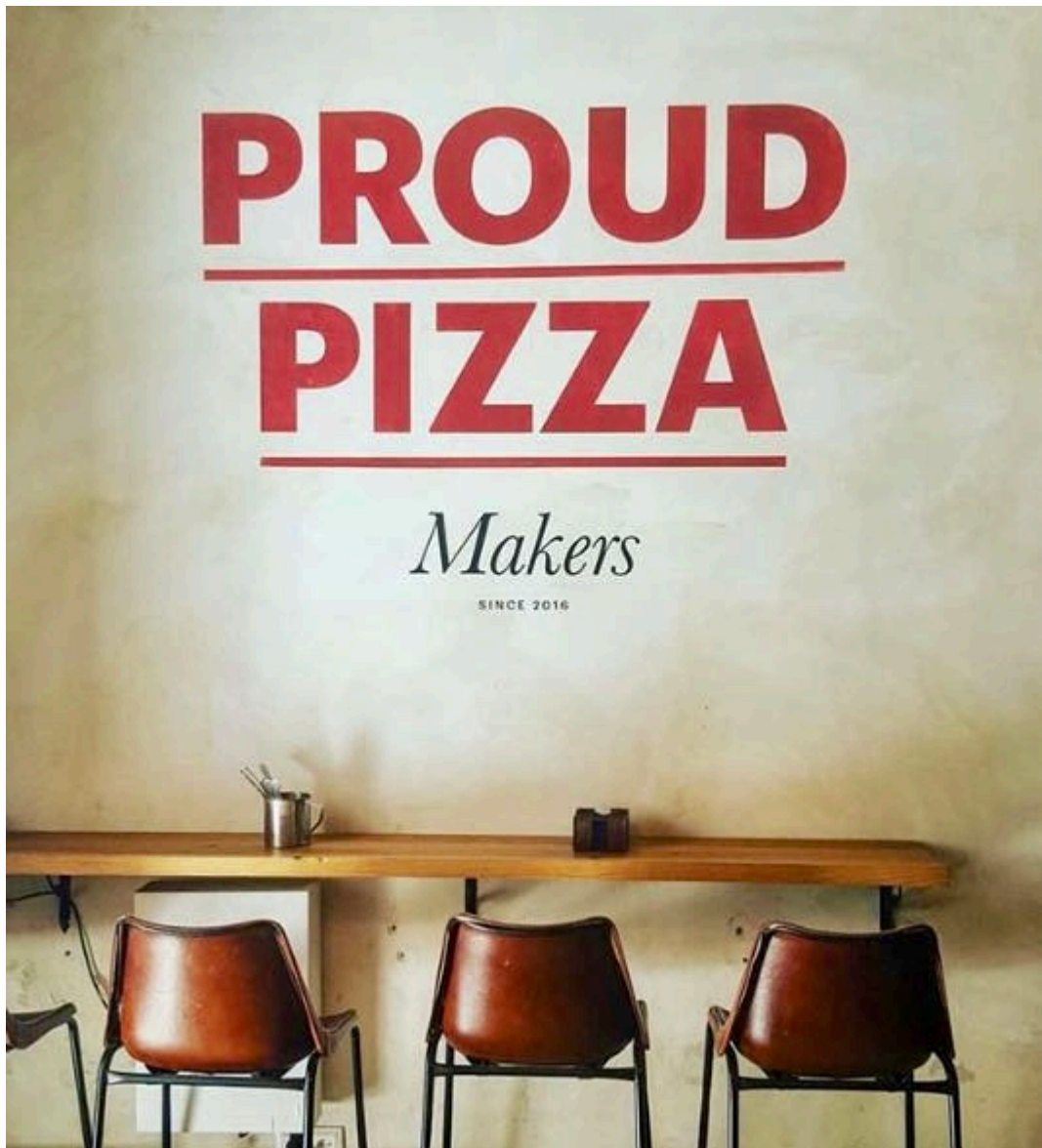
[Massa Pizza](#) is a stone's throw from the perennially popular [Mercado de San Anton](#) and could certainly be described as warm and inviting upon entering. A couple of gin fizzes in, myself and my dinner date selected some starters and neither one disappointed. Beef carpaccio (which is always up there as one of my death row dinners) and roast chicken croquetas which were bites of utter joy – now I realize it might sound strange for croquetas to have made their way into an Italian menu but I'm all for fusion food that's filling and fun.



We both then opted for individual pizzas (I'm grateful that the concept of a doggy bag is becoming increasingly popular in Madrid) – eyes bigger than Nelly much? Both pizzas were lush, doughy but not soggy, crisp on the edges but not burnt and the perfect cheese/tomato ratio in my humble opinion.



Now some people at this point might have needed to be rolled home. Not us. We saved space for the extremely cute (and Instagram worthy) dessert tray/box which was heaving with bite-sized little puds for you to select from. The cheesecake and tiramisu were to to die for but alas, all good things must come to an end.



[Massa Pizza](#) makes for the perfect low-key date night (as it did for us) and it's ideally located smack back in the centre of the city. What do you get when you combine pizza and pride? A combo that's as appealing as gin coupled with tonic.

Massa Pizza

- [Facebook](#), [Website](#)
 - **Address:** Augusto Figueroa 21
 - **Metro:** Chueca
-

Oh happy day at Ohanasana

I'm a relatively late bloomer when it comes to all things health and fitness wise. I'd love to wax lyrical that the only time a dirty Maccies passes my lips is at the end of a night when only greasy carbs will do, but frankly, I'd be lying. However, there's something about hitting your thirties (and I really hope that this isn't just the case for me) that wakes you up to the fact that your body isn't quite what it once was, and that a helping hand from the old spin class and eating some greens aside from the mint in your mojito is no bad thing.

So [Ohanasana](#) was blessing in disguise for something who's dare I say it, challenged in the clean eating stakes. Ticking all my necessary boxes on the decor front – floral chairs, some fluro neon and an exposed brick, all that was left to approve of was the grub. And boy it did not disappoint.



Now before I extol the virtues of fat free, vegan type fun, let me be clear, I love all things calorific so for me to rave about something without there being a chip in sight it has to be good. I started with a juice called "young, wild and free" – I like to think they named it after me! *my tongue is firmly in cheek here. It was a mix of pineapple, mint, cucumber and

coconut water. With every sip I felt like I was radiating the kind of glow that Gisele Bündchen seems to naturally exude. Whilst I may not be Gisele, it was delish and did serve its desired purpose which was to counteract the gins consumed the previous evening.

Next up was a little amuse bouche of gazpacho, it had a slight chilli kick to it which I loved – having grown up near Birmingham (the balti capital of Blighty) I love all things spicy and appreciated the twist on a Spanish summer classic. Next came the build-your-own bowl section (which a fussy faffer like me loves as it avoids any awkward “can I switch the cucumber for more deliciousness that is an avocado”).



I plumped for a quinoa-base laden with gorgeous raw tuna, avo and edamame – topped off with some salty soy while my friend had the “happy” chicken bowl which did exactly what it said on the tin, left her feeling cheery and safe in the knowledge that her lunch was devoid of anything that could hamper

“operación bikini.”



But this is me and I'll never be completely angelic. With the merest mention of a dessert menu I was all over it like a rat up a drainpipe. The best part this time was that the chocolate pot that we shared wasn't packed with nasties and the mouse was even made of butternut squash – what's not to love about getting one of your five a day when it's masquerading as a cocoa fix.



Aside from the food, the service was faultless. Our lovely waiter was the right side of helpful, aka he knew what he was talking about but didn't enforce menu choices upon you and instead gently suggested that we should order the chocolate pot and for that, I was grateful.

Ohana Sana isn't just a luxury for peeps in the barrio either,

available on Glovo, Deliveroo and Uber Eats there's no need to exert any energy if you don't quite fancy going out to sample their wares. Convenient and clean eating, that's a combo that works for me.

Ohanasana

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- Address: [Calle del Barquillo 34](#)
- Metro: Chueca
- Phone: 910 66 49 72

You may also like:

- [The Circle Food, tasty food for staying trim](#)
- [Honest Greens, feel-good food that tastes good too](#)
- [Zoco Comidero, eat well and feel great at Madrid's first \(and only\) flexitarian restaurant](#)

Restaurante Lúa, authentic Galician cuisine with a Michelin-starred touch

Galician chef Manuel Domínguez took a big risk when he decided to open a restaurant offering an exclusively fixed menu 14 years ago in Madrid. The concept was almost unheard of at the time. But today, that bet has paid off.

His award-winning [Restaurante Lúa](#) continues to offer Galician-inspired dishes with truly innovative touches. The quality and creativity of his cuisine has even earned him a Michelin star – Lúa is the only Galician restaurant outside Galicia to

hold one.



Lúa, which means “the moon” in Galician, is Manuel’s personal project that he’s been dedicated to for well over a decade with a signature culinary style and unique tasting menu. He bases his cuisine off traditional Galician recipes made with seasonal, fresh and local ingredients.

His success led him to move from the original location to a larger space on Calle Eduardo Dato with a dining room, a bar area with high tables and a terrace that opens up in summer.



There's even a private room that can be booked for special occasions.



Manuel's personal passion for design is reflected in all the decor, from the furniture to the art.



The restaurant's main attraction is the Menú Lúa tasting menu (€68) consisting of three *aperitivos*, two starters, two main dishes (meat and fish), a pre-dessert and a dessert. Oenophiles can order this same menu along with a wine pairing, Menú Lúa Chea (€90). If you're not in the mood for a tasting menu, not to worry – you're also welcome to order off the regular menu, which features half- and full-size portions of Galician-inspired dishes with a twist.

What's more, [Lúa](#) has over 150 wine labels on offer and a short list of champagnes from small producers. We shared two bottles of the restaurant's very own red and white: "A Tiro Fijo." Both are made exclusively for Lúa and with local ingredients from the Coto de Gomariz bodega in Orense. The wine's flavor was truly unique, with a hint of Albariño which is my favorite.



The star of the menu is Galician-style octopus prepared in two ways: the classic *pulpo a feira*, the authentic recipe from the owner's hometown of Carballiño; and the oven-baked octopus accompanied by potato purée and garlic sauce. We tried the first and for anyone who's ever been to Galicia, you'll know it's the real deal.

We sampled several other small portions of their most popular menu items, such as the foie micuit over pear empanada and caramelized San Simón cheese which was a burst of so many different flavors in just one bite.



We also had the *patatas bravas* made of shrimp – a deliciously deceiving *trompe-l'œil*. The list goes on but I'd rather you experience it first-hand for yourselves.



For dessert we grabbed a seat out on the terrace and ordered the cheese cream with violet soup. The cheese itself was outstanding, and the “violet soup” was inspired by traditional Spanish *Violeta* candies. We rounded off our meal with some *licor de café*, straight from Galicia of course.

This was my first Michelin-starred dining experience and now I

do understand what all the fuss is about. I won't give away too many more details about Lúa, but let's just say that if you appreciate the art of gastronomy and have a love for good food, it's well worth a visit.

Restaurante Lúa

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Pº Eduardo Dato, 5
 - **Phone:** 91 395 28 53
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Sala Equis – impress your friends with lunch in an old XXX theatre

Lunch at a once-was pornography theatre in Madrid is not what anyone expects and is exactly why you must go. The gem that awaits you is hardly recognizable from the street but once you arrive at Tirso de Molina metro, you're just feet away.

Once inside [Sala Equis](#), pass the popcorn machine and "taquilla" and go down towards the sun-soaked covered patio with two-story-high skylights. The natural light makes it a little difficult to see the main screen but it ironically plays second fiddle to the overall ambience.



During our afternoon visit, the suspended screen played an old black-and-white movie that blended into the background amongst the greenery and food and drink counter. According to [Sala Equis' website](#), there are often concerts in this same space though we weren't privy to see any that day.



Lunchtime turned out to be the ideal hour considering there was plenty of options for spaces to sit and eat but there were enough people to kickstart the pre-Saturday night feeling. We skipped the lawn chairs, swings and stadium-style seating and opted for some iron loveseats with tables.

The menu can't be described as one thing or another since it offers a bit of it all. We had the vegan burger with fries (€9), a flatbread pizza with fig and goat's cheese (€7.50), a quiche with bleu cheese and squash (€5.50), a couple of kimchi and shrimp wraps (€8 each).







The food was interesting, much like the locale. There's also Mahou on tap and a full bar.

Apart from the covered patio, there is still a functioning movie theatre. Though the genre originally screened is no longer, one can still find the red velvet couches that you could only imagine to be found in a former pornography movie

theatre.

Currently, Sala Equis plays all original version films (with subtitles). This month, classics like *Chitty Bang Bang* are playing alongside *Big Fish* and *Lady Bird*. Odd choices they may seem, but the selections are unexpectedly refreshing. Film tickets run about €6.50.

By Caitlin Mackenzie

Sala Equis

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Instagram:** @salaequismadrid
- **Address:** [Duque de Alba, 4](#) (Tirso de Molina or La Latina)

Don't walk right 'pasta'

Propaganda 12

I really and truly love Italy. So much so that if my finances ever return to 'normal' after the battering they've taken from buying a flat, it's where I hope to spend a week over the summer getting some much longed for Vitamin sea.

I love everything from the sing-songy nature of their language, to the style and panache of their locals. And of course, there's the food. To me, there is literally nothing better than a plate of pasta. Like a hug when you're feeling blue, it has restorative powers.

[Propaganda 12](#) is so much more than pasta though. It's like bypassing passport control and finding yourself in the land of limoncello, despite not having left the cocoon of barrio Chueca.



As mentioned, I bought a flat – a process in Spain that felt akin to a root canal, but I survived. And after you've

survived something there's only really one rightful thing to do and that's – celebrate. So off I went (with my Dad in tow) to toast my freshly signed mortgage.

No sooner did we arrive, our hostess (who couldn't be faulted the entire evening) offered us two glasses of champers – I liked the place already and the fizz combined with the decor (my current obsession is all things paint and plate related) made an excellent first impression. The tiles in the bathroom along with the wallpaper are sure to be papped and all over the 'gram.



Again, we completely trusted our wonder of a waitress when it came to wine and she gave us a back story with each bottle.

So on to the food. We shared anti pasta to start. Now so far, you may well think so predictable, but the roast pork that we plumped for was literally so a-ma-zing, that we ordered a second portion.



Now I enjoy pork as much as the next person but this was something else. Tasting of rosemary and served with freshly baked bread, I honestly think I could eat it day in, day out. Whilst I'm becoming increasingly open minded with food, my

Dad's a tough crowd and even he couldn't find enough superlatives to pile on the praise.



We both then had a beef red curry which was spiced to perfection – not bland, not blow your head off hot and two delicious puds, tiramisu and a red fruits cheesecake respectively. Everything was heavenly and as good as anything that I've eaten in Puglia. All the while, the setting is chic yet cosy, the staff friendly but not overbearing.

I also spotted that come weekends, they do a champagne brunch

for the non too pricey sum of 25 euros. Good food, good booze, good times.

An ideal place to brunch, lunch or dinner, pop propaganda 12 on your to-do list right about – now!

All photos from Propaganda 12

Propaganda 12

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Fratelli Figurato – two Neapolitan brothers bring pizza passion and innovation to Madrid

Fratelli Figurato is a newly opened pizzeria in Madrid's Chamberí neighborhood, brought to us by two brothers hailing from Naples who share a strong passion for pizza and innovation.

Before founding [Fratelli Figurato](#), Riccardo and Vittorio had both worked in marketing and lived in different parts of the world. It wasn't until December of last year that they decided

to give it all up to pursue their true calling: reinventing the Neapolitan pizza.



The mastermind behind the kitchen is Riccardo, who's been a pizza-making aficionado for years, creating his own methods and putting spins on Italian culinary tradition. You'll always spot him sporting a blue New York Yankees hat.

Vittorio is in charge of marketing and communication, and designed the restaurant's image and personality. He's the crazier one of the two, although he shares the same passion for gastronomy and creativity as his brother.



Together, the Italian duo has made their dream come true with [Fratelli Figurato](#). Lucky for us, we now get to delight in their welcoming, family-run restaurant serving delicious Naples-style pizzas featuring innovative techniques, elaborate processes and special ingredients.



Their pizzas stand out in particular for the light dough – Figurato’s trademark recipe created by Riccardo. It’s fermented for an impressive 36 hours and made with top-quality ingredients. With each pie you order, you get to choose from three dough options: traditional, wheat and five-grain.

After greeting the two brothers and hearing all about the restaurant's story and mission, here's what went down at the table:



We each ordered a glass of Italian wine: a white *Casal di Serra*, and a red *Lacryma Christi*. To whet our appetites we were given slices of Tuscan-style salami. A perfect and simple appetizer.

You can't go wrong with any of the pizzas listed on the menu, but seeing as it was our first time, we asked to try the most standout options – mortadella and pistachio, and squash and pancetta.



The first is made with a cream of ricotta and pesto, and provolone cheese. After leaving the oven, it's topped with thin slices of mortadella from Bologna, bits of toasted pistachios and basil. We had it prepared on traditional dough.



The latter is made with cream of roasted squash, provolone and crispy pancetta. It's topped with walnuts and basil. We ordered it on five-grain dough.

The mix of ingredients and flavors was so unexpected and delicious. Not to mention the dough was outstanding and very light.



To round it all off, we ordered their most in-demand dessert, the Sicilian-style cannoli. Divine.

All the star dishes certainly have a signature Figurato flair. We'll definitely be going back to try everything else on the menu!

Fratelli Figurato:

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