Kittens & coffee at Polineko, an ethical cat cafe in La Latina

You may have heard of the Japanese concept of a '**neko café**,' or a cat cafe, which has made a splash in the world's biggest cities in recent years.

In Japan, the idea was born because most landlords don't allow pets. So animal lovers go to a cat cafe and pick which cat they'd like to play with. Each time they visit, they spend time with the same cat, forming a relationship with him or her. It's kind of like having a part-time pet.

In other cities though, like London and New York, it works a bit different. You simply pay to **hang out in a feline-filled cafe**, and the cats roam free while you sip a latte and relax.

The latter has arrived to Madrid. There are a handful of options, but my favorite is Polineko, recently opened in La

Latina. It stands out for several reasons:

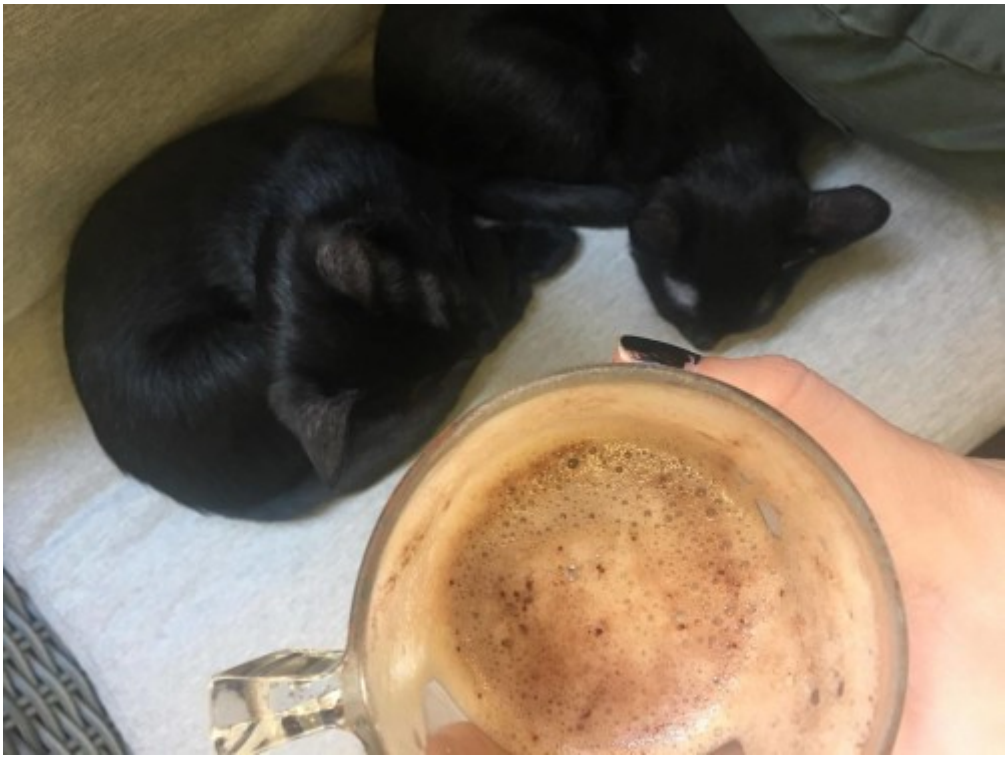
- **Its authentic Japanese style.** Between the decor, the Japanese snacks like doriyakis, and the anime-themed items in their shop, you'll feel like you've stepped into a real neko café.

- **Its mission.** Above all, Polineko aims to foster loving relationships between humans and their feline friends. Unlike other cat cafes in Madrid, you can touch and play with all the cats, and almost all of them are available for adoption. They partner with animal protection agencies like ALBA that facilitate the adoption process, guaranteeing that all cats are healthy and vaccinated, and that they end up in loving and reliable 'furever' homes.

- **Its staff.** Everyone who works here is incredibly friendly and knowledgable, from Steven (the warm and open co-owner), to Juan (barista extraordinaire), and its other co-owner, Melisa, who I didn’t meet but is a veterinarian and does free behavioral consultations for your cat every Friday!

- **The environment.** The cafe is spacious and opts for couches instead of tables and chairs. There’s free wifi and they won’t bat an eye if you choose to work on a laptop, or if you prefer to sit on the ground and play with the kitties.

- **The coffee.** It’s delicious. That’s all. Oh, and they have every kind of milk variety you can think of. Try it with almond milk!



In addition to coffee and Japanese snacks, Polineko also offers bowls of cereal (Froot Loops and Lucky Charms, oh my!) and Japanese beer and tea.

Polineko is open Sunday-Thursday from 11am-10pm, and Friday and Saturday from 11am-11pm.

Prices are as follows:

- 4€ for 30 minutes and a beverage
- 6€ for 30 minutes, a beverage, and a Japanese snack
- 6€ for an hour and a beverage
- 8€ for an hour, a beverage, and a snack

The staff is also planning to launch **intercambio nights** soon—stay tuned for more info by following them on social media.

Here are more cat pics.

Photos courtesy of Polineko and the author.

Info

- **Address:** Carrera de San Francisco, 11
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- **Instagram & Twitter:** @polineko_madrid
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