

Lockdown diaries: Cepee, community builder & founder of She Hit Refresh

Cepee was in Morocco when the news started spreading that Madrid was going under lockdown and closing off its borders. Luckily she made it back in time, but three of the women she was traveling with are still there and are having trouble getting back home.

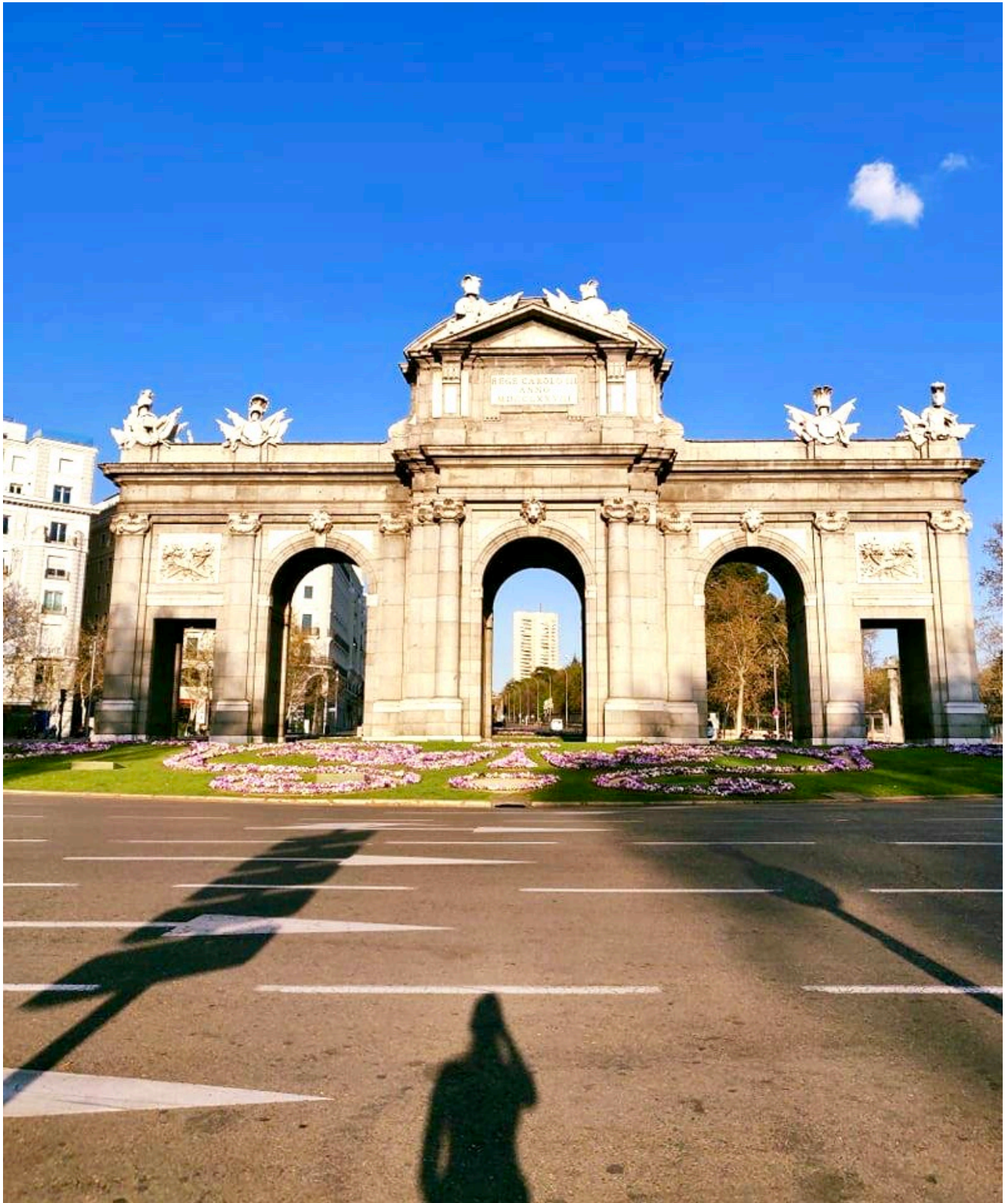
Cepee Tabibian is from the US and has been living in Madrid for over four years. She's the founder of [She Hit Refresh](#), an online community of over 5,000 women age 30 and over who want to break free from routine and start a life of travel. She's also the creator of [Madrid Blogger Network](#), Madrid's largest community for content creators.

What was your life like a week ago vs. today?

A week ago I was in Marrakech, Morocco. We were just a couple days into my retreat for my business She Hit Refresh. I was joined by seven lovely women – five Americans, one Canadian, and one Brit. When I left Madrid on March 5th, I believe Spain had roughly 280 cases of COVID19. Movement to/from the U.S. and Europe was normal, except for possible quarantine for those who had been in high-risk countries at the time: China, Iran, Italy.

Morocco only had two cases at that point and they were in Casablanca, a city we were not visiting. We were able to enjoy the trip without paranoia but were mindful to wash our hands and use hand sanitizer. However, social distancing wasn't being practiced yet in our group or even in society. Life felt quite normal. The beauty of the trip was that Morocco felt very far from the coronavirus panic and hype that we were seeing on Facebook. On more than one occasion we commented on how lucky we were to be in our own bubble, away from the anxious energy.

Fast forward one week – the impact of corona caught up with us. The announcement of new travel restrictions in the U.S. for travelers coming from Europe cut the trip short for some of our attendees. A few changed their flight to leave Morocco that same day and when my flight back to Madrid was cancelled that evening, I started to realize that things were starting to change very quickly in Spain.



I made it back to Madrid via Zurich and hit the supermarket as soon as I got home as I heard rumors of a possible lockdown. Today is day 5 of the quarantine and my life is not too different from what it was before embarking on the retreat. I work from home and am used to spending long hours in isolation at my apartment. But at the same time much of my social life

comes from the many events I run and attend in the city; we're now navigating how to replicate that online.

I've been using the extra time to work on projects and tackle my to-do list. I'm also being gentle with myself and allowing myself time and space to just relax. I do get to have a short walk outside three times a day with my dog, who has been the best company and cuddle buddy during this lockdown.

While I feel calm here in Madrid I am concerned for three of our attendees who stayed in Morocco to travel after the retreat and are having difficulties getting back home.

What does the street look like?

I live in Lavapiés. My street is eerily quiet – minimal foot traffic and barely any cars coming through. There is a stillness in the air that wasn't there a week ago – *a very 28 Days Later feel*. If I do see anyone on the street, they are either walking their dog or going grocery shopping. Some are wearing masks and gloves, we keep our distance, and most don't even make eye contact when they pass by.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

Our daily expression of gratitude to the health workers at 8:00pm has become my favorite time of the day. Hearing neighbors near and far applaud and cheer from their balcony and windows is uplifting and heartwarming. It's a moment where

you can experience the best of humanity. Madrid is a social city and since we can't be together physically, banding together everyday for this one ritual makes me feel deeply connected to humankind.

How are you coping?

I feel like I am coping very well. Although I'm an extrovert, I enjoy spending a lot of time at home alone. My original plan before corona was to hunker down in March and April to work on a few big projects. I was going to limit my social time so I could focus, so I guess I get to do just that, but without FOMO.

I'm making sure I'm still physically active. While I can't run under the lockdown I can work out in my apartment and have been using the [7-minute workout app](#) on a daily basis.

I have plenty to keep me busy, my dog to keep me company, and a cozy apartment stocked with food to keep me comfortable. TikTok, online communities, and the internet in general keeps me entertained and gives me an outlet for escapism when I need it.

I have so much to be grateful for right now and by focusing on what I have, I'm not frustrated by what's lacking or what I can't do. It could be much worse and I know a few weeks (months?) isolation is a drop in the ocean in the grand scheme of life. I can do it. We can do it!

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

Go for a run! I was just getting back into running before the quarantine. In Italy I heard they can leave the house to go for a run and at the beginning of our lockdown I fantasized about running wild and free through an empty city, however, outdoor activities are not allowed in Spain.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

I have many friends who are *autónomo* (registered freelancers) in Spain and struggling with the loss of work. The stress about how to pay their bills, let alone how to meet the monthly *autónomo* fee, is heavy. My message to the government echoes what Daniel Catalan has said before me, please consider suspending monthly *autónomo* fees indefinitely.

**for all registered freelancers in Spain, you must pay a monthly fee of €280/month, regardless of income*

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

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