

Volunteer Opportunities in Madrid for Everyone

If you're looking for ways to get involved in the Madrid community and help out – from donating clothes to teaching English in city jails – here are a few non-profit organizations recommended by international volunteers who live here. While some require long-term commitments and knowing Spanish, others can benefit from just a few hours of your time and have no language barriers.

So whether you're new to the city or have very little spare time, there are plenty of ways to give back – even the smallest gesture can make a difference.

[Casa Solidaria](#)

While Madrid operates government-run food banks for its residents in need, there are many people who can't take advantage of this service due to lack of paperwork. **Casa Solidaria** aims to fill this void, organizing volunteers who prepare food in their own homes and deliver to 150+ people in **Plaza de Tirso de Molina every weekday at 8:30pm**. Each person gets a hot meal, a sandwich and a piece of fruit.

One volunteer said: "For most of these people, this is their primary source of food for the day. Without this, they are at serious risk." With no regular funding, the charity—which also operates in Barcelona and Lleida—is always always looking for [volunteers and donations](#).

- [Website](#)

[Robin Hood Restaurant](#)



Pablo Blazquez Dominguez/Getty Images

Another noble organization feeding the hungry of Madrid is the Robin Hood restaurant on Calle Eguilaz. During the day, Robin Hood is run like a typical Spanish café. But **by night, the chefs and waiting staff use the profits to feed Madrid's most in need residents.**

At this catholic charity-run eatery, the idea is to offer the homeless of Madrid not only their daily bread, but also the civility of dining at a restaurant. Father Ángel García Rodríguez told [NPR](#), "I want them to eat with the same dignity as any other customer. And the same quality, with glasses made of crystal, not plastic, and in an atmosphere of friendship and conversation." The restaurant is attracting the talents of celebrity chefs and staff from the city's top hotels.

Support Robin Hood by dropping in for a bite to eat—just be sure to make a reservation first as it's booking up months in advance.

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

CONCAES (Confraternidad Carcelaria Española)

CONCAES is a Madrid-based NGO that works to provide support to people affected by crime, whether they're prisoners, victims or family members. One of their main initiatives is giving educational workshops for inmates, to provide or increase skills and help with rehabilitation. English classes are currently run in two different penitentiary centres and give inmates the opportunity to learn English, or improve their level with native teachers.

As a volunteer you are responsible for planning and leading the classes, while you are accompanied by other volunteers or coordinators. According to one volunteer, "It can be challenging at times but it is without a doubt the most rewarding thing that I've done since moving to Madrid. In my experience the students are very motivated and the classes have a great atmosphere. The English workshops take place on Friday mornings so it's easy to combine with work. It can take a while between signing up and getting permission to enter the centres so this is definitely one for people who are in Madrid for more than a few months."

- [Website](#)

Madrid for Refugees



Madrid for Refugees is run by a group of international volunteers who work closely with refugee centers in the Comunidad de Madrid. Their main goal is to help refugees from all over the world to build a life for themselves here in the city, from finding housing to work. One way to support Madrid for Refugees is by attending a **Chefugee event – monthly dinners organized where the entire menu is prepared by a refugee** seeking work opportunities in Madrid’s culinary scene. Other ways to get involved include donating clothes and doing language exchanges as well as running errands and being a chauffeur. You can also attend their fundraising events and concerts which are announced on the [MfR Facebook page](#), and all benefits go to helping refugees.

[Facebook](#) & [Website](#)

[Serve the City](#)

Serve the City is an international volunteer movement that

began in Brussels in 2005, and is now located in over 95 cities around the world. It aims to connect people with local opportunities and events in their cities, so they can show kindness in practical ways to people in need, including refugees, the homeless, orphans, victims of human trafficking, the disabled and the poor. Serve the City believes that even the smallest efforts can make a big difference, and we agree.

[Website](#) & [Facebook](#)

Know of any other organizations to add to this list? Let us know!

Street spotlight: Calle Ruda, a tiny portal between La Latina and Embajadores

It goes without saying that there's no shortage of things to do in Madrid. In fact, sometimes there's so much, you don't know where to start. On those days when the sun's shining and you're itching to get out of the house, **sometimes it's best to just walk to a cool part of town and let the city do its thing.** We're here to give you some inspiration.

Calle de la Ruda

La Latina and Embajadores—bustling multicultural hubs—are connected by a string of tiny streets full of surprises. One of them is **Calle Ruda**, which takes you straight from Mercado La Cebada to Plaza Cascorro, and makes the very short walk well worth it.

Onis, for old-school charm



If you enter the street from Calle Toledo, you're greeted by the classic corner bar, Onis.

This place is the definition of *castizo*. Tapas in the glass display case, tobacco machines, weird arcade games, and a grumpy server who has probably been here since the place opened (which was 1976, I've learned).

Ruda Café, for coffee



Looking for something more modern? We got you. Keep heading down Ruda and you'll come across [Ruda Café](#), a new (opened last year) coffeeshop that's riding the wave of java experts that has hit Madrid in recent years. We're not mad about this trend. And yes, they have wifi. They also sell packaged artisanal coffee and tea, jam, art, and coffeemakers.

De Piedra, for handmade jewelry



But there's only so much coffee you can drink (unfortunate, I know). So now that you're fueled up, you're ready to browse the cute little shops of this gem of a street. If you're a fan of jewelry and creepy mannequins, pay a visit to **De Piedra**, an artisanal jewelry shop at C/ Ruda 19. They haven't been at this location long, but the store has been open for some 15 years.

Molar, for records, books and cassette tapes



Next you'll come across my personal favorite place on the street, **Molar**. Think record store meets bookshop. They even sell cassette tapes, which is not something you see every day in Mad City.

Mamá Elba, for something sweet



Got a sweet tooth? [Mamá Elba](#) has been open a mere 3 weeks, and is already drawing a loyal customer base. Their selection of ice cream (including vegan and gluten-free), cakes, and coffee will leave you overwhelmed by heavenly choices.

Erre Catorce (R14), for art and design



[R14](#) is another **brand new spot** on the street, just open for a month. It's a modern interior design shop, with local art, restored vintage furniture pieces (from around the world, namely Scandinavia and the US), apparel, and lots of cool home decor.

Soon they'll be putting on events to promote and discuss interior design and art, so keep your eyes peeled and follow them on [Facebook](#).

La Tienda de Cerveza, for craft beer



Next up: craft beer. Okay, I lied before, THIS place is my favorite. [La Tienda de Cerveza](#) is a must in La Latina (and in the city, really). The shelves are lined with hundreds of bottled or canned craft beers and ciders from both Madrid and around the world. They have a few tables in the back, and they hold tasting events often. An absolute must for *cervecerxs*.

Tienda Biológica, for something healthy

Something I love about Madrid is that **you can eat healthy without going bankrupt**. Tienda Biológica is living proof of this. This small organic food shop sells health products at reasonable prices, and it's run by the sweetest lady.

La China Mandarina, for a great meal in a modern space



And last but not least (and not even covering half of the street's spots), for a great meal and a laidback ambience, visit [La China Mandarin](#) at the end of Calle Ruda (closest to Plaza Cascorro). It's one of those places that masters the art of offering both very traditional and very modern cuisine on the same menu. So if you're craving a *tortilla de patatas* but your friend has a hankering for a vegan burger, there's something for everyone.

They have great wifi and won't roll their eyes if you work on your laptop all morning (I know from experience).

There's also a mushroom-themed restaurant called El Brote! Check out Leah's article about it here:

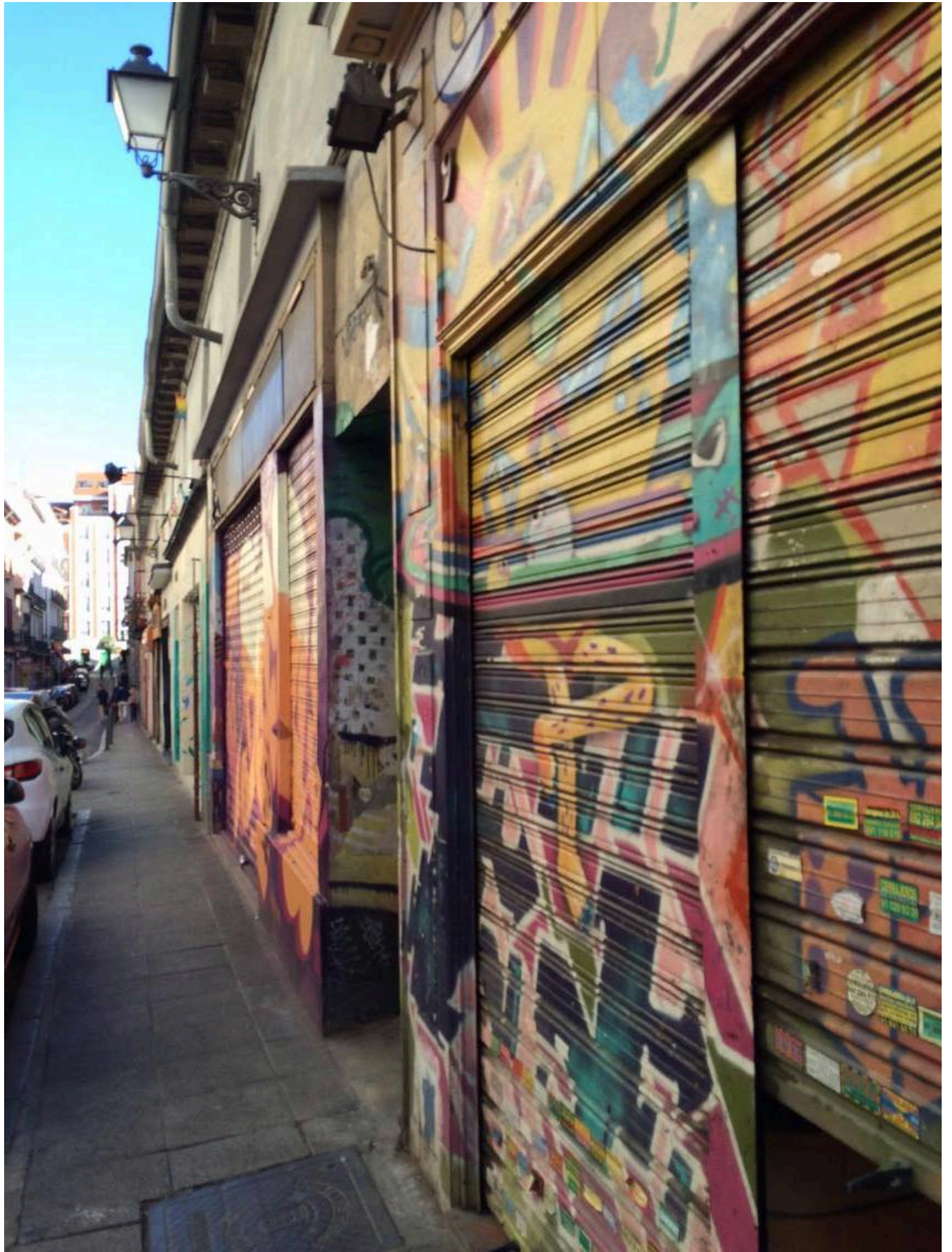
[*El Brote: a brand-new mushroom restaurant in the heart of El Rastro*](#)

Calle Ruda is just one of a plethora of tiny goldmines in Madrid. If none of these spots call your attention (tough crowd!), we suggest you still come to the area on a beautiful day and just get lost. You can't go wrong.

A Mini Guide: how to make the most of rainy Madrid

When the sun shines on the big city... Madrid is spectacular, especially in the sun. The authentic Spanish architecture on every building looks picturesque against a backdrop of blue skies, and even the areas coated in graffiti look artistic and vibrant in a summery light. You can walk pretty much anywhere; take a stroll in El Parque Retiro; sip sangría in Plaza Mayor; visit a rooftop in almost any barrio.







But with some Autumnal showers it can be difficult to experience Madrid to the full, so here are a few ideas to keep

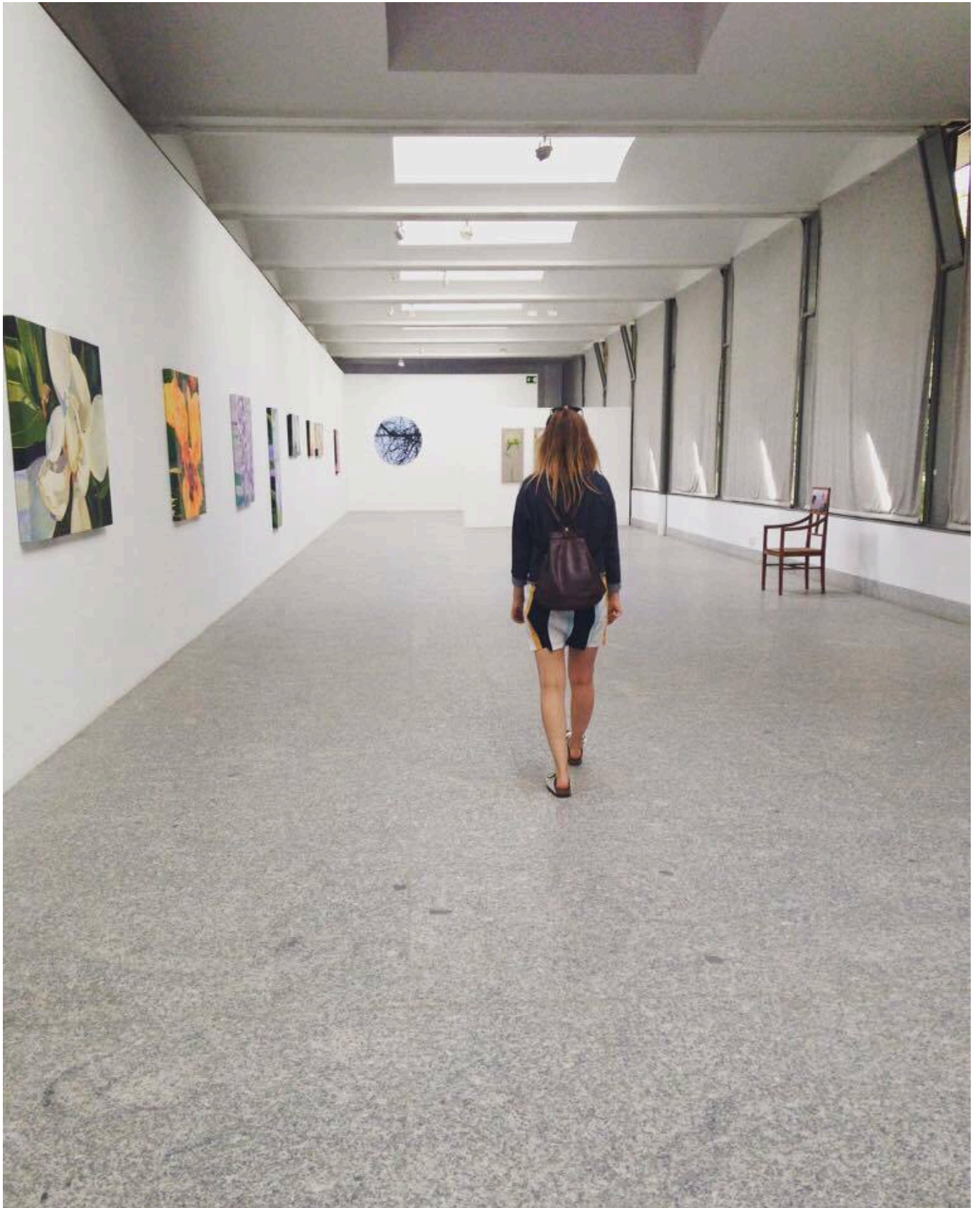
you busy come rain or shine...

Get even more culture in you

It goes without saying that rainy days are perfect museum days. Stay warm and dry inside beautiful exhibition rooms, and feel like you have really experienced at least a snippet of the art and culture that Madrid has to offer, even on a miserable day.

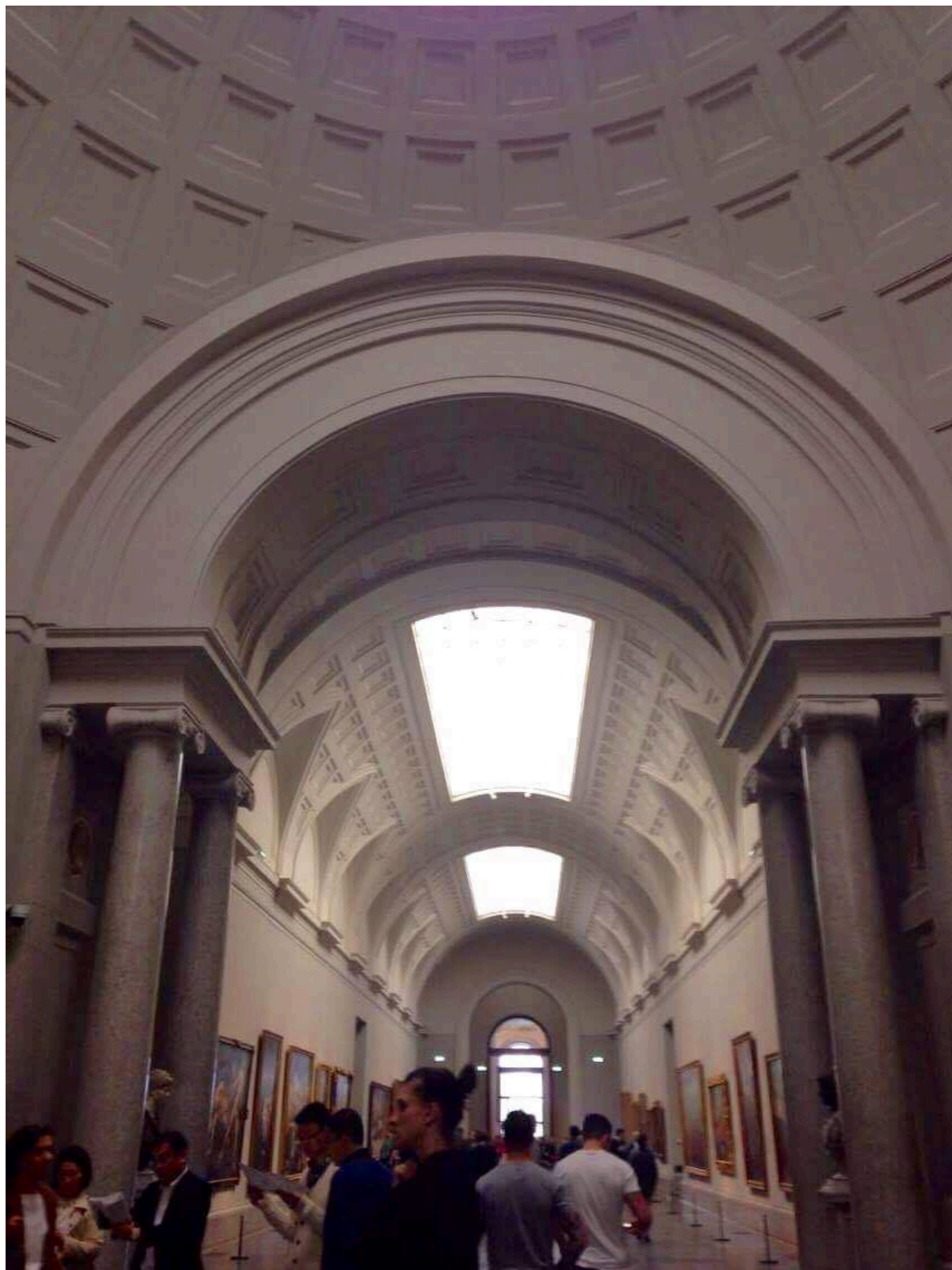
This can also be a free way to enjoy Madrid! Just as though you were wandering through tourist sites in the sun, like the grounds of Palacio Real or within Plaza Mayor, many art exhibitions in Madrid are free to the public.

To get started with art in Madrid, a true tourist or cultured expat must visit the [city's main art museums](#). **El Museo del Prado** houses Spain's finest works ever produced, and is free from 6 to 8pm every day. **La Reina Sofia** boasts the breathtaking *Guernica* (*Pablo Picasso*) and four floors of thought-provoking artwork; it is free on Sunday mornings and afternoons. To get even more authentic, **El Museo Taurino** is Spain's bullfighting history museum, and is free to the public every day of the week.



For [less well-known exhibitions](#), keep checking websites to find the best ones, as lots are exhibited for limited time periods. Photography exhibitions seem to populate the Embajadores area: [La Tabacalera](#) is home to many temporary

shows for renowned Spanish photographers and artists.



When you think of Spanish culture, you think of Flamenco. A quintessentially Spanish dance art that is both vibrant and dynamic. [La Villa Rosa Flamenco](#) is the oldest flamenco bar in the *world*. It opened in 1911, and has since promoted the Flamenco art with regular shows. Enjoy a class of vino in this relaxed, lively atmosphere.



Fooooooooood: cake, churros and tapas with a twist

When it's rainy, chilly, or just a bleak day, we often entertain ourselves with food. I mean, eating is great at any time, but there seems to be something about a miserable day that makes you feel peckish for a tasty gastronomic experience. Luckily, any street in the centre of Madrid is largely populated by tapas bars and restaurants. But these can too often feel very same-same.

When it comes to eating tapas and savouring every single taste because you have never tasted anything quite like it before, think: [LA MUSA](#). It's what foodie dreams are made of. Forget your standard croquette, and think *Croqueta 2.0*. Forget your standard patatas bravas, and think of *La Patata Bomba* filled with meat and served on bread crumbs and a magical pea puree. If you are lucky enough to go to [La Musa](#) you will enjoy the fusion of Asian and Spanish cuisines in one, revolutionary tapas menu. Find La Musa in both La Latina and Malasaña.



As well as typical Spanish bars, Madrid boasts a plethora of cool artisan cafes to choose from. Cosy up on a Central Perk

style sofa with a caramel macchiato and a slice of red velvet cake. There is always a buzz running through such places, whether that be from the coffee grinder or the many chatty customers: they really seem to be a hub for expats and travellers sheltering themselves from the drizzle. Some personal favourites in Malasaña include:



La Bicicleta: an industrial-chic, modern and artistic café with homemade cake and great coffee. It has a work station for those with laptops, and slowly transforms throughout the day from a bustling café to lively and casual bar by night. Here, I would recommend their **Chai Vanilla Latte** (not many places do it Madrid!) and a slice of **fluffy carrot cake**. Be careful not to head there in peak hours (2-5pm) as you will struggle for a table.



HanSo Café: a hidden gem. By hidden I mean there is literally no sign on its exterior. Inside it is pretty minimal too, with

concrete walls, floor and bar area. The grey tones are contrasted with the warm low-hanging lighting, and the soft sound of music and subtle smell of sourdough toast adds some atmosphere.

Fresh cakes are constantly brought out by HanSo's friendly owners, with some *postres* looking colourful and fruity with an Asian twist. There is a large central table for social hipsters and a few window seats for more private coffee dates. They have a never-ending list of frappes – so you will be spoilt for choice.

When you think of Madrid in cold or rainy weather, you will warmly dream of **chocolate con churros**. In fact, you can kill two birds with one stone. You get your daily dose of 'culture' by trying typical Spanish delicacies, whilst also satisfying your chocolate cravings...



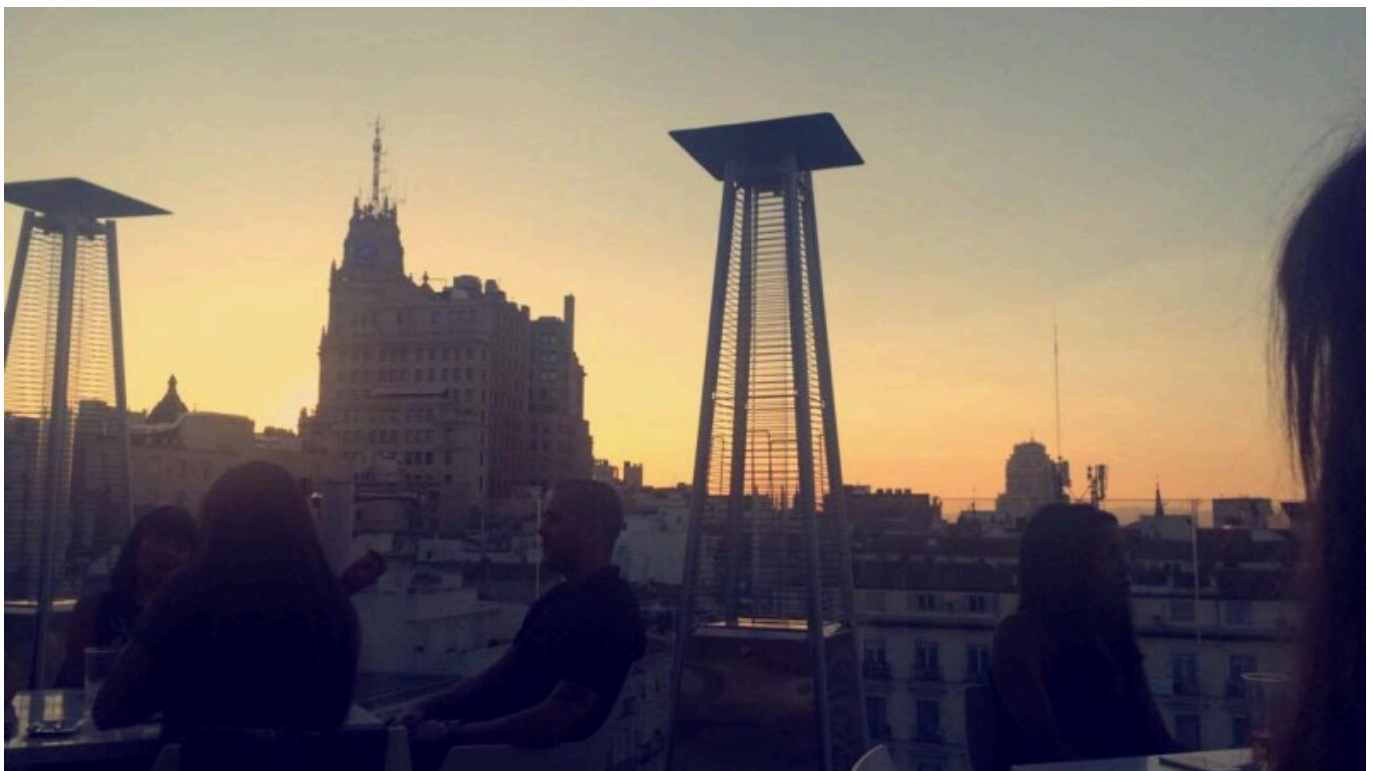
Artesanos 1902: 'La mejor churreria' – this churros joint stands wide and proud on Calle San Martín (between Sol and

Opera), complete with twinkly fairy lights that make it all the more inviting. What better way to spend your day eating churros than in a place that has made them their speciality for over 100 years?

They serve their rich chocolate accompaniment in either dark or milk flavours, and also have waffle and crêpe options just in case their mouth-watering churros don't tickle your fancy.

Still up high: panoramic views without getting soaked

One of Madrid's main attractions is the ability to take in the majestic skyline at sunset from one of its [many rooftop terraces](#). In the rain however, this is still possible! Just find somewhere *indoors* that is still high up with panoramic views of the city.



To many, **El Corte Ingles** is just a large department store with everything you may want from furniture to fashion. But it can also be on your list of 'things to see and do' in Madrid. The

9th floor in Sol is a foodie hub, with many street food stands and joints offering all types of world cuisines.

Called [Gourmet Experience](#), El Corte Ingles' 9th floor has cafes and restaurants with window tables that provide customers with an almost birds-eye view of the city. It provides a warm and dry haven to enjoy while feeling on top of the world.



[Mercado San Anton, Chueca](#): here you will find 4 floors of foodie market heaven, topped with a rooftop restaurant and bar. Fear not, 70% of this floor is covered to keep you dry from the rain, and you still feel as though you are high up in the city air with the ability to take in the views.



Faro de Moncloa: a viewpoint standing tall in the heart of Madrid's university district, Moncloa. Visitors have access to two panoramic lifts that will take them up to the 92-metres-high, glass viewing room. Although yes, a view so high of Madrid would probably look better on a sunnier day, it's still a tourist activity that grants a breathtaking view sheltered from rain or wind.

By night: secret gardens and sandy beaches

A problem with rain is that you can't access a sandy beach or an enchanted forest without getting soaked. That's where Madrid's bohemian and artistic student area, Malasaña comes in handy.



El Jardín Secreto: a bar disguised by indoor plants, trees, fairy-lights, unicorn heads, bird cages and swinging princess-style chairs. For a simple cocktail with friends, you can enter this enchanted world *and* keep dry from the rain. It's most definitely Instagram worthy: you won't be able to keep your eyes from gazing around the room at all the Midsummer-Night's-Dream-style décor.



Ojalá: a tastefully decorated cocktail bar and eatery upstairs, and a sandy beach downstairs. I don't know who came up with the idea to create an indoor beach bar, but it's genius. Relax on their floor level seating whilst running your hand through the sand and enjoying a nice copa, cocktail or milkshake. Who says Madrid doesn't have any beaches?!

So here you have it: just my personal selection of the endless activities available in this amazing city, during rainier weather. Other indoor pursuits include Madrid's many cinemas

and theatres, but the list could go on forever.

It is often way too easy to opt for a day in bed watching Netflix when the weather gets miserable, but that's no fun is it? You may be able to take advantage of Madrid's frequently fine weather and stunning outdoor spaces most of the time, but rainy Madrid weather brings with it the chance to discover quirky bars and cafes, taste amazing food and appreciate Spanish art in all its glory. Enjoy!

By Rosie Dowsing

You might also like:

- [Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid](#)
- [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars](#)
- [Madrid's Obvious and Not-so-obvious Art Institutions](#)

Where to Dance Bachata and Salsa in Madrid

Always wanted to learn how to dance bachata but didn't want to pay high costs for private lessons? Well, look no further!

It is *muy de moda*, or very popular to dance bachata right now in Spain. Each year there seems to be more meet-up groups and more bars offering *noches de bachata* or *noches latinas*.

Located right by Templo de Debod, [The Host](#) offers three bachata classes followed by social dancing every Wednesday night.

For 8 euros you'll have entrance to the bar, access to three classes over the course of two hours and a drink (alcoholic or not) of your choice. You can choose to take all three classes or just one. If you're more of a "people watcher" there are plenty of seats at the bar and around the perimeter of the dance floor. Don't show up too early though because the first class starts when the bar opens at 9PM.



For new dancers, the first question often asked is "Do I need to bring a partner?" **You do not need to bring a partner but you can if you'd like!** The classes tend to begin with the basics, which everyone dances individually. Then, when you do partner up, the pairs rotate so often that by the end of the class you'll have danced with nearly everyone, you might even remember a few names or have made a new friend by the end of

the lesson. On this particular Wednesday, the classes were: modern bachata, Dominican bachata and lastly, sensual bachata.



After the classes end and the students watch or record as the dance instructors model all the steps learned, the social dancing starts! You get the chance to practice what you learned with friends from the class or meet others who are just arriving for the social dancing. The fun doesn't end until 3AM! **If you're more interested in salsa, you should join The Host on Thursdays for class (see below).** You'll also hear a little bit of salsa and kizomba throughout the night but Wednesdays are specifically for bachata at The Host!



Info

- Address: Calle Ferraz 38
- Metro: Argüelles / Ventura Rodriguez / Plaza España
- [Facebook](#)

Other classes at The Host:

Tuesday: Kizomba (classes 21:00-23:00 and social dancing until 3)

Wednesday: Bachata (classes 21:00- 23:00 and social dancing until 3)

Thursday: Salsa (classes 21:00-23:00 and social dancing until 3)

Friday: Bachata (classes 22:00-@24:00 and social dancing

until 5:30)

Facebook pages and groups on Madrid's salsa and bachata scene:

1. [Salsa Madrid](#) (page)
2. [Salsa Madrid](#) (group)

Here are some more salsa places to check out:

[Azucar:](#)

For 8 euro you can enjoy classes and a drink at Azucar near Metro Atocha. It is a smaller nightclub but brings in dancers of many levels.

[Tropical House:](#)

Near Metro Plaza de España is the best place to start dancing salsa or bachata as a beginner. Tropical also offers kizomba lessons on Fridays and Saturdays.

[Cats:](#)

On Sundays at Cats (now called Sala Mitty) you can dance salsa and bachata. The crowd is great and there's plenty of room to dance as it doesn't get completely packed.

[El Son:](#)

A close walk from Puerta del Sol, El Son offers classes from Monday through Thursday at 6 euro a class.

[La Negra Tomasa:](#)

In Sol but doesn't feel like it. Live Cuban music every night and although there isn't a lot of space to dance, if you love salsa music, La Negra Tomasa is a must.

You may also like: [Where to get fit in Madrid](#)

Madrid with Kids! – Tips from a Mom

Whether you're planning a trip to Madrid or a long-time resident looking for new ideas, Madrid is full of great options to keep your little ones entertained.

You might also like my article on [workout tips for moms in Madrid](#).

Parks

Madrid is home to several great parks that offer lots of fun activities.



Madrid Rio: Why not go for a run with your baby along the park lining the Manzanares River? Parents running with a jogging stroller in Spain used to get a lot of odd stares. The running boom has changed all that and made jogging strollers a trend that's here to stay. Get yours at [Baby Running](#) – an online store with top-of-the-line sport strollers.

Casa de Campo: Casa de Campo is a huge park housing the [amusement park](#), [zoo aquarium](#) with more than 6,000 animals, and a scenic lake with outdoor cafes and boats for rent. If you'd like to avoid traffic jams and screaming kids on the metro, try the [cable car](#) for a scenic view of Madrid along the way. You may want to make sure you are out of the park before it gets dark as escorts tend to make their appearance later in

the day.

Retiro: Look for a puppet show at the [outdoor theatre](#) on weekends and enjoy the many other street performers surrounding the pond at the center of the park. You can also rent row boats if you're feeling confident in your deltoids, or sit back and relax on the solar boat. If you are looking to get some exercise, [Diverbikes](#) across from the O'Donnell entrance rents all different kinds of bikes, and surreys.

Rain driving you and your kids up the wall? Check out the second floor of the [library](#) in the park for a space dedicated to babies and children.

Theme parks and zoos

In addition to the amusement park and zoo aquarium in Casa de Campo, your children will also love seeing the animals at [Faunia](#) in Valdebernardo. Visitors can interact with cage-free animals, and even feed them. The manatee exhibit and petting zoo tend to be a big hit.

If you have a car, the 30 kilometer drive to [Warner Theme Park](#) is the worth the trip. With five different park areas, including Hollywood Boulevard, Superheroes World, Cartoon Village, the Old West and WB Movie World Studios, there are plenty of options to keep everyone in your family happy. Younger kids will love seeing Batman, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Superman while older kids and parents check out the latest roller coasters, log fumes and rapid rivers.

You also have the largest water park in Europe about 15 minutes from Madrid in Villanueva de la Cañada. [Aquópolis](#) can get very packed during the peak season so you may be better off going to one of Madrid's [outdoor pools](#) on hot summer weekends.



Summer pool by UCM

Sports fans

Kids dreaming of becoming the next Cristiano Ronaldo will forever thank you for taking them to the tour of the [Santiago Bernabeu stadium](#). Mini Real Madrid fans will be in heaven as they visit the players' locker room, the President's Balcony and even sit on the players' bench.

Little ones hoping to join Cholo's squad will love seeing the [Atlético de Madrid Museum](#). Atlético fans will adore looking at the trophies, memorabilia and collection of shoes and balls dating back to 1903.

Kid-friendly museums

If your kids hear the word "museum" and start to groan, several museums in Madrid could change all that.

The [Wax Museum](#) has over 450 figures including Harry Potter, Snow White, The Simpsons and Frodo from “The Lord of the Rings”. Look online for special discounts for families.

The [Madrid Railway Museum](#) contains a selection of 19th century trains, related exhibits and a wide range of family friendly activities. Take a break afterwards and have a snack in the café located in a 1930s carriage. In Spring and Fall you can also take a ride to Aranjuez on an old-fashioned train, the [Strawberry Train](#) (*Tren de la Fresa*).

Madrid’s [Planetarium](#) lets little explorers observe other galaxies, planets, stars and black holes. Children’s workshops are also available for Spanish-speaking little ones.

With huge dinosaur skeletons and weekend workshops for children, the [National Museum of Natural Sciences](#) is another good option for families.

Theatre and concerts for babies and kids

Madrid offers a wide range of theatre and concerts designed for babies and children. The bill is constantly changing so check [BabyTribu](#) and [Sapos y Princesas](#) for the latest options.

Other ideas

Older kids who are into go-carts will love the [Carlos Sainz Center](#) in Madrid and Las Rozas.

Little ones may enjoy visiting [The Casa Museo del Ratoncito Pérez](#) – the Spanish version of the tooth fairy. The hours change so check their website before going.

Located inside the [Kinépolis](#) movie theatre, [The Magic Forest](#) is a children’s park with slides, climbing trees and mazes.

Nearly every neighborhood in Madrid has a **play center** (*ludoteca*). Find the one closest to you [here](#).

By Marybeth Redheffer

Marybeth is the founder of [Baby Running](#), an online store selling sport strollers so you can stay fit with the little ones in the city! Check out her [website](#) and [facebook](#).

You might also like: [Workout tips for moms in Madrid!](#)

Workout Tips for Moms in Madrid!

If you are a former gym buff wondering how you can get some exercise that doesn't involve changing diapers or pushing a swing, fear not! Your workout days don't have to be over.

Also check out my previous article on [great child-friendly activities in Madrid!](#)



Yoga

Mom and baby yoga is a great way to get out of the house, recover strength and flexibility and spend time with your baby. Most yoga classes go from 6 weeks until the baby starts crawling. Check out the Mom and Baby yoga classes at [Centro El Patio](#) near the Bilbao metro stop and [Zentro Yoga](#) close to the Retiro on Calle Claudio Coello.

Yoga for families is another good option for toddlers and children (the age requirement varies from center to center). [City Yoga](#) offers classes for parents and toddlers from 1-3 years and [Centro Infantil Nariz Roja](#) starts at 4 years.

Gyms with daycare

Unfortunately gyms with daycare are few and far between in Madrid. Why deep-pocketed entrepreneurs aren't investing in gyms with daycare remains a mystery. If you are lucky enough to live near one of the gyms that offer daycare, be sure to ask the minimum age before going. Some won't take babies or

toddlers.

- [Virgin Atlantic Capitán Haya \(Tetuán\)](#)
- [Zagros Puerta Europa \(Chamartin\)](#)
- [Holmes Places \(Moraleja\)](#)
- [Reebok Sports Club \(Pozuelo\)](#)

Try Baby Running

Going for a run with your baby or toddler is probably the most convenient way to get some exercise. Just make sure you have a proper jogging stroller – you don't want to hurt your little one in the process! If you're tight on space, opt for a model that can go from swivel to fixed wheel and it can also serve as your everyday stroller. Check out [Baby Running](#) for a selection of top-rated sport strollers.

Try Baby Blading

If rollerblading is your thing, the BOB Revolution PRO is the first stroller to be certified for rollerblading. Get yours [here](#).

Rent bikes

Places to rent bicycles are popping up all over the city. Go for a bike ride with your kids in a nearby park, or if you live in the center, the Paseo del Prado is closed for cars from 9AM-4PM on Sundays. Located across from the O'Donnell entrance to the Retiro, [Diverbikes](#) is also a fun way for the whole family to get some exercise.

MamiFit classes

[MamiFit](#) classes are designed to help new moms in their postpartum recovery, with an emphasis on hypopressive exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor and core. The best part is that you can bring your baby, a few of his or her favorite toys and get in a workout (if your baby cooperates☺).

Go swimming

Take your children for a swim at one of the many [indoor](#) and [outdoor](#) public pools. If your little ones could use some help learning to swim, some pools offer swimming lessons. Take advantage of class time to do some laps yourself!

YouTube

Ignore your to-do list and use nap time to release some endorphins doing exercise at home. There are tons of good full-length exercise videos on YouTube. Some favorites are [All Around Fitness](#) and [Body Rock](#).

By Marybeth Redheffer

Marybeth is the founder of [Baby Running](#), an online store selling sport strollers so you can go out for a run with the little one in the city! Check out her [website](#) and [facebook](#).

You might also like: [Madrid with kids – tips from a mom!](#)

Urso Hotel & Spa, Take a holiday (from a 'holiday')

When you tell people that you live abroad the general response is usually something along the lines of 'Oh you must feel like you're on holiday all the time!' or 'Think of all the sun and sangria!' to 'You must be perma-tanned!' Admittedly, whilst there is a lot of sun and I do feel like I'm on 'holiday' when I look up at all the pretty balconies in Malasaña, La Latina and the like, I'm most certainly not perma-tanned (without the help of something I purchased from Space NK) and life's mundane tasks have a way of finding you wherever you live *read/washing/ironing/cleaning/taking the bins out.

So no matter whether you're fortunate enough to live in a sunny clime (in this case the marvelous Madders) there comes a time when you fancy a holiday within the city; if true indulgence floats your boat then look no further than the **exquisitely elegant and seriously stylish**, [Hotel Urso](#).



Nestled on Calle Mejia Lequerica, Hotel Urso is a relatively small but perfectly formed boutique hotel. Discovered through the [Mr and Mrs Smith website](#) (which I cannot recommend enough) it's the kind of hotel you'll never want to leave. Fluffy white robes adorn the bathroom door, there for the taking when the spa takes your fancy. Pillows so soft, that lifting your head up from one feels like a chore (or maybe that was partly due to too much gin the night before). But still, it felt like having a glimpse into how the other half live – all **freshly brewed coffee, sumptuous soft furnishings and complimentary**

welcome fizz at the hotel bar.



Service wise, Hotel Urso couldn't be faulted. In a country that often leaves a lot to be desired on that front (why do I have to beg for a bill?!) nothing was too much trouble. We forgot our toothbrushes – two new ones appeared by magic. My mum on arrival managed to fall up the stairs – turns out marble floors, heels and mimosas don't mix (but cue an ice pack appearing at lightning speed) – I can only stress here that apples don't fall far from the tree and that making an

entrance must run in the family!

When check out time swung round (which wasn't until 12; a Mr and Mrs Smith perk might I add) neither of us wanted to leave – or part with the 400 thread count Egyptian cotton sheets.

It's worth noting that if splurging on a night away isn't an option – unless money starts growing on trees (as a deluxe room wasn't cheap) they have jazz nights every Thursday and the pop up restaurant '[The Table By](#)' which are well worth a visit, with a different chef dominating in the kitchen each month.

I left Sunday morning plotting how many private classes I'd have to teach so that I can return, and soon. Should I be lucky enough to do so, my mum will be wearing flats.

Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - Address: Calle Mejia Lequerica 8
 - Phone: [+34 914 444 458](#)
 - E-mail: info@hotelurso.com
-

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 CAMISAS
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'ALLET

OLIVIA TE CUIDA

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

#THEHOUSE

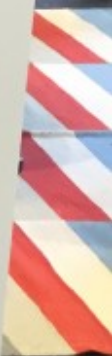
But there's more...

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)

MAR ENGO GREY



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 its 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**).

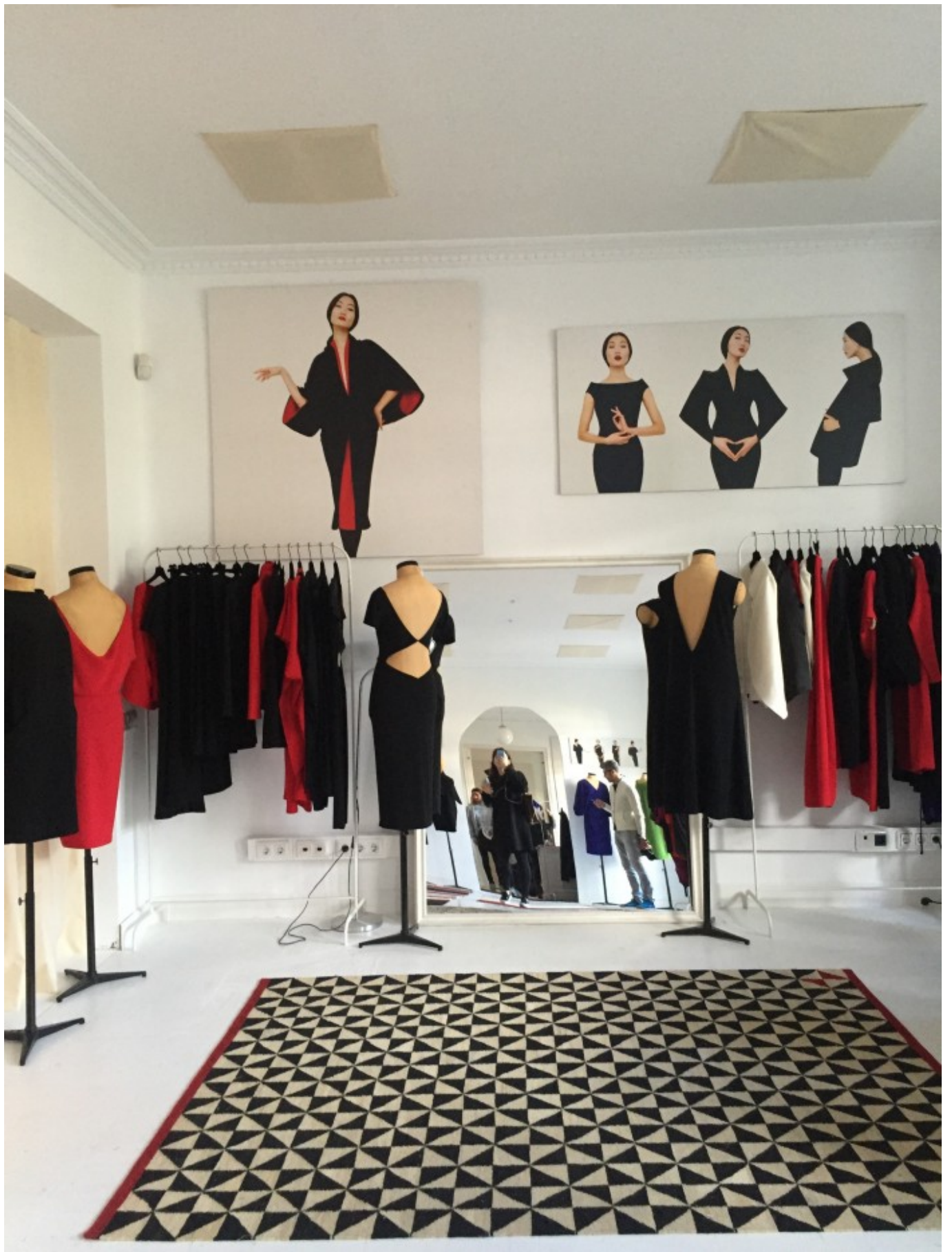


If juicing or health food is more your style, you'll also find a temporary outpost of [Fit Food](#) – where you can try a big selection of the juices on offer (and perhaps tempt you to try a Detox treatment in January so you can fit into clothes you

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](#)

Forasteros, a Madrid-based swing, gypsy-jazz and folk

band

As a hub for artists and creative are types from all over the world, Madrid's local live-music scene is energetic and diverse. As always, your friends at Naked Madrid are here to provide you with the best options as how to maximize the potential of your nights out. **The first local musicians to be featured in this series are the swing, gypsy-jazz, folk group Forasteros.**



They have an interesting backstory because their members had all met by chance. The band was formed when its founder, lyricist and guitarist, **Tom Buzz Cox** from London, crossed paths with **Tara** during a Vaughan System teacher training course. Swing instructor **Julia Hampson**, also from London, was brought onboard as the violinist after an encounter busking the streets in Lavapies.

Tom recruited **Hinata Myojin**, a bassist from Japan, through another band in the community. Clarinetist **Ricardo Vasquez** from Texas/Mexico was discovered upon his response to an advertisement. They are unclear on how drummer **Fernando Iglesias** from Madrid entered the fold, strongly implying that he materialized out of thin air.



They write in Spanish, English, French and even Japanese. Ricardo and Julia have a classical background and are well-versed in swing and Jazz. Overall the group combines aspects of **gypsy-jazz, folk and swing** while also being open to anything that takes their fancy: twisted Latin rhythms, funk, DnB hints.

Their ambition is to make people laugh, dance and feel while also “talking about difficult shit.” says **Tara Lowe**, their singer and lyricist, who I have known for the greater part of the year as two of my close friends were her flatmates. Lowe,

a long-term expat from Cardiff enjoys writing songs about everyday life that are “cheeky, honest and indulgent.”



Forasteros' songs have addressed some of the more **relatable aspects of living in Madrid** with their songs “Landlord from Hell, title self-explanatory, as well as “Banks of June” which focuses on lust and broken hearts. Their track “Springtime Shuffle” centers on opportune new beginnings while “Cuando” is just about dancing.

Forasteros performs a lot in Lavapiés in the venues of Gato Verde, Taberna Alabanda, La Tortuga, La Tabacalera and Centro de Creación y Investigación. Their First EP, “Hello you!” was recorded at The Treehouse Madrid Studios on the label of Vestizo Azul Records. [It is available free on Bandcamp.](#) Check out their video of [“Devil in the Trees”](#) from their new EP.

FORASTEROS

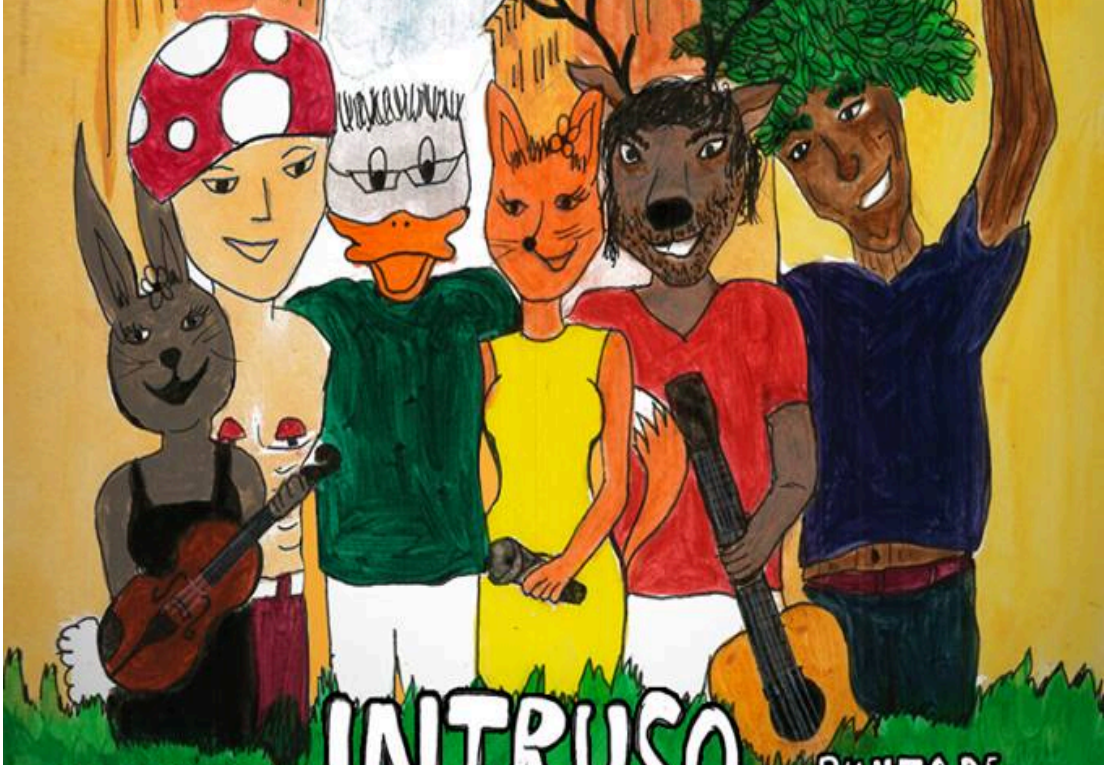
PRESENTACION PRIMER ^{MINI} DISCO

"HELLO YOU!"

JUEVES 12 de NOV. 21H

INVITADO ESPECIAL:
TAIACORE

GYPSY JAZZ FOLK



FACEBOOK.COM/
FORASTEROS
MADRID

INTRUSO

AUGUSTO FIGUEROA 3

PUNTO DE
VENTA:
GIGLON.COM

Info

Follow them on [Facebook](#) & **their** [Bandcamp page](#) and be sure to see them perform live! Their EP *Hello You* launches [on the 12th November at Intruso Bar](#) – with supporting artist [Tiacore](#). Tickets can be purchased at [Giglon](#). The first 50 people to arrive will get a free EP and poster.

La Latina's 'seafood party' in Mercado de La Cebada: The place to see and be seen!

Mercados are the heart and soul of any Spanish city. If you want to get under the skin of the place you're visiting, make a beeline for the city's biggest food market. Wander around each section (meat, vegetables, fish, etc.) and you will instantly see what the region's all about. Then make your way to the *mercado's* busiest bar, order what everyone else is drinking and demand your rightful complimentary *tapa*. If it's something you've never clapped eyes on, even better.



La Latina's [Mercado de la Cebada](#) is no exception. The place encapsulates Spanish culture to almost cliché levels: the heart and soul of Madrid is right here.



Every weekday, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) will sell you fresh produce from all over Spain. There's also a good selection of local bars in the labyrinth of alleys both upstairs and downstairs, and even a few clothes stalls, toyshops and cobblers for some of the market's more devout punters.



But then, every Saturday at lunchtime, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) transforms into what I will describe as nothing less than a **seafood party**.





The atmosphere is electric; iced molluscs and pulpo are flowing, and groups of friends doing what they do best: sharing food and belly-laughing, plastic cup of valdepeñas in one hand, half-eaten shrimp in the other.





Grab a few friends and get there **no later than 2:30pm**. Find one of the aproned chaps hovering in front of his stall, affectionately touching everyone with his fishy hands, and place your order per *ración* or by weight.



Before you take your polystyrene plates to the nearest paper-covered stack of crates, don't forget to pick up your **complimentary bottle of wine or cans of beer. Yeah... COMPLIMENTARY!** Due to licensing rules, these shops can't sell drinks. I imagine there's a slight markup on the prices of seafood but, having said that, **the prices are some of the lowest I've seen in Madrid, and the quality is some of the best.**

There are cups, serviettes, toothpicks and mussel 'spives' (spoon-knives) strategically strewn around the stalls – a seafood spectacular with no frills, and all the better for it.

Info

[Web](#) – [Facebook](#)

Address: Plaza de la Cebada, La Latina, 28005

Metro: La Latina (right outside)

Opening hours: Mon – Fri 9am-2pm / 5-8:30pm; Sat 9am-3pm

Another soulful neighbourhood market, not too far away, is [Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés](#)