

Rascafría



What to see:

There is a proverb in Spanish that goes: *“quien algo quiere, algo le cuesta.”* It’s the Spanish way of saying: “no pain, no gain.” I say this because, if you don’t have a car, Rascafría is far from the city and inconvenient. However, if you have wheels, don’t miss the opportunity to drive along the **northern mountains of Madrid and get away from the city**. Once you get there, you won’t regret it.

In this northern town, there are plenty of adventure activities to do. Although hiking and biking are the most popular, you can also jump into one of Madrid’s natural ponds. After that, enjoy the rest of the day at one of the pool-side *terrazas* or at a café in the quaint town.

How to get there:

- By Car ([How to get there](#))
- By bus

Depart from: Plaza Castilla. 194 bus
Schedule:

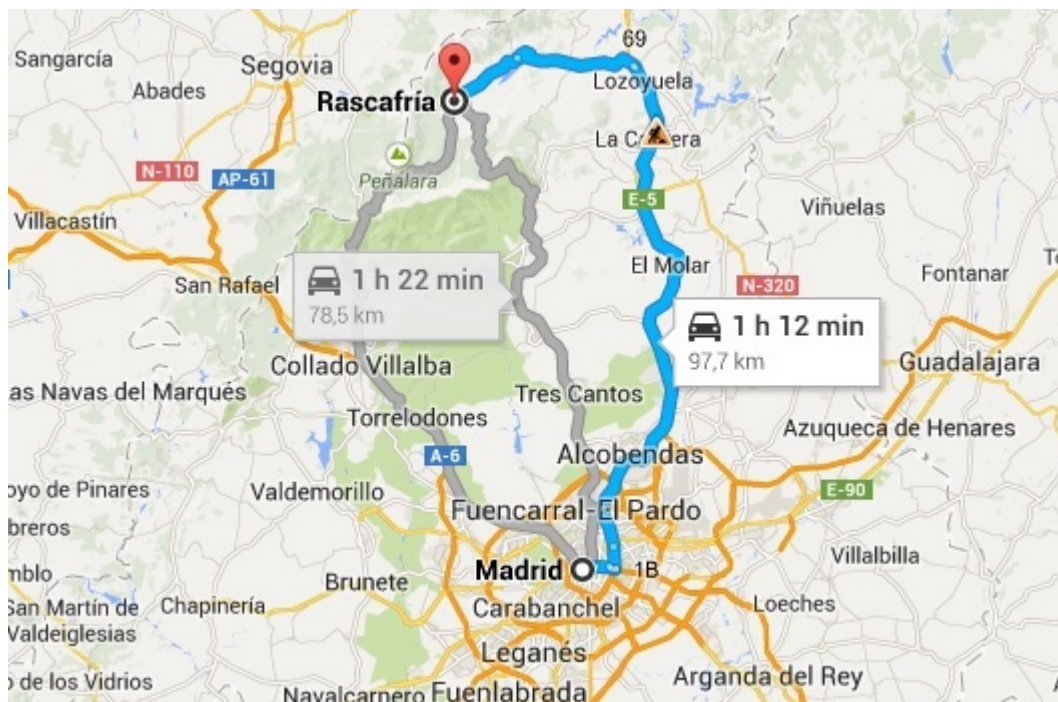
Departure ([Madrid – Rascafria \(Bus\)](#))

Return ([Rascafria – Madrid \(Bus\)](#))

Duration: approx. 2 hour

Price: 5,10€ (round trip 10,20€)

Where to find it on a map:



Best Natural Swimming Pools

in Madrid (my top three)

Sometimes in life, you find yourself taking sides on what really matters: dogs or cats? living in the city or in a town? Here comes a difficult one: pizza or burger? From now on, you won't have to struggle on the next question in Madrid: **day trip to the ocean or hiking in the mountains?** Cause the answer is **piscina natural!!**

Las piscinas naturales, or **natural swimming pools/ponds**, are a pleasant alternative to the more common ones in the city (take a look at our previous post, [my top 4 city swimming pools in Madrid](#)). As far as I know, this kind of pool is **chemical free** and uses the water that flows from a river to fill the **pool**. Here in Madrid, we are lucky enough to live relatively close to a few of them. Since **summer** has now come and it's going to stick around for a while, go give yourself a break and enjoy life in the "*Sierra de Madrid*".

Here are my top three!

(note—they're all open now but I highly recommend calling beforehand to confirm their hours, sometimes they change without warning)

1. Piscinas naturales de Cercedilla (Las Dehesas)



Cercedilla by Marcelo Concina



Cercedilla by ABC

What you need to know:

Cercedilla's pool is my favorite because it's the closest to the city and the easiest one to get to. Before going, you should know that there is a "small" 30-60min walk from **Cercedilla's train station** to the pool. Although you can get a bus that makes it shorter, I'd recommend walking and enjoying the **landscape**. Also, that way you'll really feel you deserve the swim.

Telephone: 91 852 57 40 / 91 852 22 00 (Tourism office)

Schedule: 10am to 8pm (Season 2014: They are open since June 13th!!)

How to get there:

- Quick link to [how to get to Cercedilla](#)
- [Bus from Cercanias train station to the pools](#)

How much is it?

- **Working days:** 5,50€
- **Weekends:** 6,50€
- **Others:** Children and elderly 3,50€ / They also have group prices.

**Note: If it's the first time you go there, ask somebody to tell you in which direction you have to walk.*

2. Piscinas naturales Buitrago de Lozoya

(Riosequillo)



Buitrago de Lozoya by Kripsol



Buitrago de Lozoya by Canalgestión

What you need to know:

My perfect day trip would be visiting **Buitrago de Lozoya** town in the morning, follow by spending the afternoon at the pool while enjoying the view. Buitrago's pool is a bit farther than the one in Cercedilla, and the public transportation is not as convenient. However, the town and the pool deserve a try.

Telephone: 91 293 20 47 (Info) / 91 868 00 56 (City hall) / 91 545 10 00 (Canal de Isabel II)

Schedule: **10am to 8pm** (Season 2014: They are open since June 21st!!)

- **Working days(From Tuesday to Friday):** 11.30 am to 8.30pm
- **Weekends and holidays:** 11am to 9pm

- **Note: Mondays are closed. Better to go on a weekday.*

How to get there:

- Quick link to [how to get to Buitrago](#)
- **Note. Ask the bus driver where to get off, it's not the last stop and you don't want to get lost!*

How much is it?

- **Working days:** 2,50€
 - **Weekends:** 3€
 - **Others:** Children and elderly 1,50€
-

3. Piscinas naturales Rascafría (Las Presillas)



Rascafría by rascafría.eu



rascafria by javidemadrid.tumblr.com

What you need to know:

Last but not least, *Las Presillas* pool in Rascafria is the farthest pond from Madrid and the less convenient to go by public transportation. Although the entrance is free and looks like the most natural and authentic. Plus, the bar area is great!

Telephone: 91 869 18 04 (Las Presillas) / 91 869 11 71 (Rascafria City hall)

Schedule: 9am to 9pm

How to get there:

- Quick link [to how to get to Rascafría](#)

How much is it?

- The entrance is free!!
- Parking is 5€ a day.

Chocolates are nice (but this first date is better) Part 2



So you don't like Da Vinci or Michelangelo and don't see what the fuss is about with graffiti artists like Banksy. I love that shit but not every girl is interested in it either. Again we want to take our date to **3 different places**, it keeps momentum flowing and builds new experiences between you two in a short time. This will not turn all pumpkin dates into shining diamond-studded carriages of awesomeness but it is harder to get bored when you are going to new places.

For **part 2** we will be exploring the **scenic route of Madrid**. Madrileños are crazy about their terrazas, so we will explore the skies and sights of this beautiful capital. The great thing about this is that you let the views do the talking rather than you. Any anecdote about the buildings you see always helps. One is that **Palacio de Cibeles** with its fountain of the Greek goddess Cybele is the unofficial party spot of Real Madrid. Any cup win will see thousands of supporters descend onto the roundabout. As with all routes you will be able to walk from one to the other. This route is one for the

summer, which in Madrid you have plenty of. The views however do have their price and you pay something like a terraza tax. It is a price gladly paid.

Act One: Retiro park



Palacio de Cristal

It is an easy pick but a great place to start with because you get away from the noise and hectic life of the city. You invite your date for an aperitivo to the café (on paseo Venezuela) next to the pond in the centre of the park. However you shouldn't linger too long with the drinks. After the first copa you should take your date to **Palacio de Cristal** in Retiro or show them the now abandoned zoo that used to be in Retiro. For both do a little research and make sure how to get there because you can get easily lost. My personal favourite is the rose garden located towards the side of Av. De Menendez Pelayo. It is incredibly impressive when you walk along and are met by a resident peacock. It will also take you to the restaurant. If the sun is setting though take the route to **Palacio de Cristal**.

What time: 19h-20/21h

Alternative: no just take him/her to the park.

Act Two: [La Castela](#) in Calle del Doctor Castelo, 22



This is a truly excellent restaurant. You have two options when you decide to have dinner here. You can eat at the front of the bar and join in with the crowd. Definitely my recommended option to get the adrenaline pumping after the quiet walk. Even with a minimal Spanish you will get by and be able to order the local delicacies. You can also book a table for two and will be seated at the back, which is much more quiet and intimate. The last time I went a boyfriend gave his girlfriend a necklace for their anniversary (I took the picture if you were wondering).

What time: 21-23h

Metro: Take a walk / Ibiza

Alternative: Platero & Co. A very stylish bar that is located right next to La Castela. The restaurant was designed the Catalan interior designer Inma Rull. Very nicely done.

Act Three: [Azotea](#) on top of **Circulo de Bellas Artes** in Calle de Alcalá, 42



Yes it is crowded with tourists, Spanish and everyone looking for a view but it still is an incredible view. On a first date confirmation is just as important as impressing. Further, walking by foot will give you an excuse to pass by la **Plaza de Independencia** at night down to **Palacio Cibeles** and up **Calle de Alcalá**, which is one of the most beautiful walks in Madrid once it's gone dark. Once you arrive step ahead and pay for both entry tickets (3 euros each). It is a small token of chivalry, especially if you just split the bill 50/50. Once at the top you really have two main choices depending on your comfort level. On the right going down the stairs is an area where you can sit/lie and it is easier to get closer to one another. On the left are high seats with small tables. Daring wins the game in my eyes and I choose the right. It makes your intentions clear in a subtle way.

What time: 23h to 02h

Alternative: [Room Mate Óscar](#) in Plaza Vázquez de Mella 12



The terrace at the top of this hotel has just been renovated. Good thing too because the white plastic surface has been replaced with wooden planks. The special thing about this terrace is that it has a pool but if you fancy a dip you will need to reserve. The terrace has a nice feel due to the artificial grass spread across the ground. Also not a cheaper option as a gin tonic will cost 12 euros and a glass of wine 5 euros.

Metro: Gran Via / Banco de España

Read on...

- For more **first date ideas in Madrid**, check out **part 1** of this article, [Flowers are nice \(but the first date is better\)](#)
 - For more on **rooftop terraces in Madrid**, check out our series on [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars](#)
-

My top 4 city swimming pools in Madrid!

Some of these swimming pools only open in Summer—if you're looking to take a dip in Autumn, Winter or Spring, check out ["Madrid's top pools open year-round and much more"](#).

One of my very best memories as a child is **swimming** in **Madrid's summer pools**. Growing up in the city, we used to go to one of the pools close to my home near Retiro almost every day in summer. There, we would spend the day swimming, running and eating at the **cafetería**. A few years later, the story repeated itself but this time with my friends. We got together and talked and enjoyed the **summer heat and calmness** as if there was no tomorrow.

I'm writing this article today because summer is here, the pools are open and I want to relax and enjoy my day off. On **this list**, you'll read about **4 public swimming pools in the centre of Madrid** that you will most certainly find me in this summer. To be honest, I'm not really sure they are the **best of the city**, but I can guarantee you that all of them will make you forget that **Madrid** doesn't have the sea...

**at the end of this post you'll find a link to all of Madrid's municipal pools, prices and info. And if you're looking for natural swimming pools outside the city, check out our post on ["Madrid's Best Natural Swimming Pools"](#) which are located in nearby mountain towns.*



Summer pool by UCM

1. Complutense University of Madrid (La complu!)

Awesome student atmosphere and CHEAP bar food!!! It's a party.

Schedule: 11h to 20h (11am to 8pm)

What you need to know:

- **Address:** Avenida Obispo Trejo, s/n – 28040 Madrid ([Map](#))
- **Neighbourhood:** Ciudad Universitaria/Moncloa
- **Telephone:** 913 941 174

How to get there:

- **Metro:** Ciudad Universitaria
- **Bus:** 46

How much is it?

- **Complutense members:** 4,50€
- **University students** (Different than Complutense): 6,50€
- **Plus ones:** 8€

*Note: You or someone you are with must bring a student ID to get in. If you are a Complutense student you also get a discount.



Casa de Campo by ABC

[2. Centro Deportivo Municipal Casa de Campo](#)

One of Madrid's most popular public pools by far. There is a fun ambience here but you'll have to wait on a line. It gets crowded.

Schedule: 11h to 21h

What you need to know:

- **Address:** Paseo Puerta del Ángel, 7 28011 MADRID ([Map](#))
- **Neighborhood:** Casa de Campo/Moncloa-Aravaca
- **Telephone:** 914 630 050 / 914 649 889

How to get there:

- **Metro:** El Lago, Puerta del Ángel
- **Bus:** 31, 33, 36, 39, 65, 138

3. [Centro Deportivo Municipal Francos Rodríguez](#)

Great quality swimming pool and plenty of grass area to lay down on, situated in a residential neighbourhood yet close to the University, so you'll find a mix of both families and younger people.

Schedule: 11h – 21h

What you need to know:

- **Dirección:** Calle Numancia, 11 ([Map](#))
- **Neighborhood:** Ciudad Universitaria/ Moncloa-Aravaca
- **Teléfono:** 914 599 871

How to get there:

- **Metro:** Francos Rodríguez
 - **Bus:** 44, 64, 126, 127, 128, 132
-



Peñuelas by Rosalia Martinez

4. [Centro Deportivo Municipal Peñuelas](#)

Lay out on the sun, take a dip and grab a picnic table with your friends for lunch!

Schedule: 11h – 21h

What you need to know:

- **Dirección:** Calle Arganda, 25 ([Map](#))
- **Neighborhood:** Acacias/Arganzuela
- **Telephone:** 914 732 491

How to get there:

- **Metro:** Acacias, Embajadores, Pirámides
- **Bus:** 18, 36, 62
- **Renfe (Cercanías):** Pirámides

What do I need to bring?

- There are showers so bring flip flops
- Although some have lockers, most people just leave their stuff on their towels and don't bring anything valuable
- Bring snacks or a few euros to get a bite or drink at the cafeteria
- Lots of suntan lotion, you don't want to be that foreigner who gets burnt...

How much is it?

- **Single tickets:** Adults week-day 5€ (weekends 6€)
- **10 ticket pack:** 42,95€
- **Summer-long ticket** 126,15€

*Except Complutense. See above.

Full list of public summer swimming pools in Madrid: [Listado completo de piscinas municipales](#)

Check out [Madrid's Best Natural Swimming Pools!](#)

Aranjuez



What to see:

In the south of Madrid, you'll feel royal as you walk through Aranjuez's lush gardens and visit its impressive Royal Palace. Built as the royal family's summer house, Aranjuez is best to visit in the spring or summertime so you can take in all the colors of its gardens in full bloom.

Unlike most towns in Spain, there are no tiny streets here. Aranjuez stands out for its large and spacious boulevards. Once you've built up an appetite, there are plenty of good Spanish restaurants right along the Tajo river where you can enjoy typical Spanish food and *carne de caza* (game food).

How to get there:

• By train (Cercanías)

Depart from: Atocha train station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Aranjuez \(RENFE\)](#))

Return ([Aranjuez – Madrid \(RENFE\)](#))

Duration: approx. 50 min

Price: 3,30€ (round trip approx. 6,60€).

• By bus

Depart from: Méndez Álvaro: Bus 423

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Aranjuez \(INTERURBANO\)](#))

Return ([Aranjuez – Madrid \(INTERURBANO\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 4,20€ (round trip 8,40€)

Where to find it on a map:



Images from turismoenaranjuez.com and wikipedia

Ávila



What to see:

There are plenty of reasons to go to Ávila. For example, the city is stunning (especially when it snows in winter), the cathedral transports you to ancient times and the old wall that still stands enclosing the city is simply amazing.

It also claims to be the Spanish city with the most amount of Romanesque and Gothic churches per capita. Plus it's the birthplace of Spain's national saint, Santa Teresa de Ávila.

But to be honest, I would go here for the following: **judías del barco** (beans from Avila), **chuletón de ternera** (large beef steak) and **yemas de Santa Teresa** (traditional sweets made with egg yolks).

How to get there:

- **By train (Renfe)**

Depart from: Chamartín train station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Ávila \(RENFE\)](#))

Return ([Ávila – Madrid \(RENFE\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour 20 min

Price: 12€ (round trip approx. 24€).

• By bus

Depart from: Estación Sur. Méndez Álvaro

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid – Avila \(Larrea\)](#))

Return ([Avila – Madrid \(Larrea\)](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour 20 min

Price: 8,90€ (fares + round trip ticket approx. 20€)

Where to find it on a map:

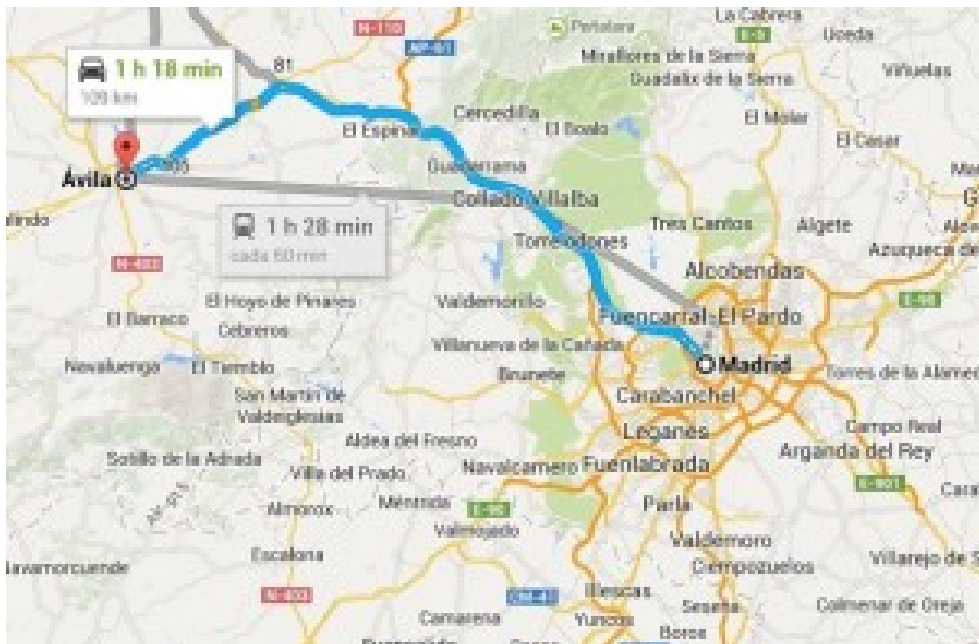


Image from *Hostal Alcantara* and *abc.es*

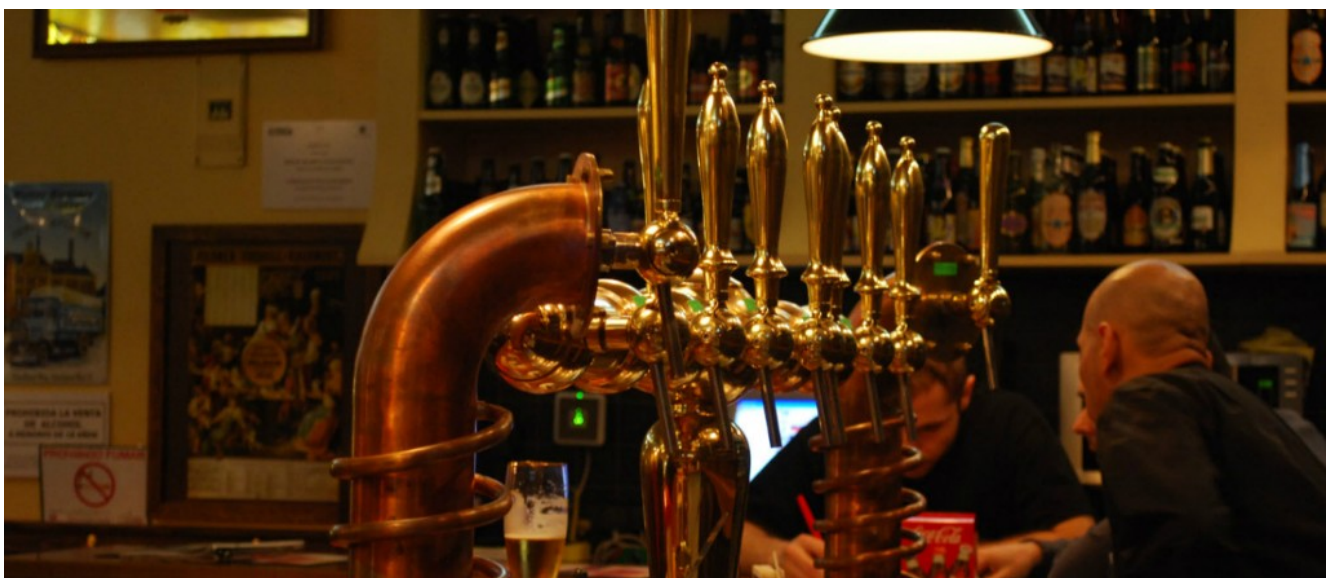
A Heightened Beer State of Mind in Madrid

Beer lovers this is for you again! You can read my [first article on craft beer bars in Madrid](#) to explore/discover more. The main idea is to go try and find your favourites'.

There truly is a very special place just North of Metro Bilbao that I like to call the **triangle of craft beer**. It involves 3 craft beer bars that are within throwing distance of each other. It really is the perfect place to have your heart's desire of good beer satisfied without feeling trapped in the same bar the entire night. **The 3 bars are named ANIMAL, Oldenburg and Cervercería L'Europe**. What they all have in common is their huge offer of various beers from across the world. This selection of bars promises a night out where you know your next destination and be sure to arrive as well.

ANIMAL I wrote about in my [previous article](#) and you can follow the link to take a look. It is a bar that consistently offers excellent beers from all parts. Tivo, the owner, also speaks good English.

1) [Oldenburg](#), in Calle HARTZENBUSCH, 12



Famous for standing in the Guinness book of world records as the establishment that offers the greatest variety of beers per square meter. Opened some 25 years ago, this bar lets you choose among **200 varieties**. One of the very first craft beer bars in Madrid, it inspired the opening of Fabricas Maravillas and is loved by the owner of [La Buena Cerveza](#). However beware there are 2 Oldenburgs and this is the younger bar. More of an institution than an ordinary bar, the brilliant thing here is that you can order **Alt bier**. This beer is brewed according to the German "**Reinheitsgebot**" (shouting it makes the pronunciation easier) and originates from Düsseldorf. It is a dark beer that is incredibly hard to find unlike the Cologne cousin Kölsch beer. If you are familiar with the LENT beers, **Thor** is brewed after the same recipe.

Alt bier is the beer of my home city and I will always be biased to this incredible bar for stocking it. The Belgians, apart for being famous for having no one famous (name 10 famous Belgians, footballers excluded) and no government, make incredible beer. Oldenburg offers the most varieties of **Belgian beer in Madrid**. Every beer brand in Belgium has its own beer glass to drink from. The glass is designed to increase the flavour of the beer.

Metro: Bilbao

[Facebook](#)

2) [Cervercería L'Europe](#) in Calle Cardenal Cisneros 19



You enter and believe you have been transported to the German Alps to celebrate a round of après ski fun. It looks like a drinking hall with kitsch decorated around the bar so skiers are reminded there is a home away from home. Terrible decoration aside, this place does offer excellent beers on tap and even more in bottles. In fact, it claims to have the largest offer of beers on tap and in bottle, check out the website, with nearly 100. The whole menu is online. The food here is **typical German beer food on offer**. Lots of sausages, potato dishes and sandwiches to soak up the beer.

Those that like an after work delight will be happy to know that between 18 and 20h all beers on offer are half price.

Metro: Bilbao

[Facebook](#)

3) **Irreale** in Calle Manuela Malasaña 20



The other bar not included in the triangle of greatness. However this bar does feature in the same street as **La Tape**. You just have to love this city. Irreale only recently changed location to their new home a few months ago. Recently having relocated from Calle de la Ballesta 15, this place is a gem. Having taken over the space from Ave Phoenix, the bar offers 12 different beers on tap. Similar principal to **ANIMAL**, these beers will also change once the keg is empty, meaning a lot of variety. The only two beers they always serve are **La Virgen** and **Schneider Weisse**. The latter being easily one of the best wheat beers in Europe.

The real advantage with **Irreale** is that it offers you the pub feel whilst also offering food. Most, however, stick with the beer and if you prefer the smell of hops and alcohol to chorizo and tortilla I recommend you take a visit. However let's think bigger better more exciting! Media pinta beats caña, pinta beats media pinta, but the king will always be the keg. You need a place for a birthday party or a friend's leaving due, **Irreale** will let you rent the **cellar of the bar**

for free. All you need are thirsty friends and yourself if you order one keg (20 litres) and the room is yours free of charge. They will also give you a 10% discount on the keg you order. Price will range with beer type so just go in and have a quick chat. English fluency is minimal here.

Metro: San Bernardo / Bilbao

[Facebook](#)

For more articles related to Madrid's drinking culture, check out:

- [A Beer State of Mind in Madrid](#), on the city's best craft beer bars
- [Martinis, Margaritas & More](#), on Madrid's best cocktails
- [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international beer shop offering a huge variety plus tastings and more

Madrid doesn't have the sea, but it's not that far away! So let's go sailing!

A fresh breeze hits my face while the waves make us swing smoothly. Juan is steering the **sailboat**. He grasps the rudder and tells Vanessa and Daphne to get ready to swerve. Antonio, our **patrón** (skipper or captain), adjusts the rope that controls **the boom** (a spar on which the foot of a triangular sail is bent). In perfect harmony, we change course, picking

up 2 more knots of speed and a big smile on our faces. Let's do it again!



Although this could have been a perfect dream, this actually became real for me for a few days. The journey started in **Cádiz** (a city in Andalucía, the southern region of **Spain**) when I decided to join in on an adventure with some friends on a Wednesday night. After having lots of **Biodramina** (sea sickness pills), I climbed into my cabin and quickly settled into the tiny space and the light rocking movement of the boat. Then I slept like a baby, pondering what sailing was all about.

On Thursday morning, I woke up fidgety and full of enthusiasm. After the right maneuvers, Juan got us out from the port and went along the edge looking for some wind. We ended up getting hit by what we thought was smoke from a boat in flames, but

was actually **a cloud of mosquitoes from Africa**. I had my body covered with insects and thus my first impression of sailing wasn't very good. But then Antonio dropped the anchor at the same altitude as **Rota** (Spanish municipality located in the Province of Cádiz) and prepared the most delicious **tuna** I had ever tasted in my life. The tuna saved the day.





After lunch, the wind gained more strength. We took the anchor up, set the sails and went in the direction of the open sea. As if we were in a *regatta*, Antonio marked our target: **“A por ellos!”** (go after them!) and gave us instructions: **“Déjate caer Juan!”** (back starboard or catch the wind on the forward side of the sail), **“Hay que largar el Génova Vanessa!”** (I’m still wondering what that means...), **“James, get your butt in the Cockpit if you don’t want to jump off the boat!”** (oops!)



A few swerves later, we headed for **Guadalquivir** estuary in **Sanlúcar de Barrameda**, (a small town in Huelva province), in front of which, you can find **Doñana** (a Spanish National Park), a beautiful paradise where Antonio decided to call it a day and prepare another amazing meal.

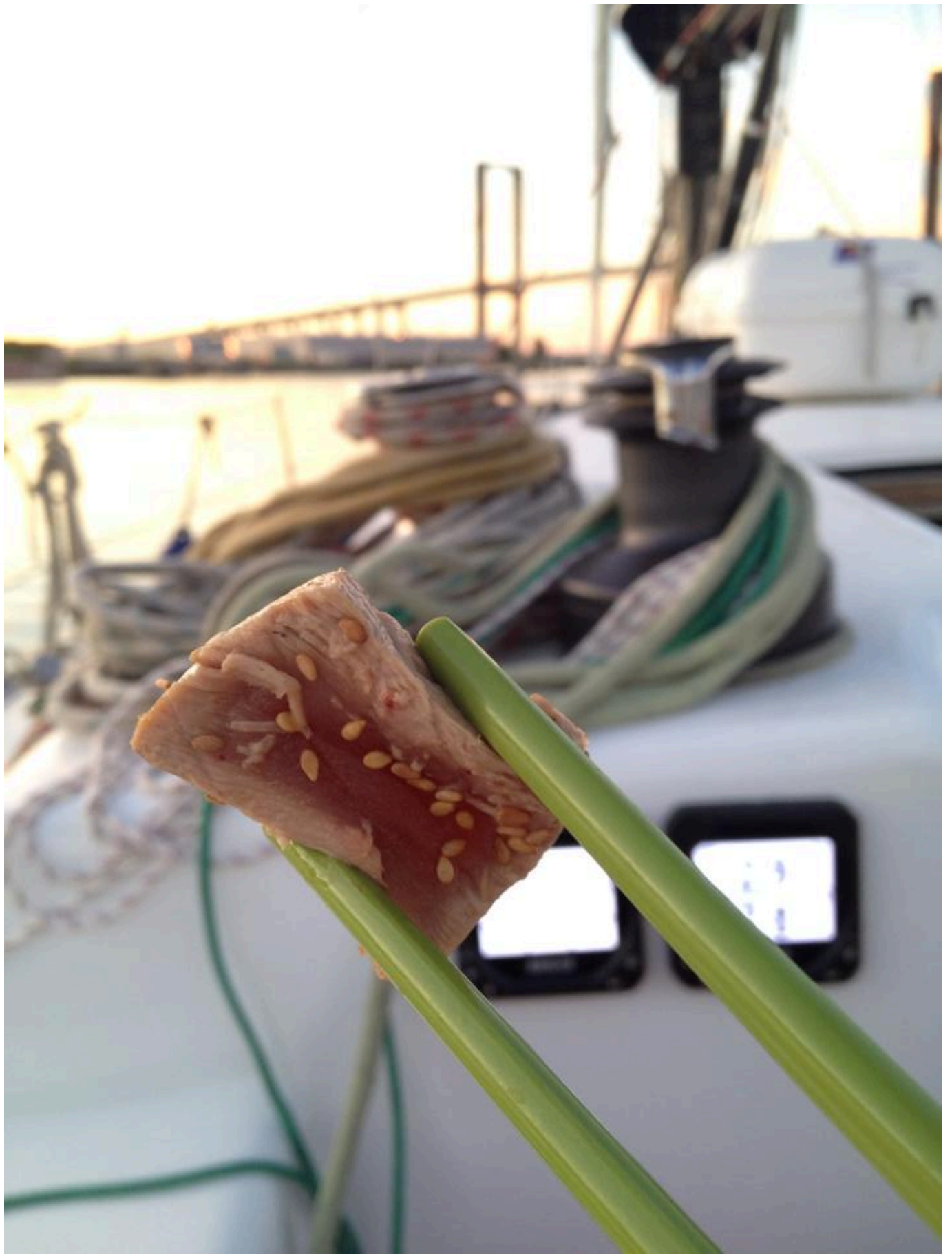


Doñana National Park

The next day, we woke up and had breakfast while the **National Park** was illuminated by the morning sun. After that, when I

thought it was going to be a calm day of sailing up the river towards **Seville**, Antonio proved me wrong once again. "**I won't waste this wind,**" said the captain. We raised up the sails and set out to the **capital of Andalusia**.







A few days after our trip started, we were finally pedestrians again. We spent Saturday walking around the city of Seville, just as it was getting ready for its world-famous week of partying, known as **La F eria de Sevilla**. We were lucky enough to sail with our friend, Vanessa, from [Las mesas de Vanessa](#) (a food blog from Madrid). She knew exactly where to take us for lunch—[Espacio Eslava](#)—a fantastic spanish restaurant which won the **Best Tapa of the Year in 2013**. This restaurant is a must if you find yourself in Seville. We ordered **salmorejo** (a typical Andalucian tomato soup made with bread, garlic, olive oil and tomato) and, my favourite, **costillas** (ribs), among many other unbelievable dishes.



It was hard to come back to reality. Life at sea can be pretty addictive. Yet now I know that even though Madrid doesn't have sea, it's not that far from here!

Sailing School Info: [Oversailing](#)

[Facebook](#)

Restaurant in Seville: [Espacio Eslava](#)

[Facebook](#)

Adress C/ Eslava, 3 & 5
41002 Seville, Spain

Flowers are nice (but this First Date is better) Part 1



The moment: Check your phone or ditch all together

I get nervous and will probably continue to get nervous when planning a first date. It's not easy. It can even be daunting. You might have just met the girl/boy on a drunken Saturday night and you find yourself trying to come up with a way to

entertain, show off, and come across as interesting and intelligent all at once. So I'm back to getting nervous and with little idea of what might or might now work.

Topics of interest can be hard to find but I believe that the location of the date should tie into the conversation. So rather than the usual routine of restaurant then drinks, this is a bit more dynamic and Madrileño (known for going to lots of places on one night).

The idea behind my method is to take your date to at least 3 different places on a given night. Each place will compliment each other and yet offer a very different component of the night. I have included a route order to help. All the places will be in walking distance from each other.

Part 1 is taking the arts and culture route. Not the Prado and its thousands of archangels, but more modern and contemporary offerings. Something more quirky to get the conversation flowing.

This in no way will guarantee you get laid on the first night. Too many factors depend on that result. However, it should reduce those awkward silent moments because you're grasping for a common topic. Quick tip for the awkward moment, just kiss him/her. There is no perfect moment. Only the courage to move your head forward 5 inches.

Act One: [Fundacion Telefonica](#) in Calle Fuencarral 3



Fundación Telefonica

We start in the Fundacion Telefonica on Fuencarral. This gallery is always free and almost always open, except Mondays. It regularly changes the collections and usually has photography showing. I am no art student but when you are confronted with space geese and watching a video of their training to fly to the moon, it makes you smile and realise we live in a great place (Moon Goose Analogue, 2011-1012, Agnes Meyer-Brandis). So quickly check out the website and see what's on, the stranger the better as you don't need to be knowledgeable. Only a sense of humour is required.

Best time: 18-20h

Metro: Gran Via

Act Two: [Aìò](#) in Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 25 (mentioned in a [previous article](#))



Now that we have started down the cultural road, we cannot go too formal with the restaurant. It needs to fit the setting but shouldn't cost too much. Aio is an Italian restaurant that offers aperitivo for dinner. Aperitivo means you just buy drinks at a slightly higher price and are able to eat from the buffet at your heart's content. The food is typical Italian with pizza, pasta and salads on offer. Aperitivo is incredibly popular in Italy since the crisis hit, as a way to entice consumers to leave their homes. You cannot reserve a table but there's always a positive atmosphere.

Best time: 20-22h

Alternative: la Mucca is an excellent restaurant. You can make reservations and also sit outside on the terrace. It is the

more high quality and expensive option.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

[Facebook](#)

Act Three: [Microteatro](#) por dinero in Calle de Loreto Prado y Enrique Chicote, 9



What surprise will await?

You then continue the night by going to Micro Teatro, a bar where you can watch a small theatrical performance for only €4. You can enjoy drinks upstairs and then when your number is called out, you will descend the stairs into the basement and go into the designated room. All groups are at most 15 people and you come face to face with the actors in the small room. Each little play lasts around 15 minutes, which is good because not all are great. It never fails to create another conversation and even if you only understand 50%, it will still be entertaining.

Best time: 22-24h

Alternative: [Bar Lambuzo](#): an Andalusian tavern offering Micro

Teatro every Thursday night from 9pm-11pm in their downstairs wine cellar (21h-23h if you will J!), with sessions every half hour for 4€ (more information in a [previous article](#))

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

The Final Act: [El Perro de la parte de atras del coche](#) (or just el Perro) in Calle de La Puebla, 15,



Once you still have energy and need a club, I recommend El Perro, which is around the corner. This club is free entry before 24h, otherwise entry is €10. The music varies a lot. Not a huge dancing room means even if it is not packed will have you feeling like enough people are present.

Best time: after 24h

Alternative: Wind down with a cocktail instead of some dance moves at [1862 Dry Bar](#) in Calle Pez 27, which is open to 1.30am and until 2am on weekends. The martini like many of their cocktails is thoroughly worth it.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao



For other great date ideas in Madrid, check out these off-the-beaten-path cultural centres, restaurants and bars!

- [El Matadero](#), a slaughterhouse turned cultural hub
- [Bar Lambuzo](#), a family-run Andalusian tavern in the centre of Madrid offering activities in their wine cellar, from wine tastings to microteatro!
- [La Paca](#), the perfect Malasaña bar & café offering movie nights, art, markets, music and Chema!
- [Mercado de Motores](#), Madrid's coolest vintage & food

market that takes over the city's old train museum once a month!

- [La Buena Cerveza](#), *an international and imported beer shop in Madrid offering beer tastings, workshops and more...*
- [Beer State of Mind](#), *go on a route to discover Madrid's best craft beer bars, you'll love them all ☐*
- [Martinis, Margaritas and More](#), *where to get the best cocktails in Madrid...*

Martinis, Margaritas and more

Gin tonic, rum with coke and whiskey and ginger ale. All great drinks but very repetitive. What about an Old Fashioned, Vesper Martini or just on the rocks? Sounds much sexier. **Cocktails** are becoming a bigger trend and the quality is improving, as are the **bartenders** standing behind the bar.

So if you want to impress a date or your friends with some classy glasses and just plain **cool-looking cocktail bars**, I present you a list of some very fine venues. These venues have some **excellent bartenders** and the service is guaranteed to be great.

So stop deciding which gin you will pair with what tonic and

enter the world of James Bond and Don Draper.

1. [Le Cabrera](#) in Bárbara de Braganza, 2



This is one of the best looking and coolest cocktail bars in Madrid. Unofficially also known as the **best cocktail bar in Madrid**. Opened by Diego Cabrera who hails from Quilmes, Argentina, every detail has been tended to. Although Diego has recently left the bar to open a new venue, the bar has still retained all its quality. The idea behind the bar came when Sergi Arola offered Diego, who was looking to have his own place, to be part of his project to turn the lower half of Le Cabrera into a bar.

This cocktail bar, even for all its beauty, would be worth very little without the men and women standing behind all the bottles and fruit. The **bartenders regularly take part in WORLD CLASS**, a competition of the best bartenders in the world, going through to the finals for Spain.

To get to the **cocktail bar**, you have to go down the stairs when you arrive inside. Upstairs they have a restaurant in which I have never eaten. **All cocktails cost 11€** and are well worth it.

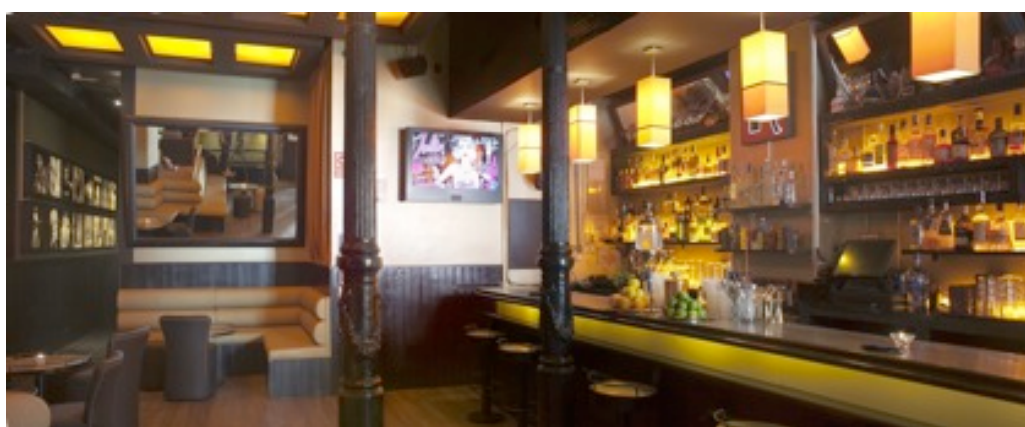
Recommended Cocktail: Old Fashioned Bourbon.

The trick with the **Old Fashioned** is to stir the ice for long enough (approx. 5 minutes) in the glass. The Bulleit Bourbon is a truly excellent one and has recently been launched in Spain.

[Facebook](#)

Metro: Chueca / Colon

2. [Costello](#) in Caballero de Gracia 10



Great cocktails and live music! I just love this combination. On the ground level you will find an excellent bar with house bartender regularly offering you to challenge him by making up a **cocktail on the spot**. All you have to do is to tell him if you prefer it sweet, sour, etc., and if you want to have a specific ingredient. Then this wizard will create it.

Downstairs is a **basement with a stage and a further bar** (no cocktails). Regularly offering live music of **Spanish bands**, this is what makes Costello unique. One of the **best concerts** I went to in Madrid was with the front man playing the saxophone.

Very easy to find as you start to walk to the massive McDonald's on Gran Via and from there, the **bar is located in a side street**. On weekends, you will want to arrive before 22h or will have to wait a little outside.



**Recommended Cocktail: Make your own! Or choose the
Missionary's Downfall (picture above)**

[Facebook](#)

Metro: Gran Via / Sol

3. [Only You](#) – Barquillo 21



Opened less than 6 months ago, this **hotel is very chic and modern**. The reception area shows a wall of white suitcases for starters, and they have a blue room where a cup of tea or a **Martini** would not be out of place.

What also impresses is the **friendly customer service** and bright back bar lights. You can clearly see the different type of spirits on offer and nothing is hidden away or obscured.

On Thursdays, they offer an **AfterWork** with a different concept and music each week. **The cocktails cost 11€**. The menu offers a large selection of different drinks. I would recommend trying one of their 5 own creations. The menu card will also explain to you what type of flavour the different gins have.

Recommended Cocktail: Barquillo Boyz

[Facebook](#)

Metro: Chueca

4. [Bon Vivant](#) in Calle San Gregorio, 8



Another **Gastrobar** that recently opened in Madrid. It does concentrate more on being a restaurant but the cocktails have a great flair about them. If you order the **Piña Colada** it will be presented to you in a pineapple—a very real, very big and delicious pineapple.

The **cocktail bar** is located at the back with bright back bar lights. Take a seat at the bar and watch the **bartender create**

the cocktail in front of your eyes. There is **a lot of action**; the crushed ice is made by hacking a large block of ice with a pick to pieces. Goggles are not included in the experience.



Recommended Cocktail: Pisco Sour

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Metro: Chueca

If you're more of a **beer** person than a cocktail person, check out our posts on **Madrid's rising beer scene**:

- [A Beer State of Mind in Madrid](#), *the best places to get craft beers in the city*
- [La Buena Cerveza](#), *a shop in Chueca where you can find all types of imported and craft beers, as well as do tastings and workshops*

Or check out our **favorite Madrid rooftops** where you can have both!

- [Madrid's Best Rooftops, round 1](#)
- [Madrid's Best Rooftops, round 2](#)