

Mercado de Diseño, Hello Spring

This weekend, April 2nd and 3rd, Mercado de Diseño invites all foodies, music lovers, and everyone in between to come out to Matadero to welcome the change of season with [Hello Spring!](#) Artists such as Belop, Penny Necklace and Iseo will be there performing at different times throughout the afternoon. So grab your friends and go enjoy the sun, cocktails, live music, and street food!

Central Design Market at Matadero Madrid

Interested in learning about innovative designs within Madrid? [Mercado Central de Diseño](#) is an event for young entrepreneurs in various industries including textile, industrial, and interior design to showcase their ideas to the public. In addition to art, at this special March edition, you'll also find good food, music and much more!

Bicycle Festival in El Matadero – “Festibal con B de

Bici” with workshops, food trucks and live music!

So, Madrid is starting to become biker-friendly, especially thanks to the city’s [electric bike scheme](#). But there’s still a long way to go and that’s why [El Matadero Madrid](#) and Viernes are hosting this cycling festival for the second time on September 19th, called “[Festibal con B de Bici](#).” From 11am-9pm, el Matadero will be filled with different free activities to get people excited about cycling – you’ll find workshops, roller derby, music and the entire Paseo de la Chopera will be cut off from traffic all morning. Throughout the entire event, there will be food trucks, live concerts and other fun activities!

We’re so excited!!

Here’s the [schedule](#) and link to [El Matadero](#)

Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid – Part 1

Wondering where to take your mom when she comes to visit you in Madrid? Here’s a list of places (aside from the Prado and the Royal Palace) that are all hand-picked, tested and approved, if not by me then by my friends. All these ideas have definitely worked – and not just for my mom, but for a lot of out-of-town guests and other family members, too. Here goes!

1. [Madrid Food Tour](#), for a culinary experience full of insight



I can't recommend this tour enough. The guys at [Madrid Food Tour](#) are young and passionate about the city's food culture and history. They offer a variety of tours that take you through the city's most authentic neighborhood markets, tapas bars and restaurants. Plus you get to walk around the city while the tour guides give you insights into Madrid's history. I went on the [Huertas market tour](#) and wrote about it in [a previous post](#).

But you can check out all the tours [here](#) and then choose the one that appeals to you most! The tours are given in English and can be personalized if you have particular food preferences or needs. Just ask them! Another note – I

recommend **starting out the trip with this tour** so your mom can get a better feel for the city and its gastronomic offerings.

2. [Bar Lambuzo](#), a family-run Andalusian restaurant



This is one of **my favorite restaurants in Madrid**. What makes Lambuzo perfect is that it is an authentic, Andalucían-style taverna in the heart of Madrid, run by a whole family, and each member has his or her role. For example, you'll find Pepe, the father, working the front and Luis, one of the sons, working the bar. They specialize in food from the South of Spain, so get ready for a variety of fried fish, rice dishes and other delicious treats. Lambuzo now has two locations, although my favorite is the one near Opera, which you can read more about in my previous post [here](#).

3. Museums, Museo Sorolla & Thyssen in particular



My mother has been to the **Prado and Reina Sofia** twice now and although they're of course worth visiting, she actually preferred the **Thyssen** (so did my brother and sisters) and **Sorolla museums**. While the Thyssen's collection is considered one of the best in the world, the Sorolla's is less expected – it is in the painter's former home and houses an outstanding collection of pieces that you can see as you walk through the charming rooms. Here's a post on all of [Madrid's obvious and not-so-obvious arts institutions \(plus how to get in for free\)](#) so you can add more to your list.

4. El Matadero & Madrid Río, for an off-the-beaten-path experience



I always jump at the chance to take friends and family to this place. A former slaughterhouse turned cultural center, **El Matadero** is a must for anyone into contemporary art and cultural activities. It is a huge space with different warehouses, each dedicated to their own type of art. For example, there's the theatre nave, the reading nave and the music nave, among many others. The Matadero also holds wonderful farmers' markets with local products and food trucks, as well as live music and activities for the little ones. It's also situated along Madrid's river so if the weather is nice, I recommend taking a stroll afterwards or even hopping on a bike.

5. [Casa Mingo](#), an old-school Asturian cider house



I have too many good memories of Casa Mingo, a century-old Asturian restaurant serving roasted chicken and cider by the bottle. Please take your mother here if she likes the good-old kind of restaurant that cannot be imitated no matter how hard you try. This is the real deal (plus it's incredibly cheap!) Here's a [previous post](#) I wrote on it.

6. Food markets, not just Mercado de San Miguel



Madrid has a thriving indoor and outdoor market culture. My mother's first experience with Madrid's market scene was Mercado de San Miguel, naturally. While I do suggest taking your mom there, don't forget about Madrid's other markets. On my mom's most recent visit, we went to [Mercado del San Ildefonso](#) in Malasaña and she was stunned by the architecture, vibrant food scene and open-air seating areas. Then there's [Mercado de San Antón](#) in Chueca which is never a bad idea for its gourmet food stands and amazing rooftop bar (check out other [rooftop bars here](#)). Plus, virtually every weekend there's an outdoor market (aside from **the Rastro**) and food festival in Madrid. Some of my suggestions are **Madreat**, **Mercado de Productores** and **Mercado de Motores**.

8. Desperate Literature, a charming international bookstore



My mom adored this place, mainly because the owner, Craig, gave her a glass of whisky to drink as she browsed through the paperbacks and hardcovers, used and new. There's more to the story, though. Desperate Literature was opened in Madrid about a year ago by the guys who run a very special international bookstore in Santorini, Greece, where my mother had actually visited and my sister had previously worked for a summer. Maybe it's the music, the high quality book selection or the people from all over the world who run Desperate Literature with such care and love, or maybe it's because it's nestled in between the streets that bring you to Madrid's Royal Palace and Opera House... I guess it just has that *je ne sais quoi*.

And if your mom is an avid reader, she'll get to donate the book she finished reading on her flight to Madrid and find herself a new one for the trip home! Here's a [full post on Desperate Literature](#).

9. [Toni 2](#) or [Bar Cock](#), for cocktails and more...



If you're wondering where to get a drink late at night, you can try [Toni 2](#), a sort of piano bar mostly for patrons of a "certain age" – only the classics are sung here, accompanied by a live pianist. It's an old-fashioned kind of bar with an extra long grand piano in the center (here's a full article on [Toni 2](#)). If your mother isn't so into the vintage karaoke scene, then I'd definitely recommend getting a cocktail at [Bar Cock](#), another beautiful old-fashioned bar off the Gran Vía. The only time I went here, Harrison Ford was there! Also,

across the street from Bar Cock is La Barraca, the restaurant mentioned next.

10. [La Barraca](#), for paella and other Valencian dishes



I've been asked a lot about where to get paella in Madrid and never knew what to say, until recently. One of Madrid's most active writers, [Dan Catalan](#), just discovered a place that his grandmother took him to in Madrid. It's a Valencian restaurant located in the city center called La Barraca, which specializes in rice and seafood dishes like paella, which he says is definitely mother-worthy. Just note that this restaurant is on the pricey side – maybe you'll take your mom here, but she'll have to pick up the tab... Check out Dan's post [here](#).

11. [Rooftop bars](#), like Casa Granada or Mercado de San Anton



Madrid has an impressive number of **rooftop bars** and we've written about 20 or so in our [4-part series](#). If I had to recommend just a few, I'd say [Palacio de Cibeles](#) and [Circulo de Bellas Artes](#) for stunning views, and then [Casa Granada](#) and [Mercado de San Anton](#) for great food and ambience. My mom loved **Casa Granada** back when it was in such desperate need of renovation that we actually felt our chairs were going to slip off the roof. It's since been refurbished so you'll still get the dining experience, just without the fear...

12. La Cava Baja, for “tapas bar” hopping



Lined with tapas bars and restaurants, La Cava Baja is the most happening street in La Latina. The first time I walked along it with my mother was during winter and it was very foggy outside. She said it looked like a fairy tale – as if a knight on a horse was going to appear riding through the mist. Even on a clear day, La Latina is a must if your mother (like mine) enjoys going into Madrid’s charming little bars and walking through the area’s old and windy streets. For specific recommendations on bars in La Latina, check out this article: [Coziest Wine Bars in La Latina \(with gluten free options!\)](#)

13. Flamenco, when in Spain...

I personally can’t recommend any particular flamenco performance in Madrid, but if you think your mother would

enjoy experiencing a tablao, our friends at [Madrid Food Tour](#) have compiled this list of [Where to See Flamenco in Madrid](#) and we trust them.

14. A nearby town, beyond Toledo



My mom went on a guided tour of Toledo a few years ago and didn't enjoy it so much because she didn't get to "roam around freely" as much as she would have liked. So while I'm not against taking a tour, I do think you should make sure to have enough time to wander around and explore the nooks and crannies of wherever you go. I've taken my mom on a number of day trips around Madrid and her favorite was when we drove to [Segovia](#) and [El Escorial](#) in one day. If you can get your hands on a car, I highly recommend it. You can also check out our article on [Madrid's 10 most beautiful surrounding towns](#) which all link to a description, map and transport details.

15. Pepe Botella & Plaza del Dos de

Mayo, for coffee and tea



Pepe Botella has long been my **favorite café in Madrid**, as anyone who's ever visited me will already know. Its ambience, location and simple drink menu has always set it apart from the rest of Madrid's cafés, for me at least. I recommend going here either before or after lunch and sitting with a book or a newspaper, or just chatting away. When I go in the afternoon, I like starting with a **coffee or tea**, and then welcoming in the evening with a **glass of wine**. Here's a [full post on Pepe Botella](#).

Any other suggestions? We'll be coming out with a part 2 so all recommendations

are more than welcome!

You'll also like:

- [Eating our way through Huertas with Madrid Food Tour!](#)
 - [Madrid's Obvious and Not-so-obvious Museums \(and how to get in for free\)](#)
 - [Madrid's 10 Most Beautiful Surrounding Towns \(and how to get to there\)](#)
 - [Madrid's best rooftop bars – part 1](#)
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Stunning Local Olive Grove Tour, in English! – Proyecto Los Aires

In 2013, biologists **Guillermo and Laura** – Spain's newest generation of **olive farmers** – took over the family business and embarked on an innovative mission: to connect the local countryside with the city of Madrid and make farming a **sustainable way of life** once again.

How it all started:

Over a century ago, in a small town in the region of **Toledo**, Guillermo's great grandfather planted his first grove of around 200 olive trees, and between the evenly spaced olive saplings grew rows of sun-drenched grapevines.

A hundred odd years later, only the footprints of the old vines are visible, but the olive trees have grown beautifully gnarled and twisted, with silver miniature leaves and shiny

hard fruit, ready for the annual harvest of some of the tastiest **organic extra virgin olive oil** in Spain.



The centenarian olive trees

Guillermo and Laura's story:

Olive farming has been in both of their families for generations, inspiring them to study biology at university, which is where they met. From early on, they drew sketches on scraps of paper illustrating grand ambitions to re-bond our booming capital with its rural backyard, enthusiastically telling anyone who will listen about the genius that is the organic farming ecosystem (it's genius).

By mid 2014, their dream had gathered enough steam for them to **quit their jobs** and make [Proyecto Los Aires](#) their life, and for being in the midst of an **economic depression**, it's incredible how much they've already achieved.

The tour:

On Saturday, we headed out to their stunning olive grove in **Arcicóllar**, about an hour south of Madrid. When we arrived, we met up with our fellow tour buddies and set off on our educational meander through the olive trees.

Guillermo and Laura led us around their oldest plot and explained the **process of creating olive oil**: from planting and harvesting to filtering and bottling. Their scientific angle on the entire practice is fascinating, but I won't say any more – the oohs and aahs are all part of the fun!



The walking tour begins



Taking a closer look at the trees

After the walking tour (and tanning opportunity), we sat down at a shaded table nestled idyllically among the centenarian trees. It was time for the **tasting**. This involved professionally sampling several olive oils in little blue glass cups, and learning how to tell the difference between generic **supermarket oil** and **top-quality organic oil** such as theirs.

And then came the food and wine. Through local connections and friends and family, Guillermo and Laura brought together a plethora of **Iberian foodie gems** for us to eat. A *mercado* on a table came to mind, and our tour companions' similarly delighted reactions included lots of "mmm"s and "oh my God"s and jokey squabbles over who liked the **pumpkin *morcilla*** most. We chatted, talking about Guillermo and Laura's endeavours as well as our own, then gratefully accepted Guillermo's offer of

a top-up of wine to accompany our final wander through the trees (and take a few grove-selfies). Finally, we had the opportunity to buy some of the delicious products we tasted that day.



The tasting (and eating and drinking)



The quaintest little market stall in the world

After an **eye-opening and mouth-watering experience**, we said our goodbyes to the lovely Guillermo and Laura and hopped on the bus back to Madrid, desperate to get the word out to you!

The project explained:

[Proyecto Los Aires](#) aims to **promote local agriculture** by running **educational tours & tastings** on their farm and forging a direct link between urban consumers and the rural economy. Their oil (Los Aires Extra Virgin Olive Oil) can be found in **gourmet shops** such as Oleoteca Murúa at [Mercado San Antón](#). Guillermo and Laura also regularly sell their oil in **markets across Madrid** such as [Mercado de Motores](#), [Mercado Central de Diseño](#), [Nómada Market](#) and [Gastro Market](#). Next time you're there, **go and say hello!**



Los Aires olive groves

How to get there:

The **meeting point** for the tour is the bus stop in the town of **Arcicóllar** (see location [here](#)). Regular buses (see timetable [here](#)) will get you there from Madrid's **Méndez Alvaro** bus station in **just over an hour**. If you're driving, it takes around **50 minutes** from central Madrid.

Details & Contact Info:

Tours run **year-round** on **any day of the week** or weekend and must be booked at least **48 hours** in advance.

[Facebook](#) & [Web](#)

The website is in English and Spanish! For more information about the tour, pricing, and to book, click [here](#).

DocumentaMadrid – 12th International Festival of Spanish Documentary Films

From the 30th of April to the 10th of May, check out [DocumentaMadrid](#) – an international festival of Madrid documentary films. Get to watch more than 80 films in one of Madrid's most prestigious cinemas – [Cineteca](#) in [El Matadero Madrid](#) (a former slaughterhouse turned cultural center).

Buy your tickets [here](#).

Here's a full post on the [Matadero](#) if you haven't been!

Tapas Festival at Madrid's Farmers' Market – Mercado de Productores in Matadero

One of Madrid's best farmers' markets – [Mercado de Productores](#) – is held once a month at [El Matadero](#), a cultural hub that was a former slaughterhouse. This weekend you can check out the stands selling local products from around the city and also join in on the market's tapas fair, where tapas made with fresh produce will cost you **1.50€** and you can also vote for your favorite.

When:

Saturday, Jan. 31st – 11-7pm

Sunday, Feb. 1st 11-5pm

Madrid Museums: The Obvious and Not-so-obvious (and how to get in for free)

Here's a long list of Madrid museums worth visiting while you're here. And to make things easier, we're breaking it down into two parts: the obvious (like the Prado) and the not-so-obvious (like Cerralbo). We'll also tell you how to get in for free!

If you've already read up on the famous Madrid museums, then scroll down...

The Obvious:

All of these Madrid museums are classified as "obvious" because they're situated along the two great boulevards – Paseo del Prado and Paseo de Recoletos – where you'll find the city's finest arts institutions, including the *Golden Triangle of Art* which refers to the first three institutions on this list. Only one place is not situated here – the Royal Palace.

1. [Prado Museum](#)

Spain's national art museum houses a wide collection of European art from the 12th to the early 19th centuries, and its most notable works are by Spanish painters, Diego Velázquez, Francisco de Goya and El Greco. Considered one of

the best museums in the world, the Prado's most famous piece is *Las Meninas* by Velazquez. Do give yourself a few hours to walk around – the Prado is gigantic!

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always for under-18-year-olds and students ages 18-25 (with valid ID); Sundays and holidays from 5pm-7pm; and Mon-Sat from 6pm-8pm.

Prices & Hours: General admission 14€. Open Mon-Sat from 10am–8pm. Sundays and holidays from 10am-7pm.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Paseo del Prado (s/n)

2. [Reina Sofia Museum](#)



Spain's national museum of 20th-century art is located at the bottom of El Paseo del Prado, near Atocha train station. The Reina Sofia's permanent collection consists of art by Spanish painters such as Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí, and its most famous piece is Picasso's *Guernica*. Temporary exhibits feature works by international artists, plus the building's impressive

architecture and free-access art library are alone worth a visit!

[Website](#)

When is it free? Sundays from 1:30pm-7pm; weekdays from 7-9pm (except Tuesdays).

Prices & Hours: Mon-Sat from 10am-9pm and Sundays from 10am-7pm. Closed on Tuesdays.

Metro: Atocha

Where: c/ Santa Isabel, 52

Additionally, you can visit a glass palace situated in the middle of Retiro Park featuring works from the museum.



3. [Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza](#)

This is my brother's favorite. In fact, he loved the Thyssen so much that he actually visited it two days in a row (during

a five-day visit). The Thyssen is named after its founder and houses one of the largest private collections in the world. You'll find an amazing permanent collection of more than 1,600 masterpiece paintings spanning seven centuries of art and representing a myriad of genres, as well as must-see temporary exhibits showcasing Van Gogh to Pop Art.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Mondays 12-4pm.

Hours: Mondays 12pm-4pm; Tues-Sun 10am-7pm.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Paseo del Prado, 8

4. [Caixa Forum](#)



Created by the Catalonian bank, La Caixa, the first thing that stands out about Caixaforum is its impressive exterior design, including an urban garden wall. As you step inside, you'll notice that the building's interior design follows suit. Architecture aside, here you'll see outstanding temporary exhibits on everything from up-and-coming photographers to Pixar!

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always free for La Caixa clients and under-16-year-olds.

Prices & Hours: General Admission €4. Open Sun-Mon from 10am-8pm

Metro: Atocha

Where: Paseo del Prado, 36

5. [The Royal Palace](#)

The Royal Palace is one of the most beautiful spots in the city, situated in Plaza de Oriente, facing the Royal Opera House and overlooking the Gardens of Sabatini. It's the official residence of the King of Spain, although he doesn't actually live there. Used today for national ceremonies and as a popular museum, Madrid's Palacio Real is the largest royal palace in all of Western Europe, boasting 3,418 rooms which are ornately decorated with fine paintings, sculptures and tapestries. One last thing – if you go here, you absolutely must pay a visit to its gardens, called “**El Campo del Moro**”, located just behind the palace (always free and open to the public at the same hours as the palace).

[Website](#)

When is it free? For anyone with an EU or Iberoamerican passport/residency card/work permit from Mon-Thurs from 4pm-6pm during April-Sept; and from 6pm-8pm during Oct-Mar.

Prices & Hours: Normal entrance fee is 10€. Students with valid ID get a discount (5€). In Winter (Oct-Mar) open daily from 10am-6pm and in Summer (Apr-Sep) open daily from 10am-8pm.

Metro: Ópera (line 5 & 2) and Príncipe Pio (line 10)

Where: c/ Bailén (s/n)

6. [Palacio de Cibeles](#)



Madrid's most emblematic building, Palacio de Cibeles is situated in the famous Plaza de Cibeles which joins Madrid's two boulevards – Paseo del Prado and Paseo de Recoletos. One wouldn't imagine that this ornately decorated palace was once Madrid's post office, but it was indeed! It was turned into a cultural center in 2013, and now holds free exhibits throughout its first four floors. It also boasts a café, restaurant, and [a rooftop terrace on the 6th floor](#) that offers breathtakingly beautiful views of the city. You can also visit the lookout point at the top of the building for just 2€, where you'll surely get one of your best pics of Madrid.

The lookout point (mirador):

When is it free? Free entrance every first Wednesday of the month.

Price & Hours: 2€ for adults and 0,50€ for children under 12 years of age. Visits are held every thirty minutes from Tues-Sun from 10:30am-1:30pm and from 4pm-7pm. Closed on Mondays. You must reserve tickets at the CentroCentro office

situated near the main door of the building.

The exhibition spaces:

Website

When is it free? Always.

Hours: Mon-Sun from 10am-8pm. Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Plaza Cibeles, 1

The Not-So-Obvious

Madrid has some wonderful art havens scattered about the city which are less spoken of, although still much deserving of a visit. Here are some of our favorites:

1. La Casa Encendida

Created by the bank, Caja Madrid, you'll find "The Burning House" located just a five-minute walk from the Reina Sofia Museum. This arts and cultural center showcases modern and contemporary art exhibits, and also hosts many cultural events, screenings, workshops concerts, and more. Entrance is always free, and the café is very nice too.

Website

When is it free? Always.

Hours: 10am-10pm everyday

Metro: Embajadores

Where: Ronda de Valencia, 2

2. El Matadero



This is one of our absolute favorite spots in Madrid. A former pig slaughterhouse, El Matadero was turned into an arts and cultural center in 2006. It has many warehouses (naves) showcasing film, theater performances and art galleries, as well as events and a great café called “La Cantina” where you can taste local food products from Madrid. We highly recommend going here, and taking a stroll along Madrid’s river (Madrid Río) afterwards which is just across the street. [Here’s a more in-depth article we wrote about El Matadero.](#)

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always

Hours: Tues-Fri from 4pm to 10pm; Sat-Sun from 11am to 9pm

Metro: Legazpi (line 3, yellow)

Where: Paseo de la Chopera, 14

3. [Museo Naval](#)

Although Spain’s maritime museum is situated on the Paseo del Prado, we don’t consider it as obvious as the ones listed above. Many people are surprised when they go here, precisely because it’s not talked about enough. The exhibits take you

through Spain's maritime history in chronological order, showcasing artefacts such as old coins, maps, books, weapons, and more.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always (recommended donation of 3€)

Hours: Tues-Sun from 10am-7pm. (During August it closes at 3pm). Closed on Monday.

Metro: Banco de España

Where: Paseo del Prado, 5

4. [Museo del Romanticismo](#)



Located in the heart of Madrid's trendiest neighborhoods – Malasaña and Chueca – you should definitely stop by this museum if you're in the area. El Museo del Romanticismo gives you insight into the history, art and daily life in Spain

during the Romantic Era (European intellectual movement during the 19th C). And I must admit that my favorite thing about this museum is its quaint and hidden garden café. If you're not into museums, at least pop in for a coffee or tea.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Saturdays from 2pm onwards and Sundays

Prices & Hours: General admission 4€. Closed on Mondays. Sundays from 10am-3pm. In Summer (May 1-Oct 31) Tues-Sat from 9:30am-8:30pm. In Winter, (Nov 1-Apr 30) from 9:30am-6:30pm.

Metro: Tribunal or Alonso Martínez

Where: Calle San Mateo, 13

5. [Museo Sorolla](#)

This charming museum is my mother-in-law's favorite, not only for its beautiful art pieces but also for the old architecture of the building itself, which was the former private residence of Spanish painter, Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863 – 1923), who is especially famous for his portraits and landscapes. Another note – my mother fell in love with this museum too.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Saturdays from 2pm onwards, and Sundays.

Prices & Hours: General admission 3€. Tues-Sat from 9:30am-8pm. Sundays from 10am-3pm. Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Iglesia and Rubén Darío

Where: Paseo del General Martínez Campos, 37

6. [Museo Cerralbo](#)

[The Cerralbo Museum](#) is by far one of my favorite places in Madrid. Tucked away on a side street near Plaza de España and Templo de Debod, this stunning little museum was a former residence of the Marquis of Cerralbo, who lived here with his family in the 19th century. As you walk through the mansion's corridors and up the elegant stairwell to the ballroom, you'll

find everything remains exactly in tact, from the furniture and art pieces to the wall colors and lighting. Read our full post: [Museo Cerralbo, an art lover's dream house](#).

[Website](#)

When is it free? After 2pm on Saturdays; Thursdays from 5pm-8pm; Sundays.

Prices & hours: General admission €3. Open Tues–Sat 9:30am-3pm; Thursday also from 5-8pm; Sundays and holidays from 10am-3pm. I highly recommend [booking a guided tour](#) in English, Spanish or French

Metro: Plaza de España

Where: Calle Ventura Rodríguez, 17

7. [Casa Museo Lope de Vega](#)

This 16th-century house was the former home of Spanish writer, Lope de Vega, who was famous during the “Golden Age” of Spanish literature. His house is located in Madrid’s “Barrio de las Letras”, a central neighborhood whose streets are named after the several famous Golden Age writers who also lived there, such as Miguel de Cervantes, Quevedo and Góngora. Lope de Vega resided in this house during the last 25 years of his life, from 1610-35. His home was turned into a national monument and museum in 1935. Here you can see his private collection of art, furniture, books and more. To visit, you **must make a reservation in advance** for a free, guided tour (see details below).

[Website](#)

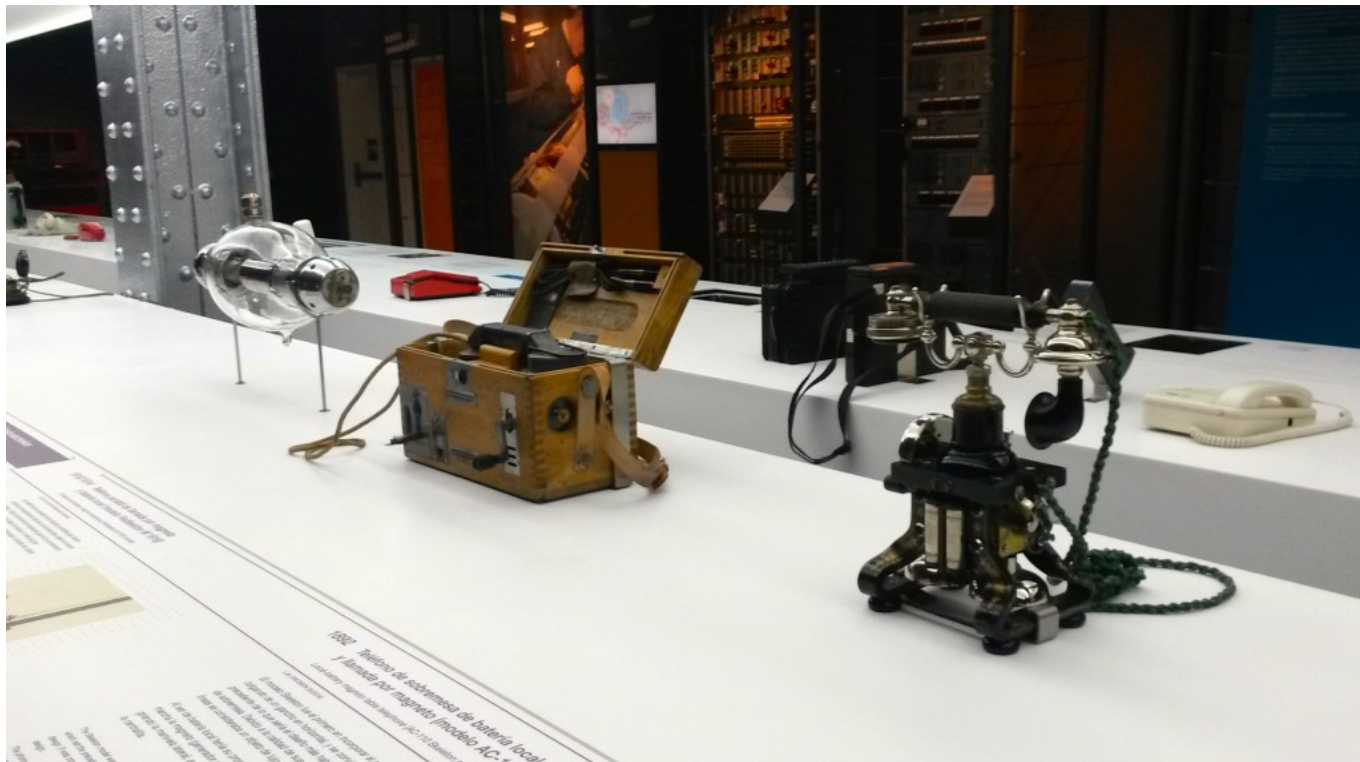
When is it free? Always.

Hours: Tues-Sun from 10am-6pm. Guided tours begin every half hour and are available in Spanish, English and French. [Make a Reservation by](#) telephone (91 429 92 16) or email (casamuseolopedevega@madrid.org).

Metro: Antón Martín and Sol

Where: Calle de Cervantes, 11

8. [Espacio Fundación Telefónica](#)



This arts and cultural exhibition space was created by the telecommunications company, Telefónica, and is always free and conveniently located on the Gran Vía. We highly recommend paying a visit, not only because it's free and has good air conditioning, but also because you'll find surprisingly current and interactive art exhibits. Plus, one of our Naked Madrid writers, Alex, recommends this place as a [great first date idea!](#)

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: every day from 10am-8pm.

Metro: Gran Vía (line 1 & 5)

Where: c/ Fuencarral, 3

9. [Museo de América](#)

This national museum houses 25,000 pieces of art and historical artifacts from the American continent. My friend, Ryan, wanted to make sure that I mentioned the shrunken heads

on display here (apparently, native Americans used to shrink dead humans' heads and use them as talismans).

[Website](#)

When is it free? For under-18-year-olds, over-65, university students and unemployed (with valid ID), holders of carné joven.

Prices & Hours: General Admission 3€. Tues-Sat from 9:30am-3pm; Thurs from 9:30am-3pm; Sundays from 10am-3pm; Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Moncloa

Where: Avenida de los Reyes Católicos, 6

10. [Fundación Mapfre](#)

This foundation was created by the insurance company, Mapfre, and exhibits art mostly from the last third of the 19th century to after World War II. It also showcases a lot of photography. The foundation has two rooms, both located next to each other.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: Mon from 2pm-8pm. Tues-Sat from 10am-8pm. Sun/holidays from 11am-7pm.

Metro: Colón

Where: Paseo de Recoletos, 23

11. [Conde Duque](#)



I have particularly fond memories of this cultural center because I used to go here often during university. Located in one of my favorite neighborhoods – Conde Duque – this building served as the former barracks of the Royal Guard Corps and was turned into a cultural center in 1983. Ever since, it has used its enormous space wisely. Here you can see free exhibits including large scale art projects, photography and documentaries. Its space is also used for concerts, performances, dance rehearsals, book archives, and even [outdoor cinema](#) which runs from July through September.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always.

Hours: Tues-Sat from 10.30am-2pm and 5.30pm-9pm.
Sundays/Holidays from 10.30am-2pm.

Metro: Noviciado, Plaza de España, San Bernardo and Ventura Rodríguez.

Where: Calle Conde Duque 11

12. [Museo del Traje](#)

Madrid's fashion museum showcases different modes throughout

the centuries. Although its current name is rather recent, the museum first opened in 1925 as “Exposición del Traje Regional e Histórico”, meaning the *exhibit on regional and historic attire*. Today it showcases a wide range of collections as well as cool activities and events which you can see [here](#).

[Website](#)

When is it free? Saturdays from 2:30pm on; Sundays. If you're under 18, over 65, a student between 18-28 years old.

Prices & Hours: General admission is 3€. Open Tues-Sat from 9:30am-7pm. Sundays and holidays from 10am-3pm.

Metro: Moncloa

Where: Avenida de Juan de Herrera, 2.

13. [La Tabacalera Promoción del Arte](#)

[La Tabacalera](#) is a very unique community center in Madrid that occupies an abandoned factory and holds free activities on a daily basis, from salsa and capoeira classes to concerts and markets. Adjacent to the community area is an exhibition space that is free and open to the public, and mainly showcases photography and contemporary art works. Warning: it's a large and almost spooky space.

[Website](#)

When is it free? Always

Hours: Mon-Fri from 12pm-8pm. Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 11am-8pm. Closed on Mondays.

Metro: Embajadores

Where: Calle Embajadores 51 (the community center is number 53)

General Information:

*Most museums allow free entrance to under-18-year-olds and over-65-year-olds, as well as free entrance or a considerable discount to university students with valid ID and groups of over 5 people.

**All of Madrid's museums allow free entrance on the following holidays: April 18th (World Heritage Day), May 18th (International Museum Day), October 12th (National Spanish Holiday) and December 6th (Day of the Spanish Constitution).

As always, if we've left out any of your favorite art institutions or museums, please let us know! We intend on expanding this list.

4 Best City Biking Routes for Tourists in Madrid

There is no such thing as the best city in the world (even though New Yorkers like to claim the title). From what I can see, however, Madrid is getting pretty close. You've probably noticed that Madrid's public bike system, [BiciMad](#), is fully up and running. Madrid's public bikes are **electric-powered** which is awesome because you barely break a sweat while going up the city's many hills. This also means that you can see Madrid's most emblematic buildings, plazas, parks and river all in one day, on two wheels.

Now that cycling in Madrid has been made easy, **here are four beautiful cycling routes in the city-center!** I've attached a **google map** with each route, but you really can't get lost. Combine these routes as you wish, as they're not too long and meant to be enjoyed, so you can feel free to wander off and explore. Happy cycling!!!

If you want to know how [BiciMad](#) works, check out our post:

[“Electric city bikes in Madrid, a city that’s turning bike-friendly”](#)

1. Atocha – Paseo del Prado – Recoletos



This first route starts at “*Ministerio de Agricultura*” or Ministry of Agriculture building. This tour is very easy to bike because the streets are flat and wide. There is also a pretty boulevard which goes all the way up Paseo del Prado and Castellana. You will see some of the main buildings in the city like the Prado Museum, Caixa Forum and the National Library. You’ll also pass through three of the most important and well-known squares (plazas) in Madrid: Neptuno, Cibeles and Colón.





Find the route on the map:

2. Cibeles – Alcalá – Retiro Park



While New York and London have, respectively, Central Park and Hyde Park, we *Madrileños* have **Retiro Park**. Maybe it's not that famous or was never featured in a Hollywood production, but we are as proud as can be of our city's beautiful green oasis. The route through Retiro is also really easy to bike, however, you can start it at "*Plaza de la Independencia*", also known as Puerta de Alcalá, to make it even easier. In Retiro Park, you'll see some of Madrid's most stunning places such as "*Palacio de Cristal*" (main pic at the top) and "*Retiro Lake*" where you can rent a rowboat.





Find the route in the map:

3. Palacio – Casa de Campo



What I like most about this route is that you get to leave the city for a while. We first start at the Madrid's Royal Palace and take a ride around to enjoy it in all its glory from front to back. Then, we head for "*Casa de Campo*", where there are always groups of mountain-bikers going up and down the park's infinite paths. If you're not familiar with Casa de Campo, it's much bigger than Retiro, and looks more like a forest– it has a great [public swimming pool](#) and lake where people do water sports. Of course, there are bars too. As for this route's level, I wouldn't say it's easy one but it's definitely doable. It all depends on how far you go into "*Casa de Campo*" .





Find the route in the map:

4. Matadero – Madrid Rio – Principe Pio



Just a few years ago, the **Manzanares River** was surrounded by an ugly highway. Thanks to Madrid's former mayor who spent who knows how much money on its renovation, now we are enjoying "*Madrid Rio*" to the max. Starting at **Principe Pio**, you will enter Madrid Rio to bike along different paths and stumble upon fun (and free) activities like a "*tirolina*" or zip-line, playgrounds (for adults too!) and one of Madrid's urban beaches, a.k.a. sprinklers, that we love when summer comes. Then you will end up at one of my favorite spots in the city, [Matadero Madrid](#), an old slaughterhouse which is now an awesome and free cultural center. Here is a link to our post on [El Matadero](#).





Find the route in the map:

El Matadero, a slaughterhouse turned phenomenal cultural hub

If you're looking for something as impressive as the Prado or the Reina Sofia, but off-the-beaten-path, it's [El Matadero](#). The perfect place to spend a leisurely afternoon alone or with friends in Madrid, here you can calmly diddle daddle through a maze of **art exhibits** and **designer market stands**. Then, enjoy a

café con leche or a cold Madrid brew outside. **El Matadero** has it all—from Spain’s national dance company performances to international innovation conferences.

What is it?

Just a 10-minute subway ride from Sol, **El Matadero** is a culture/innovation hub and architectural treasure. The **former slaughterhouse** (hence, the name) is now a public-private entity offering book-readings, theater and music performances, photography exhibits and independent cinema on a nightly basis, most of which are **free**.



on día internacional de la danza, image from Matadero’s Facebook page

Not to be compared with any other space in the city, **El Matadero** is an ambitious project and the fruit of a most innovative and modern Madrid. **This cultural center** also provides ongoing activities for families as well as a

space for local innovators to develop their projects, all of which you can see while wandering through its enormous labyrinth of warehouses (naves) and open work spaces.



There are six *naves*, each used for a different purpose. For example, the **Nave Español** holds theater and dance performances. The **Cineteca** showcases international and independent film festivals. The **Música Nave** holds concerts and recording studios.



The **old oven** has now been usurped by the café, **La Cantina**, that sells locally produced food and wines, and has the kind of atmosphere that makes you want to stay forever. Plus, it has one of the **best terrazas** (outdoor seating areas) in all of Madrid, in my opinion at least.



When the weather's nice, my husband and I like to go there by bike; it's a breezy 30-minute ride from *Principe Pio* along Madrid's river (*Madrid Río*), which the city has done an amazing job of revamping. The river is now lined with bike and pedestrian paths, unique bridges, playgrounds (for grown-ups too!), street workout equipment, sprawling green zones and sprinkler areas. Plus it's a straight shot to **El Matadero**.



Last summer I took my sister, Amanda, from New York, to **El Matadero** for the whole afternoon. We first slipped into what used to be the slaughterhouse's fridge area, where an odd fire exhibit was being showcased. When we stepped out onto the courtyard, a group of flamenco dancers were *zapateando* (stomping) and smoking in a circle, getting ready to go on stage in the **Nave Español**. Then we parked ourselves at **La Cantina** for a glass of wine and a plate of delicious vegetable dishes made from **Madrid's local gardens**.

Amanda was amazed how all of this was so open to the public, and that it wasn't even packed. She said that if this were to be opened in Brooklyn, lines would be stretching to Queens.

History

El Matadero was built in the 1920s as a pig slaughterhouse, and was turned into a cultural center in 2006. When they renovated the slaughterhouse, the goal was to keep the original columns, the beams, the ovens and exterior structure in tact. For example, the first room you see on the left of the entrance used to be the freezer. Now it's an exhibition space. The dark, sinister feel makes you ponder what really went on in there. The interior was designed to be versatile and sustainable – most of the walls can be rolled away or folded up to make way for projects and events of all scale.

What to do?

Even if you're in Madrid for a few days, don't be intimidated by the amount of things going on. I highly recommend checking out their [activities list](#) (which is in English) or just stopping by to see the architecture and the vibe. As you stroll through the different spaces, you'll stumble upon anything from an indoor garden to a conference on new technology. Activities are open to the public in the afternoon, and you're free to walk around the plaza, find a nook to study in or have a drink at the café anytime.

What's new?

Since October 2013, El Matadero has its own independent market—[El Mercado Central de Diseño](#).



El Matadero's monthly market—[El Mercado Central de Diseño](#)—is one of Madrid's first design markets for entrepreneurs in the worlds of fashion, design and arts & crafts. During the two-day market, various free **music concerts** and **events** are put on as well, making it a **hot spot** to go with friends on the weekend!



Information:

El Matadero

Facebook

Where: Paseo de la Chopera 14 Metro: Legazpi (line 3, yellow)

Hours: Tuesday to Friday from 4pm to 10pm Saturday to Sunday from 11am to 10pm

Telephone: 915 17 73 09