

# MADRID

EN UNA MALETA



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# INTRO

Written for and by young people visiting Madrid, this downloadable travel guide lists a wide range of recommendations for first-timers exploring the cultural wonders of the city. There are plenty of free and less famous places featured, for example an array of museums, traditional Spanish markets and green-spaces for those looking to escape the humming of the busy centre of Madrid. Also covered, are pricier but unmissable social happenings and must-sees, such as the world's oldest restaurant, the exciting night-life, controversial bullfights and flamenco dancing. Essential information like opening hours, where to purchase tickets for events and directions from the nearest metro station can be found at the end of each review. This guide is your true Madrilenian bienvenida and we hope it proves useful during your stay in this unique city.



## GETTING AROUND

Madrid's public transport is clean, safe and reliable. The metro is the most popular way of travelling in and around Madrid. It is fast and efficient. You can get a 10 trip ticket, costing €12.20 and a single ticket costing €1.50. The 10 trip ticket can be used for metros and buses, but once you pass through the barrier, you can change stations without having to come out and be charged another travel, unlike the buses where you will need to use the ticket every time you board a bus. There are tourist passes that can be used unlimited for 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 days. The metro is open from 6am to 1:30am. Madrid, as a nocturnal city, has night, 'buhos' - buses that run after 11:45pm to 6am. Don't forget to try out the Hop On/Hop Off Bus Tours if you want to do all the sight-seeing in just two days and then enjoy the rest of your trip, exploring Madrid by foot.



## A BRIEF HISTORY

Madrid is one of Europe's canonical historical cities and has one of the most colourful stories of any city in the world. Spain's capital city has been called home by Visigoths, Romans, Islamic tribes, Christian kingdoms, Jewish settlers and the Hapsburg court. Consequently, it has had an extremely rich variety of cultural, religious, architectural and social influences. This all makes for an incredibly vibrant and exciting place to be, where any foreigner can feel at home but also where you can turn any corner and feel as though you are entering another part of the world. To see how diverse Madrid has always been, you only need visit the south west corner and see how part of the old Islamic city walls still stand tall opposite the Catedral de Almudena. Although many sites and monuments were damaged during the Spanish Civil War, the city retains a plethora of fabulous attractions. Furthermore, an array of new museums such as the Museo Arqueológico Nacional have captured and preserved Madrid's (and Spain's) rich history and made it accessible to all. Whether you are an enthusiastic historian or looking to capture beautifully picturesque sights - this fantastic city is a truly enthralling place.

## STAYING SAFE

As with any city, it is important to keep your wits about you. Most of this advice is common sense, but here are a few tips to keep you and your belongings safe:

- Make photocopies of important documents (carry them instead of your originals)
- Always have your bag and camera across your shoulder
- Guard your bag by keeping it tight between your feet whenever you put it down (wrap the straps around your leg)
- Keep the contents of your bag organised (so you have easier access to get what you need quickly)
- Put your valuables like your wallet in your front pockets
- Keep cash to a minimum (hide a little in your clothing)
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Try not to look too like a tourist
- Do not try and resist if you are confronted

Your personal safety comes first - your belongings can always be replaced! If something is lost or stolen, cancel all your credit cards first. Report to the police station where you will be asked to make a 'denuncia'. This is the official statement detailing what has been stolen, how and where. Keep this document safe, as it will help you when making insurance claims.

# HISTORY



## PLAZA MAYOR

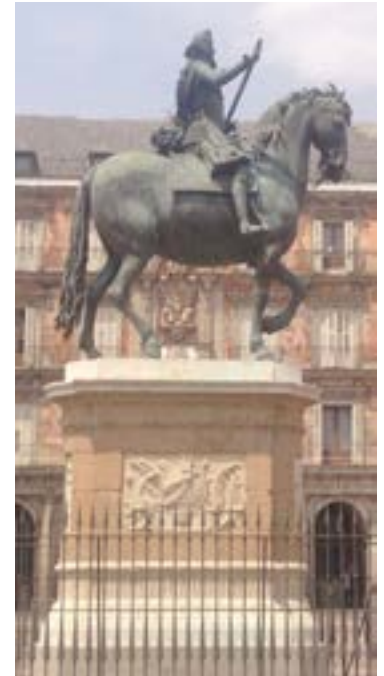
Joe Peskett

Plaza Mayor is a central meeting point for a number of streets in the centre of Madrid. It has played a central role in the city's history, playing host to bullfights, football games and notoriously, public executions during the Spanish Inquisition. The square still holds community events such as concerts and cultural functions and remains an integral part of the area. Although, today the city authorities generally abstain from using the plaza for executing heretics!

The main feature of Plaza Mayor is the dominating Casa de la Panadería (Bakery House). Resembling a giant canvas, its walls are decorated from ground to ceiling with exquisite paintings which give the building a soft, peach-coloured glow. The famous symbol of Madrid, the bear and cherry tree, can be found amongst the many elegant frescos of mythological beings. Plaza Mayor is also residence to an impressive statue of Philip III upon his bird-gobbling horse (ask at the Tourist Information point below Casa de la Panadería)!

Although exposed to the sun, the square is bordered by an array of shaded bars and restaurants which are nestled amongst the porticoes. Plaza Mayor is a quietly buzzing space and rightly holds its place as one of the main historical and contemporary attractions in Madrid.

*Metro: Ópera or Sol //*



## PALACIO REAL

Joe Peskett

Although no longer the actual residence of the Spanish Royal Family, Palacio Real de Madrid is still used as a venue for official state business and retains its importance in current day affairs. Its thick walls and cavernous interior, comprising of over 3000 rooms, provide a welcome break from the heat. Each one is adorned with incredibly detailed carvings and remarkable artwork, including superb roof frescos and tapestries.

Much of the visit is spent gazing at the utterly magnificent ceilings, making it a neck-aching experience. Swathed in gold and occupied by impressive statues, both the Royal Chapel and the Throne Room are particularly awe-inspiring. Their sheer grandeur makes the experience worthwhile even if its history does not interest you.

Within the palace are general photo restrictions; however, this ensures you experience its splendour in full glory rather than through a lens. Outside, the expansive courtyard provides excellent photo opportunities of the palace and Almueda Cathedral. The arches which border the courtyard perfectly frame the sublime scenery of the Sabatini Gardens leading out to the mountains beyond, providing a beautiful vantage point over west Madrid.

Understandably, Palacio Real de Madrid is very popular with tourists and so you can expect to queue. However, it is absolutely worth it. Furthermore, entry is free from 6pm if you are under 23.

*Metro: Ópera and La Latina // Open Monday-Sunday, 10am – 6pm // Student €8 or General admission €10 // [www.patrimonionacional.es](http://www.patrimonionacional.es) // +34 914 54 87 00 //*



## MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO NACIONAL

Joe Peskett

Recently refurbished in April 2014, the Museo Arqueológico Nacional reveals how extremely rich and important the Iberian Peninsula is in terms of human history and archaeological findings. For keen historians, it is easy to get lost for hours amongst its marvellous artefacts. For those less enthusiastic, the exhibits remain immensely captivating and interesting- not something most museums can claim! Both permanent and temporary exhibitions are divided between three floors and to name but a few of the exhibitions: Prehistory, Roman-Hispanic and Medieval. Chronologically laid out and clearly translated, exhibits are accessible and engaging for all.

The Roman-Hispanic exhibition is particularly fascinating and exposes just how important Spain was to the Roman Empire. It provides a refreshing perspective of Roman history, already a widely studied area. In the centre is a recreation of a Roman courtyard displaying statues of gods and emperors. The Medieval floor with its exotic Islamic art and craftwork is a feast for the aesthetic mind. But even this is surpassed by the mystical gold, silver and bronze torcs, necklaces and rings of the Prehistory section.

Museo Arqueológico Nacional's hordes of swords, troves of jewellery and masses of ancient relics make the experience visually indulgent. But, at the same time, it is immensely illuminating and you come away feeling much closer to Spain's remarkable past, with an appreciation of how Spain and Madrid have come to be the places they are today.

*Metro: Serrano // Calle de Serrano, 13, 28001 // Open Tuesday - Saturday, 9.30am - 8pm Sundays and Public Holidays 9.30am - 3pm // General admission €3. Free on Saturdays from 2pm and Sunday mornings. // [www.man.es](http://www.man.es) // +34 915 77 79 12 //*



## CALLE DE TRIBULETE

Joe Peskett



Virtually every calle (street) in Madrid is marked by a quaint, detailed hand-painted tile, which was originally a means of displaying social status and keeping buildings cooler. Calle de Tribulete is one such street. Situated in the barrios of Lavapiés, only two minutes stroll from the metro station, it is marked by a seemingly unassuming tiled painting. It depicts four boys playing a medieval game called tribulete, hence the street's name. Although it is unclear exactly how the game was played, the image reveals that three vertical pins in the ground were a target for either a ball or ring to be thrown. This truly reflects the laid-back, leisurely nature of the area surrounding Calle de Tribulete and it is easy to imagine the scene portrayed on the tiles. Lavapiés's labyrinth of narrow side streets holds marvellous hidden gems such as Mercado de San Fernando and the roof terrace atop of Escuelas Pias, which are well worth discovering. As with most of Madrid's barrios, Lavapiés possesses an array of tiled artwork which make wandering around its streets an exciting journey of discovery. Calle de Embajadores and Calle del Amparo have some particularly pleasant and interesting examples depicting medieval scenes. Street paintings such as these exhibit Madrid's charm, are a testament to its rich art heritage and are an attraction in their own right worth seeing.

*Metro: Lavapiés //*



## TOLEDO

Joe Peskett

If you are in Madrid, the small medieval city of Toledo, set in a picturesque, rugged landscape, is a must-see! As the former capital of the Spanish Empire during the fifteenth-century – Spain's 'Golden Age', it holds immense riches and historical significance. The city is also remarkably culturally and architecturally versatile, as it marked the boundary between Islam, Christendom and Judaism in the early-medieval period.

Famous for both marzipan and producing swords for the Roman army, there is no shortage of quaint confectioneries and medieval-esque shops within Toledo's maze of narrow, winding streets. Hidden around every corner and snuggled into peculiar spaces is an array of cafés, restaurants and bars. Alternatively, Plaza Zocodover offers a pleasant open space to escape this busy warren and relax with a beer.

The Cathedral of Toledo is unrivalled in Spain in terms of its grandeur and it is impossible to overstate how awe-inspiring it is. The towering arches, detailed carvings with their captivating iconography, gleaming altars and staggering monuments are all utterly breath-taking! Also worth a visit is the imposing Alcázar.

Toledo's sheer beauty and individuality makes it understandably touristy and pricey. But this gives it a satisfying buzz and a feeling of how it once may have been. The city is an absolute necessity if you have some cash to spare!

*Travel: 30 minutes by train from Atocha Renfe, Madrid, €21 return*

*Various open-top bus tours available from €15-€25 (most include a panoramic drive around Toledo, a guided tour of downtown Toledo and entry to either the Cathedral or Alcázar)*

*Cathedral: Open Monday-Saturday 10am-6pm, Sundays 2-6pm, €11 entry*

*Alcázar: Open 11am-5pm, €5 entry*

[www.toledo-turismo.com](http://www.toledo-turismo.com)





## REAL BASILICA DE SAN FRANCISCO EL GRANDE

Joe Peskett

If you are on a tour of Madrid, the Real Basilica de San Francisco el Grande offers perfect respite from a busy itinerary. Stepping off the noisy street into the cool, darkened Basilica is like entering an oasis of utter tranquillity. The low lighting initially conceals the splendour of the interior until the eyes can adjust. Once attuned, your eyes are met with the epic saints' statues surrounding the cavernous space.

As your eyes travel up the marble pillars, past the all-seeing angel effigy, they reach an extraordinary dome adorned in utterly magnificent frescos, framed by thick streaks of pink, blue and gold. Set into the scene are countless cherubs, angels, saints and Biblical characters which together tell a story. It is possible to have the story revealed by taking a tour, which run virtually continuously all day. However, it is just as satisfying to sit, gaze and wonder.

Within its walls, the Basilica de San Francisco is far more subtle, beautiful and impressive than any other major place of worship in Madrid, including the Catedral de Almudena. On leaving this peaceful haven and re-entering reality you will feel calm, content and refreshed – ready to continue your exciting experience of the bustling city of Madrid.

*Metro: La Latina and Puerta de Toledo // Plaza de San Francisco, s/n, 28005 // Mass 8am-10.30am Monday-Saturday, Tour 10.30am-12.30pm and 4-6pm Tuesday-Sunday // Students €2. General admission €3 // +34 913 65 38 00 //*

## OSO Y MADRONO

Ellen McGann

The famous Oso y Madroño (bear and cherry tree) statue serves as a symbol of Madrid, a landmark and a meeting point. The statue, which depicts a bear eating fruit from a tree, was placed in Puerte del Sol in 1967 and weighs an incredible 20 tonnes. It is made from stone and bronze and stands at 4 metres tall on top of a pedestal. Also while exploring Puerte del Sol, you can visit Km 0 which marks the centre of Madrid, view the monument to King Charles III and be entertained by some elaborate street performers. As the most famous and busiest area of Madrid, it is worth a visit.

*Metro: Sol //*

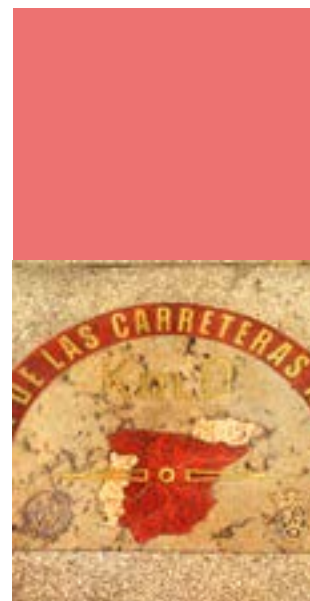


## KILOMETRO CERO

Harry Wilton

Discover where x marks the spot at the Kilometro Cero and stand at the very centre of Spain. The Kilometro Cero plaque now replaces the original signpost that traditionally measured all distances from here to the rest of the country. In this way, its contemporary design has enabled it to fit in with the lively and crowded atmosphere of Sol – rived with street performers, nightlife and shops. It is located in front of the clock tower at 'Puerta del Sol' and is translated as, 'Gate of the Sun'. The gate is a symbolic opening to the rest of Spain. Puerta del Sol is also home to some significant historical monuments that make for excellent meeting points such as the figure of the bear and the strawberry tree – Madrid's very own coat of arms and the Charles III statue. Kilometro Cero is no less important because of its size – don't miss it!

*Metro: Sol //*



## NEW MADRID WALKING TOUR

Emily O'Hara

Finding your way around a new city is always a daunting experience, so kicking off your visit with a tour of the city is a great way to find your feet.

Try the completely free New Madrid tour. The guides speak a variety of languages and incorporate humour and lesser-known facts into their narration, keeping the experience engaging. Featured on the tour are many places covered in this guide book, for example the Palacio Real, the Puente de Segovia, the cookie-selling convent and the world's oldest restaurant.

The same tour company also offers a tapas experience and a pub crawl, plus they can get you discounted tickets for events like Flamenco shows.

The free tours run daily at 11am or 2pm, lasting approximately 2 hours. The guide meets you outside the Tourist Information stand at Plaza Mayor - you can just turn up, preferably 10 or so minutes early, with no need to pre-book. The meeting point is a 5 minute walk away from Sol metro station. Since you'll be walking around Madrid in its blistering heat, it's highly recommended you bring a bottle of water!

*Metro: Sol // Plaza Mayor, 28012 // Tours run at 11am or 2pm // [www.newmadrid-tours.com](http://www.newmadrid-tours.com) //*



## ERMITA DE LA VIRGEN DEL PUERTO

Emily O'Hara

A short and pretty walk from the Palace Real, next to the peaceful Madrid Rio park, the Ermita de la Virgen del Puerto stands by the Manzanares river amidst a tranquil new orchard. This fascinating catholic shrine and chapel was burned down in the civil war and rebuilt in 1945, however the original building stood there from 1716 until the war.

The Ermita de la Virgen del Puerto originally housed a carving of the Virgen del Puerto, which translates as the Virgin of Port, who was named patroness of Madrid by Pope Pius X in the early 20th century. For many centuries the shrine was the object of pilgrimages for thousands of Catholics wishing to come and worship the famous carving of the Virgen del Puerto. The shrine was declared a National Monument in 1945.

A short walk down the river there is a café/bar that serves refreshing food and beverages to enjoy whilst you soak up the glorious view of the Ermita and the orchard and river surrounding it, then a short walk across one of the river's bridges is the Parque Madrid Rio, yet another peaceful greenspace to take a walk in.

The monument itself is free to go and explore but unfortunately it's interior is no longer usually open to the public, although such a historical place in a beautiful location is still well worth a visit. It's about a 20 minute scenic walk from the Palace Real or a 30 minute walk from Ópera metro station.

*Metro: Ópera //*

