

DISCOVERING & ENJOYING

SPAIN

MADRID

REGION

**ENJOY
MADRID**



**Comunidad
de Madrid**



Destination: the Region of Madrid, Spain.

With its bright blue skies, mild climate, endless days of sunshine, and the exuberant lifestyle of the locals, Madrid never sleeps. The Spanish capital is unquestionably one of the liveliest cities in the world, and what's more, it forms part of a dynamic region brimming with culture, art and natural beauty. Small towns and villages nestled amongst valleys and mountains are interspersed with prominent financial and business hubs. All of this makes up the Region of Madrid.

Geographically situated in the centre of the country, and with great transport links, you can get pretty much anywhere in Spain or Portugal within a few hours. It's also well connected to Europe and the rest of the world, especially America, by air.

Madrid has been recognised as an important centre of culture throughout history. Great artists from all walks of life have made it their home. Major cultural centres, in both the city and many of its surrounding areas, today house works of art from across the ages. Illustrious figures such as Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Quevedo, Ortega y Gasset, Marañón and Chueca were born in Madrid. These days, the city is home to big names in sport, science, gastronomy, fashion and culture.

Madrid is a region open to all those who wish to explore it. It's a place that brings together a multitude of cultural, culinary, business, leisure and entertainment possibilities, with some of the best and most diverse tourist attractions in the world.



Sierra del Rincón Biosphere Reserve, Sierra Norte



Chinchón Main Square

History and culture

The Region of Madrid provides visitors with great historical and artistic treasures, a reflection of both its illustrious past and its modern vitality. In addition to the historical and artistic wealth of the capital, you'll find heaps of cultural and natural attractions a short distance from the centre of the city.

General information

Museums and art galleries

Madrid is an exceptional meeting point for artists from every possible background, and especially Latin Americans, given that Madrid also serves as a bridge between both sides of the Atlantic. Its grand museums and dynamic cultural agenda put Madrid at the forefront of art and culture in Europe.

In the city centre, the Paseo del Arte joins three of the most important art galleries in the world. It's said to be one of the largest concentrations of art on the planet. On this short route, the Museo del Prado, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, as well as the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, can all be found.

The Museo del Prado displays the essence of European painting from the Middle Ages through the 19th century. Here you can find famous works of art by the great masters: Goya, Velázquez, Rubens, El Bosco, El Greco and more. The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía houses a large collection of contemporary art, including Picasso's famous Guernica. Meanwhile, the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza is home to nearly a thousand works of art, mostly from the 13th to the 20th century.

The Museo Arqueológico Nacional has the best collection of Spanish artifacts from prehistoric times to the modern age. The city's plethora of temporary exhibitions should also be added to the list of cultural and artistic wealth.

This selection of museums is complemented by over 100 more in the surrounding region: around 150 galleries and exhibitions which display the changes within the different worlds of art and its diverse disciplines, including photography, painting, sculpture and art installations.

Must-see attractions also include the Círculo de Bellas Artes, La Casa Encendida, the Centro Cultural Conde Duque, CaixaForum, Matadero Madrid and Casa de América, all of which have become great facilitators of culture in the region. Meanwhile, annual fairs such as the Feria del Libro de Madrid (the Madrid Book Fair), the International Contemporary Art Fair (ARCO) and PHoto-España also put Madrid in the national and international spotlight. The huge importance of the region's museums is reflected in La Noche de los Museos (Night of the Museums), an event in which the main museums extend their opening hours and organise guided tours, conferences, workshops and other activities.

Performing Arts

If Madrid is famous for anything, it's for its cultural events, which are guaranteed to satisfy even the most demanding of visitors with more than 200 public theatres. Large, medium and small-scale venues in the capital and neighbouring towns and villages offer the best in theatre, music and dance, with staging that transports audiences to magical worlds, envisaged by great directors and choreographers. Some of the best examples include the Teatros del Canal, the Teatro de la Abadía, the Corral de Comedias in Alcalá de Henares and the Teatro Real Coliseo de Carlos III in San Lorenzo de El Escorial.

It's no coincidence that the region of Madrid is home to many important festivals. International ambassadors of the region's culture include the Festival de Otoño a Primavera (the Autumn to Spring Festival), which brings together the best figures from the international art scene; the Festival Internacional Madrid en Danza (the Madrid International Dance Festival), frequented by renowned dance companies and artists; Teatralia (the Children's International Festival for Performing Arts); the Festival Clásicos en Alcalá, which showcases the essence of classic theatre; Surge Madrid, which features independent, small-scale theatre; and Suma Flamenca, which makes the region a benchmark for flamenco—to name but a few. Madrid offers a variety of performing arts, from classical theatre to the most avant-garde, from traditional to contemporary dance and every musical genre imaginable.

La Noche de los Teatros (Night of the Theatres) is another of the region's events. It's held on World Theatre Day and features a variety of theatre, dance, puppetry and music performances, amongst many other activities.

Music

Music lovers can lose themselves in the notes of a quality musical score on any day of the year, with performances for all tastes. Three international venues stand out in terms of classical music: the Teatro Real (Royal Theater), showcasing major international opera productions; the Teatro de la Zarzuela, a unique venue created for Spanish operetta known as zarzuela, which offers a fantastic concert programme; and the Auditorio Nacional (National Auditorium), a temple for cultured music with its two venues, the Sinfónica (Symphonic) and the Cámara (Chamber), offering the best of the musical scene.

In such a dynamic region, the big festivals are not to be missed. These include the Festival Internacional de Arte Sacro (International Festival of Religious Art), held between February and March, which explores and mixes diverse music genres including classical, jazz, folk, rock and electronic. The Festival de Música Antigua de Aranjuez (Aranjuez Festival of Ancient Music) is another gem for music lovers, held in the beautiful surroundings of the palace and gardens of Aranjuez. With the arrival of summer, the festival Clásicos en Verano offers over 100 concerts at some of the region's finest monuments, such as the Manzanares El Real castle. The Festival de Verano de San Lorenzo de El Escorial (The Summer Festival of San Lorenzo of El Escorial) is another of the major events held in the mountains of Madrid.

The region also has a remarkable network of live music venues, and is home to festivals such as Galapajazz and JazzMadrid, as well as more indie affairs such as Mad Cool, Tomavistas, DCODE and Festimad.

And what about Madrid's very own Broadway? After dark, the century-old Gran Vía is illuminated by the bright lights of theatres and local nightlife, while its sidewalks are filled with people eager to catch a glimpse of the latest shows or celebrate major musical events.

If you would rather see another side of Madrid, its bustling nightlife won't disappoint, thanks to its unique blend of bars and clubs, which can be found absolutely everywhere.



A street, arch and part of the Buitrago del Lozoya's fortress

Streets and squares

Madrid is one of the most vibrant cities in the world. To experience its true spirit, you just have to lose yourself among its lively streets and immerse yourself in its alleys and terraces. In addition to its great cultural offerings, the wealth and quality of its cuisine and its nightlife make it one of the most entertaining cities in Europe.

The city's main arteries are the Paseo de la Castellana and Gran Vía. Along these, the fountains of Cibeles and Neptuno can be found, as well as palaces and buildings dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, such as the Banco de España (the Bank of Spain), Casa de América (House of America) and the new City Hall, in addition to café terraces, offices, theatres, restaurants and hotels.

It's also a pleasure to stroll through the streets and squares of the old town, discovering a piece of Spanish history at every turn. Between the Puerta del Sol and the Palacio Real (Royal Palace) you'll find Madrid de los Austrias, a neighbourhood which is home to buildings such as the Real Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales (The Royal Monastery) and the Convento de la Encarnación, although the most iconic construction of Madrid de los Borbones (Madrid of the Bourbons) is undoubtedly the Royal Palace. A guided walking tour is the best way to discover the hidden delights of these neighbourhoods.

The Barrio de las Letras, meanwhile, is located around Calle Huertas and Plaza de Santa Ana, both of which are pedestrian-friendly. The most famous writers of the Spanish golden age, such as Miguel de Cervantes, Quevedo, Góngora and Lope de Vega once lived in this area. The very first Corrales de Comedias de Madrid (open-air theatrical courtyards) were also found here, as well as the printer Juan de la Cuesta, where the original copy of the first part of Don Quixote de la Mancha (1604) was made. The Convent of San Ildefonso de las Trinitarias Descalzas, where Cervantes was buried, can be found hidden amongst these streets.

Literature remains very important to madrileños (people from Madrid) and La Noche de los Libros (the Night of Books) is excellent proof of this. During this event, readers are given the opportunity to converse with writers and participate in numerous literary activities, such as workshops, readings, discussions, book signings and more... throughout the entire Region of Madrid.

And if you're in search of peace and tranquillity, there's no shortage of parks and gardens: Retiro, the Real Jardín Botánico (Royal Botanical Gardens) and the neoclassical Parque del Capricho, plus the recent addition of Madrid Río, a park situated along the banks of the city's river.

World Heritage in Madrid

Four places recognized by UNESCO



You'll find three cities close to the capital whose historical and artistic heritage has been included on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Alcalá de Henares, San Lorenzo de El Escorial and Aranjuez are all united under the World Heritage in Madrid brand. Hayedo de Montejo has also recently been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site of outstanding natural beauty.

Alcalá de Henares

Home of the world-renowned literary genius Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Alcalá de Henares has enjoyed World Heritage status since 1998, in recognition of its rich historical and monumental legacy, as well as for being the first university city in the world. It is therefore recognised for the cultural influence it has exerted since 1499 when Cardinal Cisneros founded the original Complutense University. This was the model that was reproduced by other European universities, which Spanish missionaries then took to Latin America.

Nowadays, the city remains linked to the world of literature and culture with the Cervantes Prize awarded on the 23rd of April every year in the auditorium of the university. The award is regarded as the Nobel prize for literature in the Spanish language. Visiting the Colegio de San Ildefonso (San Ildefonso College) to check out the old university's facade is highly recommended. The Aula Magna with its coffered ceiling and the Patio Trilingüe are worth a visit. Other tourist attractions include the Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes (the Cervantes Birthplace-Museum), Iglesia-Catedral Magistral (the Magistral Church-Cathedral), Palacio Arzobispal (the Arzobispal Palace), Corral de Comedias (the Theatrical Courtyard), Monasterio de San Bernardo (the Monastery of San Bernardo) and Museo Arqueológico Regional (the Regional Archaeological Museum).

Alcalá de Henares is also the perfect place to take a walk, wander the streets and squares, have some tapas or grab lunch in one of its top-notch restaurants, sit and have a chat on a terrace, go shopping or even to splash out on some sweet treats whether they're from a local bakery or a convent. On top of that, in spring and autumn you can take a ride on the Tren de Cervantes (the Cervantes Train), a journey that takes you back in time, travelling from Atocha to Alcalá with onboard performances set in the Cervantes period.





San Lorenzo de El Escorial grand staircase

San Lorenzo de El Escorial

El Real Sitio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial—declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984 and nestled in the heart of the Guadarrama mountains—has heaps of natural attractions for hiking enthusiasts, who will also be enchanted by the Bosque de la Herrería forest and the Pinar de Abantos pine reserve.

The monastery, a colossal Herreran-style architectural complex which appears somewhat modest on the outside but is lavish and richly ornate on the inside, was constructed on the orders of King Felipe II in just 20 years and counts itself among one of many areas of great historical, artistic and cultural value. For example, the palatial quarters of the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons, library, basilica, the Patio de los Reyes (the Patio of the Kings), Panteones Reales (the Royal Pantheon) and Jardín de los Frailes (the Garden of the Frailes). A number of priceless frescoes by Tibaldi, Zuccaro, Luca Cambiaso, Lucas Jordan and Giordano can be found on its walls. There are also captivating oil canvases by Navarrete “el Mudo”, Claudio Coello, El Bosco, Tiziano, Greco, Roger van der Weyden and Durero, not forgetting the White Christ sculpture by Cellini and the Kings of the Old Testament by Juan Bautista Monegro, amongst others.

The monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial became a workshop for the Catholic European artists and a first-class cultural centre that has continued to expand over the years and dynasties to the present day.

A visit to this enclave wouldn't be complete without wandering the streets and squares of this historical-artistic site, with magnificent buildings from the 16th and 18th centuries. You can also take a trip to the Silla de Felipe II (the Seat of Felipe II) from where it's said the king would gaze upon the monastery, or you can treat yourself to the vast array of rich cultural and culinary delights on offer. It's worth tucking into some delicious mountain cuisine, with meat from the local Sierra de Guadarrama with Protected Geographical Indication, or sampling some tapas.

Since summer 2017, the Tren de Felipe II (the Felipe II Train) that links Madrid to El Escorial can be caught and combined with guided visits to various historical sites in San Lorenzo de El Escorial.

Aranjuez

Situated on the banks of the river Tajo, Aranjuez was chosen by the Bourbon dynasty as the site of their spring residence, turning it into an administrative framework for the royal residences, which moved la Corte Itinerante every year, following the monarch. The architecture of the Royal Palace and the old town, as well the gardens, groves and orchards that make up the natural surroundings of the town all form part of the “Cultural Landscape” included by UNESCO on its World Heritage Site list.

Visitors cannot miss out on a visit to the Palacio Real (the Royal Palace), Museo de Falúas Reales (the Royal Riverboat Museum) and the Casa del Labrador (Labrador House). It is also worth taking a stroll through the old town, declared a Historical-Artistic Site. This includes the Plaza de Toros (The Square of the Bulls) and Mercado de Abastos (the Abastos Market), which is filled with places to sample the local cuisine.

The gardens in Aranjuez are also a must-see. Considered to be the most beautiful of their era and magnificent in just about any season, they have inspired artists including the composer Joaquín Rodrigo and the painter Santiago Rusiñol. They continue to inspire and delight visitors to this day. There are a number of historic gardens surrounding the Royal Palace, each one representing a particular style depending on the era and the taste of the monarch from whom it was commissioned.

An unforgettable experience is catching the Tren de la Fresa (The Strawberry Train) which runs from Madrid to Aranjuez every weekend in spring and autumn. If you also want to visit the town as they did years ago, there's nothing better than taking a horse-drawn carriage through the old town, the groves and historic orchards that once supplied produce to the Court and still to this day provided local restaurants with produce including asparagus, strawberries and melon.

Hayedo de Montejo

Located at a latitude that doesn't normally provide favourable conditions for a beech forest, this shady and lush area is one of Madrid's most spectacular forests. In the Biosphere Reserve of Sierra del Rincón in the town on Montejo de la Sierra, in the north of the Region of Madrid on the banks of the Jarama river, lies one of the southernmost beech forests in Europe. Its 250 hectares are dominated by beech trees but you'll also find oak, elm and holly trees.

Declared a World Heritage site of outstanding natural beauty in 2017, it has enjoyed protection for more than 40 years. The number of visitors is limited to preserve the forest. In order to make a visit, passes must be requested by phone or via the Internet well in advance. Small numbers are also available on the day. During these free, guided tours, it's possible to discover century-old beech, with other points of interest in the local surroundings.

Although it is worth visiting at any time of year, it is in autumn when the trees are full of colours, boasting ochre, orange, red and gold tones, and making it even more attractive and magical.

More information and bookings:
www.sierradelrincon.org



Colmenar de Oreja Main Square

3. Towns of Madrid

- Manzanares el Real
- Rascafría
- Patones
- Torrelaguna
- Buitrago del Lozoya
- Nuevo Baztán
- Villarejo de Salvanés
- Colmenar de Oreja
- Chinchón
- Navalcarnero
- San Martín de Valdeiglesias

Only a step away from the big city, Madrid's countryside offers peaceful places with good food and an intimate connection to nature... It's a secret side of Madrid, ready to be discovered.

Delving into Madrid's small towns, you'll come across a range of unique destinations recognised for their valuable cultural heritage. Not only have they managed to preserve their rural authenticity, but they also have sufficient tourism infrastructure to guarantee quality and visitor satisfaction.

Madrid wouldn't be Madrid without the Guadarrama mountain range (Sierra de Guadarrama) and its rivers: the Lozoya, Manzanares, Henares, Jarama and Tajuña mark the contrast between valleys and peaks. The regional landscape has everything, from high mountain ranges to plains, from snow-covered firs on lofty summits to the oak trees in Alcarria. It's all here, waiting for you to explore it.



Manzanares el Real

A fairy-tale castle

The Manzanares el Real castle conjures up childhood tales of enchanted princesses. It's the best-preserved castle in the Region of Madrid, and the transformation of its rooms into a museum allows visitors to take an interesting tour of the medieval and Renaissance world. Manzanares el Real is also blessed with beautiful surroundings of forests, the Santillana reservoir and a "magical" mountain: La Pedriza. As part of the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park, it's one of the region's natural treasures. Here the Manzanares flows freely, bathing the area in its crystal-clear waters before reaching the capital.

Rascafría

Mountains, faith and art

Rascafría is nestled in the beautiful Lozoya Valley at the foot of the Guadarrama Mountains. Together with the peaks and lakes of Peñalara, it led Henry II to found the monastery of Santa María del Paular here in the 14th century. It's a jewel of monastic art, with a rich collection of paintings by Vicente Carducho. Visitors can admire 52 of the 56 original paintings, provided by the Prado Museum in Madrid. In autumn, game and mushrooms play a starring role on restaurant menus in this mountain village. Here you can walk and ski through the snow-capped peaks in addition to enjoying the fresh water of the Lozoya River.

Patones

A romantic getaway

Patones de Arriba is a secluded village that invites you to enjoy its scenery and unusual slate architecture. Its streets are essentially an open-air museum, complemented by unique cuisine in rural, intimate and romantic restaurants. Its hotels have helped shape the style known as rural chic, and a walk along the natural ravine path (El Barranco) which separates the two Patones, Abajo (lower) and Arriba (upper), is the perfect addition to an unforgettable experience.

Torrelaguna

A cradle of illustrious Madrileños

Torrelaguna's old town has the same illustrious character as the people who were born in this village—including Cardinal Cisneros and Santa María de la Cabeza—and those that lived among its streets, such as San Isidro Labrador. Cardinal Cisneros himself spared no expense when it came to increasing the size of the village with the church of Santa María Magdalena, an example of Madrid-style Gothic architecture; el Pósito (the Granary); the old Santísima Trinidad hospital; and the Franciscanos de la Madre de Dios convent.

Hundreds of years later its authentic scenery made Torrelaguna an ideal movie set. Actors like Sophia Loren, Cary Grant and Frank Sinatra got to experience the town's antique beauty firsthand during the filming of *The Pride and the Passion*.

Buitrago del Lozoya

From the past to the forefront

To stroll through Buitrago del Lozoya is to travel back to the Middle Ages; the landscape seems to merge with the gentle flow of the Lozoya river at the foot of the town's castle, in the shelter of its remarkable walled enclosure. It's a landscape that ensures spectacular beauty—whether bathed in sunlight or covered in snow, turning even the most hidden corners to white. One of these secluded spots is no longer a secret; the Eugenio Arias Collection Picasso Museum contains more than 60 works that the famous artist left to his barber.

At Christmastime, Buitrago turns back the clock by 20 centuries to host its very own Living Bethlehem: a festival declared to be of Regional Tourist Interest, in which most of the locals take part in re-enactments along the town's 800-metre wall.

Nuevo Baztán

An enlightened corner of Madrid

At the dawn of the 18th century, Juan de Goyeneche y Gastón, a politician from the Navarre region of Spain who was based in Madrid, decided to set up an area that would accommodate different factories and workshops while also housing their workers. Thus the Nuevo Baztán was born, a unique example of a town from the Enlightenment and an impressive architectural complex designed by Churriguera. Its information centre lets visitors discover the inception and development of this project, conceived by an ambitious man who dreamed of changing Spain.

Villarejo de Salvanés

Cinema, monks and knights

The impressive, towering keep gives you an idea of the scale and grandeur that the castle of Villarejo de Salvanés must have had in its heyday, when it was the capital of the Encomienda Mayor de Castilla. Perhaps built on the foundation of a former Muslim watchtower, it was the key to controlling access to the southern plain through the Military Order of Santiago. Visitors can find out more about its history and importance by visiting the Casa de la Tercia and the information centre located inside the castle's keep. From the top level, it offers spectacular views over Madrid's Alcarria, with a landscape of olive and holm oak trees nourished by the Tajo and Tajuña rivers.

Colmenar de Oreja

Wine and art

The Ulpiano Checa museum in Colmenar de Oreja displays paintings that inspired the setting of films such as Ben-Hur and Quo Vadis. A great excuse to visit this little village is the fact that it's home to several architectural wonders, like its Plaza Mayor (main square). There, you can try patatas chulas (fried potatoes, a local specialty), washed down with one of the very best Protected Designation of Origin wines of Madrid, which can also be enjoyed by visiting any of the centuries-old wineries in town. Biking between Chinchón and Colmenar de Oreja and touring the fields and vineyards of the countryside is another worthwhile way to spend your time.

Chinchón

A scene straight from the movies

Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth, John Wayne and Cantinflas all discovered Chinchón's attractions firsthand while shooting films in this town. Its main square is without a doubt one of the most famous in Spain, a perfect example of popular Spanish architecture that makes it seem as if time has stopped. Here there are some of the best hotels and culinary offerings in the Region of Madrid, inviting you to lose yourself in the historic streets as you wind your way along them. The best panoramic views of the town can be enjoyed from its castle.

On Holy Saturday at dusk, Chinchón becomes Jerusalem; more than 200 locals take part in the recreation of the Passion, a spectacle of light and sound that's been declared a Fiesta of National Tourist Interest.



A column of Goyeneche's palace-church in Nuevo Baztán



Patones traditional architecture

Navalcarnero

Wine and relaxation

In the wine-growing heart of Madrid, surrounded by mountains, hills, vineyards and the flowing Guadarrama and Alberche rivers, lies Navalcarnero. Its Plaza de Segovia is an unexpected delight, antiquated and peaceful, and is the ideal place to enjoy a glass of Protected Designation of Origin wine from Madrid. The wine in Navalcarnero is such a hit that it even has its own museum, Jazz festival and wine tasting route. For the cherry on top, accompany this elixir with a meal of olla del segador (a regional specialty) in one of the town's caves. Visits to its medieval lanes, squares, natural surroundings and buildings with trompe-l'œil styling are also essential. The whole place is an ode to rest and relaxation.

San Martín de Valdeiglesias

Wine, history and the sea

San Martín de Valdeiglesias is a true enological hub located in the Sierra Oeste de Madrid. Its wines have their own sub-designation within the Protected Designation of Origin of Madrid, thanks to their great quality grapes such as Grenache (red) and Albillo Real (white). Any wine enthusiast will have the time of their life here, while also enjoying the town's scenery and heritage—of which the Coracera castle is a perfect example. From its keep, you can see the peaks of the Gredos mountains and the forests that blanket the western mountains of Madrid. But wait, there's more: the San Juan and Picadas reservoirs serve as private seas and beaches for Madrid's locals. Their waters can be enjoyed on hot summer days, or at any time of year for water sports and outdoor activities.

The Castles of Madrid

The castles of the Region of Madrid are a reflection of its glorious historical past. In the Region of Madrid, there remain important ruins of walls and castles that unite rich history, art and natural beauty. Among them, the Mendoza family's palace-fortress in Manzanares el Real stands out as one of the best preserved buildings of its kind—not just in the Region of Madrid, but in all of Spain. Built in the Gothic Elizabethan style in the mid-15th century, the castle is a perfect example of Spanish military architecture. Spectacular views of the Santillana reservoir and the Guadarrama mountains can be seen from its towers. Wandering its halls and rooms is like travelling back in time. It also offers theatrical tours, guided by characters dressed in period clothing who show you the history of the castle and the people who lived there, room by room.

The medieval period also left behind other castles and fortresses. The walled town and castle of Buitrago del Lozoya, whose location on the Lozoya river lent it true protection from its enemies, served as a fortress for the influential Mendoza family in the 14th and 15th centuries. Its walls and the ruins of the castle have been preserved, and now host visitors, theatrical tours and a medieval market. The Castillo de la Coracera in San Martín de Valdeiglesias is well preserved and was even visited by Queen Isabella I of Castile—and it's the perfect starting point for a visit to the surrounding wineries. Other examples include the fortress of Conde de Barajas in Alameda de Osuna in Madrid, the castle of Gonzalo Chacón in Arroyomolinos and the Castillo de los Condes in Chinchón, a symbol of the lords' power in the town. These are a few of the castles that remain at least partly intact in their original form, set in magnificent locations. La Torre del Homenaje de Villarejo de Salvanés (the Villarejo de Salvanés tower), the Castillo de Batres and its keep, the Castillo de Odón in Villaviciosa de Odón, the city walls of Talamanca and Torrelaguna and the network of Atalayas (watchtowers) in Madrid are also worth pointing out.



Manzanares El Real Castle

Active Tourism and Nature

Nature in its purest form can be seen and enjoyed less than an hour from the capital. The region of Madrid lies among beautiful natural surroundings that offer many possibilities, from a simple hiking excursion in fresh mountain air to sports such as cycling and skiing, or horse riding trips from half a day to several days, spending the night in rural houses.

The Region of Madrid is a region of contrasting landscapes, biodiversity and natural areas of high ecological interest, such as the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park, the Sierra del Rincón and la Cuenca Alta del Río Manzanares Biosphere Reserves (as named by UNESCO), as well as other natural spots protected by the regional government. All of them are fantastic for outdoor activities. The World Heritage Site of outstanding natural beauty, Hayedo de Montejo, has recently joined this group.

Winter sports lovers can go skiing, snowshoeing or sledding in the Guadarrama mountains. The Puerto de Navacerrada has ski lifts and slopes, while Valdesqui has more than 20 kilometres of ski slopes. And those looking for something a little more relaxed can take the Tren de la Naturaleza (the Nature Train) which makes its way from Cercedilla to el Puerto de los Cotos, allowing passengers to take in the spectacular mountain scenery worthy of an Alpine rack railway.

Running enthusiasts have the chance to take part in competitions such as triathlons, cross-country races, marathons, half marathons and the San Silvestre Vallecana, a race which takes place on the 31st of December. Additionally, for those who prefer water, there's the chance to go paddle surfing, windsurfing and take part in other water sports at the lakes of San Juan and El Atazar.

A Real Madrid or Atlético de Madrid game, or a visit to their facilities, should be at the top of every football fan's list. Both Madrid teams are known all around the world, and for their fans, a visit to the stadiums and trophy halls is a must.



CiclaMadrid, Bicycle Tourism

CiclaMadrid is a 420-kilometre cycling route that connects tourism destinations including three UNESCO World Heritage Sites and a national park. It is linked to the city of Madrid by a series of routes, some of which utilise public transport to make it easier for tourists to access.

CiclaMadrid is linked to other routes too—of more than 1,400 kilometres—ideal cycling routes for different kinds of trips; for sportier, more active cyclists, for those more inclined towards “slow tourism,” and for families, groups of friends and nature enthusiasts. It’s the best way to get more from travel experiences: at cycling speed, surrounded by nature, in places of exceptional beauty, exploring castles and fortresses, traditional villages, monasteries, unique landscapes, squares, wineries and vineyards... A world of inexhaustible discoveries with every turn of the pedals.

Also, with the app available at www.ciclamadrid.es, you can follow the routes individually or as part of a group, with additional information to help you make the most of Madrid on your bike.

Along with this new project, there are other ways to get to know the region. In the city of Madrid, electric BiciMAD bikes can be used to explore the streets. Another activity for cycling enthusiasts is the 65-kilometre route that encircles the city; the Anillo Verde Ciclista (Green Cycling Ring), a unique route with rest areas, fountains and public transport network maps.

Traditional, international, avant-garde, fusion, haute cuisine, Michelin stars... there's food for all tastes and budgets in the region of Madrid. The region is especially representative of the gastronomic boom that Spain has experienced, with Michelin-starred restaurants, old establishments and classic bars coming together to put quality, tradition and innovation on the table. In addition to the excellent range of restaurants on offer, there's a series of culinary events and contests throughout the year.

Madrid is all about trying a delicious dish in a trendy restaurant, having lunch or tea in a museum garden, enjoying tapas on one of the many squares and streets, trying new cocktails in an after-work bar or a rooftop terrace with sunset views, or nourishing the body and soul with some amazing molecular gastronomy while attending a live show.

On top of this, Madrid has a wide range of local products that contribute to the success of Madrid's cuisine. This includes its own wines (there are activities organised by wineries belonging the Protected Designation of Origin of Wines of Madrid), olives from Campo Real, aniseed from Chinchón, meat from the Guadarrama mountains (with Protected Geographical Indication), strawberries and asparagus from Aranjuez, melons from Villacañeros, vegetables from Villa del Prado, honey from the mountains, beans from Sierra Norte, sheep's milk cheese...

Cocido

If there's one dish that is synonymous with Madrid, it's cocido Madrileño, a kind of stew served up in three stages. It can be ordered in some of the city's classic restaurants, although when winter arrives many more join up to serve it on the so-called Ruta del Cocido (Cocido Route), a culinary event that will delight fans of this dish.

Tapas

Just as in other Spanish cities, going for tapas in Madrid is a custom that blends tradition and innovation, as new dishes have been added to local and traditional tapas, all while remaining committed to the promise of offering food prepared with the very best ingredients. Whether it's after work or just meeting with friends, mid-week or at the weekend, it's always a good time to go out for tapas.

In the region of Madrid, Alcalá de Henares and Chinchón are excellent for tapas. Chinchón's Plaza Mayor (main square) is surrounded by balconies, bars and restaurants. Tapas have become so popular that almost every weekend there are tapas-themed events held in the local towns.

Food Markets

The traditional markets that have been turned into temples of gastronomy are an excellent option where gourmet products can be bought and tried: the Mercado de San Miguel next to Plaza Mayor, the Mercados de San Antón and San Ildefonso in the neighbourhood of Chueca, the Mercado de Moncloa and the multicultural market, el Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés. In addition to these markets, the Mercado de la Paz and the culinary locale Platea Madrid can be found in the neighbourhood of Salamanca.

A visit to Madrid wouldn't be complete without visiting some of these markets to try the cuisine that's created on-site, accompanied by a good glass of wine, a beer or a cocktail. It's a great atmosphere where you can enjoy the moment, just like the locals do!



Chinchón Main Square

Shopping

Madrid is considered a top shopping destination thanks to its wide range of shopping venues, according to specialist reports that evaluate shops, prices and the ease of making purchases, together with the hotels on offer as well as transportation and cultural attractions.

Without a doubt, the lack of opening hour restrictions has played a role in achieving this position. Numerous shops in the city and Madrid's shopping centres are open on Sundays and public holidays, making the streets a lively contrast to those of other cities.

Shopping areas

In Madrid there's something for all tastes and budgets. Those that're looking for luxury will find shops to their taste in the neighbourhood of Salamanca, while those looking for more modern, bohemian or avant-garde design may find what they're looking for in the neighbourhoods of Salesas, Chueca and Triball. More modest prices can be found in the city centre around Sol and Gran Vía, in Moncloa and near Goya. Fashion, accessories, watches, jewelry, leather and much more are easy to find in the region of Madrid, which is a leader in fashion and design.

In the neighbourhood of Salamanca—commonly known as the Milla de Oro (Golden Mile)—the latest trends in clothes, accessories and shoes can be found in luxury brand-name stores and shopping centres.

Salesas is a good neighbourhood for taking a stroll to browse the designer shops that sit alongside fashion brands, restaurants and coffee shops. Its elegant, historic buildings make you feel like you're in old Europe.

Chueca is a shopping paradise. In the streets of Fuencarral and Hortaleza and the surrounding areas, there is an abundance of shops of all kinds—but especially clothing stores. In this dynamic, open and cosmopolitan area, everyone feels like a Madrileño.

Close to Gran Vía lies the 'Triángulo de Ballesta,' known as Triball, where young, cutting-edge designers have set up shops alongside the area's established stores.

In the city centre's shopping streets (Arenal, Carretas, Mayor, Carmen and Preciados) there is no shortage of national and international chain stores with affordable prices, as well other current, independent establishments, not forgetting centuries-old shops where time seems to have stopped.

Open every day of the year, the various shopping centres dotted around the city give shoppers the opportunity to combine shopping and eating in a single stop. And if you're looking for luxury at affordable prices, don't hesitate to visit an outlet store.

For the hardcore design enthusiasts, the Mercado del Caracol in Majadahonda, the Mercado de Diseño at the Matadero Madrid and the Nómada Market, dedicated to independent fashion design, are all must-visits.



A morning or an afternoon of shopping wouldn't be complete without stopping for a break in a coffee shop or on a terrace, whether it's a traditional establishment or a more modern one, to enjoy something sweet... Having lunch or dinner in one of these places is the ideal way to conclude a morning or afternoon of shopping.

Open-air markets

And how could we forget the street markets? This kind of trading, which is very typical in the region, is usually outdoors, in public places and on particular days. The products on sale are more varied: food, clothing, household items, plants, jewelry.... These markets enjoy great success thanks to always being in the same place and offering a variety of items for sale at prices lower than those of traditional retailers.

With its origins in medieval times, the best street market in Madrid, and one of the city's iconic events, is El Rastro. It's held every Sunday in Plaza de Cascorro and the surrounding streets and offers a wide range of antiques, new and secondhand items. There are also numerous well-known antique shops in the area, such as the ones located in Galerías Piquer.

As well as the traditional street markets selling food and clothes, there are other specialised markets of great interest such as the libros de la Cuesta de Moyano with authentic literary gems, the market on Avenida de Felipe II with its bohemian stalls, the traditional mercadillo de filatelia in Plaza Mayor, the Mercado de Motores in the Museo del Ferrocarril and the market in Plaza Conde de Barajas, which has a good selection of paintings on display.

The street markets held in the region's local towns mustn't be forgotten either, such as the Productos ecológicos y artesanos en Hoyo de Manzanares, which sells ecological products and handicrafts, the antique markets in Navacerrada and the medieval markets in Alcalá de Henares, Manzanares el Real and Buitrago del Lozoya.

Tax-free. Those that don't live in the European Union can save on shopping by going to one of the many duty-free shops. The minimum amount to qualify for a VAT refund is €90.15.

And if you're missing a gift at the last minute or you don't want to be too loaded up, the Aeropuerto de Madrid-Barajas Adolfo Suárez also has a range of duty-free shops.

Study Spanish in Madrid

Thanks to its excellent range of centres specialised in the teaching of Spanish to foreign learners, the Region of Madrid is one of the regions that receives the highest number of Spanish students.

Madrid is a cosmopolitan, open city that is a melting pot of different nationalities, headquarters of some of the most important institutions of the Spanish language, such as el Instituto Cervantes (The Cervantes Institute), la Biblioteca Nacional (The National Library) and la Real Academia Española de la Lengua (the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language).

El Instituto Cervantes is a centre of excellence for learning Spanish around the world, not only with its courses in the language, but also for its Spanish culture courses, allowing students to get to know the rich Spanish culture better.

The public universities in Madrid are also places for learning Spanish, without forgetting of course the la Federación de Escuelas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (FEDELE - The Federation of Schools for Learning Spanish as a Foreign Language) to which many high-quality Spanish-language academies belong.

One of the most attractive places for this kind of tourism is Alcalá de Henares due, firstly, to its history, its university and to the fact that it is the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes, and, secondly, due to the fact that it is the Institute Cervantes's training centre headquarters as well as hosting various official Spanish language schools for foreign students.

In terms of its language tourism and international students, it's not just the studies available but also what is widely on offer in the city and its perceived image, and in this regard, the region of Madrid meets all of your expectations.

It's no wonder the region of Madrid is a benchmark for business tourism on a European and international level thanks to its wide range of quality hotels, fantastic infrastructure for holding meetings and a modern transportation network, as well as other complementary activities such as golf. Madrid and its surrounding metropolitan area are well-positioned as a centre for attracting investment and is where a number of Spanish and foreign companies are located.

Madrid is one of the regions with the highest number of meetings held, in terms of both the number of actual meetings as well as the number of attendees, putting it near the top of the rankings compiled by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

One of the key drivers of the region is Ifema (Recinto Ferial de Madrid), that has more than 1 million square metres of space to fit the needs of each hall and activity, with more than 30,000 companies participating, millions of visitors every year, 12 halls, multiple convention spaces and rooms which along with its services and location, making it the perfect spot for doing business.

Among the most important fairs held at Ifema include Fitur - one of the most important international tourism fairs in the world - ARCO (International Contemporary Art Fair) and Madrid Fashion Week, with many more on Madrid's trade fair calendar.

In addition to the large business centre that is the city of Madrid, numerous towns in the region also have hotel facilities and services, as well good resources for putting on business events, conventions and congresses.



House riding. Villaviciosa de Odón



Madrid is the perfect place to take your family and it's easy to find not just activities for children, but for the whole family to enjoy. For example, the Museo del Ferrocarril (The Railway Museum), el Museo de Ciencias Naturales (The Museum of Natural Sciences) y el Museo de Cera (The Museum of Wax) appeal to children of all ages, but also the museums on the Paseo del Arte (Avenue of Art) which schedule children's events, family workshops and tailored visits for smaller children so parents and children alike have a great time. Other great attractions include the Planetario de Madrid or going to see plays put on especially for families.

In the region of Madrid, it's easy to take a gentle walk or go for a bike ride in the outdoors along the green routes, livestock trails, nature trails... Horse riding is another possibility, or enjoying parks full of zip lines, bridges between trees, or visiting animals from all corners of the globe at the Madrid Zoo Aquarium, the Faunia (Zoo) as well as the Madrid Safari.... And how about exploring parks such as El Retiro, El Capricho, Juan Carlos I, the Casa de Campo, Madrid River and the Parque Europa (Park of Europe) or the Bosque Encantado (Haunted Forest) of San Martín de Valdeiglesias?

Apart from the art, culture and nature on offer, a visit to the large theme parks such as the Parque de Atracciones, the Parque Warner, Micropolix and of course in summer, the water parks.

The region is one of the most prominent places for the LGBTI community. In the city of Madrid, areas such as Chueca have become hubs for the gay community, where multicolored flags can be seen everywhere. Chueca accommodates the gay communities as well as others that live with the ideals of love and respect.

A fine example of this is the fact that Madrid was chosen as the host city for World Pride 2017 but as well this, there were many LGBTI events organised throughout the year related to culture, art, sport and leisure. The Festival of Gay, Transsexual and Lesbian Cinema, the We Party and Gay Day Madrid festivals together with hotels, restaurants and entertainment especially oriented towards the LGBTI communities make them a point of reference in this area.

Practical information

Region of Madrid tourist offices network

The Region of Madrid's network of tourist information offices has offices strategically located throughout the city of Madrid - in the airport, stations and in the centre of Madrid - along with others attached to the transport network, located throughout the region.

The primary objective of these is to welcome visitors that arrive in Madrid and the surrounding towns, providing quality information and letting them know about the wide variety of tourism resources that the region of Madrid has.

A word on security...

Madrid is one of the safest cities in the world. It's not a coincidence that it was voted 12th in the Safe Cities Index 2017 carried out by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The security measures are evident in the thousands of cameras distributed around the public transport network that work in conjunction with the network's security guards. Footage is recorded in real time in the metro stations which is monitored by the command centre. This also co-ordinates emergencies and other events, which can also be co-ordinated from other command posts scattered around the capital's metro stations.

The National Police has a Foreign Tourist Service (SATE) in several languages which visitors can turn to in the event of exceptional circumstances where police intervention might be needed. Its functions include cancelling credit cards, contacting embassies and consulates and providing assistance in police formalities and reports.

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Legal Deposit:

M-1083-2018.

Print: BOCM

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