The best places to eat, sleep and play in Madrid this fall and winter

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INTRODUCTION

TripAdvisor, the most trusted source for where to eat, sleep and play in thousands of destinations around the world, has collected the best insider tips from its 50 million monthly visitors to produce a unique series of travel guides. In addition to the best hotels, restaurants and attractions for every type of traveler, you'll get great advice about what to pack, how to get around and where to find the best views. Be sure to check out the guides at www.tripadvisor.com.

Inside MADRID

On its high perch smack dab in the center of the country, Madrid stands as the capital of Spain and the highest capital in Europe. Its five million residents, known as Madrileños, rise early (if they ever got to bed at all) for a local favorite—coffee and churros, a tasty fried-dough pastry. Join them in this custom and the morning sugar rush will energize you for a day of non-stop action. At first glance, Madrid might seem serious—and it is—but it has a fully developed fun side: a raging art and cultural scene, including world-class museums, trend-setting galleries, engaging shows, rowdy parks, relaxing gardens and serious, serious nightlife. For the most favorable view of the city, simply look up and take in the architecturally diverse and visually pleasing buildings—some say Madrid’s buildings are its best attribute. Of course, those with a sweet tooth might award that honor to the churros.

TRAVEL TIPS

1. “Get ready to adjust your clock. Nothing really starts happening until about 10:30 at night.”—TripAdvisor Member, California

2. “Take your opera glasses—the bullring in Madrid is the largest in Spain, with some 30,000 seats.”—TripAdvisor Member, Seattle, Wash.

3. “You can take your baby just about anywhere—even to the tapas bars, the Prado museum and the Puerta del Sol shopping area. I definitely recommend bringing a stroller; preferably a heavy duty one. The old streets in some parts of town would be hard on a flimsy stroller.”—TripAdvisor Member, Chicago, Ill.
Top VIEWS

MADRID’S BEST VIEWS

“One thing to know about Madrid (and it has taken me some time to find out) is that its beauty is better captured if you look upwards. Take a look at the buildings in Barrio de Salamanca.”—TripAdvisor Member

Barrio de Salamanca, Alfonso XII and Piamonte

Take “the teleférico/cable car that goes from (sort of) near Plaza de España/Palacio Real to the park Casa de Campo. Views of Madrid from the west end of the city are spectacular.”—TripAdvisor Member

Teleférico, Paseo del Pintor Rosales, s/n

On Moncloa, “there’s an impressive building on the left (the Air Force headquarters) and a lookout tower where you can get a view of the city.”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

Lookout Tower, Moncloa

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Where to PLAY

TOP 10 Attractions

1. Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), Paseo del Prado, 8, 91 369 0151
2. Retiro Park (Parque del Retiro), Between C. Alfonso XII and Avenida de Menendez Pelayo
3. Prado Museum (Museo del Prado), Paseo del Prado s/n, 91 330 2800
4. Sorolla Museum (Museo de Sorollo), 37 Martinez Campos, 91 310 1584
5. Hermitage of San Antonio de la Florida (Ermita de San Antonio), Paseo de la Florida, 91 542 0722
6. Bernabeu Stadium (Estadio Santiago Bernabeu), Avenida de Concha Espina 1, 91 398 4300
7. Royal Palace of Madrid (Palacio Real), Calle Bailen, 91 454 8800
8. Queen Sofia Arts Center (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia) Santa Isabel, 52, 91 774 1000
9. Real Basilica de San Francisco el Grande, Plaza de San Francisco el Grande San Buenaventura, 91 365 3800
10. Palacio de Comunicaciones, Plaza de Cibeles, 91 396 2679

FAMILIES

“Faunia is a great mix of both indoor and outdoor things to see. Many of the animals are allowed to roam quite freely. We saw some incredibly cute little furry animals popping up out of holes in a grass bank. Kids will love it!”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

Faunia, Avenida Comunidades 28, 91 301 6210

Zoo Aquarium de la Casa de Campo offered “a very good day out. The aquarium is a lot bigger than it first appears. Great variety of animals. Cafeteria is well worth a visit, so don’t bother with the packed lunch. Arrived intending to kill a couple of hours and spent all day there!”—TripAdvisor Member, Northampton, England

Zoo Aquarium de la Casa de Campo, Casa de Campo, 91 512 3770

“1917 Blinis & Vodkas is a gem. You can go for drinks or have their delicious blinis, made with all sort of smoked fish. The decoration is very intimate: red velvet curtains, gold painted ceilings, dim lights, and smooth jazz music.”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

1917 Blinis & Vodkas, Calle de la Independencia 1, 91 124 9800

ROMANCE

Retiro Park (Parque del Retiro) “is buzzing with people walking dogs, jogging, juggling, dancing, singing, practicing Tai Chi, sunbathing and even watching the world go by. The gardens, boating lake, statues and topiary really make this a special place in the heart of a great city. If you were going to propose to someone, this would be the perfect place.”—TripAdvisor Member, Edinburgh, Scotland

Retiro Park (Parque del Retiro), between Alfonso XII and Avenida de Menendez Pelayo

You’ll be “overwhelmed by the beauty of Basilica de San Francisco El Grande. It’s a hidden gem. What a fantastic place to have the perfect wedding!”—TripAdvisor Member, Malaga, Spain

Basilica de San Francisco El Grande, Plaza de San Francisco el Grande, 91 365 3800

“1917 Blinis & Vodkas is a gem. You can go for drinks or have their delicious blinis, made with all sort of smoked fish. The decoration is very intimate: red velvet curtains, gold painted ceilings, dim lights, and smooth jazz music.”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

1917 Blinis & Vodkas, Calle de la Independencia 1, 91 124 9800

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**BUDGET**

“The Sorolla Museum is a hidden gem and is one of the most enjoyable museums to see. The paintings are wonderful and there are many, especially on the upper floor. There are many artistic things to see in the house and the patios are simply beautiful. The house is like a decorative arts museum and shows wonderful furniture from the past.”—TripAdvisor Member, Malaga, Spain

Sorolla Museum (Museo de Sorollo), 37 Martinez Campos, 91 758 1584

“La Latina is in the heart of old Madrid, with picturesque streets and the most charming restaurants and bars. Browse through the market, have a full meal or go for tapas here, tapas there and before the night ends, you’ve had tapas everywhere! Expect to get caught by the fiesta and end your day on top of a barstool, smiling and toasting in a dancing, yelling crowd. This is what celebration of everyday life should be like!”—TripAdvisor Member, Oslo, Norway

La Latina

“I left my heart in Gate of the Sun (Puerta del Sol). It was the center of my experience in Madrid. Andean street musicians (even mariachis sometimes!), major people-watching, places to eat and central to many of the best nightspots. I miss Madrid like mad.”—TripAdvisor Member, Los Angeles, Calif.

Gate of the Sun (Puerta del Sol), Mayor and Alcala

“Ski in Madrid year-round. Madrid Snow Zone is the largest indoor track in Europe and the only one in the world that reproduces an authentic mountain environment. There’s also tubing, a children’s park and go-karting. The most diverse alternatives for enjoying a day.”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

Madrid Xanadu, Autovia A-5 (N-V), Km 23.5, Margen Izquierdo, Arroyomolinos, 90 226 3026

**ADVENTURE**

Bravo Bike Tour “was definitely a highlight of our stay in Madrid. We rode past squares, statues, fountains, parks, the Prado, Plaza Mayor, Palacio Real and other points of interest. It was a great three-hour tour.”—TripAdvisor Member, Las Vegas, Nev.

Bravo Bike Tour, Calle Juan Alvarez Mendizábal, 19, 91 758 2945

“We had a beautiful day with Madrid Segway Tours and had tons of fun while seeing parts of the city that we wouldn’t have otherwise. The Segway is very easy to operate and adapt to, and the owner provides plenty of time to get comfortable and experiment.”—TripAdvisor Member, New Jersey

Madrid Segway Tours, Plaza de Espana, 65 982 4499

“…give yourself plenty of time to soak in the inspiring works!”

**EDUCATIONAL/HISTORICAL**

Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza) is “a delight. It represents one of the greatest private art collections in the world. Almost all major artists are represented. Never overwhelming, this collection is informative, enlightening and exquisite. Not to be missed.”—TripAdvisor Member, Toronto, Ontario

Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), Paseo del Prado 8, 91 369 0151

“Don’t leave Madrid without a visit to Queen Sofia Arts Center. It was the highlight of my visit. If you want a treat on modern/ contemporary art, then walk around and give yourself plenty of time to soak in the inspiring works! Of course, Picasso’s Guernica draws the crowd. But don’t leave without seeing what Spain has done with art in the mid to late 20th century.”—TripAdvisor Member, Philadelphia, Pa.

Queen Sofia Arts Center (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia), Santa Isabel 52, 91 774 1000

“The Royal Palace is not the current royal residence, and one can see why. The palace is clearly a great and impressive building, housing many of Spain’s treasures, but many of the rooms have a reflection of a time long since gone.”—TripAdvisor Member, Sheffield, England

Royal Palace of Madrid (Palacio Real), Calle Bailén, 91 454 8800

“…”give yourself plenty of time to soak in the inspiring works!”

**RELAXATION**

“Parque del Oeste is a magnificent park, with a great variety of trees and plants. You can walk and walk without tiring. Enjoy the ‘sounds of nature.’ Though you are in the middle of the city, the park drowns out all the noise. Best of all, it’s not full of tourists!”—TripAdvisor Member, Texas

Parque del Oeste, Moncloa-Argüelles

Sabatini Gardens “are in neoclassic style, with symmetrical designs that include fountains and many bushes, trees and flowers. There’s a large reflecting pool surrounded by Roman statues and many benches where one can sit and relax. It is a very quiet and beautiful place.”—TripAdvisor Member, Malaga, Spain

Sabatini Gardens, Royal Palace, North Facade

“Expect to get caught by the fiesta and end your day on top of a barstool, smiling and toasting in a dancing, yelling crowd. This is what celebration of everyday life should be like!”—TripAdvisor Member, Oslo, Norway

La Latina

“This is what celebration of everyday life should be like!”

Alcalá de Henares, 20 miles north of Madrid

Escape cosmopolitan Madrid on a daytrip to nearby Alcalá de Henares. Easily reached by train or bus, this ancient city is the birthplace of Cervantes. It was granted UNESCO World Heritage status for its “rich collection of churches and monasteries and its 15th century university.”—TripAdvisor Member, Malaga, Spain

Alcalá de Henares, 20 miles north of Madrid
What's the TOUR

How to Get Around

“Get the tourist pass for the Metro, which you can purchase at any Metro station. You get unlimited rides for however many days you buy. We rode the Metro EVERYWHERE. You will need your passport when purchasing the pass. The pass also gives you unlimited rides on the bus. These passes are great!”—TripAdvisor Member

“Parking is nightmarish; walking is the best way to get around the compact center of Madrid. Or, taxis are inexpensive and well regulated. Look for an illuminated ‘libre’ sign on the roof.”—TripAdvisor Member

“Open Roof Bus Tour is a must to get around; you can hop on and off at numerous points around the city.”—TripAdvisor Member, United Kingdom

WHERE to eat

FAMILIES

“El Buey is a little tricky to find but worth it—good atmosphere, very typical Spanish menu, polite service & child-friendly.”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

El Buey, Plaza de la Marina Espanola 1, 91 541 3041

“Chocolat is the best chocolateria in Madrid: perfect chocolate, not excessively sweet or gloopy, churros which are hot and crispy and staff that are never short of a smile.”—TripAdvisor Member, Oxford, U.K.

Chocolat, Santa Maria 30, 91 429 4565

ROMANCE

“We sat outside at the Cafe de Oriente. It is hard to describe just how perfect this setting is—on a pedestrian street overlooking a gorgeous garden in front of the royal palace. Great location, perfect atmosphere!”—TripAdvisor Member, Phoenix, Ariz.

Cafe de Oriente, Plaza de Oriente 2, 91 541 3974

“Meson del Champinon has reasonably priced food with a lovely atmosphere. Their calamares o chopitos were delicious and a very large portion for the price!”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

Meson del Champinon, Calle Cava de San Miguel 17, 91 559 6790

BUDGET

“Museo del Jamon is a good place to sit and watch all the activity. It was packed day and night whenever we went. You can simply order to take out or sit in. A good size Serrano ham and cheese sandwich costs only around 5 euros and is very filling. It also has great paella at a great price.”—TripAdvisor Member, Seville, Spain

Museo del Jamon, Calle Mayor 7, 91 500 3626

“Cafe Melo’s has “huge croquetas and enormous sandwiches that can fill you and five of your friends up—with beer—for about 15 euros total.”—TripAdvisor Member

Cafe Melo’s, C/Ave Maria 44, 91 527 5054

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WHERE to eat

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS

“La Gloria de Montera is “a nice restaurant” that serves “very affordable Mediterranean food. No reservations, so you have to be there before opening time for a table (8:30 P.M. or so.””—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

La Gloria de Montera, Caballero de Gracia 10, 91 523 4407

HIDDEN GEMS

“We’ve just returned from Madrid and found—well stumbled upon, really—THE JEWEL for authentic, cheap dining with outstanding quality: La Sanabresa. The restaurant opens at 8:30 P.M., and if you’re not there by 9:00, expect to queue to get in. We went three times out of our five-night stay. For four people—appetizer, main course, dessert, two bottles of wine. Total bill—wait for it—€61. Totally unbelievable and totally fabulous.”—TripAdvisor Member, Torrox Costa, Spain

La Sanabresa, Calle Amor de Dios 12, 91 429 0338

“Viva La Vida is quite an innovative place. It’s buffet style food, all completely vegetarian, and you pay according to the weight of the food you eat. There’s an excellent variety of stuff: aubergine lasagne, croquettes, hummus, couscous, salad, rice, plus yummy desserts. The carrot cake and chocolate cake are to die for!”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

Viva La Vida, Costanilla de San Andres 16, 91 366 3349

“Named after the 1961 Luis Buñuel film classic, Viridiana is widely regarded as one of Madrid’s finest restaurants. It is renowned for the creative imagination of its chef and part-owner, who has lined the walls with stills from Buñuel films. Specialties are contemporary adaptations of traditional recipes.”—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

Viridiana, Juan de Mena 14, 91 523 4478

“Casa Nemesio is an excellent restaurant with very fresh seafood. The staff are friendly and they even have an English menu. It’s not cheap, but it’s good value for excellent food.”—TripAdvisor Member, Sydney, Australia

Casa Nemesio, Paseo de la Castellana, 91 323 8410

SPECIAL EVENTS

Find the perfect gifts at a price that won’t leave you broke at Estampa, Madrid’s premier print and contemporary art fair, featuring works by famous artists as well as emerging generations. (October 20 – 23)

Estampa, IFEMA, Parque Ferial Juan Carlos 1, 91 544 7727, http://www.estampa.org

Celebrate diversity on film during the Madrid Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, featuring over 100 screenings of films from local and international filmmakers. (November 3 – 13)

Madrid Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, various venues, http://lesgaicinemad.com

The whole family will be enchanted by the annual Christmas World (Ciudad de los Niños), when Plaza de Colón is magically transformed into a wonderland of music, flamenco performances, puppet shows and much more. (December)

Christmas World (Ciudad de los Niños), Plaza de Colón, 91 588 1636 (Tourist Office)

Lace up your running shoes and dash towards 2012 at the San Silvestre Vallecana, a 10K fun run through the barrio of Vallecas on New Year’s Eve. (December 31)


Have a sweet tooth? Catch some goodies at the Twelfth Night Children’s Parade, where the Three Kings and their helpers will toss out candies to the cheering crowds. (January 6)

Twelfth Night Children’s Parade, El Retiro parque – Plaza Mayor

The Netherlands is this year’s invited guest at the Madrid International Contemporary Art Fair (ARCO), although the massive art fair will feature works of modern and contemporary art from all over the globe. (February 15 – 19)

ARCO, Feria Madrid Exhibition Centre, Parque Ferial Juan Carlos 1 (IFEMA), 91 722 3000, http://www.arco.ifema.es

Feast and dance in the days leading up to Lent at the Madrid Carnaval, featuring costume competitions, music, food and the annual Burial of the Sardine. (February 16 - 21)

Madrid Carnaval, various locations, 91 588 1636 (Tourist Office)

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**FAMILIES**

Hostal Acapulco is a "great, cheap, clean, safe family hostel right in the middle of everything. The room had four single beds with heaps of room to move and a small balcony looking over a square. Lots of natural light. We felt very safe, and there were so many shops, restaurants and bars around us. A great find for a wonderful city!"—TripAdvisor Member, Australia

Hostal Acapulco, Salud 13, 4th floor, Plaza del Carmen, 91 531 1945

The Westin Palace is a very fancy hotel in a great location in Madrid. The hotel is not modern, but has an old-world luxurious feel and charm. It's large and bustling, with great rooms and bathrooms."—TripAdvisor Member, Madrid

Westin Palace Madrid, Plaza de las Cortes 7, 91 360 8000

"The suite at Hotel Suites Viena is a good size with plenty of storage space. The quiet and safe location, air conditioning/ heating, laminate floor, blackout curtains, good-sized bed and comfortable modern furniture made our stay very comfortable. I recommend this hotel to families—the kitchenette is ideal if traveling with children."—TripAdvisor Member, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Hotel Suites Viena, Juan Álvarez Mendizábal 17, 91 758 3605

"Hostal Luz has a "convenient central location, two blocks from the metro. I've stayed there five or six times in the past eight years. If fact, it's the only place I've stayed in Madrid."—TripAdvisor Member, Rochester, Minn.

Hostal Luz, Calle de las Fuentas, 10. 3 Izq., 91 542 0759

**ROMANCE**

The Gran Melia Fenix is a “lovely place to celebrate a special occasion. The room was beautiful, the outdoor Jacuzzi great for relaxing, and the royal service second to none. We didn’t hear any noise from the other rooms during our stay.”—TripAdvisor Member, Dublin, Ireland

Gran Melia Fenix, Calle de Hermosilla 2, 91 431 6700

A “fab, chic hotel on the corner of plaza Santa Ana, Hotel Room Mate Alicia is a breath of fresh air: minimalist decor, hip, clean and friendly staff.”—TripAdvisor Member, Edinburgh, Scotland

Hotel Room Mate Alicia, C/ Prado 2, 91 389 6095

"Casa De Madrid was the first stop on our honeymoon in Spain, and we were absolutely delighted. It felt more like a beautiful home than a hotel."—TripAdvisor Member, Mumbai, India

Casa De Madrid, Calle Arrieta 2, 91 559 5791

**BUDGET**

Abracadabra “is a fantastic place to stay in Madrid. Clean, safe, comfortable, modern and accessible rates—that’s all we want to find on holidays! Do not hesitate to stay at Abracadabra—you won’t regret it. I give you my word!”—TripAdvisor Member, Cordoba, Argentina

Abracadabra B&B, Calle Bailén 39, 91 188 5712

"Located in a beautiful old house, Hotel Plaza Mayor has been magnificently renovated with all the modern conveniences. The rooms were spotless, featured new beds and large, well appointed bathrooms. The AC worked great—which was a blessing considering the heat. The location is perfect; the Plaza Mayor is right outside the door. This hotel was a steal."—TripAdvisor Member

Hotel Plaza Mayor, Atocha 2, 91 360 0606

Hostal Luz has a “convenient central location, two blocks from the metro. I’ve stayed there five or six times in the past eight years. If fact, it’s the only place I’ve stayed in Madrid.”—TripAdvisor Member, Rochester, Minn.

Hostal Luz, Calle de las Fuentes, 10. 3 IZQ., 91 542 0759

**LUXURY**

"Hotel Orfila is paradise on Earth! The staff is extremely helpful and accommodating; the food is delicious, and the location couldn’t be better. The absolute comfort of it is almost overwhelming!"—TripAdvisor Member, San Jose, Costa Rica

Hotel Orfila, Calle de Orfila 6, 91 702 7770

"If you’re into modern, contemporary design, you have to stay at Puerta America. It’s unlike anything you’ve ever seen in any other hotel. And you have so many floors to choose from, whether you like flowing organic lines, the fragrance of leather paneling or the science-fiction feel of stainless steel. It’s a design adventure—totally cutting edge and absolutely fascinating."—TripAdvisor Member, Munich, Germany

Silken Puerta America, Avenida América 41, 91 744 5400

The Adler "is a small, centrally located hotel in exclusive Barrio de Salamanca. The staff is very helpful and take a personal interest in providing all the information and help you need. The rooms are impeccably maintained and the service is perfect—the staff even keeps a record of your requests and preferences. Home away from home!"—TripAdvisor Member, Puerto Rico

Adler Hotel, Calle Velazquez 33, 91 426 3220

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Where to STAY

HIDDEN GEMS

“Located right in the heart of Chueca, Chueca Pension is very clean, well maintained and welcoming. The staff are really amazing, always on hand to suggest ‘local’ places to visit and tips on how to experience the most of Madrid.”—TripAdvisor Member, Sydney, Australia

Chueca Pension, Gravina 4, 91 523 1473

“We were amazed when we opened the door to our room at Suites 33. It was beautiful for the price that we paid. The hotel is right off the main street of Gran Via, where everything is! But if you don’t know where you’re going, you just might pass right by the hotel and not know it. There is no sign on the front of the hotel—so look carefully.”—TripAdvisor Member, New York

Suites 33, Calle Leganitos 33, 91 758 3850

“Dormirdcine is so amazing - fun, funky lighting and film art. Such good fun! No heirs or graces, just good service and helpful staff. The bedside tables and headboards light up and each bedroom is a different theme.”—TripAdvisor Member, Kent, U.K.

Dormirdcine, Principe de Vergara 87, 91 411 0809

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