

# Madrid



Madrid may lack the effortless glamour of Paris, the gravitas of Rome or the European cool of Barcelona, but it is everything that is good about Spain. Indeed, you'll quickly come to wonder how you can bear to live anywhere else.

Madrid's charm revolves around two extremes. This is a refined city known for its cultural life. Where else in the world could you find three of the world's best art galleries – the Prado, the Reina Sofía and the Thyssen – within a stone's throw of each other? At the same time, Madrid has become synonymous with having a good time and carousing until all hours.

In Madrid's hinterland, attractions range from the sedate royal heritage of San Lorenzo de El Escorial and Aranjuez to the charming villages of Sierra de Guadarrama or enchanted Chinchón, and are all worth seeking out.

Whether you're strolling through the Parque del Buen Retiro on a Sunday afternoon or sipping wine as the street performers that so adorn this city announce its headlong rush into the night, Madrid will, at some point, capture your soul. Once it happens, it never lets go.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- See Velázquez's masterpieces and the dark works of Goya at the world-famous **Museo del Prado** (p131)
- Stroll with the *madriñeños* on a Sunday afternoon in the **Parque del Buen Retiro** (p133)
- Search for treasure amid the crowds at **El Rastro flea market** (p129)
- Soak up the buzz with a *caña* (small beer) or glass of fine Spanish wine on **Plaza de Santa Ana** (p130)
- Lose yourself with the flamenco aficionados amid the passion of **Cardamomo** (p160)
- Make a pilgrimage to see the stars of Real Madrid play at the temple of football, **El Estadio Santiago Bernabéu** (p162)
- Enjoy some of the friendliest bars in Spain in the gay barrio of **Chueca** (p156)
- Spend your hard-earned euros in the exclusive barrio of **Salamanca** (p163)
- Feast on roast suckling pig at **Café de la Iberia** (p172) in Chinchón
- Escape the clamour of city life at Aranjuez's sumptuous **Palacio Real** (p169)



■ AREA: XX505 SQ KM (MADRID)  
32°C.

■ AVE SUMMER TEMP: HIGH  
POP: 3.29 MILLION (MADRID)

## HISTORY

When Iberia's Christians began the Reconquista (Reconquest) – the centuries-long campaign by Christian forces to reclaim the peninsula – the Muslims of Al-Andalus constructed a chain of fortified positions through the heart of Iberia. One of these was built by Muhammad I, emir of Córdoba, in 854, on the site of what would become Madrid. The name they gave to the new settlement was Magerit (or Mayrit), which comes from the Arabic word *majira*, meaning water channel.

Magerit's strategic location in the centre of the peninsula saw the city change hands repeatedly, but it was not until 1309 that the travelling Cortes (royal court and parliament) sat in Madrid for the first time. Despite the growing evidence of royal attention, medieval Madrid remained dirt-poor and small-scale: 'in Madrid there is nothing except what you bring with you', observed one 15th-century writer. It simply bore no comparison with other major Spanish, let alone European, cities.

By the time Carlos' son and successor, Felipe II, ascended the Spanish throne in 1556, Madrid was surrounded by walls that boasted 130 towers and six stone gates, but these fortifications were largely built of mud and designed more to impress than provide any meaningful defence of the city. Such modest claims to significance notwithstanding, Madrid was chosen by Felipe II as the capital of Spain in 1561.

Madrid took centuries to grow into its new role and despite a handful of elegant churches, the imposing Alcázar and a smattering of noble residences, Madrid consisted, for the most part, of precarious whitewashed houses that were little more than mud huts. The monumental Paseo del Prado, which now provides Madrid with so much of its grandeur, was nothing more than a small creek.

It was during the 17th century, Spain's golden age, that Madrid began to take on the aspect of a capital and was home to 175,000 people, making it the fifth-largest city in Europe (after London, Paris, Constantinople and Naples).

Carlos III (r 1759–88) gave Madrid and Spain a period of comparatively common-sense government and, after he cleaned up the city, completed the Palacio Real, inaugurated the Real Jardín Botánico and carried out numerous other public works, he became known as the best 'mayor' Madrid had ever had.

*Madriñeños* (Madrid residents) did not take kindly to Napoleon's invasion and subsequent occupation of Spain in 1805 and, on the morning of 2 May 1808, they attacked French troops around the Palacio Real and what is now Plaza del Dos de Mayo. The ill-fated rebellion was quickly put down by Murat.

Turmoil continued to stalk the Spanish capital after this event. The Carlist Wars of the 19th century were subsequently followed by a two-and-a-half-year siege of Madrid by Franco's Nationalist forces, during which the city was shelled regularly from Casa de Campo and Gran Vía became known as 'Howitzer Alley'.

After Franco's death in 1975 and the country's subsequent transition to democracy, Madrid became an icon for the new Spain as the city's young – under the mayoral rule of Enrique Tierno Galván, a popular Socialist professor – unleashed a flood of pent-up energy. This took its most colourful form in the years of *la movida* (see p159), the endless party that swept up the city in a frenzy of creativity and open-minded freedom that has in some ways yet to abate.

## ORIENTATION

In Spain, all roads lead to Madrid's La Plaza de Puerta del Sol (commonly known as Puerta del Sol), kilometre zero, the physical and emotional heart of the city. Radiating out from this busy plaza are roads – Calle Mayor, Calle del Arenal, Calle de Preciados, Calle de la Montera and Calle de Alcalá – that stretch into the city, as well as a host of metro lines and bus routes.

South of the Puerta del Sol is the oldest part of the city, with Plaza Mayor and Los Austrias to the southwest and the busy streets of the Huertas barrio (district or quarter of a town or city) to the southeast. Also to the south lie La Latina and Lavapiés.

North of the plaza is a modern shopping district and, beyond that, the east–west thoroughfare Gran Vía and the bohemian barrio Chueca as well as Malasaña. To the west is the stately Palacio Real, while to the east lies the city's lungs, El Retiro park, and Salamanca.

Madrid is surrounded by a series of ring roads, making maps of the city look something like a bull's-eye. Though often hellishly crowded, these highways are the best (and sometimes only) way to get out of the city.

## INFORMATION Bookshops

**Altair** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 543 53 00; www.altair.es in Spanish; Calle de Gaztambide 31) Cosy travel bookshop, with a range of maps, guides and travel literature.

**Casa del Libro** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 524 19 00; www.casadellibro.com in Spanish; Gran Vía 29) Spain's answer to Barnes & Noble has a large English- and foreign- language literature section on the ground floor at the back.

**Cuesta de Claudio Moyano bookstalls** (Map p125; Cuesta de Claudio Moyano) On the southern edge of the botanical gardens, a row of 30-odd bookstalls burst with second-hand books.

**De Viaje** (Map p120; ☎ 91 577 98 99; www.deviaje.com in Spanish; Calle de Serrano 41) Madrid's largest travel bookshop with a travel agency, a travel gear section and exhibitions of travel photos.

**Petra's International Bookshop** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 541 72 91; Calle de Campomanes 13) A lively expat community is drawn to this excellent (mostly second-hand) English-language bookshop.

## Cultural Centres

The following foreign cultural centres all have libraries and organise film nights and other activities.

**British Council** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 337 35 00; Paseo del General Martínez Campos 31)

**Goethe Institut** (Map p120; ☎ 91 391 39 44; Calle de Zurbarán 21)

**Institut Français** (Map p120; ☎ 91 700 48 00; Calle del Marqués de la Ensenada 12)

**Istituto Italiano di Cultura** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 547 86 02; Calle Mayor 86)

## Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 061)

**Cruz Roja** (☎ 91 522 22 22)

**Medical & Fire Emergencies** (☎ 112)

**Police** (☎ 091)

## Internet Access

You're almost guaranteed to find a high-speed connection if you poke around the streets surrounding the Puerta del Sol, Plaza Mayor and Gran Vía. The ayuntamiento's Centro de Turismo de Madrid (opposite) on Plaza Mayor offers free internet for up to 15 minutes.

**Cyber Total** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 532 26 22; Calle de Espoz y Mina 17; per hr €2; 10am-10pm) High-speed internet connections, fax, printing, scanning and CD burning are all possible at this modern, savvy place.

### 11 MARCH 2004 – A SPECIAL SILENCE *Anthony Ham*

There has never been a day quite like it in Madrid. Throughout Thursday 11 March 2004, an eerie silence reigned over a city long renowned as the most raucous and vibrant in Europe; the quietness of this day was profoundly unsettling, in part because of the devastating bombings which had caused it, but also because this is a city with a joyous disregard for noise.

The silence was broken only by the sirens of emergency vehicles and the sound of circling helicopters. As they laid out the bodies alongside the tracks at Madrid's Atocha train station, many emergency workers stood in anguish, trying to decide whether to answer the ringing mobile phones of the victims. At the makeshift morgue on the outskirts of the city, an emotion-filled voice read out the names of those who had died over a loudspeaker to the waiting families.

And then there was the sound of a million mobile phones, as *madriñeños* overloaded mobile networks trying frantically to track down family and friends. These sounds could not drown out the silence of the empty bars, of normally clamorous streets filled with people standing in silence. After a desperate two hours spent trying to reach my wife's family – we knew that they had been close-by when the bombings took place – I finally got through. Suddenly, I found myself unable to speak.

On Friday night, we joined the massive crowds on the streets of Madrid and marched past the wrought-iron balconies draped with Spanish flags, each tied with a black ribbon, while others stood silently in the rain. Chants rose up, among them the defiant: *'Se nota, se siente, Madrid esta presente'* (You can see it, you can feel it, Madrid is here).

It took almost three hours to travel the 3km from Plaza de Colon to Atocha station. When this angry, grieving crowd, whose march had taken on the quality of a pilgrimage, reached its destination close to where the bombs had exploded, it broke into spontaneous rounds of applause. And before the haunting silence of the *madriñeños* again took hold, there was one last resounding cry: *'Ibamos todos en ese tren'* (We were all on that train).

**La Casa de Internet** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 594 42 00; 1st fl, Calle de Luchana 20; per hr €2.10; 10am-12.30am Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30am Sat, 5pm-12.30pm Sun) Terrific place with 60 fast computers and where hourly prices drop as low as €1.25 the more time you use.

**Navega Web** (Map pp118-19; Gran Vía 30; per hr €2; 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Mon-Sat) The national phone company's phone centre.

**Neveda 2000** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 20 94; Calle de los Reyes 7; per hr €1.80; 8am-1am daily) Once you're past the smoky old café with one-armed bandits, there are fast connections out the back.

## Left Luggage

Both Chamartin and Atocha train stations have *consignas* (lockers), where you can leave luggage for €2.40 to €4.50 per day, depending on the size of the locker. If you're leaving large boxes or suitcases, the Estación Sur bus station is better; you check your belongings into a large storage room and pay by the day. Three left-luggage offices operate at the airport: in the T1 terminal (near the bus stop and taxi stand), in T2 (near the metro entrance) and on the ground floor of T4. Costs start from €2.75 for the first 24-hour period (or fraction thereof).

## Lost Property

You can try looking for lost property (including items left on the metro or buses) at the **Negociado de Objetos Perdidos** (☎ 91 588 43 48, 91 527 95 90; Plaza de Legazpi 7; 9am-2pm). The nearest metro station is Legazpi.

If you leave something in a taxi, call ☎ 91 588 43 44 or the taxi company concerned. If you lose something on a local train, check at the information desk at Atocha train station.

## Medical Services

**Anglo-American Medical Unit** (Map p120; ☎ 91 435 18 23; Calle del Conde de Aranda 1) Private clinic with Spanish- and English- speaking staff.

**Farmacia del Globo** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 20 00; Plaza de Antón Martín 46; 10am-24hr)

**Farmacia Mayor** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 46 16; Calle Mayor 13; 10am-24hr)

**Hospital General Gregorio Marañón** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 586 80 00; www.hggm.es in Spanish; Calle del Doctor Esquerdo 46) One of the city's main public hospitals.

## Money

Large banks such as Caja de Madrid usually have the best exchange rates, but check their commissions. Using your ATM card will give

you these same bank rates, no matter where or what time of day you use it.

If you're desperate, around Puerta del Sol and Plaza Mayor there are plenty of  *bureaux de change*, which have the predictable rip-off rates but are often open until midnight.

## Post

**Post Office** (Map p125; ☎ 91 396 24 43; www.correos.es; Plaza de la Cibeles; 8.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat) The main post office is in the gigantic Palacio de Comunicaciones. Other branches are dotted throughout the city.

## Tourist Information

The city's general-information telephone line (☎ 010, Spanish only) deals with everything from public transport to shows.

You can also try the Comunidad de Madrid's regional information line (☎ 012, Spanish only).

**Centro de Turismo de Madrid** (Map pp122-3; www.esmadrid.com, www.munimadrid.es; Plaza Mayor 27; 9.30am-8.30pm) The ayuntamiento also runs bright orange information points at Plaza de la Cibeles, Plaza de Callao and at the T4 terminal at Barajas airport.

**Regional tourist office** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 49 51, 902 100 007; www.madrid.org in Spanish; Calle del Duque de Medinaceli 2; 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun) There are also tourist offices at Barajas airport, Chamartin and Atocha train stations.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

There's no need to be paranoid while in Madrid, but you should be on your guard. Tourists are generally the prey of choice, and thieves operating on the metro and buses will be quick to whisk away that easily accessible wallet, small backpack or briefcase left sitting in the aisle.

You need to be especially careful in the most heavily touristed parts of town, notably Plaza Mayor and surrounding streets, Plaza de Santa Ana, the Puerta del Sol and around the Prado. You should also be sure to take particular care in the crush of bodies in El Rastro flea market.

Don't expect the police to become too agitated over your stories of theft and mishap though. It's part of their daily diet in Madrid. They will, however, be certain to take your statement. You will need this for insurance purposes as well as to have new passports and other documents issued.

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- Dutch Embassy.....1 D2
- Escuela Oficial de Idiomas.....2 B3
- Universidad Complutense.....3 A3

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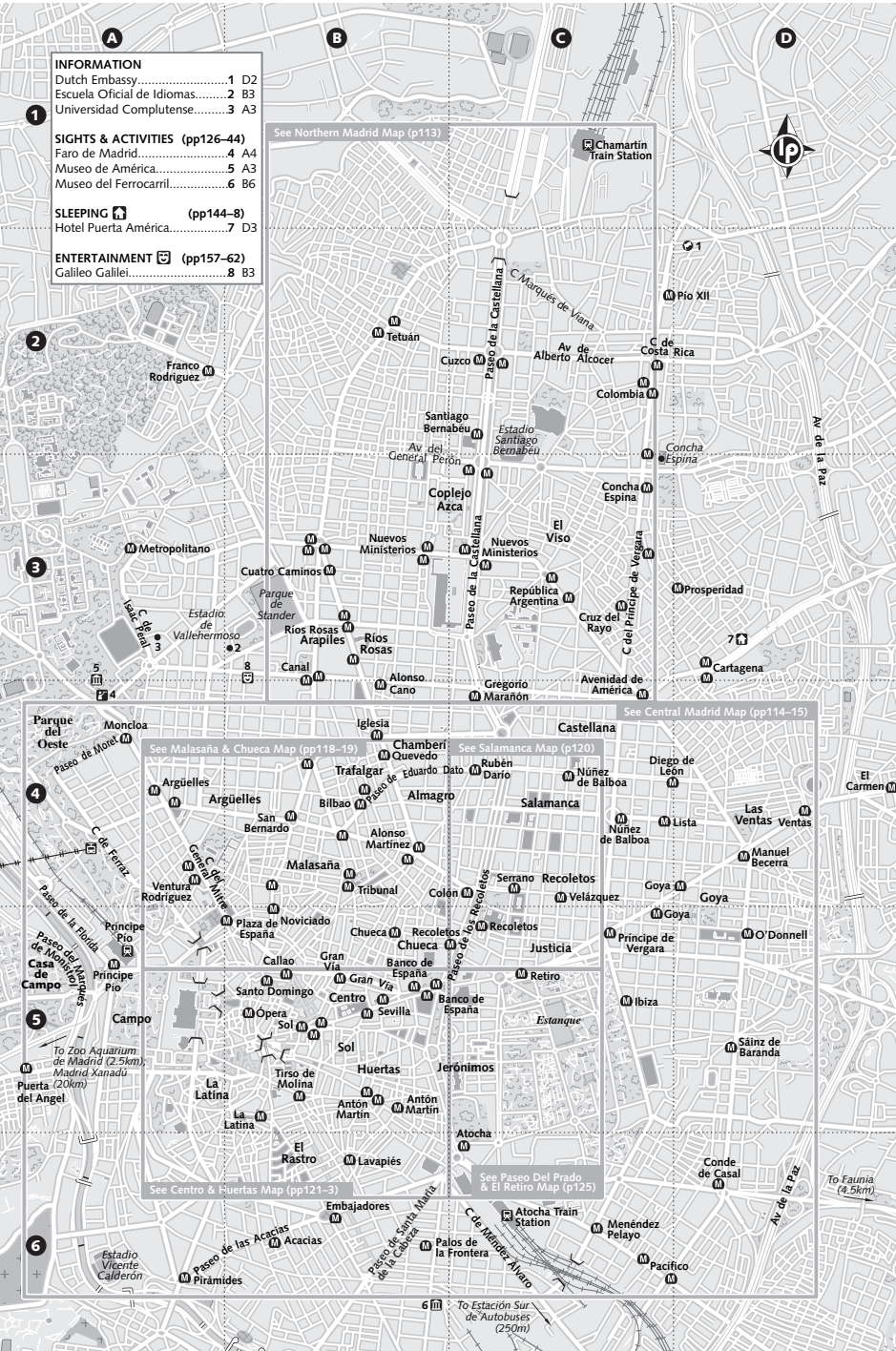
- Faro de Madrid.....4 A4
- Museo de América.....5 A3
- Museo del Ferrocarril.....6 B6

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- Hotel Puerta América.....7 D3

**ENTERTAINMENT (pp157-62)**

- Galileo Galilei.....8 B3



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- Australian Embassy.....1 A6
- Cooking Club.....2 B2
- Japanese Embassy.....3 C6
- Moroccan Embassy.....4 D4

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- City Yoga.....6 A5
- Exposición de Trofeos.....7 C4
- Museo de la Ciudad.....8 D5

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- Calle 54.....13 C5
- Estadio Santiago Bernabéu.....14 C4
- Estadio Santiago Bernabéu Ticket Office.....15 C4

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- ALSA.....(see 16)
- Continental-Auto.....(see 16)
- Intercambiador de Avenida de América.....16 D6





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| Altair.....                               | 1  | B1 |  |
| British Council.....                      | 2  | E1 |  |
| Fundación Triángulo.....                  | 3  | D1 |  |
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| Marañón.....                              | 4  | G4 |  |
| Irish Embassy.....                        | 5  | E1 |  |
| Portuguese Embassy.....                   | 6  | E1 |  |
| US Embassy.....                           | 7  | E1 |  |
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| Florida.....                              | 10 | A2 |  |
| Karacol Sports.....                       | 11 | E5 |  |
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| La Casa de Internet.....                 | 3       | F2 |  |
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| Duque.....                               | 6       | C3 |  |
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| Chimeneas.....                           | 7       | G6 |  |
| Museo de Cerralbo.....                   | 8       | A5 |  |
| Museo Municipal.....                     | 9       | F4 |  |
| Museo Municipal de Arte                  |         |    |  |
| Contemporáneo de Madrid....              | (see 6) |    |  |
| Parque Secreto.....                      | 10      | D2 |  |
| Sociedad General de Autores y            |         |    |  |
| Editores.....                            | 11      | G4 |  |
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| La Musa.....                             | 24      | E3 |  |
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| Bernardo.....                            | 25      | D3 |  |
| Laydown Rest Club.....                   | 26      | C5 |  |
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| Europcar.....                            | 56      | C4 |  |
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**INFORMATION**

- Alliance Française.....1 D1
- Angora Embassy.....2 C6
- Anglo-American Medical Unit.....3 B6
- Canadian Embassy.....4 D4
- De Viaje.....5 C3
- French Embassy.....6 B6
- German Embassy.....7 B2
- Goethe Institut.....8 A2
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- Biblioteca Nacional.....13 B5
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- Museo Arqueológico Nacional.....15 B5
- Museo de Cera.....16 A4
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- Amaya Arzuaga.....32 D4
- Armand Basi.....33 C3
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- Camper.....35 C5
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- Sara Navarro.....37 D5







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## Scams

Tricks abound and they usually involve a team of two or more (sometimes one of them an attractive woman to distract male victims). While one distracts your attention, the other empties your pockets. If approached by strangers offering flowers or unsolicited help, or simply getting too close to your personal space, move on fast. Be wary of jostling on crowded buses and the metro.

## SIGHTS

Madrid has three of the finest art galleries in the world and if ever there was a golden mile of fine art, it has to be the combined charms of the Museo del Prado, the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. Beyond the museums' walls, the combination of stunning architecture and feel-good living has never been easier to access than in the beautiful *plazas* (squares), where *terrazas* (cafés with outdoor tables) provide a front-row seat for Madrid's fine cityscape and endlessly energetic streetlife. Throw in some outstanding city parks (Parque del Buen Retiro, in particular) and areas like Chueca, Malasaña, Lavapiés and Salamanca, which each have their own identity, and you'll

quickly end up wondering why you decided to spend so little time here.

## Los Austrias, Sol & Centro

From the tangle of streets tumbling down the hillside of Madrid's oldest quarter, **Madrid de los Austrias**, and the busy streets around the Puerta del Sol to the monumental Gran Vía, cutting through the heart of Madrid, this is the city at its most diverse. This is where the splendour of Imperial Spain was at its most ostentatious and Spain's overarching Catholicism was at its most devout – think expansive palaces, elaborate private mansions, ancient churches and imposing convents amid the raucous clamour of modern Madrid.

## PLAZA MAYOR

The stunningly beautiful Plaza Mayor (Map pp122–3) is a highlight of any visit to Madrid. The grandeur of its buildings – the uniformly ochre apartments with wrought-iron balconies offset by the exquisite frescoes of the 17th-century Real Casa de la Panadería (Royal Bakery) – is one thing, but this is a living, breathing entity, from the outdoor tables of the *terrazas* to the students strewn across the cobblestones on a sunny day.

Designed in 1619 by Juan Gómez de Mora, its first public ceremony was the beatification

of San Isidro Labrador, Madrid's patron saint. Thereafter, bullfights watched by 50,000 spectators were a recurring spectacle until 1878, while the autos-de-fe (the ritual condemnation of heretics) of the Spanish Inquisition also took place here. Fire largely destroyed the square in 1790, but it was rebuilt and became an important market and hub of city life.

## PALACIO REAL

Spain's lavish **Palacio Real** (Royal Palace; Map pp122–3; % 91 454 88 00; www.patrimonionacional.es in Spanish; Calle de Bailén s/n; adult/child incl tour, Farmacia Real & Armería Real €9/3.50; 11 9.30am–5pm Mon–Sat, 9am–2pm Sun Oct–Mar, 9am–6pm Mon–Sat, 9am–3pm Sun Apr–Sep) is a jewel box of a palace, although it's used only occasionally for royal ceremonies; the royal family moved to the modest Palacio de la Zarzuela years ago.

When the Alcázar burned down on Christmas Day 1734, Felipe V, the first of the Bourbon kings, decided to build a palace that would dwarf all its European counterparts. Felipe died before the palace was finished, which is perhaps why the Italianate baroque colossus has a mere 2800 rooms, just one-quarter of the original plan.

The official tour leads through 50 of the palace rooms, which hold a good selection of Goyas, 215 absurdly ornate clocks and five Stradivarius violins still used for concerts and balls. The main stairway is a grand statement of imperial power, leading first to the Halberdiers' rooms and eventually to the sumptuous Saló del Trono (Throne Room), with its crimson-velvet wall coverings and Tiepolo ceiling. Shortly after, you reach the Saló de Gasparini with its exquisite stucco ceiling and walls resplendent with embroidered silks.

Outside the main palace, visit the **Farmacia Real** (Royal Pharmacy) at the southern end of the patio known as the Plaza de Armas (or Plaza de la Armería). Westwards across the plaza is the **Armería Real** (Royal Armoury), a shiny collection of weapons and armour, mostly dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. The Armería is included in the Palacio Real ticket or you can visit it on its own (€3.40/1.70 per adult/child).

## PLAZA DE ORIENTE

On a summer's evening, there's no finer place to be than the majestic Plaza de Oriente (Map pp122–3). Overlooked by the Palacio Real (above) and enclosed by a semicircle of ele-

gant apartment buildings and cafés, the square is one of Madrid's most open and agreeable.

Once the site of the old Alcázar (left), the square took on its present form under French occupation in the early 1800s. Littered with statues of mostly ancient monarchs and nobles, local legend has it they get down off their pedestals at night to stretch their legs.

On the eastern side of the square is the ill-fated **Teatro Real** (Map pp122–3; % 91 516 06 60; www.teatro-real.com in Spanish; Plaza de Oriente), the city's opera house. The first theatre was built in 1708 and torn down in 1816. Its successors were burned down during the reign of Isabel II and later blown up in the Civil War for good measure. It took its present neo-Classical form in 1997 after a €100-million refit. **Guided visits** (adult/child €4/2; 11 10.30am–1.30pm) are possible.

## CAMPO DEL MORO & JARDINES DE SABATINI

In proper palace style, lush gardens surround the Palacio Real. To the north are the formal French-style **Jardines de Sabatini** (Map pp118–19; 11 9am–9pm May–Sep, 9am–8pm Oct–Apr). Directly behind the palace are the fountains of the **Campo del Moro** (Map pp122–3; 11 10am–8pm Mon–Sat, 9am–8pm Sun & holidays Apr–Sep, 10am–6pm Mon–Sat, 9am–6pm Sun & holidays Oct–Mar), so named because this is where the Muslim army camped before a 12th-century attack on the Alcázar. Now shady paths, a thatch-roofed pagoda and palace views are the main attractions.

## CATEDRAL DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA ALMUDENA

Paris has Notre Dame and Rome has St Peter's Basilica. In fact, almost every European city of stature has its signature cathedral, a stand-out monument to the city's glorious Christian past. Not Madrid. The **Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Almodena** (Map pp122–3; % 91 542 22 00; Calle de Bailén; 11 9am–9pm), south of the Palacio Real, is cavernous and laden with more adornment than charm, its colourful, modern ceilings doing little to make up for the lack of the old-world gravitas that so distinguish the world's great cathedrals.

Carlos I first proposed building a cathedral here back in 1518, but construction didn't get underway until the 1880s. Other priorities got in the way and it wasn't finished until 1992. Not surprisingly, the pristine, bright white neo-Gothic interior holds no pride of place in the affections of *madriños*.

## MADRID IN TWO DAYS

Just two days in Madrid? What were you thinking! You've a hectic day ahead of you so plan it around the best places (and plazas) to relax en route. Begin in **Plaza Mayor** (above) with its architectural beauty, fine *terrazas* and endlessly fascinating passing Madrid parade. Wander down Calle Mayor, passing the delightful **Plaza de la Villa** (p128) and head for the **Palacio Real** (opposite). By then you'll be ready for a coffee or something stronger, and there's no finer place to rest than in **Plaza de Oriente** (opposite). Double back up towards the **Puerta del Sol** (p128), and then on to **Plaza de Santa Ana** (p130), the ideal place for a long, liquid lunch. Time for some high culture, so stroll down the hill to the incomparable **Museo del Prado** (p131), the home of a grand collection of predominantly Spanish old masters and one of the best art galleries in Europe. In anticipation of a long night ahead, catch your breath in the **Parque del Buen Retiro** (p133) before heading into **Chueca** for great restaurants (p152) and Madrid's famously noisy and eclectic nightlife (p156).

On day two, choose between either the **Centro de Arte Reina Sofía** (p131) or the **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** (p132), then jump on the metro for a quick ride across town to the astonishing Goya frescoes in the **Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida** (p136). While you're in the area, consider a chicken-and-cider meal at **Casa Mingo** (p153) or head for La Latina and the great restaurants and tapas bars along **Calle de la Cava Baja** (Map pp122–3) or some cod-and-tripe tapas at **Casa Revuelta** (p149). If it's a Sunday, better still precede these outings with a wander through **El Rastro** (p129), one of the best flea markets in Europe. Another great place to explore is around Malasaña, where **Calle de Manuela Malasaña** (Map pp118–19) offers rich pickings and the august and old-world **Café Comercial** (p152) is a fine old pit stop at any time of day.

### MURALLA ÁRABE

Behind the cathedral apse, and down Cuesta de la Vega, is a short stretch of the so-called *Muralla Árabe* (Arab Wall; Map pp122–3), the fortifications built by Madrid's early medieval Islamic rulers. Some of it dates as far back as the 9th century, when the initial Islamic fort was raised. Other sections date from the 12th and 13th centuries, by which time the city was in Christian hands.

### PLAZA DE LA VILLA

There are grander squares elsewhere, but the intimate Plaza de la Villa (Map pp122–3) is one of Madrid's prettiest. Enclosed on three sides by wonderfully preserved examples of 17th-century Madrid-style baroque architecture (*barroco madrileño*: a pleasing amalgam of brick, exposed stone and wrought iron), it has been the permanent seat of Madrid's city government since the Middle Ages.

On the western side of the square is the 17th-century ayuntamiento (town hall), with its Herrerian slate-tile spires and Habsburg-style baroque. On the opposite side of the square is the Gothic-style Casa de los Lujanes, whose brickwork tower is said to have been 'home' to the imprisoned French monarch François I, after his capture in the Battle of Pavia (1525). The Plateresque Casa de Cisneros, built in 1537 with later Renaissance alterations, also catches the eye.

### CONVENTO DE LAS DESCALZAS REALES

The grim, prisonlike walls of the *Convento de las Descalzas Reales* (Convent of the Barefoot Royals; Map pp122–3; ☎ 91 554 88 00; www.patrimoniacional.es in Spanish; Plaza de las Descalzas; adult/child €5/2.50, EU citizens free Wed, combined ticket with Convento de la Encarnación €6/3.40; 10.30am–12.30pm & 4–5.30pm Tue–Thu & Sat, 10.30am–12.30pm Fri, 11am–1.30pm Sun) offer no hint that behind the Plateresque façade lies a sumptuous stronghold of the faith.

Founded in 1559 by Juana of Austria, the widowed daughter of the Spanish king Carlos I, the convent quickly became one of Spain's richest religious houses thanks to gifts from Juana's noble friends. On the obligatory guided tour you'll see a gaudily frescoed Renaissance stairway, a number of extraordinary tapestries based on works by Rubens, and a wonderful painting entitled *The Voyage of the 11,000 Virgins*. Some 33 nuns still live here and there are 33 chapels dotted around the convent.

### CONVENTO DE LA ENCARNACIÓN

The *Convento de la Encarnación* (Convent of the Incarnation; Map pp122–3; ☎ 91 454 88 00; Plaza de la Encarnación; adult/child €3.60/2, EU citizens free Wed, combined ticket with Convento de las Descalzas Reales €6/3.40; 10.30am–12.45pm & 4–5.45pm Tue–Thu & Sat, 10.30am–12.45pm Fri, 11am–1.30pm Sun) was founded by Empress Margarita of Austria and occupies a 17th-century mansion built in Madrid-style baroque. It's still inhabited by nuns of the Augustine order (Agustinas Recoletas). Inside there is a unique collection of 17th- and 18th-century sculptures and paintings, as well as a handful of silver and gold reliquaries. The most famous contains the blood of San Pantaleón, which purportedly liquefies every year on 28 June, drawing throngs of the curious and the faithful.

### IGLESIA DE SAN NICOLÁS DE LOS SERVITAS

Considered Madrid's oldest surviving church, *Iglesia de San Nicolás de los Servitas* (Map pp122–3; ☎ 91 559 40 64; Plaza de San Nicolás; 8am–1.30pm & 5.30–8.30pm Mon, 8–9.30am & 6.30–8.30pm Tue–Sat, 9.30am–2pm & 6.30–9pm Sun & holidays) may have been built on the site of Muslim Magerit's second mosque and offers a rare glimpse of medieval Madrid. Apart from the restored 12th-century Mudéjar (hispano-moorish) bell tower, most of the present church dates back to the 15th century.

### IGLESIA DE SAN GINÉS

Between Calle Mayor and Calle del Arenal, north of Plaza Mayor, *Iglesia de San Ginés* (Map pp122–3; Calle del Arenal 13; 1 during services) is another of Madrid's oldest churches and has been here in some form since at least the 14th century. It houses some fine paintings, including an El Greco.

### PLAZA DE LA PUERTA DEL SOL

The official centrepiece of Spain is a gracious hemisphere of elegant façades and often very crowded. It is, above all, a crossroads. People here are forever heading somewhere else, on foot, by metro (three lines cross) or bus (many lines terminate and start here). In Madrid's earliest days, the Puerta del Sol (Gate of the Sun; Map pp122–3) was the eastern gate of the city.

It comes into its own on New Year's Eve, when all Madrid packs into the square waiting for the clock that gives Spain its official time

to strike midnight, as the rest of the country watches on TV. Look out for the statue of a bear nuzzling a *madroño* (strawberry tree); this is the symbol of the city.

### REAL ACADEMIA DE BELLAS ARTES DE SAN FERNANDO

In any other city, the *Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* (Map pp122–3; ☎ 91 524 08 64; http://rabasf.insde.es in Spanish; Calle de Alcalá 13; adult/student/senior & under 18yr €2.40/1.20/free, Wed free; 9am–7pm Tue–Fri, 9am–2.30pm Sat–Mon Sep–Jun, longer hours in summer) would be a stand-out attraction, but in Madrid it too often gets forgotten in the rush to the Prado, Thyssen or Reina Sofía. An academic centre of learning for up-and-coming artists since Fernando VI founded it in the 18th century – both Picasso and Dalí studied here – it houses works by some of the best-loved old masters. Highlights include works by Zurbarán, El Greco, Rubens, Tintoretto, Goya, Sorolla and Juan Gris, not to mention a couple of minor portraits by Velázquez and a few drawings by Picasso.

### GRAN VÍA

It's difficult to imagine Madrid without Gran Vía, the grand boulevard that climbs through the centre of Madrid from Plaza de España then down to Calle de Alcalá, but it has only existed since 1911 when it was bulldozed through what was then a lively labyrinth of old streets. On a rise about one-third of the way along Gran Vía stands the 1920s-era *Telefónica building* (Edificio Telefónica; Map pp122–3), which was for years the tallest building in the city. During the Civil War, the boulevard became known as 'Howitzer Alley'. At the southern end of Gran Vía, the stunning French-designed *Metrópolis building* (Edificio Metrópolis; Map pp122–3; 1905), has a winged statue of victory sitting atop its dome.

### La Latina & Lavapiés

With an identity all its own, eclectic Lavapiés is one of Madrid's oldest, most traditional and, increasingly, most multicultural barrios. There's something medieval about its steeply climbing streets which are home to quirky bars, restaurants and alternative-cool shops. It all spills over into La Latina which comes to life on weekends and on Sunday throngs with the El Rastro crowd, keen to savour one of Europe's most engaging flea markets.

### EL RASTRO

A Sunday morning at *El Rastro* (Map pp122–3; 1 Sun morning only), Europe's largest flea market, is a Madrid institution. *El Rastro* (the Stain) owes its name to the blood that once trickled down these streets from the slaughterhouses, which sat up the hill. It's been an open-air market for half a millennium.

The madness begins at Plaza de Cascorro, near La Latina metro stop, and you could easily spend an entire morning inching your way down Calle de la Ribera de Curtidos and the maze of streets branching off it.

Cheap clothes, luggage, antiques, old photos of Madrid, old flamenco records, faux designer purses, grungy T-shirts, household goods and electronics are the main fare, but for every ten pieces of junk, there's a real gem waiting to be found. The shopping starts at 8am and lasts until lunch (2pm or 3pm) but, for many *madrileños*, the best of El Rastro comes after the stalls have shut down and everyone crowds into nearby bars for an *aperitivo* (appetizer) of vermouth and tapas, turning the barrio into the site of a spontaneous Sunday fiesta.

A word of warning: pickpockets love El Rastro as much as everyone else.

### VIADUCTO & JARDINES DE LAS VISTILLAS

For a great view of Campo del Moro, take a stroll down Calle de Segovia, where a viaduct gives a good vantage point.

This was a popular suicide spot until plastic barriers were put up in the late 1990s. Good vantage points, with views out towards Sierra de Guadarrama, are also to be had from the outdoor tables in the adjacent *Jardines de las Vistillas* (Map pp122–3). During the Civil War, Las Vistillas was heavily bombarded by Nationalist troops from the Casa de Campo, and they in turn were shelled from a Republican bunker here.

### LA MORERÍA

The area stretching south from Calle de Segovia and southeast to the Iglesia de San Andrés was the heart of the *morería* (Moorish quarter). Strain the imagination a little and the maze of winding and hilly lanes even now retains a whiff of the North African medina. This is where the Muslim population of Magerit was concentrated in the wake of the 11th-century Christian takeover of the town.

**BASILICA DE SAN FRANCISCO EL GRANDE**

One of the largest churches in the city, the *Basilica de San Francisco el Grande* (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 38 00; Plaza de San Francisco 1; admission museum €3; 11am-1pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sat) dominates the skyline at the southern reaches of La Latina, its pretty yellow dome peeking above the rooftops. The baroque basilica has some outstanding features, including frescoed cupolas and chapel ceilings by Francisco Bayeu. Goya's *The Predication of San Bernardino of Siena for the King of Aragon* is here, too. According to legend, the basilica sits atop the site where St Francis of Assisi built a chapel in 1217.

**IGLESIA DE SAN ANDRÉS & AROUND**

The stately *Iglesia de San Andrés* (Map pp122-3; Plaza de San Andrés 1; 8am-1pm & 5.30-8pm) crowns the plaza of the same name, providing a lovely backdrop for the impromptu parties that fill this square on Sunday afternoons as the El Rastro crowd drifts in. Gutted during Spain's Civil War, it was restored to its former glory and is at its best when illuminated at night.

Around the back is the *Capilla del Obispo*, considered the best Renaissance church in Madrid, though it's not strictly of the period. Look out for the mostly Gothic vaulting in the ceilings, the Plateresque tombs and the fine Renaissance *reredos* (screens). It was long the resting place of San Isidro Labrador until his remains were moved to the *Basilica de San Isidro*.

The nearby *Museo de San Isidro* (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 74 15; www.munimadrid.es/museosanisidro; Plaza de San Andrés 2; admission free; 9.30am-8pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) is devoted to the life of the saint. One highlight is a model based on Pedro Teixeira's 1656 map of Madrid.

**IGLESIA DE SAN PEDRO EL VIEJO**

*San Pedro el Viejo* (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 12 84; Costanilla de San Pedro) is one of the few remaining windows onto the world of medieval Madrid, most notably its clearly Mudéjar bell tower. The church was built atop the site of the old Mezquita de la Morería (Mosque of the Muslim Quarter), in the days when Madrid was still influenced by its Muslim occupation.

**Huertas & Atocha**

This lively central quarter is where Madrid's writers once made their home, and landmarks to their stay are among the highlights. If you keep going far enough down the hill, you'll end up at the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

**PLAZA DE SANTA ANA**

A delightful confluence of elegant architecture and irresistible energy, *Plaza de Santa Ana* (Map pp122-3) is a gem. What it lacks in a distinguished history, it more than compensates for as a focal point of music (there are smoky flamenco bars nearby and street performers love the square itself), culture (the Teatro Español at the eastern end), daytime café sophistication and nocturnal, full-volume hedonism.

**BARRIO DE LAS LETRAS**

The area around Plaza de Santa Ana is often referred to as the *Barrio de las Letras* (District of Letters), because of the writers who lived here during Spain's golden age of the 16th and 17th centuries. Miguel de Cervantes was originally buried in the baroque *Convento de las Trinitarias* (Map pp122-3; closed to the public) and a commemorative Mass is held for him every year on the anniversary of his death, 23 April. Cervantes' house, at Calle de Cervantes 2, is long gone, but just down the street is the *Casa de Lope de Vega* (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 92 16; Calle de Cervantes 11; admission €2, Sat free; 9.30am-2pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat), which is now a museum about the great writer's life and work.

**ANTIGUA ESTACIÓN DE ATOCHA**

The *Antigua Estación de Atocha* (Old Atocha Train Station; Map p125; Plaza del Emperador Carlos V) is a towering iron-and-glass relic from the 19th century. Lovingly preserved and artfully converted in 1992 into a surprising tropical garden with more than 500 plant species, it now feels more like a lush greenhouse than a transport hub, although the cavernous ceiling resonates with the grand old European train stations of another age.

**REAL FÁBRICA DE TAPICES**

Fancy a wall tapestry or a rug based on some of Goya's sketches? The *Real Fábrica de Tapices* (Royal Tapestry Factory; Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 434 05 51; www.realfabricadetapices.com; Calle de Fuencarral 2; admission €2; 10am-2pm Mon-Fri) can whip one up for you in just a few months for a mere €10,000 or so. Founded in 1720 to provide the royal family and other bigwigs with tapestries befitting their grandeur, it counts the Hotel Ritz as a regular client and the current royal family. Many works are based on cartoons by Goya, who was a long-time employee here, creating 63 different drawings to use as models for elaborate tapestries.

**CENTRO DE ARTE REINA SOFÍA**

Adapted from the shell of an 18th-century hospital, the *Centro de Arte Reina Sofía* (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 774 10 00; www.reinasofia.es; Calle de Santa Isabel 52; adult/student/child & senior €6/4/free, 2.30-9pm Sat & Sun free; 10am-9pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun) houses the best in modern (predominantly) Spanish art, principally spanning the 20th century up to the 1980s.

The main gallery's permanent display ranges over the 2nd (Rooms 1 to 17) and 4th floors (Rooms 18 to 45). The peaceful courtyard offers a respite from the clamour of Madrid, while the views over the city from the external glass lift are outstanding.

The main attraction for most visitors is Picasso's *Guernica*, in Room 6 on the 2nd floor, which is worth the entrance price even if you see nothing else. Measuring an epic 3.5m by 7.8m, this is one of the most famous paintings in the world, a signature work of cubism whose disfiguration of the human form would become an eloquent symbol of a world's outrage at the horrors wrought upon the innocent by modern warfare. (It was inspired by the German bombing of the Basque town of Guernica, on Franco's orders, on 26 April 1937.) Alongside this masterpiece is a plethora of the artist's preparatory sketches.

Primary among the other stars on show are the paintings and sculptures of Joan Miró, whose work adorns Room 7, a long gallery adjacent to the Picasso collection. In nearby Room 9 you can see a couple of canvasses by Wassily Kandinsky, one of the few foreigners on show here, while Room 10 boasts 20 or so canvasses by Salvador Dalí, including the surrealist extravaganza *El Gran Masturbador*.

Among the other important Spanish artists you'll find the works of Juan Gris (Rooms 3 and 4) and the Basque painter Ignazio Zuloaga (Room 1), while Room 12 is home to Buñuel's homage to Dalí and sketches by the poet Frederic García Lorca.

On the 4th floor, works by Francis Bacon and Henry Moore (both in Room 24), broaden the context a little, but on no account miss the beautiful works of the Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida (Rooms 42 and 43).

The state-of-the-art Reina Sofía is itself a work of art, no more so than the stunning extension that spreads along the western tip of Plaza del Emperador Carlos V and hosts temporary exhibitions, auditoriums, the bookshop, a café and the museum's library.

**Paseo del Prado & El Retiro**

If you've just come down the hill from Huertas, you'll feel like you've left behind a madhouse for an oasis of greenery, fresh air and high culture. The Museo del Prado and the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza are among the richest galleries of fine art in the world and plenty of other museums lurk in the quietly elegant streets just behind the Prado. Rising up the hill to the east are the stately gardens of the supremely enjoyable Parque del Buen Retiro.

**MUSEO DEL PRADO**

One of the world's top museums, the *Museo del Prado* (Map p125; ☎ 91 330 28 00; http://museodelprado.mcu.es; Paseo del Prado; adult/student/under 18yr & over 65yr €6/4/free, Sun free; 9am-8pm Tue-Sun) has a peerless collection of Spanish and European art. Spend as long as you can here or, better still, plan to make a couple of visits because it can all be a little overwhelming if you try to take it all in at once.

The building in which it is housed is itself a masterpiece. Completed in 1785, the neo-Classical Palacio de Villanueva served as a cavalry barracks for Napoleon's troops during their occupation of Madrid between 1808 and 1813. In 1814, King Fernando VII decided to use the palace as a museum for the royal collections, and five years later the Museo del Prado opened with 311 Spanish paintings on display.

Entering through the northern Puerta de Goya thrusts you immediately into the heart of this priceless collection with the vivid, almost surreal works by the 16th-century master El Greco, whose figures are characteristically slender and tortured. Also close by are works by Titian who was preferred as court painter by Felipe II above El Greco.

About halfway along the main hall, turn left into Room 12 where you'll encounter the life-filled paintings of one of the greatest figures of Spanish art, Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez. Of the many Velázquez paintings that so distinguish the Prado by their presence, *Las Meninas* is considered his masterpiece and nowhere is his mastery of light and colour more apparent. Completed in 1656, the painting is more properly known as *La Familia de Felipe IV* (The Family of Felipe IV), with the Infanta Margarita dominating the picture. In a flourish of personal conceit, Velázquez portrays himself painting

the king and queen. Aside from the extraordinary cheek of depicting himself in royal company, it is the presence of the cross of the Order of Santiago on his vest that reveals his mischievous, yearning streak. He was awarded it shortly before his death.

There are more fine works by Velázquez in Rooms 14 and 15, but don't fail to return to the main hall, where Room 29 is framed by his stunning paintings of various royalty on horseback. By now you'll have become accustomed to the Prado's subtle but strategically placed lighting and high ceilings, which together combine to make this one of the world's premier exhibition spaces.

Room 32 is your introduction to Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, who is the most extensively represented of the Spanish masters in the Prado. To capture Goya's magic, we suggest a selective approach. Head for Room 22, where you'll find what are probably his best-known and most intriguing oils, *La Maja Vestida* (The Dressed Beauty) and *La Maja Desnuda* (The Nude Beauty). These portraits of the unknown woman commonly believed to be the Duquesa de Alba scandalised Madrid society of the day. You can enjoy the rest of Goya's works later (he fills Rooms 19 to 22, and his early preparatory paintings for tapestries, religious paintings and drawings are on the 2nd floor) but first make your way to Room 39, where pride of place is given to the dramatic *El Dos de Mayo* and *El Tres de Mayo*. Two of Madrid's most emblematic paintings, they bring to life the 1808 anti-French revolt and subsequent execution of insurgents in Madrid.

By now you should be ready for the dark and disturbing works of Goya's later years, his *Pinturas Negras* (Black Paintings; Rooms 35 to 38), so-called because of the dark browns and black that dominate, and the distorted animal-like appearance of their characters. The Prado's administrators have displayed these wonderfully, with dimmer lights to suit the sombre mood which the paintings evoke.

Having captured the essence of the Prado, you're now free to select from the diverse masterpieces that remain. If Spanish painters have piqued your curiosity, the stark figures of Francisco de Zurbarán dominate Rooms 17A and 18A, while Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (Rooms 29 and 28) and José de Ribera (Room 16) should also be on your itinerary.

Another alternative is the Prado's outstanding collection of Flemish art. The fulsome

figures and bulbous cherubs of Peter Paul Rubens provide a playful antidote to the darkness of many of the other Flemish artists and can be enjoyed in Rooms 8 to 11. Other fine works in the vicinity include those by Anton van Dyck (Rooms 9B, 10A and 10B) and on no account miss Rembrandt in Room 7.

There is no more weird-and-wonderful painting in the Prado than *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch which can be found in Room 56, downstairs on the ground floor. No-one has yet been able to provide a definitive explanation for this hallucinatory work, painted five centuries before surrealism had a name.

Also on the ground floor is the Prado's nod to the Italians of the Renaissance. Among the plethora of Madonnas with babes and Christ in many poses are *The Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* in three parts by Botticelli and classic chiaroscuro from Caravaggio, while Tintoretto and Titian play with perspective. You'll also find a couple of paintings by the German artist Albrecht Dürer in Room 55B.

The Prado is undergoing a major extension project that could last for years, although it's unlikely to change the major exhibition spaces for some time, if at all. At a later stage some of the thousands of paintings currently in storage (known as the 'Hidden Prado') will also adorn what was until recently the Museo del Ejército.

### Guides & Information

With so much to look at, getting a guidebook or joining a guided tour can be a huge help in the Prado. There is little printed information given out for free; the hand-out map will guide you to the main schools and the major artists, but it won't tell you anything about the works themselves. Coin-operated machines sell booklets (€1 each) in several languages and the bookshop sells a more complete guide to the highlights for €9. You can also get an audio guide at the entrance for €3.

### MUSEO THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA

The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Map pp122-3; % 91 369 01 51; www.museothyssen.org; Paseo del Prado 8; adult/child €6/4; 10am-7pm Tue-Sun) is the favourite art gallery of many visitors to Madrid. The Thyssen has something for everyone with a breathtaking breadth of artistic styles, from the masters of medieval art down to the zany world of contemporary painting. All the big

names are represented here, sometimes with just a single painting, but the Thyssens' gift to Madrid and the art-loving public is to have them all under one roof. Its easy-to-follow floor plan also makes it one of the most easily navigable galleries in the capital.

The collection is the legacy of Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza, a German-Hungarian magnate. Spain acquired the prestigious collection when the baron married Carmen Tita Cervera, a former Miss España and ex-wife of Lex Barker (of *Tarzan* fame). The deal was sealed when the Spanish government offered to overhaul the neo-Classical Palacio de Villahermosa specifically to house the collection. Almost 800 works have hung here since October 1992. Although the baron died in 2002, his glamorous wife has shown that she has learned much from the collecting nous of her late husband. In early 2000 the museum acquired two adjoining buildings, which have been joined to the museum to house approximately half of Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza's collection.

The 2nd floor, which is home to medieval art, is probably of least interest to the casual visitor, although there are some real gems hidden among the 13th- and 14th-century Italian, German and Flemish religious paintings and triptychs. The instantly recognisable *Henry VIII* by Holbein the Younger (1497–1543) and the evocative 1586 *Massacre of the Innocents* by Lucas van Valckenbrec are highlights, as are works by El Greco, Tintoretto, Titian, Caravaggio and Canaletto. But best of all on this floor is the extension (Rooms A to H) built to house the burgeoning collection of Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza with more Canalettos hanging alongside Monet, Sisley, Renoir, Pissarro, Degas, Constable and van Gogh.

If all that sounds impressive, the first floor is where the Thyssen is truly elevated into the ranks of great art galleries. If you've been skimming the surface until now, Room 32 is the place to linger over each and every painting. The astonishing texture of van Gogh's *Les Vessenis* is a masterpiece, but the same could be said for *Woman in Riding Habit* by Manet, *The Thaw at Vétheuil* by Monet and the quintessentially Parisian *Rue Saint-Honoré in the Afternoon* by Pissarro.

Rooms 33 to 35 play host to Modigliani, Picasso, Cézanne, Matisse and Egon Schiele, while the baroness's eye for quality is nowhere more evident than in the extension (Rooms I to P). Juan Gris, Matisse, Picasso,

Kandinsky, Georges Braque, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, Sorolla, Sisley and Edward Hopper are all present, but our favourites include the rich colours of Gauguin's *Mata Mua*, Monet's dreamlike *Charing Cross Bridge* and the rare appearance of Edvard Munch with *Geese in an Orchard*. Quite simply, it's an outrageously rich collection.

The ground floor begins with a fine spread of paintings from cubism through to pop art. In Room 41 you'll see a nice mix of the big three of cubism: Picasso, Georges Braque and Madrid's own Juan Gris. Picasso pops up again in Room 45, another one of the gallery's stand-out rooms. Its treasures include works by Marc Chagall, Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Joan Miró.

Room 46 is similarly rich with the splattered craziness of Jackson Pollock's *Brown and Silver I*, and the pleasing *Green on Maroon* by Mark Rothko taking centre stage. In Rooms 47 and 48, the Thyssen builds to a stirring climax, with Salvador Dalí, Francis Bacon, Roy Lichtenstein, Edward Hopper and Lucian Freud all represented.

### PARQUE DEL BUEN RETIRO

A Sunday walk in El Retiro (Map p125; 11 6am-midnight May-Sep, 6am-10pm Oct-Apr) is as much a Madrid tradition as tapas and terrace cafés. Littered with marble monuments, landscaped lawns, the occasional elegant building and abundant greenery, it's quiet and contemplative during the week, but comes alive on weekends.

Once the preserve of kings, queens and their intimates, *madrileños* from all walks of life have long since made the park their own. Apart from strolling, people come here to read the Sunday papers in the shade, take a boat ride (€4 for 45 minutes) or take a cool drink at the numerous outdoor *terrazas*. Puppet shows for the kids are another summertime feature (look for Tiritilandia, or Puppet Land).

The *estanque* (lake) is watched over by the massive ornamental structure of Alfonso XII's mausoleum on the eastern side of the lake, complete with marble lions. If you want to catch the essence of Madrid, come here as sunset approaches on a summer Sunday afternoon – as the crowd grows, bongos ring out across the park and people start to dance.

Legend has it that an enormous fortune buried in the park by Felipe IV in the mid-18th century rests beneath the Fuente Egipcia

(Egyptian Fountain) on the western side of the lake. Other highlights include the 1887 **Palacio de Cristal** (☎ 91 574 66 14; 11am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun & holidays May-Sep, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun & holidays Oct-Apr), a charming metal-and-glass structure south of the lake; the 1883 **Palacio de Velázquez** (☎ 91 573 62 45; 11am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun & holidays May-Sep, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun & holidays Oct-Apr); and, at the southern end of the park, a statue of **El Ángel Caído** (the Fallen Angel, aka Lucifer), one of the world's few statues to the devil.

In the southwestern corner of the park is the moving **Bosque de los Ausentes** (Forest of the Absent), an understated memorial to the 191 victims of the 11 March 2004 train bombings. For each victim stands an olive or cypress tree.

### REAL JARDÍN BOTÁNICO

With its manicured flowerbeds and neat paths, the **Real Jardín Botánico** (Royal Botanical Garden; Map p125; ☎ 91 420 30 17; Plaza de Bravo Murillo 2; adult/child €2/1; 10am-7pm Oct & Mar, 10am-6pm Nov-Feb, 10am-8pm Apr & Sep, 10am-9pm May-Aug) is more intimate than El Retiro, although not nearly as large. First created in 1755 on the banks of Río Manzanares, the garden was moved here in 1781 by Carlos III. These days you can see thousands of plant species. It's more a place to take a leisurely wander than laze under a tree.

### PLAZA DE LA CIBELES

Of all the grand roundabouts that punctuate the elegant boulevard of Paseo del Prado, **Plaza de la Cibeles** (Map p125) most evokes the splendour of Imperial Madrid.

The jewel in the crown is the astonishing **Palacio de Comunicaciones**. Completed in 1917 by Antonio Palacios, Madrid's most prolific architect of the *belle époque*, it combines elements of the North American monumental style of the period with Gothic and Renaissance touches. Newcomers find it hard to accept that this is merely the central post office, although the city council is soon to take part of it over as the *ayuntamiento*. Other landmark buildings around the perimeter include the **Palacio de Linares**, **Casa de América**, **Palacio de Buenavista**, **Casa de las Siete Chimeneas** and the national **Banco de España** (1891). The views east towards the Puerta de Alcalá or west towards the *Metrópolis* building are some of Madrid's finest.

The spectacular fountain of the goddess Cybele at the centre of the plaza is also one of Madrid's most beautiful. Ever since it was erected in 1780 by Ventura Rodríguez, it has been a Madrid favourite. Carlos III tried to move it to the gardens of the Granja de San Ildefonso, near Segovia, but the *madriños* kicked up such a fuss that he abandoned the idea. The Cibeles fountain has also long been the venue for joyous and often destructive celebrations by players and supporters of Real Madrid whenever the side has won anything of note.

### MUSEO NAVAL

Boat lovers will get a thrill from the **Museo Naval** (Map p125; ☎ 91 379 52 99; www.museonavalmadrid.com; Paseo del Prado 5; admission free; 10am-2pm Tue-Sun), but it's also of interest to those who've always wondered what the Spanish armada really looked like. Apart from its extraordinary model ships, the museum's highlights are the antique maps, especially Juan de la Cosa's parchment map of the known world, put together in 1500; it's supposedly the first map to show the Americas.

### MUSEO DE ARTES DECORATIVAS

Give your inner antique dealer a thrill at the **Museo de Artes Decorativas** (Museum of Decorative Arts; Map p125; ☎ 91 532 64 99; Calle de Montalbán 12; adult/child €2.40/1.20; 9.30am-3pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun). A fascinating window onto the life of the upper classes from the 15th to the 19th centuries, the museum is awash with sumptuous period furniture, ceramics, carpets, tapestries and the like. Spread over five floors, it could keep you occupied for hours but probably only deserves an hour.

### IGLESIA DE SAN JERÓNIMO EL REAL

Tucked away behind the Museo del Prado, the lavish **Iglesia de San Jerónimo el Real** (Map p125; ☎ 91 420 35 78; Calle de Ruiz de Alarcón 19; 8am-1.30pm & 5-8.30pm) was largely destroyed during the Peninsular War but the 19th-century reconstruction of the interior is exquisite. The chapel was traditionally favoured by the Spanish royal family and it was here, amid the mock-Isabelline splendour, that King Juan Carlos I was crowned in 1975 upon the death of Franco. Being a chapel of royal choice did little to protect it from the Museo del Prado's inexorable expansion – what remained of the cloisters next door was demolished (despite

vociferous local protests) to make way for the Gran Prado extension.

### PUERTA DE ALCALÁ

This stunning triumphal gate (Map p125) was built to celebrate the arrival of Carlos III in Madrid in 1769. It was once the main entrance to the city and surrounded by city walls. The gate originally lay in the Puerta del Sol, then Plaza de la Cibeles, but was moved in the late 19th century to its present spot on Plaza de la Independencia as the city grew.

### Salamanca

The same theme of grand and rarely restrained elegance continues in the Barrio Salamanca with some excellent museums.

### MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO NACIONAL

The rather forbidding entrance to the **Museo Arqueológico Nacional** (National Archaeology Museum; Map p120; ☎ 91 577 79 12; www.man.es in Spanish; Calle de Serrano 13; adult/student €3.01/1.50, free from 2.30pm Sat & all day Sun; 9.30am-8.30pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-2.30pm Sun) bares little resemblance to what lies within. With typical Spanish flair for presentation – the lighting is perfect and the large collection of artefacts is never cluttered – this delightful collection spans everything from prehistory to the Iberian tribes, Imperial Rome, Visigothic Spain, the Muslim conquest and specimens of Romanesque, Gothic and Mudéjar handiwork.

The museum's ground floor is the most interesting. Highlights include the stunning mosaics taken from Roman villas across Spain (those in Rooms 22 and 24 particularly catch the eye); the stunning gilded Mudéjar domed ceiling in Room 35; and the more sombre Christian Romanesque and later Gothic paraphernalia of Room 33. Elsewhere, sculpted figures, such as the *Dama de Ibiza* and *Dama de Elche*, reveal a flourishing artistic tradition among the Iberian tribes – no doubt influenced by contact with Greek and Phoenician civilisations.

The basement contains displays on prehistoric man and spans the Neolithic period to the Iron Age – it's probably more of interest to dedicated archaeological buffs. Modest collections from ancient Egypt, Etruscan civilisation in Italy, classical Greece and southern Italy under Imperial Rome take their place alongside the ancient civilisations in the Balearic and Canary Islands.

The 1st floor contains all sorts of items pertaining to Spanish royalty and court life from the 16th through to the 19th centuries. Outside, stairs lead down to a partial copy of the prehistoric cave paintings of Altamira in Cantabria (see p509).

### BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL & MUSEO DEL LIBRO

One of the most outstanding of the many grand edifices erected in the 19th century on the avenues of Madrid, the 1892 **Biblioteca Nacional** (National Library; Map p120; ☎ 91 580 77 59; Paseo de los Recoletos 20; admission free; 10am-9pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) dominates the southern end of Plaza de Colón. The reading rooms are more for serious students, but the sections given over to the Museo del Libro – if it ever reopens after renovations – are a worthwhile stop for any bibliophile yearning to see a variety of Arabic texts, illuminated manuscripts and centuries-old books of the Torah.

### MUSEO LÁZARO GALDIANO

The **Museo Lázaro Galdiano** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 561 60 84; Calle de Serrano 122; adult/student €4/3; 10am-4.30pm Wed-Mon) is an imposing early-20th-century Italianate stone mansion with some 13,000 works of art and *objets d'art*. Apart from works by van Eyck, Bosch, Zurbarán, Ribera, Goya, Claudio Coello, El Greco, Gainsborough and Constable, this is a rather oddball assembly of all sorts of collectables. In Room 14 some of Goya's more famous works are hung together to make a collage, including *La Maja* and the frescoes of the Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida.

### MUSEO DE LA ESCULTURA ABSTRACTA

This fascinating open-air collection of 17 abstracts (Map p120) includes works by the renowned Basque artist Eduardo Chillida, the Catalan master Joan Miró as well as Eusebio Sempere and Alberto Sánchez, one of Spain's foremost sculptors of the 20th century. The sculptures are beneath the overpass where Paseo de Eduardo Dato crosses Paseo de la Castellana.

### Malasaña & Chueca

Packed with unique shops and lively bars, trendy Chueca and rough-and-ready Malasaña aren't the most obvious districts to head to for museums. Nevertheless, you'll find a few places worth visiting.

## MUSEO MUNICIPAL

The fine **Museo Municipal** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 588 86 72; www.munimadrid.es/museomunicipal; Calle de Fuencarral 78; admission free; 11 9.30am-8pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, 9.30am-2.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug) has an elaborate and restored baroque entrance, raised in 1721 by Pedro de Ribera. The interior is dominated by paintings and other memorabilia charting the historical evolution of Madrid, of which the highlights are Goya's *Allegory of the City of Madrid*. Also worth lingering over is the expansive model of 1830s Madrid on the ground floor.

## SOCIEDAD GENERAL DE AUTORES Y EDITORES

The swirling, melting wedding cake of a building that is the **Sociedad General de Autores y Editores** (General Society of Authors & Editors; Map pp118-19; Calle de Fernando VI 4; 11 1st Mon in Oct) is as close as Madrid comes to the work of Antoni Gaudí. It's a joyously self-indulgent ode to Modernism and one of a kind in Madrid. It's far more impressive from the street, which is just as well because casual visitors are actively discouraged. The only exception is on the first Monday of October, which is International Architecture Day.

## ANTIGUO CUARTEL DEL CONDE DUQUE

Dominating the western edge of the Malasaña district this formidable former barracks (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 588 57 71; Calle Conde Duque 9) houses government archives, libraries and the Hemeroteca Municipal (the biggest collection of newspapers and magazines in all Spain). Also contained within its walls is the **Museo Municipal de Arte Contemporáneo de Madrid** (☎ 91 588 29 28; www.munimadrid.es/museoartecontemporaneo; admission free; 11 10am-2pm & 5.30-9pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-2.30pm Sun), with contemporary Spanish and international paintings, sculpture, photography and graphic art. Now and then in summer the one-time barracks also does a night gig as a music venue.

## MUSEO DE CERRALBO

Huddled beneath the modern apartment buildings northwest of Plaza de España, the noble old mansion that houses the **Museo de Cerralbo** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 547 36 46; Calle de Ventura Rodríguez 17; adult/child €2.40/1.20; 11 9.30am-3pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Oct-May, 10am-1pm Mon, 9.30am-2pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Jul-Sep) is like an apparition of how wealthy *madrileños* once lived. The former

home of the 17th Marqués de Cerralbo (1845-1922) – politician, poet and archaeologist – it's a study in 19th-century opulence.

The upper floor of the museum boasts a gala dining hall and a grand ballroom, while the ground floor contains suits of armour, Moroccan kilims and tapestries, a gondola of Murano glass, Bohemian crystal, the porcelain of Sèvres, Wedgwood and Meissen, and local ceramics.

Clearly the marquess was a man of diverse tastes, especially once you factor in artworks by Zurbarán, Ribera, van Dyck and El Greco's *Éxtasis de San Francisco*.

## Chamberí & Argüelles

**ERMITA DE SAN ANTONIO DE LA FLORIDA** The frescoed ceilings of the **Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 542 07 22; Glorieta de San Antonio de la Florida 5; admission free; 11 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) are one of Madrid's most surprising secrets. Recently restored and also known as the Panteón de Goya, the southern of the two small chapels is one of the few places to see Goya's work in its original setting, as painted by the master in 1798 on the request of Carlos IV.

Those on the dome depict the miracle of St Anthony, who is calling on a young man to rise from the grave and absolve his father, unjustly accused of his murder. Around them swarms a typical Madrid crowd. Usually in this kind of scene the angels and cherubs appear in the cupola, above all the terrestrial activity, but Goya, never one to let himself be confined within the mores of the day, places the human above the divine.

The painter is buried in front of the altar. His remains were transferred in 1919 from Bordeaux (France), where he died in self-imposed exile in 1828.

## TEMPLO DE DEBOD

Remarkably, this authentic 4th-century-BC Egyptian temple sits in the heart of Madrid. In the Parque de la Montaña, the **Templo de Debod** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 366 74 15; www.munimadrid.es/templodebod; Paseo del Pintor Rosales; admission free; 11 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 9.45am-1.45pm & 4.15-6.15pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar) was saved from the rising waters of Lake Nasser, formed by the Aswan High Dam, and sent block by block to Spain in 1968. The views from the surrounding gardens towards the Palacio Real are quite special.

## QUIRKY MADRID

The festivals of Madrid can be paradise for lovers of the offbeat. On 17 January, locals and their furry friends flock to the Iglesia de San Antón (Map pp118-19) for the **Fiesta de San Antón**, an annual blessing of pets. The 13 June **Fiesta de San Antonio** sees young *madrileños* go to the Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida (opposite) to petition for a partner. Whether spiritually inclined or not, the attitude seems to be, why take a chance? And July welcomes the **Fiesta de Vallecas**, where the mischievous Brotherhood of Sailors in the working-class barrio of Vallecas stages a 'naval battle' (a massive water fight) to demand that the government provide Madrid with a seaport.

Even sporting pursuits have their quirky moments, especially the wonderfully festive **San Silvestre Vallecana** (www.sansilvestrevallecana.com) race. Staged on 31 December at 6pm, the 10km-course leads from Plaza de Castilla (Map p113) out to Vallecas, south of the centre. One of the more unusual races in Europe, most athletes are fun-runners in fancy dress; musicians line the route and runners – who pass through streets warming up for New Year's Eve – are pelted with eggs and tomatoes.

Shopping in Madrid is also about more than bullfighting posters and frilly flamenco dresses. Always wanted to be a *torero* but just didn't have a thing to wear? **Justo Algaba** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 523 35 95; Calle de la Paz 4) is where Madrid's *toreros* come to have their *traje de luces* (suit of lights, the traditional glittering bullfighting suit) made in all its intricate excess. A custom-made suit starts at €2500, while the sexy pink tights are a steal at €50. **Santarrufina** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 522 23 83; www.santarrufina.com; Calle de la Paz 9) is an extravagant three-storey shop full of gilded religious items with an astonishing chapel downstairs.

From the sublime to the ridiculous. If you've got problem boobs, **Corsetería La Latina** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 46 22; Calle de Toledo 49) is definitely the place to find a home for them; the impressive two-metre bra in the window is no sales gimmick.

## PARQUE DEL OESTE

Sloping down the hill behind the Moncloa metro station, **Parque del Oeste** (Map pp114-15) is quite beautiful, with plenty of shady corners to recline under a tree in the heat of the day. It has been a *madrileño* favourite ever since its creation in 1906. Until a few years ago, the Paseo de Camoens, a main thoroughfare running through the park, was lined with prostitutes by night. To deprive them of clients, the city authorities now close the park to wheeled traffic from 11pm on Friday until 6am on Monday.

## MUSEO DE AMÉRICA & FARO DE MONCLOA

Travel to, and trade with, the newly discovered Americas was a central part of Spain's culture and economy from 1492 until the early 20th century. The **Museo de América** (Map p112; ☎ 91 549 26 41; Avenida de los Reyes Católicos 6; adult/student/child €3/1.50/free, Sun free; 11 9.30am-3pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) has a representative display of ceramics, statuary, jewellery and instruments of hunting, fishing and war, along with some of the paraphernalia brought back by the colonisers. The Colombian gold collection, dating back to

the 2nd century AD, and a couple of shrunken heads are particularly eye-catching.

The odd **Faro de Moncloa** (Lighthouse; Map p112; ☎ 91 544 81 04; Avenida de los Reyes Católicos; admission €1.20; 11 10am-2pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sun), just in front of the Museo de América, promises panoramic views of Madrid; it's only worth it on a clear day. It was built in 1992 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America and to celebrate Madrid's role that year as European Cultural Capital.

## MUSEO SOROLLA

The Valencian artist Joaquín Sorolla immortalised the clear Mediterranean light of the Valencian coast and his Madrid mansion, now a museum (Map p120; ☎ 91 310 15 84; Paseo del General Martínez Campos 37; adult/student/child €2.40/1.20/free; 11 9.30am-3pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), is home to the largest collection of his works. Inspired by what he had seen in Andalucía, Sorolla also designed the lush gardens that surround the house.

On the ground floor you enter a cool *patio cordobés*, an Andalusian courtyard off which is a room containing collections of Sorolla's drawings. The 1st floor was mostly decorated





ayuntamiento (6; p128). On the same square stand the 16th-century Casa de Cisneros (7; p128) and the Gothic Casa de los Lujanes (8; p128), one of the city's oldest surviving buildings.

Take the street down the left side of the Casa de Cisneros, cross Calle del Sacramento at the end, go down the stairs and follow the cobbled Calle del Cordón out onto Calle de Segovia. Almost directly in front of you is the Mudéjar tower of the 15th-century Iglesia de San Pedro El Viejo (9; p130), whereupon the narrow, almost medieval streets of Old Madrid close in and twist down the hill. Proceeding up Costanilla de San Pedro, you reach the Museo de San Isidro (10; p130). Next door is the Iglesia de San Andrés (11; p130), where the city's patron saint, San Isidro Labrador, was once interred.

From here, twist down through lanes that time forgot to Calle de Bailén and the wonderful, if expensive, *terrazas* (outdoor cafés) on the edge of the Jardines de las Vistillas (12; p129) where you can contemplate the sweeping views out towards Sierra de Guadarrama.

After a soothing *cerveza* (beer), follow the viaduct north to the Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Almudena (13; p127), the Palacio Real (14; p127) and the supremely elegant Plaza de Oriente (15; p127). The eastern side of the square is closed off by the Teatro Real (16; p127).

Return to the western side of the square and follow the walkway extension of Calle de Bailén which leads into Plaza de España (17) with its statue of Don Quixote and surrounded by monumental towers. Calle de Ferraz leads northwest to the curious mansion of the Museo de Cerralbo (18; p136) and then the ancient Egyptian Templo de Debod (19; p136), from where there are more fine views.

Return to Plaza de España, the eastern flank of which marks the start of Gran Vía (p129), a Haussmannesque boulevard that was slammed through the tumbledown slums to the north of Sol in the 1910s and 1920s. Today it is a busy thoroughfare, chocked with traffic and humming with passers-by darting in and out of side streets, shops and eateries. About halfway along is the mighty Telefónica building (20; p129), still easily visible from its hilltop perch. Head down past the elegant façades to the superb dome of the Metrópolis building (21; p129), where Gran Vía meets Calle de Alcalá. Down the hill you go to Plaza de la Cibeles (22; p134), Madrid's favourite roundabout. Look out especially for the late-19th-century

Banco de España (23; p134) on your right as you approach and, on your left, the Palacio de Buenavista (24). Impossible to miss is the ornate Palacio de Comunicaciones (25; p134) facing you in all its glory from across the square.

### Walk 2: Artistic Madrid

Before setting out, pause in the splendid old Café Comercial (1; p152) on Glorieta de Bilbao, a favourite haunt of writers, artists and intellectuals for more than a century. From here, walk northeast along Calle de Luchana, northwest up Calle de Santa Engracia and then down the hill of Paseo del General Martínez Campos to the Museo Sorolla (2; p137), home to the works of Joaquín Sorolla, one of the major Spanish painters of the early 20th century.

Continue down to Paseo de la Castellana and the Museo de la Escultura Abstracta (3; p135), an outdoor exhibition of fine modern sculptures by some of the big names in Spanish contemporary art. As you continue southwest along this grand boulevard – shun the outer footpaths and wander under the shade of the trees which run almost through the centre – pause at either the Café-Restaurante El Espejo (4; p157) or Gran Café de Gijón (5; p153), both of which are steeped in history, atmosphere and the ghosts of writers and artists past.

At Plaza de la Cibeles (6; p134), turn right up the hill to the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (7; p129), which in any other city would be considered enough reason to come to the city on its own. Cross the elegant Plaza de Canalejas and keep going along Calle del Príncipe to Plaza de Santa Ana (8; p130), where a statue of the poet Federico García Lorca looks towards the Teatro Español (9; p160). From the plaza, take Calle del Prado, turn right on Calle de León, then left down Calle de Cervantes. At No 11 is the Casa de Lope de Vega (10; p130), the playwright's house. You're now in the heart of the Barrio de las Letras, where many famous Spanish writers spent their days and just around the corner (Calle de Quevedo, then Calle de Lope de Vega) is the 17th-century Convento de las Trinitarias (11; p130), where writer Miguel de Cervantes lies buried (it's closed to the public).

Return to Calle de Cervantes and turn left at the grand Plaza de Neptuno (12; Cánovas del Castillo) roundabout – which is watched over by the two grand old dames of the Madrid hotel scene, the Palace (13; p147) and the

Hotel Ritz (14; p147) – for the extraordinary Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (15; p132). Diagonally across the square is the gracious, low-slung Palacio Villanueva, better known to art-lovers as the peerless Museo del Prado (16; p131) where you could spend hours or days. Behind the Prado is the verdant Real Jardín Botánico (17; p134) and the long-standing Cuesta de Claudio Moyano bookstalls (18; p110), both of which are

pleasant detours as you continue south en route to Madrid's other extraordinary gallery, the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (19; p131).

### COURSES

Spanish-language schools fill the city centre; keep your eye on the 2nd-floor window signs as you stroll along. Some of the more reputable (and cheapest) courses are offered through the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (Map p112; ☎ 91 553 00 88; www.eoidiomas.com; Calle de Jesús Maestro). It offers courses in Spanish for foreigners (*Español para Extranjeros*) at most levels, though nailing a spot can be tough at this popular place where a semester costs as little as €89. Serious students can also look into taking classes at the Universidad Complutense (Map p112; ☎ 91 394 53 36; www.ucm.es/info

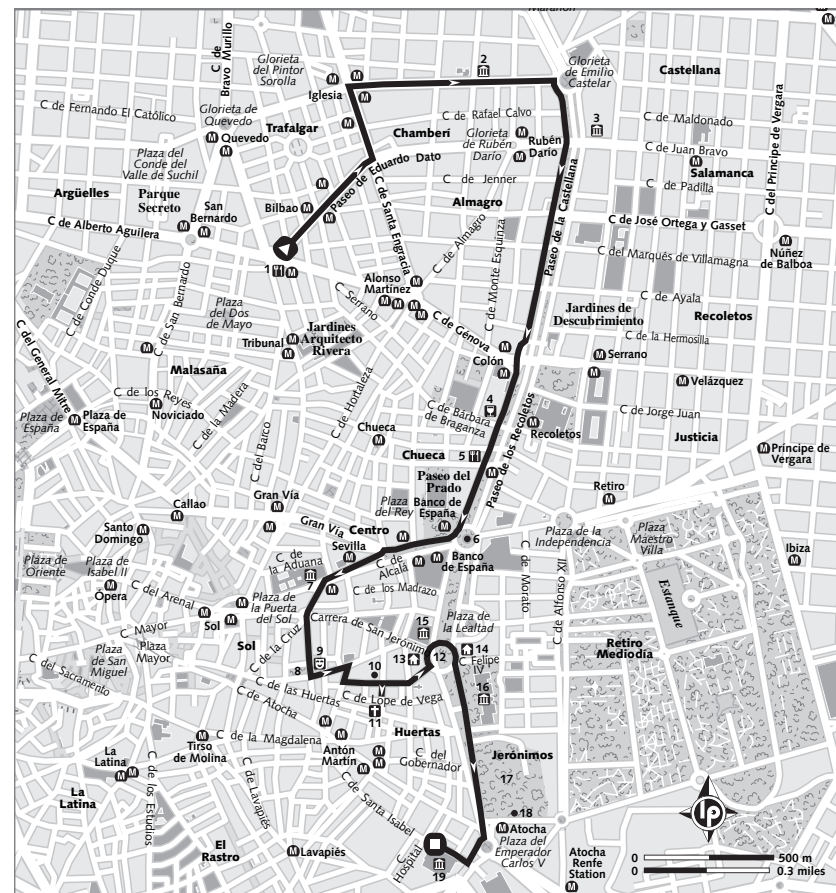
### WALK FACTS

**Start** Café Comercial

**Finish** Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

**Distance** approximately 5km

**Duration** three hours to full day



/cextran/Index.htm; Cuidad Universitaria) where an intensive 150-hour semester course costs €400.

If you'd love to try your hand at Spanish cooking, try **Alambique** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 559 78 58; www.alambique.com; Plaza de la Encarnación 2; 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) where English-speaking courses start from €65.

If you've always wanted to learn how to play guitar like the flamenco greats, stop by **El Flamenco Vive** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 547 39 17; www.elflencovive.com; Calle del Conde de Lemos 7; ☎ 10.30am-2pm & 5-9pm Mon-Sat) and make an appointment for sessions (€20 per hour) with its resident teacher.

## MADRID FOR CHILDREN

Madrid has plenty to keep the little ones entertained and a good place to start is **Casa de Campo** (p138) where there are swimming pools as well as the **Zoo Aquarium de Madrid** (Map p112; ☎ 91 512 37 70; www.zoomadrid.com; Casa de Campo; adult/child 3-7yr/infant €14.90/12.20/free; 10.30am-dusk), home to around 3000 animals, and performing dolphins and sea lions.

Also nearby is the **Parque de Atracciones** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 463 29 00; www.parquedeatracciones.es; Casa de Campo; admission €6.20, unlimited all-rides adult/under 8yr €23.50/13.20, single-ride tickets €2; 10 hours vary), an amusement park with high-adrenaline rides, a haunted house and the 'Zona Infantil' with sedate rides for the really young.

To get to Casa de Campo, take the **teleférico** (cable car; Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 541 74 50; www.teleferico.com in Spanish; adult one way/return €3.10/4.45, child 3-7 years one way/return €2.90/3.40; 10 hours vary), one of the world's most horizontal cable cars which putters for 2.5km out from the slopes of La Rosaleda.

Another possibility is **Faunia** (Map p112; ☎ 91 301 62 10; www.faunia.es in Spanish; Avenida de las Comunidades 28; adult/under12yr €19/13; 10am-5pm Wed-Sun, longer hours in summer), a modern animal theme park with an 'Amazon jungle' and 'Polar Ecosystem'. The closest metro station is Valdebernardo.

At the mammoth indoor playground **Parque Secreto** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 593 14 80; www.parquesecreto.com in Spanish; Plaza del Conde del Valle de Suchil 3; admission per 30min from €2.50; 10.30am-5pm Mon, 5-9pm Tue-Fri, 11.30am-2pm Sat & Sun) kids can romp around in tubs of plastic balls, on slides and in a snaking labyrinth. San Bernardo is the closest metro station.

All aboard! **Museo del Ferrocarril** (Railway Museum; Map p112; ☎ 902 228 822; www.museoferrocarril

.org; Paseo de las Delicias 61; adult/child €4/2.50; 10am-3pm Tue-Sun) is home to old railway cars, train engines and more. It's definitely guaranteed to fascinate budding engineers. (The nearest metro station is Delicias.)

The **Museo de Cera** (Wax Museum; Map p120; ☎ 91 319 26 49; www.museoceramadrid.com; Paseo de los Recoletos 41; adult/under 7yr €12/8; 10am-2.30pm & 4.30-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8.30pm Sat & Sun) is Madrid's modest answer to Madame Tussaud's with over 450 wax characters.

Other possibilities that the parents may enjoy as much as the kids include seeing Real Madrid play at the **Estadio Santiago Bernabéu** (p162) or wandering through the soothing greenery of the **Parque del Buen Retiro** (p133), where in summer there are puppet shows and boat rides.

## TOURS

If you're pushed for time and want to fit a lot of sightseeing into a short visit, guided tours may be the ideal way to see the city.

### Bus Tours

The orange double-decker buses of **Madrid Vision** (☎ 91 779 18 88; www.madridvision.es; adult 1-/2-day ticket €14.50/19, 17-16yr & senior over 65yr 1-/2-day ticket €8/10, under 7yr free; 9.30am-midnight 21 Jun-20 Sep, 10am-7pm 21 Dec-20 Mar, 10am-9pm rest of year) provide the usual hop-on-hop-off overview of the city.

There are three routes around town: Rte 1 makes a jaunt around 'Historical Madrid'; Rte 2 is dedicated to 'Modern Madrid'; and Rte 3 takes you around 'Monumental Madrid'.

You can get more information at tourist offices or most travel agencies. Tickets are purchased directly on the bus.

### Walking Tours

The Centro de Turismo de Madrid (p111) offers **Descubre Madrid** (☎ 902 221 622; www.esmadrid.com; Plaza Mayor 27; adult/child, student & senior €3.20/2.60) – dozens of guided itineraries that follow themes such as Madrid of the Bourbons, Velázquez and El Buen Retiro, Legends of Old Madrid, Traditional Shops and Taverns, Madrid of Cervantes and Madrid of the Habsburgs.

The privately-run **Adventurous Appetites** (☎ 639 331 073; www.adventurousappetites.com; 4-hour tours €40; 10.30am Mon-Sat) organises English-language tapas tours through central Madrid from the bear statue in Puerta del Sol. Prices include the first drink.

## Cycling Tours

Londoner **Mike Chandler** organises **Madrid Bike Tours** (☎ 680 58 17 82; www.madridbiketours.com; tours incl picnic lunch €55), which offer a range of guided four-hour tours. Make reservations by phone or email, and the tour guide will either pick you up or meet you at a central location.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Madrid loves to party, and seemingly any excuse is good for a *fiesta* (festival). For details about national festivals see p847, but here in the city we are to look out for the following events. There's more information online at www.muni.madrid.es or www.esmadrid.com.

### February

**Arco** (Feria Internacional de Arte Contemporánea; www.arco.ifema.es; mid-February) One of Europe's biggest celebrations of contemporary art, Arco draws galleries and exhibitors from all over the world. It's staged in the Parque Ferial Juan Carlos I exhibition centre near Barajas airport.

**Festival Flamenco** (February) A combination of big names and rising talent comes together for five days of fine flamenco music in one of the city's theatres.

### May

**Dos de Mayo** (2 May) In 1808, Napoleon's troops put down an uprising in Madrid, and commemoration of the day has become an opportunity for much festivity, often called the Fiesta de la Comunidad de Madrid. The day is celebrated with particular energy in the bars of Malasaña. **Fiesta de San Isidro** (15 May) Madrid's patron saint is honoured with a week of nonstop processions, parties and bullfights. Free concerts are held throughout the city, and this week marks the start of the city's bullfighting season.

### June

**Día del Orgullo de Gays, Lesbianas y Transexuales** (June) The colourful Gay Pride Parade sets out from the Puerta de Alcalá in the early evening, and winds its way around the city in an explosion of music and energy, ending up at the Puerta del Sol.

## GAY & LESBIAN MADRID

It's a great time to be gay in Madrid. Under laws passed by the Spanish Congress in June 2005, same-sex marriages now enjoy the same legal protection as those between heterosexual partners. At the time there was something of a conservative backlash, but opinion polls showed that the reforms were supported by more than two-thirds of Spaniards.

The inner-city barrio of Chueca is exuberantly and extravagantly gay, although everyone's welcome; it's one of the most lively barrios in Madrid with an abundance of gay-friendly bars, restaurants and shops. **A Different Life** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 532 96 52; Calle de Pelayo 30) is a bookshop geared towards gays and lesbians, while **Berkana** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 522 55 99; Calle de Hortaleza 64) operates like an unofficial information centre for gay Madrid; here you'll find the bi-weekly *Shanguide* which is jammed with listings and contact ads and the *Mapa Gaya de Madrid*, as well as books, magazines and videos.

Another good place to get the lowdown on gay Madrid is the laid-back **Mamá Inés** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 523 23 33; www.mamaines.com in Spanish; Calle de Hortaleza 22; 10am-2pm Sun-Thu, 10am-3.30am Fri & Sat), a café where you'll hear the gossip on where that night's hot spot will be. **Café Acuarela** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 522 21 43; Calle de Gravina 10; 11am-2am Sun-Thu, 11am-3am Fri & Sat), right on Plaza de Chueca, is a dimly-lit centrepiece of gay Madrid – a huge statue of a nude male angel guards the doorway. Also good for a low-key night out is the sophisticated **Antik Café** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 620 427 168; Calle de Hortaleza 4 & 6; 10am-3am), where the dark interior is all about intimacy and discretion.

For something a little more upbeat, the cosy **Why Not?** (Map pp118-19; Calle de San Bartolomé 7; 10.30pm-late) is the sort of place where nothing's left to the imagination (the gay and straight crowd who come here are pretty amorous) and it's full nearly every night of the week. Pop and top-40s music are the standard here.

Other good house clubs popular with a predominantly gay crowd include **Ohm** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 541 35 00; Plaza del Callao 4; 10.30pm-midnight Fri & Sat), the Saturday-night party at **Sala Bash: Cool** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 902 499 994; Calle de Isabel la Católica 6); and **Suite** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 40 31; Calle de la Virgen de los Peligros 4; 9pm-2am Mon-Thu, 9pm-3am Fri & Sat), one of the trendiest retro bars in Madrid.

For a place to rest your head, look no further than the excellent **Hostal La Zona** (p147) which has a mainly gay clientele.

**August–September**

**Summer Festivals** (mid-August to September) Small-time but fun, the neighbourhood summer festivals, such as San Cayetano in Lavapiés, and San Lorenzo and La Paloma in La Latina, are great for cheap entertainment.

**September**

**Fiesta del Partido Comunista Español** (PCE; mid-September) The yearly fiesta of Spain's Communist Party lasts a weekend and is a mixed bag of regional food pavilions, rock concerts and political soapboxing in Casa de Campo.

**October–November**

**Fiesta de Otoño** (mid-October to mid-November) Music, dance and theatre take over Madrid during the fantastically cultural weeks of the Autumn Festival.

**SLEEPING**

Madrid's accommodation used to be – how shall we put it? – unexciting, but not any more. A wave of chic minimalism and cutting-edge interpretations of traditional architecture is sweeping the city, with new hotels taking their place alongside the simple *hostales* (budget hotels) and grand old Madrid hotels that were once the city's trademark.

Travellers on a tight budget haven't been left out of the revolution with some fine new *hostales* as well as many old favourites. Mid-range accommodation is similarly diverse with *hotels con encanto* (hotels with charm, often housed in historic buildings) sharing the market with supremely stylish monuments to 21st-century fashions. Madrid's five-star hotels represent the ultimate in luxury, whether in stately palaces or in places that represent the height of innovation.

Accommodation prices in Madrid vary with the not-always-discernible seasons. In general, most midrange and some top-end places have separate price structures for high season (*temporada alta*), midseason (*temporada media*) or low season (*temporada baja*),

all usually displayed on a notice in reception or close by, but there's little agreement among hoteliers about when the seasons actually begin and end.

**Los Austrias, Sol & Centro**

With a wealth of historical sites, accommodation across a range of budgets, traditional taverns, restaurants and shops, this is probably the area where you'll spend the most time while in Madrid and is, therefore, a good place to be based.

**BUDGET**

**Los Amigos Backpackers' Hostel** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 547 17 07; www.losamigoshostel.com; 4th fl, Calle de Campomanes 6; dm €16-17; j ) If you arrive in Madrid keen for company, this could be the place for you – lots of students stay here, the staff are savvy (and speak English) and there are bright dorm-style rooms that sleep from four to 12 people (with free lockers). Los Amigos has recently opened another hostel a couple of blocks away, **Los Amigos Sol Backpackers' Hostel** (☎ 91 559 24 72; 4th fl, Calle de Arenal 26; dm €16-19).

**Hostel Metropol** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 521 29 35; www.metropolhostel.com; 1st fl, Calle de la Montera 47; s/d/tr €30/44/54; j ) It's not that the rooms here are great. In fact, they're simple and don't have a whole lot of character. But young travellers congregate here for that special something that few hostels have – an attitude, a young vibe, a chilled ambience.

**Hostal Orly** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 30 12; www.hostalorly.com; 7th fl, Calle de la Montera 47; s/d/tr €32/45/56) The street-facing rooms in this hostel, set in a grand old 19th-century building, have fabulous views; Room 11 is the best with a circular balcony stretching around the corner of the building, high above central Madrid.

**Hostal Acapulco** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 19 45; www.hostalacapulco.com; 4th fl, Calle de la Salud 13; s/d/tr €42/52/71; a j ) This immaculate little *hostal* is a cut above many Madrid hostels, with marble floors, recently renovated bathrooms, double-glazed windows and comfortable beds. Street-facing rooms have balconies overlooking sunny Plaza del Carmen and are flooded with natural light.

**Hostal Macarena** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 92 21; www.silserranos.com; 1st fl, Cava de San Miguel 8; s/d €53/59; j ) On one of the old, cobblestone streets that runs past Plaza Mayor, this *hostal* is at once homely and loaded with impeccable,

old-style charm. The rooms are nicely spacious and decorated in warm colours, with the occasional antique writing desk.

**MIDRANGE**

**Hotel Plaza Mayor** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 360 06 06; www.h-plazamayor.com; Calle de Atocha 2; s/d from €59/79; a ) Sitting just across from Plaza Mayor, here you'll find stylish décor, charming original elements of this 150-year-old building and extremely helpful staff. The rooms are attractive, some with a light colour scheme and wrought-iron furniture. The attic rooms boast minimalist dark-wood floors and beams, and designer lamps, and have lovely little terraces with wonderful rooftop views of central Madrid.

**Hotel Paris** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 521 64 91; fax 91 531 01 88; Calle de Alcalá 2; s/d €70/90; a ) It's impossible to be more central than this classic 140-year-old hotel overlooking the Puerta del Sol. Noise can be a problem, so consider one of the interior rooms (which look onto a pleasant, plant-filled courtyard). Rooms are elegantly kitsch, the owners exude an old-style grace and a reasonable buffet breakfast is included in the room price.

**Hotel Senafor** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 41 51; www.playasenafor.com; Gran Vía 21; s €75-120, d €85-140; a s ) One of central Madrid's prettiest façades conceals some of the most attractive rooms in the city centre. Unusually, only one room on each floor doesn't face onto the street and the views down Gran Vía from the corner rooms are brilliant. Rooms are sophisticated and come with armchairs, wi-fi access, sound systems and reclining beds.

**Hotel Anaco** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 522 46 04; www.anacohotel.com; Calle de las Tres Cruces 3; s/d/tr €78/97/131; a ) We like a place that spends its renovation dollars on the rooms rather than the lobby – the latter is of a tired, 1970s vintage, but the rooms are decorated in neutral tones with touches of red and modern fixtures like stainless-steel basins.

**Mario Room Mate** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 548 85 48; www.room-matehoteles.com; Calle de Campomanes 4; s €77-99, d €114-149; a j ) Entering this swanky boutique hotel is like crossing the threshold of Madrid's latest nightclub – staff dressed all in black, black walls and swirls of red lighting in the lobby. Rooms are spacious, with high ceilings and simple furniture, light tones contrasting smoothly with muted colours and dark surfaces.

**AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**Petit Palace Posada del Peine** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 523 81 51; www.hthotels.com; Calle de Postas 17; d from €100; a ) One of the best hotels to open in central Madrid in recent years, the Petit Palace combines a splendid historic building with a brilliant location – just 50m from Plaza Mayor. The modern hi-tech rooms are supremely comfortable, beautifully appointed and spacious, and the bathrooms sparkle. Friendly, attentive service is another highlight.

**Hotel Meninas** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 541 28 05; www.hotelmeninas.com; Calle de Campomanes 7; s €89-110, d €120-180; j ) Opened in 2005, this is the sort of place where an interior designer licked his or her lips and created a masterwork of minimalist luxury. The colour scheme is blacks, whites and greys, with dark-wood floors and splashes of fuchsia and lime-green. Flat-screen TVs are in every room, along with the latest bathroom fittings, internet access points and even a laptop in some rooms, all helping to round out the effect of clean lines and latest innovations.

**La Latina & Lavapiés**

Staying in Lavapiés extracts you from the well-beaten tourist track and while there are few sites to see, it's all about immersion in an area that you could only find in Madrid. La Latina is the heart of Old Madrid, awash with twisting cobblestone lanes, great restaurants and a humming nightlife.

**BUDGET**

**Mad Hostel** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 506 48 40; www.madhostel.com; Calle de Cabeza 24; dm €15-17; a i ) From the same people who brought you Cat's Hostel, Mad Hostel is similarly filled with a buzzing vibe. The 1st-floor courtyard – with retractable roof – is a wonderful place to chill, while the four- to eight-bed rooms are smallish but new and clean. There's a small rooftop gym equipped with state-of-the-art equipment.

**Huertas & Atocha**

Huertas is Madrid's beating heart with the whole area in uproar from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning – if you want to sleep, ask for an interior room.

**TOP FIVE SLEEPS**

- Cat's Hostel (p146)
- Petit Palace Posada del Peine (opposite)
- Quo (p146)
- Hotel Meninas (opposite)
- Hotel Puerta América (p148)

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Cat's Hostel** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 902 889 192, 91 369 28 07; www.catshostel.com; Calle de Cañizares 6; dm €16, d €18-20; a i ) Now here's something special. The internal courtyard is Madrid's finest – lavish Andalusian tilework, a fountain, a spectacular glass ceiling and stunning Islamic decoration, surrounded on four sides by an open balcony. There's a softly lit and super-cool basement bar where occasional live flamenco cohorts with free internet connections. The dorms and bathrooms are new and super clean.

## BUDGET

**Hostal Sardinero** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 57 56; fax 91 429 41 12; Calle del Prado 16; s/d from €45/60) More than the cheerful rooms (which have high ceilings, air-conditioning, a safe, hairdryers and renovated bathrooms), it's the friendly old couple who run Hostal Sardinero that gives it its charm. They love it if you take the time to sit down for a chat.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Miau** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 71 20; www.hotelmiu.com; Calle del Principe 26; s/d incl breakfast €88/98; a i ) If you want to be close to the nightlife of Huer-tas or you can't tear yourself away from the beautiful Plaza de Santa Ana, then this is your place. Light tones, splashes of colour and elegant modern art adorn the rooms, which are large and well-equipped. Bring ear plugs if sleep is something you value.

**Hotel El Prado** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 02 34; www.pradohotel.com; Calle del Prado 11; s €76-98, d €98-118; a i ) This hotel is one of Madrid's most welcoming and offers style and service beyond its modest three-star category. There's a wine theme running throughout the spacious rooms, which have parquet floors, light tones, and places to sit and write. The double-

glazed windows are also important, especially if you're here on a weekend.

**Catalonia Moratin** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 71 71; www.hoteles-catalonia.es; Calle de Atocha 23; s/d from €90/100; a i ) If you like your hotels to be former palaces, this could be for you. The public areas are exquisite – a palm-filled, light-drenched patio and a sweeping staircase guarded by marble lions – and the rooms boast rustic chic, with a simple, warm colour scheme, hardwood floors and balconies off every room.

**Alicia Room Mate** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 389 60 95; www.room-matehoteles.com; Calle del Prado 2; s/d from €90/100; i s ) The area around Plaza de Santa Ana rarely stands still for long and this new hotel (2006) is evidence that the endless change is for the good. Stylishly classy rooms, some with plaza views, are wedded to cool service and a hip vibe in the public areas.

**Hard Rock Hotel** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 45 00; www.hardrock.com; Plaza de Santa Ana 14) At the time of research, the western end of Plaza de Santa Ana was being transformed into a stylish new hotel run by the people who brought you the iconic Hard Rock Cafés of the world. At the time of research prices and other information weren't available, but expect it to be one of Madrid's most exciting new hotels.

## TOP END

**Hotel Urban** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 787 77 70; www.derbyhotels.com; Carrera de San Jerónimo 34; d €160-320; a i s ) The towering glass edifice of Hotel Urban is the epitome of art-inspired, super-stylish designer cool. With its clean lines and modern art, it's a wonderful antidote to the more classic charm of Madrid's five-star hotels of longer standing. Dark-wood floors and dark walls are offset by plenty of light, while the bathrooms have wonderful designer fittings – the wash-basins are sublime. The rooftop swimming pool is Madrid's best and the gorgeous terrace is heaven on a candlelit summer's evening.

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Quo** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 532 90 49; www.hotelesquo.com; Calle de Sevilla 4; s €110-156, d from €156; a i ) Quo is Madrid's home of chic with black-clad staff, minimalist designer furniture, high ceilings and huge windows that let the light flood in. The colour scheme is black and red with light surfaces providing perfect contrast. We're also big fans of the bathrooms – glass doors, glass benches and stainless-steel basins. All rooms have flat-screen TVs, black-and-white photos of Madrid, dark-wood floors, free ADSL internet connection and comfy armchairs, while the rooms on the 7th floor have Jacuzzis and private terraces with terrific views over the rooftops of central Madrid.

## Paseo del Prado &amp; El Retiro

Near the 'Big Three' and the shady Parque del Retiro, this sophisticated district is known for its charm but rather low on accommodation options.

## MIDRANGE

**NH Nacional** (Map p125; ☎ 91 429 66 29; www.nh-hotels.com; Paseo del Prado 48; d Fri-Sun €99-128, Mon-Thu €169; a i ) The excellent NH chain of hotels doesn't get any better than this place, where the stylish rooms are beautifully decorated in warm colours and combine luxury comfort with all the necessary technology (including satellite TV and internet connections in every room).

## TOP END

**Palace** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 360 80 00; www.palacemadrid.com; Plaza de las Cortes 7; d €369-470; a i ) An old Madrid classic, this former palace of the Duque de Lerma opened as a hotel in 1911 and was Spain's second luxury hotel. Ever since it has looked out across Plaza de Neptuno at its rival, the Ritz, like a lover unjustly scorned. Its name may not have the world-famous cachet of the Ritz, but it's not called the Palace for nothing and is extravagant in all the right places.

**Hotel Ritz** (Map p125; ☎ 91 701 67 67; www.ritzmadrid.com; Plaza de la Lealtad 5; d €480-580; a i ) The grand old lady of Madrid, the Hotel Ritz is the height of exclusivity. One of the most lavish buildings in Madrid, the classic style and impeccable service is second-to-none. Not surprisingly, it's the hotel of choice for presidents, kings and celebrities. The public areas are palatial and awash with antiques while the rooms are extravagantly large, opulent and supremely comfortable.

## Salamanca

The barrio Salamanca is Madrid's most exclusive address, home to a wealth of suitably grand sights, not to mention some of the best shopping the city has to offer. It's generally a quieter choice than the rest of the capital.

## MIDRANGE

**Hesperia Hermosilla** (Map p120; ☎ 91 246 88 00; www.hesperia.com; Calle de la Hermosilla; s/d €125/135; a i ) If you're here on a mission to shop in Salamanca, or otherwise value quiet, exclusive streets away from the noise of central Madrid, this modern and subtly stylish hotel is a

terrific choice. The furnishings are vaguely minimalist, especially in the public areas, and LCD flat-screen TVs and other creature comforts are rare luxuries in this price range.

## TOP END

**Bauzá** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 435 75 45; www.hotelbauza.com; Calle de Goya 79; s €138-174, d €190-275; a i ) Minimalist and modern, the new Bauzá would be right at home in Soho. The generous rooms boast dark-wood floors, soothing greys and blues, and occasional flashes of originality like Indian textile prints. Computers, plants, sound systems and designer lamps add to the appeal without crowding the rooms.

## Malasaña &amp; Chueca

There's an unmistakable sense that by staying in Malasaña or Chueca you're a discerning traveller keen to live like a *madriño*. You're close to everything, reasonably well served by transport and sure to have a good time once you step out the door of your hotel.

## BUDGET

**Hostal Don Juan** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 522 31 01; 2nd fl, Plaza de Vázquez de Mella 1; s/d €33/46) Just because you're paying cheap rates for your room, doesn't mean you can't be treated like a king. This elegant two-storey *hostal* is filled with art (each room has original works) and antique furniture that could grace a royal palace. Rooms are simple but luminous and large, and most have a balcony facing out onto the street.

**Hostal América** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 522 64 48; www.hostalamerica.net; 5th fl, Calle de Hortaleza 19; s/d/tr €36/48/67) This place is run by a lovely mother-son-dog team who preside over super-clean, spacious and IKEA-dominated rooms. As most rooms face onto the usual interior 'patio' of the building, you should get a good night's sleep in this busy area. For the rest of the time, there's an expansive terrace with tables, chairs and a coffee machine.

**Hostal La Zona** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 99 04; www.hostallazona.com; 1st fl, Calle de Valverde 7; d €50-65; i ) Catering primarily to a gay clientele, the stylish Hostal La Zona has exposed brickwork, wooden pillars and a subtle colour scheme. We like a place where a sleep-in is encouraged – breakfast is from 9am to noon, which is exactly the understanding Madrid's nightlife merits. Other highlights include free internet, helpful staff and air-conditioning/heating in every room.

## MIDRANGE

**Hostal San Lorenzo** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 30 57; www.hostal-lorenzo.com; Calle de Clavel 8; s/d from €60/80) Hostal San Lorenzo is a terrific deal: original stone walls and occasional dark-wood beams from the 19th-century in the public areas and modern, bright and comfortable rooms that you'll be more than happy to return to at the end of the day. It's just a pity some of the rooms aren't larger.

## Chamberí &amp; Argüelles

Chamberí has bars, shops, cinemas and restaurants in just the right measure and you'll quickly feel less like a tourist and more like a local by staying here. You're a short metro ride from the main sights of interest. Argüelles is more residential, sprinkled with elegant façades, as well as bars, shops and restaurants.

## TOP END

**Hotel AC Santo Mauro** (Map p120; ☎ 91 319 69 00; www.ac-hoteles.com; 5th fl, Calle de Zurbano 36; s €250, d €250-365) Everything about this recently renovated place oozes exclusivity and class, from the address – one of the elite patches of Madrid real estate – to the mansion that is the finest in a barrio of many. This is a place of discreet elegance and warm service, and rooms are suitably lavish; the Arabian-styled indoor pool isn't bad either. David Beckham may be derided for many things, but the fact that he chose to make this his home for six months certainly suggests a high degree of taste.

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Hotel Puerta América** (Map p112; ☎ 91 744 54 00; www.hotelpuertaamerica.com; Avenida de América 41; d €225-300; i a p) When the owners of this hotel looked at their location halfway between the city and the airport, they knew they had to do something special. Their idea? Take some of world architecture's most innovative names and give them a floor each to design. The result? An extravagant pastiche of styles, from curvy minimalism or zany montages of 1980s chic to bright red bathrooms that feel like a movie star's dressing room. Even the bar ('a temple to the liturgy of pleasure'), restaurant, façade, gardens, public lighting and parking garage each had their own architect.

## EATING

Madrid has become a magnet for outstanding cooking and eating out in the Spanish capital is a real treat.

There's everything to be found here, not least the rich variety of regional Spanish specialities from across the country, all within a short walk or metro ride from your hotel door. Throw in some outstanding restaurants serving international cuisine and you'll quickly discover that the choice of where to eat is almost endless.

It is nearly impossible to eat badly in Madrid. Restaurants in Malasaña, Chueca, La Latina and Huertas range from stunning old *tabernas* (taverns) to chic, sophisticated and clean-lined boutique restaurants that won't break the bank. For more classically classy surrounds, Paseo del Prado, El Retiro, Salamanca and Northern Madrid are generally pricey but of the highest standard and ideal for celebrating a special occasion or for spotting royalty and the celebrities of the moment.

Almost more than the myriad tastes on offer, however, it is the buzz that accompanies eating in Madrid that elevates the city into the ranks of the great culinary capitals of the world. In Madrid, eating is not a functional pastime to be squeezed in between other more important tasks. Instead, it's one of life's great pleasures, to be enjoyed for hours on end with friends and with a glass or two of wine; an event to be savoured like all good things in life.

Unless otherwise stated, restaurants listed here are open for both lunch (from around 2pm) and dinner (from 9pm).

## Los Austrias, Sol &amp; Centro

Old Madrid has a little bit of everything, from the world's oldest restaurant and hearty *madriileño* cooking in places rich in history and character to fine regional tapas. Also there are some wonderful little cafés from which to watch the passing parade.

## BUDGET

**Cervecería 100 Montaditos** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 902 197 494; Calle Mayor 22; small rolls €1) This terrific chain of bars serves up no less than 100 different varieties of mini-*bocadillos* that span the full range of Spanish staples in more combinations than you could imagine. You fill out your order, take it up to the counter and your name is called in no time.

## A TAPAS TOUR OF MADRID

Like so many enjoyable experiences in Madrid, your tapas tour starts in Huertas. **La Casa del Abuelo** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 521 23 19; Calle de la Victoria 12; 11.30am-3.30pm & 6.30-11.30pm) is an ageless place where the traditional order is a *chato* (small glass) of the heavy, sweet El Abuelo red wine and the heavenly *gambas* (prawns) *a la plancha* (grilled) or *al ajillo* (sizzling in garlic in little ceramic plates). Directly opposite is **La Oreja del Oro** (Map pp122-3; Calle de la Victoria 9; 1 Wed-Sun) where you can wash down the mere thought of the house speciality, *oreja* (pig's ear), with a glass of refreshing white Ribeiro wine from Galicia. Also in the same area is **Las Bravas** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 532 26 20; Callejón de Álvarez Gato 3), known for its patented version of the classic Spanish *salsa brava*, a spicy sauce slathered over fried potatoes, Spanish tortillas and even seafood, while **La Trucha** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 532 08 82; Calle de Núñez de Arce 6; 1 Tue-Sat) has a counter overloaded with enticing tapas. There is another branch on Calle del Príncipe.

Most famous for *bacalao* (cod) is **Casa Labra** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 00 81; Calle de Tetuán 11), which has been around since 1860 and was a favourite of the poet Federico Garcia Lorca. However, many *madriileños* wouldn't eat *bacalao* anywhere except **Casa Revuelta** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 33 32; Calle de Latoneros 3; meals €10-15; 1 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun), clinched by the fact that the owner painstakingly extracts every fish bone in the morning. If you continue south, **Taberna Algorta** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 48 77; Calle de la Cava Baja 26; 1 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, Sun lunch) proves that the Basques have turned tapas (or *pintxos* as they call them) into an art form. They call their abundant offerings 'high cuisine in miniature' – the first part is true, but these are some of the biggest *pintxos* you'll find.

In Chueca, be sure to try an *empanada* (small savoury meat or tuna pie) at the classic **Antigua Casa Ángel Sierra** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 531 01 26; Calle de Gravina 11), and don't miss **Bocaito** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 532 12 19; Calle de la Libertad 4-6; 1 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat), a favourite haunt of film-maker Pedro Almodóvar who finds the bar, bar staff and the tapas they produce 'the best antidepressant'. In neighbouring Malasaña, the old-world **taberna Casa do Compañeiro** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 57 02; Calle de San Vicente Ferrer 44; 1 1.30pm-2am) is tucked away in the streets just up from Plaza del Dos de Mayo and is renowned for its *pulpo a la gallega* (Galician-style octopus), *pimientos de padrón* (little green peppers grilled) and *lacón* (cured shoulder of pork).

If you're willing to go a little further, don't miss the best tapas in Salamanca at **Biotza** (Map p120; ☎ 91 781 03 13; Calle de Claudio Coello 27; 1 9am-midnight Mon-Thu, 9am-2am Fri & Sat), which is stylish and a purveyor of divine and creative Basque *pintxos*; we suggest one of the *degustación de pintxos* (tasting menus; €11 to €16) where you get a selection. Similarly good, in Chamberí, is **Sagarretxe** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 446 25 88; Calle de Eloy Gonzalo 26; meals €15-20; 1 noon-5pm & 7pm-midnight Sun-Wed, noon-5pm & 7pm-12.30am Thu, noon-5pm & 7pm-1am Fri & Sat) where the *surtido de 8/12 pintxos* (your own selection of 8/12 tapas) costs €12/16.

Wherever you happen to be out drinking late at night, consider a detour to **Bar Melo's** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 527 50 54; Calle del Ave María; meals €10-15; 1 9pm-2am Tue-Sat) in Lavapiés – it's famous across the city for its *zapatillas* (*bocadillos* of *lacón*: cured shoulder of pork and cheese). They're big, they're greasy and they're damn good.

**La Mallorquina** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 521 12 01; Plaza de la Puerta del Sol 8; pastries around €1.50; 1 8am-9.15pm) Start the day at this classic pastry shop that's packed with *madriileños* who just couldn't pass by without stopping.

**Cervecería Compano** (Calle de Botaneros; bocadillos €2) Spanish bars don't come any more basic than this, but it is the purveyors of an enduring and wildly popular Madrid tradition – a *bocadillo de calamares* (a large roll stuffed

with deep-fried calamari) – at any hour of the day.

**La Gloria de Montera** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 523 44 07; Calle del Caballero de Gracia 10; menú €7.50) There's no beating this popular eatery for cheap sit-down fare. With a sleek, minimalist décor and a combination of local and international flavours, it's oh-so-stylish, oh-so-cheap and oh-so-good. Lunch is especially crowded; be prepared to wait in line if you arrive after 2pm.

## MADRID

**MIDRANGE**  
**La Viuda Blanca** (Map pp122-3; % 91 548 75 29; Calle de Campomanes 6; meals €25;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Mon) Calle de Campomanes is quickly becoming one of central Madrid's coolest streets and La Viuda Blanca is an essential part of its charm. The dining room is flooded with sunshine through the glass roof, the crowd is young and trendy, and the cooking ranges from wok dishes and baked salmon to more traditional rice concoctions.

**Taberna La Bola** (Map pp122-3; % 91 547 69 30; Calle de la Bola 5; meals €20-35;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  closed Aug) In any poll of food-loving locals for most traditional Madrid cuisine, Taberna La Bola (going strong since 1880) always features near the top. We're inclined to agree, and if you're going to try *cocido a la madrileña* (stew; €16.80), this is a good place to do so.

**Restaurante Sobrino de Botín** (Map pp122-3; % 91 366 42 17; www.botin.es; Calle de los Cuchilleros 17; meals €35-45) This place is famous for many reasons. For a start, the Guinness Book of Records has recognised it as the oldest restaurant in the world (1725). And then there's the fact that it has appeared in many novels about Madrid, most notably Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. The secret of its endurance is fine *cochinillo* (suckling pig) and *cerdero asado* (roast lamb) cooked in the wood-fired ovens. Eating in the vaulted cellar is a treat.

**La Latina & Lavapiés**

In La Latina you could just about take your pick of any of the restaurants around Calle de la Cava Baja and Plaza de la Paja and not leave disappointed. There's an emphasis on cool, stylish interiors and equally cool and casual clientele, but you'll also find your fair share of throwbacks to another Madrid era, with atmospheric old *tabernas* who've been perfecting traditional *madrileño* cuisine for decades. Lavapiés is more eclectic and multi-cultural and, generally speaking, the further down the hill you go, the better it gets.

**BUDGET**

**Delic** (Map pp122-3; % 91 364 54 50; Costanilla de San Andrés 14; sandwiches €3-5, meals from €13;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  11am-2am Wed-Sat, 11am-midnight Sun, 8pm-2am Mon) There's no finer way to spend a summer's afternoon or evening than nursing a *mojito* at Delic's Plaza de la Paja *terrace*, but it also has a delicious range of cakes (€4.50 to €6), and international food in the chilled and cosy indoor dining area.

**El Granero de Lavapiés** (Map pp122-3; % 91 467 76 11; Calle de Argumosa 10; meals €10-15;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  lunch Mon-Thu & Sat, dinner Fri;  $\checkmark$ ) This cosy vegetarian restaurant feels like eating at home, with just one dining room and friendly, family-style service. The food (all vegetarian) is home-cooked, making it a great choice for lunch and, unusually, it has a *menú del día* on Saturday (€10) as well as weekdays (€8.50).

**MIDRANGE**

**El Estragón** (Map pp122-3; % 91 365 89 82; Plaza de la Paja 10; meals €20-25;  $\checkmark$ ) A delightful spot for crepes and other vegetarian specialities, El Estragón is undoubtedly one of Madrid's best vegetarian restaurants, although attentive vegans won't appreciate the use of butter.

**La Buga del Lobo** (Map pp122-3; % 91 467 61 51; Calle de Argumosa 11; meals €20-25;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  11am-2am Wed-Mon) One of the 'in' places in cool and gritty Lavapiés, the popularity of La Buga del Lobo shows no sign of abating. The atmosphere is bohemian and chilled, with funky, swirling murals and jazz or lounge music. The food's good – the *chorizo frío de sidra* (cold chorizo in cider) or *pimientos rellenos* (stuffed peppers) are a highlight – but it's best known for its groovy vibe.

**Malacatin** (Map pp122-3; % 91 365 52 41; Calle de Ruda 5; meals €25-30;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat) If you want to see discerning *madrileños* enjoying their favourite local food, come here. The clamour of conversation bounces off the compact dining area's tiled walls, and the speciality is as much *cocido* as you can eat (€18). Its *degradación de cocido* (taste of *cocido*; €5) at the bar is a great way to try Madrid's favourite dish without going all the way, although locals would argue that doing that is like smoking without inhaling.

**Julián de Tolosa** (Map pp122-3; % 91 365 82 10; Calle de la Cava Baja 8; meals €35;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  closed dinner Sun) This fine Navarran restaurant has a subtly modern aesthetic to accompany its excellent, meat-dominated menu – the *chuletón* (basically a huge chop of top-quality, juicy meat) for two is outstanding. Fine Navarran wines and *alubias rojas de Tolosa* (red beans from Tolosa) are other highlights.

**Posada de la Villa** (Map pp122-3; % 91 366 18 60; Calle de la Cava Baja 9; meals €35-40;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, Sun lunch Sep-Jul) The Posada is a wonderfully restored 17th-century inn (*posada*) and is something of a local landmark. The atmosphere is formal, the decoration sombre

**AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**Ene Restaurante** (Map pp122-3; % 91 366 25 91; Calle del Nuncio 19; meals €25-30) Just across from one of Madrid's oldest churches, Ene is anything but old-world. The design is cutting-edge and stylish with the dining area awash with reds and purples, while the young and friendly waiters circulate to the tune of lounge music. The food is Spanish-Asian fusion and there are also plenty of *pintxos* (tapas) to choose from. The week-day *menú del día* costs €11. The downstairs chill-out beds are pure indulgence.

and traditional (heavy timber and brickwork) and the cuisine decidedly local – *cocido*, *callos* (tripe) and *sopa de ajo* (garlic soup).

**Casa Lucio** (Map pp122-3; % 91 365 32 52; Calle de la Cava Baja 35; meals €35-45;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  closed Sat lunch) Lucio has been wowing *madrileños* for ages with his light touch, quality ingredients and home-style cooking – think seafood, roasted meats and, a Lucio speciality, eggs in abundance, which is the main reason the King of Spain is known to frequent this place.

**Huertas & Atocha**

Late-night (or all-night) drinking is a Huertas forte, but there are plenty of good restaurants as well. The pick of the places is in the lanes between Puerta del Sol and Plaza de Santa Ana, while heading down the hill around Calle del Prado promises equally rich pickings.

**BUDGET**

**El Brillante** (Map p125; % 91 528 69 66; Calle del Doctor Drumén 7; bocadillos around €3-5;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  6.30am-12.30am) Just by the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, this breezy and no-frills bar-eatery is a Madrid institution for its *bocadillos* (the *bocadillo de calamares* is an old favourite) and other snacks (*raciones* cost around €6 to €10). It's also famous for *chocolate con churros* or *porras* (deep-fried doughnut strips).

**La Finca de Susana** (Map pp122-3; % 91 369 35 57; Calle de Arlabán 4; menú €7.50, meals €15) The classy dining area with soft lighting and plenty of greenery is matched by a mix of innovative and traditional food that draws a hip young crowd. The *fiducia con ali-oli* (small pasta noodles with seafood and garlic mayonnaise) is a fine choice. La Finca doesn't take reservations and there's often a queue at lunchtime.

## MADRID

**MIDRANGE**  
**Gula Gula** (Map pp122-3; % 91 420 29 19; Calle del Infante 5; meals €15-20;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  9am-3am Tue-Sun) One of the first designer restaurants to hit Madrid back in the mid-1990s, Gula Gula continues to serve fun food. The bare brick walls, parquet floor, stage lighting and sexily dressed waiting staff help to create an ambience that's camp and snappy. The food is a mixed bag but leans towards vegetarian and the salad buffet is excellent in this meat-loving city. There's another branch at Gran Vía 1.

**Maceira** (Map pp122-3; % 91 429 15 84; Calle de Jesús 7; meals €15-20;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  lunch & dinner Tue-Sun, dinner Mon) Arrive here early as the simple wooden benches and tables creak under the weight of so much attention. Get stuck into classic *raciones* of Galician seafood, such as *pulpo a la gallega* (€8.25), downed with a crisp white Ribeiro. There is another branch around the corner on Calle de las Huertas.

**Zerain** (Map pp122-3; % 91 429 79 09; Calle Quevedo 3; meals €30-35;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  Mon-Sat) In the heart of the Barrio de las Letras, this sophisticated Basque restaurant is one of the best places in the area to sample the region's cuisine. The staples include cider, *bacalao* and wonderful steaks, while there are also a few splashes of creativity thrown in (the secret's in the sauce).

**Lhardy** (Map pp122-3; % 91 522 22 07; www.lhardy.com; Carrera de San Jerónimo 8; meals €35-45;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) This Madrid landmark (since 1839) is an elegant treasure-trove of delicatessen items that's ideal for those planning a dinner party of gourmet tapas. You can also sit down to full meals (the house specialities are Madrid dishes such as *callos* and *cocido* (stew), as well as *perdiz estofado* (partridge stew).

**Paseo del Prado & El Retiro**

In the discreet residential enclave between Parque del Buen Retiro and the Museo del Prado, you'll come across a handful of fairly exclusive restaurants. In these establishments, eating is taken very seriously, classic charm is the pervasive atmosphere and limousines wait outside to ferry the well-heeled customers home.

**TOP END**

**Balzac** (Map p125; % 91 420 06 13; Calle de Moreto 7; meals €70-80;  $\bar{\text{h}}$  Mon-Sat) While Basque and Catalan chefs have been capturing the world's attention for their *nouvelle cuisine*, Madrid's

Andrés Madrigras has been quietly gathering plaudits. His faithfulness to traditional *madrileño* cooking has been fused to what he calls 'innovation, risk-taking and rebellious spirit'. The service is also impeccable.

### Salamanca

Eating in Salamanca is traditionally as exclusive as the shops that fill the barrio, the sort of places where the keys to Jags and BMWs are left for valet parking and prices and quality are high. We've listed a few of them, but Salamanca is also home to some of Madrid's best-kept eating secrets, from the best hot dogs and Basque tapas to fusion restaurants and intimate dens of creative home-cooking.

### MIDRANGE

**Fast Good** (Map p120; Calle de Juan Bravo 3; meals €10; 11am-12am) When the star Catalan chef Ferran Adrià became concerned about Spaniards' growing obsession with fast food, he decided to do something about it. Fast Good is a simple concept (food that's fast but healthy), and it's a terrific place to get a freshly prepared hamburger, roast chicken or panini with a creative twist. We enjoyed the panini of *champiñones frescos con gorgonzola* (fresh mushrooms and gorgonzola cheese) almost as much as the curvy white and lime-green décor.

**La Galette** (Map p120; 91 576 06 41; Calle del Conde de Aranda 11; meals €30; 11am-12am Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Walk into this lovely little restaurant and you could be in the south of France, with its delightfully intimate dining area. The food is a revelation, with around half the dishes what the owner calls 'baroque vegetarian'. It is creative cooking at its best and it feels like it's emerging from your grandma's kitchen. The *croquetas de manzana* (apple croquettes) are a house speciality, but everything is good.

**Teatriz** (Map p120; 91 577 53 79; Calle de la Hermosilla 15; meals €30-40) Designed by Philippe Stark, the former Teatro Beatriz has an eerily lit bar right on the stage, and it's the kind of place where you'll need to look like George Clooney to fit in. The food follows the fashion, ranging from 'Made in Spain' to Fusion. While you're there, check out the loos, where you leave luminous footprints!

### TOP END

**Thai Gardens** (Map p120; 91 577 88 84; Calle de Jorge Juan 5; meals €35-40) This sophisticated restaurant is awash with greenery and is a favoured haunt

of Spain's celebrities and well-to-do. The food is exquisite, the service faultless and they say that the ingredients are flown in weekly from Thailand. At lunchtime it has a good set menu for €25. Bookings are essential on weekends.

**Paradis Erre Efe** (Map p125; 91 575 45 40; Paseo de los Recoletos 2; meals €50-60; 11am-12am Mon-Fri & dinner Sat) Housed in the Casa de América in Palacio Linares, this unique place's minimalist décor exudes modishness and is where Barcelonan chef Ramón Freixa offers 'interactive' cooking. You want a veal fillet? Fine, now you choose what goes with it. The elegant main dining room, dominated by whites and blacks, is surrounded by smaller annexes.

### Malasaña & Chueca

Unless you're after the exclusivity of fine and expensive dining, Malasaña and Chueca have some of the best places to eat in Madrid. Old *tabernas* abound, each with its speciality, but there are also plenty of places where *nouvelle* Spanish cuisine is served in lively and stylish surroundings. There are two streets that stand out – Calle de Manuela Malasaña and, in Chueca, Calle de la Libertad.

### BUDGET

**Café Comercial** (Map pp118-19; 91 521 65 55; Glorieta de Bilbao 7; 11am-1am Sun-Thu, 8am-2am Fri-Sat) This glorious, old Madrid café proudly fights a rearguard action against progress with heavy leather seats, abundant marble and old-style waiters. As close as Madrid came to the intellectual cafés of Paris' Left Bank, the cafés of the Glorieta de Bilbao were in the 1950s and 1960s a centre of coffee-house intellectualism. Café Comercial is the last to remain and has changed little since those days.

**Fresc Co** (Map pp118-19; 91 521 60 52; Calle de Sagasta 30; meals €7.95-9.70; 11am-12.30pm-1am) If you just can't face deciphering another Spanish menu or are in dire need of a do-it-yourself salad, Fresc Co is a fresh, well-priced and all-you-can eat antidote. An extensive buffet of salads, soups, pasta and pizza are on offer, and the price includes a drink. Queues often form out the door at lunchtime.

**La Taberna de San Bernardo** (Map pp118-19; 91 445 41 70; Calle de San Bernardo 85; meals €15) The *raciones* here (around €6 to €8) include plenty of Spanish favourites with a few surprising twists thrown in – the *berenjenas con miel de caña* (deep-fried eggplant with honey) is brilliant.

### MIDRANGE

**La Musa** (Map pp118-19; 91 448 75 58; Calle de Manuela Malasaña 18; mains €6-12, menú €8-11, tapas €4; 11am-5pm & 7pm-midnight) A local favourite of Malasaña's hip, young crowd, La Musa has designer décor, lounge music and food that will live long in the memory. The fried green tomatoes with strawberry jam and great meat dishes are fun and filled with flavour. It doesn't take reservations so sidle up to the bar, put your name on the waiting list and soak up the ambient buzz of Malasaña at its best.

**Bazaar** (Map pp118-19; 91 523 39 05; Calle de la Libertad 21; menú €7, meals €20-25) Occupying a privileged corner location, with hardwood floors, grand windows, theatre lighting and comfy leather seats, Bazaar is invariably packed with a casual young crowd who come for the fresh tastes and mixed meat and fish menu. You can't make a reservation so get here early.

**Wokafé** (Map pp122-3; 91 422 90 69; Calle de las Infantas 44; meals €25; 11am-12am Sun) Step inside here and you could be in Barcelona, Sydney or New York, with its blood-red décor, conical dangling lampshades, bordello mirrors and grand windows. The hip ambience attracts a chirpy, inner-urban crowd who fill the place at lunchtimes.

**Restaurante Momo** (Map pp118-19; 91 532 73 48; Calle de la Libertad 8; meals €25; 11am-12am Mon-Sat) Momo remains a Chueca beacon of reasonably priced, inventive cuisine. This was one of the first restaurants to take Chueca dining to a new level, and it still has its deservedly loyal following among the gay, straight and arts crowds. The *menú del día* is one of Madrid's best bargains.

**Nina** (Map pp118-19; 91 591 00 46; Calle de Manuela Malasaña 10; meals €25-30) This is one of our favourite restaurants in Madrid with fantastic food, great service and a stylish dining area. The cooking is similarly cool (English-language menus are available) and the *foie fresco a la plancha* (grilled foie gras) is rich and divine. Popular with a sophisticated local crowd, Nina can be a hard place to get a table and booking on weekends is essential.

**Gran Café de Gijón** (Map p120; 91 521 54 25; Paseo de los Recoletos 21; meals €30; 11am-2am) This graceful old café has been serving coffee and meals since 1888 and has long been a favourite with Madrid's literati for a drink or a meal. The latter is a bit of a national smorgasbord, ranging from *cabrito asado a la segoviana* (roast kid) to *bacalao al pil pil* (the typically steamed Basque cod in a garlic sauce).

**La Isla del Tesoro** (Map pp118-19; 91 593 14 40; Calle de Manuela Malasaña 3; meals €30; 11am-12am) This place wins our vote for Madrid's best vegetarian restaurant. The décor is funky, intimate and as inventive as the food. The *ensalada boskimana* (salad of goat's cheese, dates, honey and other assortments) sets the tone for cooking that's fresh and always surprising, and the friendly waiters have some English-language menus. A great choice in a great barrio.

**Laydown Rest Club** (Map pp118-19; 91 548 79 37; www.laydown.es in Spanish; Plaza de Mostenses 9; meals €30; 11am-2.40pm & 9.30pm-2.30am Tue-Fri, 9.30pm-2.30am Sat & Sun, 2-4pm Mon) This place has to be seen to be believed. Part of a new craze in concept-dining, Laydown Rest Club is whiter-than-white and completely devoid of tables – you eat Roman-style while reclining on beds and are served by toga-clad waiters with huge feather fans. It's all the rage at the moment and is a dining experience unlike any other.

### Chamberí & Argüelles

The residential barrios of Chamberí and Argüelles are fast becoming Madrid's coolest, and there's usually not another tourist in sight.

### MIDRANGE

**Casa Mingo** (Map pp114-15; 91 547 79 18; Paseo de la Florida 34; meals €10-15; 11am-12am) Built in 1916 to feed the workers building the Principe Pío train station, Casa Mingo is a rambling Asturian cider house that is known by just about every *madrileño*, most of whom agree that there's no finer place to order *pollo asado* (roast chicken) and a bottle of cider.

**The Wok** (Map p120; 91 319 18 62; Calle de Génova 27; meals €15-20) If the crowds and queues are anything to go by, *madrileños* have been crying out for reasonably priced Asian food but in a classier setting than most Chinese restaurants in Madrid can muster. Just about everything is wok-cooked and there are a handful of vegetarian options, but don't expect anything too spicy.

### TOP END

**La Broche** (Map p113; 91 399 34 37; www.labroche.com; Calle de Miguel Ángel 29; meals €80) Sergi Arola, a young Catalan acolyte of the world-renowned Ferran Adrià, has made his own splash in this hotel restaurant in the busy uptown area of Madrid. He mixes his ingredients carefully, without necessarily going overboard, and the dining room is minimalist white.

## Northern Madrid

If you want to see the state of Spain's economy, visit any eatery in Northern Madrid. The business and well-heeled clientele know their food and are happy to pay for a touch of class.

### TOP END

**Zalacain** (Map p113; ☎ 91 561 48 40; Calle de Álvarez de Baena 4; meals €70-100; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat Sep-Jul) There is a seamless and quiet efficiency about this classy home of the best in traditional cooking. Everyone who's anyone in Madrid, from the king down, has eaten here since the doors opened in 1973. The wine list is purported to be one of the best in the city (an estimated 35,000 bottles) and you should certainly dress to impress.

**Santceloni** (Map p113; ☎ 91 210 88 40; www.restaurantesantceloni.com; Paseo de la Castellana 57; meals €90-110) The Michelin-starred Santceloni is one of Madrid's best restaurants with luxury Asian-inspired décor and food that wins plaudits from discerning food lovers from across Spain and abroad. Each dish is exquisite – try the chef's showpiece *menú gastronómico* (€110).

## Self-Catering

You'll find supermarkets all across central Madrid, but the most romantic places to shop are the old-style fresh produce markets.

**Mercado de San Miguel** (Map pp122-3; Plaza de San Miguel; 🍴 9am-2.30pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2.30pm Sat) Madrid's most central fresh market, this is the spot to stock up on ingredients for sandwiches and picnics.

**Mercado de la Cebada** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 91 76; Plaza de la Cebada; 🍴 8am-2pm & 5.15-8.15pm Mon-Fri) Another easy-to-reach fresh market, this is a great place to take the pulse of 'real' Madrid.

**Mallorca** (Map p120; ☎ 91 577 18 59; Calle de Serano 6; 🍴 9.30am-9pm) For fine takeaway food, head to this Madrid institution. Everything here, from gourmet mains to snacks and desserts, is delicious. There are branches throughout the city.

For a gourmet touch, you could also try the basement food departments of **El Corte Inglés** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 418 88 00; www.elcorteingles.es; Calle de Preciados 3 & elsewhere throughout the city; 🍴 10am-10pm Mon-Sat).

## DRINKING

You've seen the great paintings, have eaten an outstanding meal and, if you have any sense, you'll have taken a siesta. Now it's time

for your initiation into Europe's most dynamic nightlife. To get an idea of how much *madrileños* like to go out and have a good time, there is one simple statistic: Madrid has more bars than any city in the world, six, in fact, for every 100 inhabitants.

If you're after the more traditional, with tiled walls and flamenco tunes, head to the barrio of Huertas. For gay-friendly drinking holes, Chueca is the place. Malasaña caters to a grungy, funky crowd, while La Latina has friendly, no-frills bars that guarantee atmosphere every night of the week. In summer, head to the outdoor cafés in the city's squares.

## Los Austrias, Sol & Centro

Old taverns and the odd hidden gem populate Madrid's centre and, as a general rule, the further you stray from Plaza Mayor, the more prices drop and the fewer tourists you'll see.

**Chocolatería de San Ginés** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 65 46; Pasadizo San Ginés 5) You have to end the night at this classic café at least once; the speciality is an eye-opening dose of *syrupy* hot chocolate and some freshly fried *churros* for dipping. It's open until 7am!

**Taberna de Cien Vinos** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 47 04; Calle del Nuncio 17; 🍴 closed Mon) This unpretentious wine bar is the perfect place to order by the glass or by the bottle. The classic décor and friendly service have made it one of the best-known wine bars in town.

**La Viuda Negra** (☎ 91 548 75 29; Calle de Campomanes 6) This all-dressed-in-orange, lounge-like cocktail bar (the Black Widow) is minimalist enough for Manhattan and genuinely cool

### LA HORA DEL VERMUT

Sunday. One o'clock in the afternoon. A dark bar off Calle de la Cava Baja. In any civilised city the bar would be shut tight at such an hour, but in Madrid the place is packed because it's *la hora del vermut* (vermouth hour), when friends and families head out for a quick *apéritif* before Sunday lunch. Sometimes referred to as *ir de Rastro* (going to the Rastro), because so many of the traditional vermouth bars are in and around El Rastro market, this Sunday tradition is deeply engrained in *madrileño* culture. Some of the best bars for vermouth are along Calle de la Cava Baja (between El Rastro and Plaza Mayor).

enough to satisfy the sophisticated crowd of the new Madrid. If you're the sort that likes to settle in for the night, you can first eat at the sister restaurant, La Viuda Blanca, next door (p150), then ease over to the bar for funky house music until late. Sunday afternoons are jazzy and very mellow.

## La Latina & Lavapiés

Two barrios, two very different vibes. On summer weekend nights (and many Sunday afternoons), crowds of happy *madrileños* spill from the bars of La Latina and down the slopes, turning otherwise medieval streets into bonhomie central. The pick of the bars are in the area roughly framed by Calle de la Cava Baja, Plaza de la Cebada, Plaza de la Paja and Calle de Segovia. Lavapiés is a different kettle of fish altogether – working-class, quirky and a barrio with a very strong sense of community. If you're after an unmistakably Madrid night but with nary a tourist in sight, Lavapiés could be your thing.

**Bonanno** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 68 86; Plaza del Humilladero 4) Newcomers to Madrid often wonder what all the fuss surrounding its nightlife is about, but that's because they start too early. If you're suffering from this affliction, head for Bonanno, a stylish cocktail bar that's popular with young professional *madrileños* from early evening onwards. Be prepared to snuggle up close to those around you if you want a spot at the bar.

**Café del Nuncio** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 09 06; Calle de Segovia 9) A sprawling bar, the Café del Nuncio straggles down a stairway passage to Calle de Segovia. You can drink on one of several cosy levels inside or, better still in summer, enjoy the outdoor *terrazza*. On summer weekends, this place hums with the sort of clamour that newcomers to Madrid (and plenty of longstanding residents) find irresistible.

**El Viajero** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 90 64; Plaza de la Cebada 11; 🍴 closed Mon) This upstairs bar requires the patience of a saint – it's busy and near-on impossible to get a table unless you're prepared to wait. But wait you should because El Viajero is always buzzing and has been for years.

**Almendra 13** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 42 52; Calle del Almendra 13) You could easily come here for the tapas but it's standing room only most nights, especially on weekends when locals come here for the fine wines and manzanilla

### AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**La Inquilina** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 627 511 804; Calle del Ave María 39; 🍴 closed Mon) An integral part of the sometimes sophisticated, more often earthy charm of Lavapiés, La Inquilina is a wonderful bar that's ideal for taking the pulse of this increasingly cool barrio. Contemporary artworks by budding local artists adorn the walls and you can either gather around the bar or take a table out the back.

(dry sherry), and the convivial buzz of a happy and discerning Madrid crowd.

## Huertas & Atocha

The maze of streets around Huertas and the Puerta del Sol is a treasure-chest of lively bars and nightspots, and you won't be hard-pressed to find a place to revel in the atmosphere with a drink in hand.

**Cervecería Alemana** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 70 33; Plaza de Santa Ana 6; 🍴 closed Aug) If you've only got time to stop at one bar on Plaza Santa Ana, let it be this classic *cervecería*, renowned for its cold, frothy beers. It's fine inside, but snaffle a table outside in the square on a summer's evening and you won't be giving it up without a fight. This was one of Hemingway's haunts, and neither the wood-lined bar nor the bow-tied waiters have changed since his day.

**Casa Alberto** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 93 56; www.casaalberto.es; Calle de las Huertas 18; 🍴 closed Mon) Since 1827 *madrileños* have been getting their vermouth from this elegant bar, where the hard stuff is served on tap. The tapas are good but come here on Sunday at 1pm and you're halfway towards being considered an honorary *madrileño*.

**La Venencia** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 73 13; Calle de Echegaray 7) This is how sherry bars should be – old-world and drinks poured straight from the wooden barrels. La Venencia is a barrio classic, with fine Jerez sherry for just €1.35. There's no music, no flashy decorations; it's all about you, your *fino* (sherry) and your friends.

**Ølsen** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 36 59; Calle del Prado 15; 🍴 closed Mon) This classy and clean-lined bar is a temple to Nordic minimalism and comes into its own after the Scandinavian restaurant out the back closes. We think the more than 80 varieties of vodka are enough to satisfy most tastes, while the vodka cocktails



(€7 to €9) are also great. You'll hate vodka the next day, but Madrid is all about living for the night.

**Viva Madrid** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 36 40; www.barvivamadrid.com; Calle de Manuel Fernández y González 7) A beautifully tiled bar, some of the best *mojitos* in town, a friendly atmosphere, a mixed crowd and scattered tables – what more could a *madrileano* want? Not much apparently, and it's famous on the Huertas late-night scene.

## Salamanca

Salamanca is the land of the beautiful people, and it's all about gloss and glamour – heels for her and hair gel for him. As you glide through the *pijos* (posh), keep your eyes peeled for Real Madrid players, celebrities and designer clothes. If nothing else, you'll see how the other half lives.

**Geographic Club** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 578 08 62; Calle de Alcalá 141) With its elaborate stained-glass windows, wooden African masks and photos from around the world, the Geographic Club feels like an Irish bar by day (it's the wood panelling that does it), but it gets noisy after midnight with a more mixed crowd than most of Salamanca can muster.

**El Lateral** (Map p120; ☎ 91 435 06 04; Calle de Velázquez 57) It doesn't get much more *pijo* than this chic wine bar, where wearing hair gel seems to be a prerequisite for entry. Don't bother coming here after work's out unless you're in an Armani suit; at other times, the excellent wines and other drinks loosen up the crowd (if not the ties) more than you'd think.

## Malasaña & Chueca

The inner-city barrios of Malasaña and Chueca are two of Madrid's most eclectic and liveliest, although they are worlds apart in personality. Malasaña by night is home to those who would relive the anything-goes, rock-heavy days of *la movida madrileña*, which means a rebellious spirit during clamorous nights that seem to last forever. Chueca, on the other hand, caters to the black-clad, trendy and stylish, the home barrio of the city's considerable gay community.

**Café Pepe Botella** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 522 43 09; Calle de San Andrés 12) As good in the wee small hours as it is in the afternoon, this is a classy bar with green velvet benches, marble-topped tables, old photos and mirrors covering the walls. The faded elegance gives the place charm that's made it one of the most popular and enduring drinking holes in the barrio.

**Areia** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 310 03 07; www.areiachil.lout.com in Spanish; Calle de Hortaleza 92) The ultimate lounge bar by day (cushions and chill-out music abound and there are dark and secluded corners where you can hear yourself talk or snog quietly), this place is equally enjoyable by night when groovy DJs take over (from 11pm Sunday to Wednesday, and from 9pm the rest of the week) with deep and chill house, nu jazz, bossa and electronica. It's cool, funky and low-key all at once.

**La Via Láctea** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 446 75 81; Calle de Velarde 18) A living, breathing and somewhat grungy relic of *la movida*, La Via Láctea remains a Malasaña favourite for a mixed,

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Museo Chicote** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 532 67 37; www.museo-chicote.com; Gran Vía 12; ☒ closed Sun) The founder of this Madrid landmark is said to have invented more than a hundred cocktails, which the likes of Hemingway, Sophia Loren and Frank Sinatra all enjoyed at one time or another. It's still frequented by film stars and socialites, and it's at its best after midnight when a lounge atmosphere takes over, couples cuddle on the curved benches and some of the city's best DJs do their stuff.

informal crowd who seem to live for the 1980s – eye shadow for boys and girls is a recurring theme. There are plenty of drinks to choose from and by early on Sunday morning anything goes. Expect long queues to get in on weekends.

**Café Belén** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 308 24 47; Calle de Belén 5) Café Belén is cool in all the right places – lounge and chill-out music, dim lighting, a great range of drinks (the *mojitos* are as good as you'll find in Madrid and that's saying something) and a low-key crowd that's the height of casual sophistication.

**Stop Madrid** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 88 87; Calle de Hortaleza 11) The name may be incongruous, but this terrific old *taberna* is friendly, invariably packed with people and wins the vote of at least one Lonely Planet author for the best sangria in Madrid.

**El Jardín Secreto** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 541 80 23; Calle de Conde Duque 2; ☒ 5.30pm-12.30am Mon-Thu & Sun, 6.30pm-2.30am Fri & Sat) One of our favourite places to drink in Madrid, 'The Secret Garden' has a hip café-style ambience in a barrio that is one of Madrid's best-kept secrets. It's at its best on a summer's evening but the atmosphere never misses a beat – candlelit, cosy and intimate, with a real buzz among the young professional crowd.

**Café-Restaurante El Espejo** (Map p120; ☎ 91 308 23 47; Paseo de los Recoletos 31; ☒ 8am-midnight) Once a haunt of writers and intellectuals, you could be a little overwhelmed by all the mirrors, chandeliers and discreet charm of another era. What changes all that is that the outdoor tables are some of Madrid's most popular drinking *terrazas* on a warm summer's evening.

## ENTERTAINMENT

To find out the current showings at Madrid's theatres, cinemas and concert halls, your best bet is the *Guía del Ocio* (www.guiadelocio.com), a Spanish-only weekly magazine available for €1 from news kiosks. Also helpful is the comprehensive *La Netro* (http://madrid.laetro.com), with info in Spanish. The town hall's website (www.munimadrid.com) has practical details for the city's theatres and stages.

Also keep an eye out for the monthly *Salir Urban* (www.salirsalir.com). It's in Spanish, costs €1.80 and covers both Madrid and Barcelona. The monthly English expat publication *In Madrid* (www.in-madrid.com) is given out free at some hotels, original-version cinemas, Irish pubs and English bookshops and has lots of information about what to see and do in town.

The local press is always a good bet, with daily listings of films, concerts, football matches, bullfights and special events. On Friday pick up *El Mundo's* supplement magazine *Metropoli* for additional information on the week's offerings.

You can buy cinema, theatre, opera or concert tickets (*entradas*) at box offices or at ticket vendors including the following:

**Caixa Catalunya's Tel-Entrada** (☎ 902 101 212; www.telentrada.com)

**El Corte Inglés** (☎ 91 379 80 00, 902 400 222; www.elcorteingles.es; throughout city; ☒ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat)

**FNAC** (☎ 91 595 62 00; www.fnac.es in Spanish) Click on the 'Todos Los Espectáculos' section of the website.

**Localidades Galicia** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 27 32, 91 531 91 31; www.eol.es/lgalicia/; Plaza del Carmen 1; ☒ 9.30am-1pm & 4.30-7pm Tue-Sat)

## Clubs

There's no barrio in Madrid without a decent club or disco, but the most popular dance spots are between Gran Vía and Plaza Mayor. For intimate dancing or quirky décor, head to Chueca or Malasaña. Don't expect dance clubs or *discotecas* to really get going until at least 1am, and some won't even bat an eyelash until 3am when the bars elsewhere have closed.

Club prices vary wildly, depending on the time you enter, the way you're dressed and the number of people inside. The cover charge is €8 to €12, though megaclubs and swanky places charge a few euros more. Discounts are possible if you keep your eyes open for the stamped tickets lying in bars about town.

## DRINKING UNDER THE STARS – THE PICK OF THE TERRAZAS

From April to October, when the evening temperatures in Madrid are balmy and rain is rare, summer *terrazas* (terraces, or tables set up outdoors) spill out onto the streets all over town. Joining the chattering, carousing crowds is one of Madrid's great pleasures and some of the best places to start are along **Paseo de la Castellana** and **Paseo de los Recoletos** (Map p120), where tables run up and down the sidewalks. Even more pleasant are the *terrazas* that set up in Argüelles, especially those on **Paseo del Pintor Rosales** (Map pp114-15), or, further south, the *terrazas* of **Las Vistillas** (Map pp114-15), just across Calle de Bailén, with their fine views out towards Sierra de Guadarrama.

Madrid's squares also make perfect locations for outdoor drinking. Most of the bars on Madrid's **Plaza de Santa Ana** (Map pp122-3) operate *terrazas*, while elegant **Plaza Mayor** (Map pp122-3) is as busy as the nearby **Plaza de la Paja** (Map pp122-3) is quiet and inviting. **Plaza de Oriente** (Map pp122-3) is also supremely civilised. Further afield, **Plaza de Chueca** (Map pp118-19) comes into its hedonistic own after dark, while **Plaza de Olavide** (Map pp118-19) in Chamberí, is one of Madrid's best-kept secrets.

**LOS AUSTRIAS, SOL & CENTRO**

**Cool** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 902 499 994; Calle de Isabel la Católica 6) Cool by name and cool by nature. One of the hottest clubs in the city, its curvy white lines, discreet lounge chairs in dark corners and pulsating dance floor is peopled by gorgeous people, gorgeous clothes and has a predictably strict entry policy. The sexy, well-heeled crowd includes a lot of sleek-looking gay men and model-like women.

**Palacio Gavía** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 526 60 69; Calle del Arenal 9) An elegant palace converted into one of the most popular dance clubs in Madrid, this is the kind of place where the crowd can be pretty young and boisterous and the queues are long. Thursday is international student and house music night – international relations have never been so much fun.

**Teatro Joy Eslava** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 366 37 33; www.joy-eslava.com in Spanish; Calle del Arenal 11) The only things guaranteed at this grand old Madrid dance club (housed in a 19th-century theatre) are a crowd and the fact that it will be open. (The club claims to have opened every single day for the past 25 years.) The music and the crowd are a mixed bag, but queues are long and invariably include locals and tourists and even the occasional *famoso* (celebrity).

**El Son** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 532 32 83; Calle de la Victoria 6) If you're after salsa, merengue or some sexy tangos, look no further than El Son. This is the top place in town for Latin music, and it's very popular with Madrid's South and Central American population. Live Cuban music from Monday to Thursday keeps the place packed all week long.

**LA LATINA & LAVAPIÉS**

**La Lupe** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 527 50 19; Calle de la Torrecilla del Leal 12) *Madrileños* in-the-know have been coming to this fun and funky dance spot for years, and there's no sign of its popularity abating. It's mostly the latest dance tunes with cosy and impromptu dance floors so packed that you'll struggle to make your way to the bar. Other places stay open later, but La Lupe will really get your night off on the right foot.

**HUERTAS & ATOCHA**

**Kapital** (Map p125; ☎ 91 420 29 06; Calle de Atocha 125; 7-11 Thu-Sun) This massive seven-storey nightclub is one of Madrid's biggies with something for everyone, from cocktail bars and dance music to karaoke, salsa and hip-hop. The crowd is sexy, well-heeled and up for a good time. On

**AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**EI Juglar** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 528 43 81; Calle de Lavapiés 37) One of the hottest spots in Lavapiés at the moment, this great bar caters for a largely bohemian crowd with down-tempo jazz and soul beats, with some fiery nods to flamenco at 10pm every Sunday and on the first Wednesday of every month. It's busy all night, but the after-midnight Latin tunes are funky and get everyone dancing. There are more frenetic Madrid nightspots, but none more agreeable.

Sunday, 'Sundance' (otherwise known as 'Kapital Love') is definitely for those who have no intention of appearing at work or university on Monday. The afternoon sessions are for a younger crowd, while nights belong more to the Real Madrid set.

**Ducados Café** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 360 00 89; Plaza de Canalejas 3) If there's a constant here, it's the promise that the music, whatever the style, will get you groovin'. DJs roll through hip-hop, house, funk and soul but always find a way to keep the crowd happy and the dance-floor filled. The upstairs bar is open all day for tapas or snacks, though at night it becomes a chilled bar. Since there's no cover charge, this is a great place to start the night.

**Room at Stella** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 63 78; Calle de Arlabán 7; 7-11 Thu-Sat) DJ Ángel García is one of Madrid's best, so don't even think about arriving after 3am – there simply won't be room and those inside have no intention of leaving until dawn. The great visuals will leave you cross-eyed if you weren't already in this vibrant, heady place.

**MALASAÑA & CHUECA**

There's more information about Chueca's nightclubs in the boxed text on p143.

**Café La Palma** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 522 50 31; Calle de la Palma 62) It's amazing how much variety Café La Palma has packed into its labyrinth of rooms. Live shows, featuring hot local bands, are held at the back, while DJs mix up the front. Some rooms have a café style, while others look like an Arab tea room, pillows on the floor and all. Every night is a little different, so expect to be surprised.

**El Junco Jazz Club** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 319 20 81; www.eljunco.com in Spanish; Plaza de Santa Bárbara 10)

Night owls who are tired of the house music that pervades so many Madrid clubs will love the nightly live jazz concerts, followed by DJs spinning funk, nu jazz and innovative groove beats. The emphasis is on black music and the crowd is classy and casual.

**Penta Bar** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 447 84 60; www.elpenta.com in Spanish; Calle de la Palma 4) A night out here and you could be forgiven for believing that *la movida* never died down. It's an informal place where you can groove to the '80s music you love to hate, but don't even think of turning up before midnight, especially from Thursday to Saturday, when the house DJ keeps the tunes hopping.

**Stromboli Café** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 319 46 28; Calle de Hortaleza 96) One of Chueca's best café-clubs, Stromboli manages to stay hip and happening with its lounge, nu jazz and deep house beats from some of the best local DJs who love the cosy, lounge feel almost as much as the punters do. Truly one of *the* places to be seen in Chueca.

**Cinemas**

**Cine Doré** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 11 25; Calle de Santa Isabel 3) The National Film Library offers fantastic classic and vanguard films at this cinema.

**LA MOVIDA MADRILEÑA**

Anyone who went wild when they first moved out of their parents' house can identify with Madrid's *movida*. After the long, dark years of dictatorship and conservative Catholicism, Spaniards, especially *madrileños*, emerged onto the streets with all the zeal of an ex-convent schoolgirl. Nothing was taboo as young *madrileños* discovered the 60s, 70s and early 80s all at once. Drinking, drugs and sex suddenly were OK. All-night partying was the norm, cannabis was virtually legalised and the city howled.

What was remarkable about *la movida* is that it was presided over by Enrique Tierno Galván, an ageing former university professor who had been a leading opposition figure under Franco and was affectionately known throughout Spain as 'the old teacher'. A Socialist, he became mayor in 1979 and, for many, launched *la movida* by telling a public gathering '*A colocarse y ponerse al loro*', which loosely translates as 'get stoned and do what's cool'. Not surprisingly, he was Madrid's most popular mayor ever and when he died in 1986, a million *madrileños* turned out for his funeral.

But *la movida* was not just about rediscovering the Spanish art of *salir de copas* (going out to drink). It was also accompanied by an explosion of creativity among the country's musicians, designers and film-makers.

The most famous of these was film director Pedro Almodóvar. Still one of Europe's most creative directors, his riotously colourful films captured the spirit of *la movida*, featuring larger-than-life characters who pushed the limits of sex and drugs. When he wasn't making films, Almodóvar immersed himself in the spirit of *la movida*, doing drag acts in smoky bars. Among the other names from *la movida* that still resonate, the designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada (p163) stands out. Start playing anything by Alaska, Los Rebeldes, Radio Futura or Nacha Pop and watch *madrileños* eyes glaze over with nostalgia.

**La Enana Marrón** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 308 14 97; Travesía de San Mateo 8) There's no beating this great arty, alternative theatre, showing documentaries, animated films, international flicks and oldies.

**Princesa** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 541 41 00; Calle Princesa 3) Screens all kinds of original version films, from Hollywood blockbusters to arty flicks.

**Renoir** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 541 41 00; Calle de Martín de los Heros 12) Plenty of latest-release films, as well as some interesting documentaries and Asian flicks.

**Yelmo Cineplex Ideal** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 25 18, 902 220 922; Calle del Doctor Cortezo 6) Close to Plaza Mayor and offers a wide selection of films.

**Theatre & Dance**

Madrid's theatre scene is a year-round affair, but it really gets going in autumn. Most shows are in Spanish, but those who don't speak the language may still enjoy musicals or *zarzuela*, Spain's own singing and dancing version of musical theatre. Tickets for all shows start at around €10 and run up to around €50.

**Compañía Nacional de Danza** (☎ 91 354 50 53; http://cndanza.mcu.es/) Under director Nacho Duato, this dynamic company performs worldwide and has won accolades for its innovation, marvellous technicality and style. The company, made up mostly of international dancers,

performs original, contemporary pieces and is considered a leading player on the international dance scene.

**Ballet Nacional de España** (☎ 91 517 46 86; <http://balletnacional.mcu.es/>) A classical company that's known for its unique mix of ballet and traditional Spanish styles, such as flamenco and zarzuela.

**Teatro Albéniz** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 83 11; Calle de la Paz 11) Staging both commercial and vanguard drama, this is one of Madrid's better-known theatres.

**Centro Cultural de la Villa** (Map p120; ☎ 91 575 60 80; Plaza de Colón) Located under the waterfall at Plaza de Colón, this cultural centre stages everything from classical music concerts to comic theatre, opera and quality flamenco performances.

**Teatro Español** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 360 14 80; Calle del Príncipe 25) This theatre has been here since the 16th century and is still one of the best places to catch mainstream Spanish drama.

## Live Music

### FLAMENCO

Flamenco aficionados from Andalucía may look down their noses at the Madrid flamenco scene, but it was here that this most Spanish of art forms gained a broader following and the city has long been a platform for some of flamenco's top dancers, guitarists and singers. The most accessible flamenco shows are in *tablaos*, small theatres that usually double as restaurants and are geared toward tourists. Although they're pricey (around €25, plus meal prices), you'll see all three elements of the art (dancing, singing and guitar) and you'll probably be sitting close enough to the stage to see the sweat dripping off the dancers.

**Casa Patas** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 04 96; [www.casapatas.com](http://www.casapatas.com); Calle de Cañizares 10; admission about €30; 11 noon-5pm & 8pm-3am, shows 10.30pm Mon-Thu, 9pm &

### LA ZARZUELA

What began in the late 17th century as a way to amuse King Felipe IV and his court has become one of Spain's most unique theatre styles. With a light-hearted combination of music and dance, and a focus on everyday people's problems, *zarzuelas* quickly became popular in Madrid, which remains the genre's undoubted capital. Although you'll likely have trouble following the storyline (*zarzuelas* are notoriously full of local references and jokes), seeing a *zarzuela* gives an entertaining look into local culture. One of the best places to catch a show is at the Teatro de la Zarzuela (below).

midnight Fri & Sat) One of the top flamenco stages in Madrid, this restaurant and *tablao* is a good place for an introduction to the art. Although it's geared toward tourists, locals stop by for a soul-filling session of passionate music and dance. Classes are also held here.

**Las Tablas** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 542 05 20; Plaza de España 9; admission €6-20; 11 daily show at 10.30pm) Las Tablas has quickly earned a reputation for quality flamenco. Most nights you'll see a classic flamenco show, with plenty of throaty singing and soul-baring dancing.

### CLASSICAL MUSIC & OPERA

**Auditorio Nacional de Música** (Map p113; ☎ 91 337 01 00; [www.auditorionacional.mcu.es](http://www.auditorionacional.mcu.es); Calle del Príncipe de Vergara 146) Resounding to the sounds of classical music, this modern venue offers a varied calendar of classical music, often by Madrid's Orquesta Sinfonía ([www.osm.es](http://www.osm.es)) led by conductors from all over the world.

**Teatro de la Zarzuela** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 524 54 00; [www.teatrodelazarzuela.mcu.es](http://www.teatrodelazarzuela.mcu.es); Calle de Jovellanos 4) This 1856 theatre is the premier place to see *zarzuela*, a very Spanish mix of theatre, music and dance.

**Teatro Real** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 902 244 848; [www.teatro-real.com](http://www.teatro-real.com) in Spanish; Plaza de Oriente) The Teatro Real is as technologically advanced as any venue in Europe and is the city's grandest stage for elaborate operas and ballets. You'll pay as little as €15 for a spot so far away you will need a telescope, although the sound quality is consistent throughout. For the best seats, don't expect change from €100.

### JAZZ

Madrid has a handful of world-class jazz venues.

**Café Central** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 41 43; [www.cafeCentro&Huertas.com](http://www.cafeCentro&Huertas.com) in Spanish; Plaza del Ángel 10; admission €8-12) This Art Deco bar is a great spot for an early evening drink and, if you're clever, you'll stay until 10pm when Café Central morphs into one of Madrid's best jazz venues. Performances include everything from Latin jazz to fusion, tango and classic jazz at the nightly shows.

**Café Populart** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 84 07; [www.populart.es](http://www.populart.es) in Spanish; Calle de las Huertas 22; admission free) One of Madrid's classic but informal jazz clubs, this place offers a low-key atmosphere and top-quality music. The shows start at 11pm, but if you want a seat get here early. There's no cover charge, and drinks cost €7 and up.

### ROCK

Performances usually start around 10pm or 11pm, though many of the venues open earlier for drinks. Information about the night's concert offerings can be found in publications such as *Guía del Ocio* (p157).

**Sala Caracol** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 527 35 94; [www.salacaracol.com](http://www.salacaracol.com); Calle Bernardino de Obregón 18) A temple to variety, this popular club does a different style of group every night, with shows ranging from hip-hop to rock or jazzy flamenco.

**Galileo Galilei** (Map p112; ☎ 91 534 75 57; [www.salagalileogalilei.com](http://www.salagalileogalilei.com); Calle Galileo 100) A Madrid classic, this club in northern Madrid has been known to stage everything from comedy acts to magic shows, though its strength remains up-and-coming bands.

**La Riviera** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 365 24 15; Paseo Bajo de la Virgen del Puerto) A dance club and concert venue

all in one, this sprawling Art Deco monolith down by the Manzanares hosts some of the biggest names in rock and electronica.

**Honky Tonk** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 445 68 86; Calle de Covarrubias 24) Despite the name, this is a great place to see local rock'n'roll, though many acts have a little country or some blues thrown in the mix too. It's a fun vibe in a smallish club, so arrive early as the place fills up fast.

**La Boca del Lobo** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 523 13 91; Calle de Echegaray 11) Known for offering mostly rock and alternative concerts, 'The Wolf's Mouth' has broadened its horizons recently, adding country and jazz to the line-up. Concerts are held two to three times a week.

## Sport

### BULLFIGHTING

From the Fiesta de San Isidro (p143) in mid-May until the end of October, Spain's top bullfighters come to swing their capes at Plaza de Toros Monumental de las Ventas (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 356 22 00; [www.las-ventas.com](http://www.las-ventas.com) in Spanish; Calle de Alcalá 237), one of the largest rings in the bullfighting world. Las Ventas has a grand Mudejar exterior and a suitably coliseum-like arena surrounding the broad sandy ring. During the six weeks of the fiesta's main bullfighting season, there are *corridos* (bullfights) almost every day. If *toreros* make a name for themselves here, they enter the annals of bullfighting legend as this is the most demanding and prestigious bullfighting arena in the world.

Tickets are divided into *sol* and *sombra* (sun and shade) seating, the former being considerably cheaper than the latter. The cheapest tickets (€3.80) are for standing-room *sol*, though on a broiling hot summer day it's infinitely more enjoyable to pay the extra €3 for *sombra*

### AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Cardamomo** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 369 07 57; [www.cardamomo.net](http://www.cardamomo.net) in Spanish; Calle de Echegaray 15; admission free; 11 9pm-4am; live shows 10.30pm Wed) If you believe that flamenco is best enjoyed in a dark, smoky bar where the crowd is predominantly local and where you can clap, shout '¡Olé!' and even sing along (the crowd is so thick no-one will mind), Cardamomo is brilliant.

### A CULT CLUB FROM A CULT MOVIE

Film director Fernando Trueba, one of the names in Spanish cinema, gained a cult following among jazz aficionados after making the 2000 documentary movie *Calle 54*, a passionate and inspiring chronicle of Latin jazz. The Grammy-nominated film was shown in major film festivals all over the world, was dubbed the *Buena Vista Social Club* of Latin jazz and is still a name of legend for jazz aficionados.

But Trueba wasn't content with simply recording the genre he loves; he went one step further and created **Calle 54** (Map p113; ☎ 902 141 412, 91 561 28 32; Paseo de la Habana 3; 11 7pm-late) in Madrid, a club where the Latin jazz spirit of the movie lives on. It has been a huge success, thanks in part to the support of the legendary artists featured in the film, and has put Madrid firmly on the international Latin jazz circuit. Greats like Bebo Valdés, Chano Domínguez and Roy Hargrove have all taken the stage here, playing for appreciative audiences that often include Trueba's film pals, like Pedro Almodóvar and Penelope Cruz. Live shows start around 11pm.

tickets. The very best seats – in the front row in the shade – are the preserve of celebrities and cost more than €100.

Ticket sales begin a couple of days before the fight at Las Ventas ticket office (H 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm). A few ticket agencies sell before then, tacking on an extra 20% for their trouble; one of the best is **Localidades Galicia** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 27 32, 91 531 91 31; www.eol.es/lgalicia/; Plaza del Carmen 1; H 9.30am-1pm & 4.30-7pm Tue-Sat). You can also get tickets at the authorised sales office (La Central Bullfight & Football Ticket Office; Map pp122-3) on Calle de la Victoria. For most bullfights, you'll have no problem getting a ticket at the door, but book ahead during the Fiesta de San Isidro.

For information on who's in the ring, pay attention to the colourful posters tacked around town and check the daily newspapers.

## FOOTBALL

El Estadio Santiago Bernabéu is a temple to football and one of the world's great sporting arenas; watching a game here is akin to a pilgrimage for sports fans. Real Madrid has more big-name stars (if not recent trophies) than any team in the world, and when they click it's as close as you'll come to footballing perfection. When they do so with 80,000 passionate *madrileños* in attendance, you'll get chills down your spine. If you're fortunate enough to be in town when Real Madrid win a major trophy, head to Plaza de la Cibeles (p134) and wait for the all-night party to begin.

The **Estadio Santiago Bernabéu** (Map p113; ☎ 91 398 43 00; www.realmadrid.com; Avenida de Concha Espina 1), named after the club's long-time president, is a mecca for *madridistas* (Real Madrid football fans) worldwide. Those who can't come to a game in the legendary stadium can at least stop by for a **tour** (entry at Gate 40; adult/child €9/7; H tours 10.30am-6.30pm except day after game) which takes in the formidable **Exposición de Trofeos**, dressing rooms and players' bench, or to buy Real Madrid memorabilia in the club shop.

Unless you book your ticket (from €30 to €100) through a ticket agency – one of the best is **Localidades Galicia** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 27 32, 91 531 91 31; www.eol.es/lgalicia/; Plaza del Carmen 1; H 9.30am-1pm & 4.30-7pm Tue-Sat) – your best bet is to try the ticket counter at Gate 42 on Avenida de Concha Espina (Map p113) early in the week before a scheduled game. The all-important number for booking tickets (which you later pick up at Gate 42) is ☎ 902 324 324 (within Spain only).

The city's other big club, Atlético de Madrid, may have long existed in the shadow of its more illustrious city rival, but it has been one of the most successful teams in Spanish football history in its own right.

**Estadio Vicente Calderón** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 366 47 07; www.at-madrid.com; Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto), the home of first-division team Atlético de Madrid, isn't as large as Real Madrid's (Vicente Calderón seats a mere 60,000), but what it lacks in size it makes up for in raw energy.

To see an Atlético de Madrid game, try calling ☎ 91 366 47 07, but you're more than likely to get a ticket if you turn up at the ground a few days before.

## SHOPPING

Madrid's a fantastic place to shop and *madrileños* are some of the finest exponents of the art.

Salamanca is the home of upmarket fashions with lavish and chic boutiques showcasing the best that Spanish and international designers have to offer. They all come with a luxury price tag attached, but prices are reasonable when you consider the quality and originality of what's on offer.

Chueca and, to a lesser extent, Malasaña are Salamanca's alter ego, home to fashion that's as funky as it is offbeat and ideal for that studied underground look or alternative club wear that will fit right in with Madrid's hedonistic after-dark crowd.

Central Madrid – whether it's Sol, Huertas or La Latina – offers plenty of individual surprises, although there's little uniformity in what you'll find. That sense is multiplied a hundred-fold in **El Rastro** (p129) where *madrileños* converge in epic numbers on Sunday to pick through the junk in search of treasure.

The peak shopping season is during *las rebajas*, the annual winter and summer sales when prices are slashed on just about everything. The winter sales begin around January 7, just after Three Kings' Day, and last well into February. Summer sales begin in early July and last into August.

The *madrileños*' shopping day starts at about 10am and is often broken up by a long lunch from 2pm to 5pm. Shops reopen after lunch and stay busy until 8pm or later. Shops selling music and books are the only outlets allowed to open every Sunday, although all shops may (and most usually do) open on the first Sunday of every month and throughout December.

## TOP FOUR MADRID SHOPPING STREETS

For...

- Glamour: Calles de Serrano & de José Ortega y Gasset (Map p120)
- Quirky and alternative cool: Calle de Fuencarral (Map pp118-19)
- Discounted designer shoes: Calle de Augusto Figueroa (Map pp118-19)
- Exclusive accessories: Calle de Piamonte (Map pp118-19)

## Books

For a list of bookshops in Madrid, see p110.

## Fashion & Shoes

**Mercado de Fuencarral** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 41 52; Calle de Fuencarral 45) Madrid's home of alternative club-cool is still going strong. This place revels in its reverse snobbery, and it's funky, grungy and filled to the rafters with torn T-shirts and more black leather and silver studs than you'll ever need.

**Camper** (Map p120; ☎ 91 578 25 60; www.camper.es; Calle de Serrano 24) Spanish fashion is not all *haute couture*, and this world-famous cool and quirky shoe brand from Mallorca has shops all over Madrid. The designs are bowling-shoe chic with colourful, fun styles that are all about comfort.

**Sara Navarro** (Map p120; ☎ 91 576 23 24; www.saranavarro.com; Calle de Jorge Juan 22) Spanish women love their shoes and, perhaps above all, they love Sara Navarro. This designer seems to understand that you'll buy expensive shoes like these only rarely, so why not make each into a perfect work of art. The shop is a temple to good taste, with fine bags, belts and other accessories as well.

**Divina Providencia** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 522 02 65; Calle de Fuencarral 45) Divina Providencia has moved seamlessly from the fresh new face on the Madrid fashion scene to almost mainstream stylish, with fun clothes for women and strong retro and Asian influences. The label is such a hit that its clothes are regularly spotted on the characters of major Spanish TV series.

**Amaya Arzuaga** (Map p120; ☎ 91 426 28 15; Calle de Lagasca 50) Amaya Arzuaga is one of Spain's top fashion designers, with sexy and bold options. She loves mixing black with bright colours (one season it is 1980s fuchsia and turquoise, the following it is orange or red) and has earned a reputation as one of the most creative contemporary designers in Spain.

**Agatha Ruiz de la Prada** (Map p120; ☎ 91 319 05 01; Calle de Serrano 27) This boutique has to be seen to be believed with pinks, yellows and oranges everywhere you turn. It's fun and exuberant, but it's not just for kids. It's also serious and highly original fashion; Agatha Ruiz de la Prada is one of the enduring icons of Madrid's 1980s outpouring of creativity known as *la movida madrileña*.

**Armand Basi** (Map p120; ☎ 91 577 79 93; Calle de Claudio Coello 52) With pink, urban designs for men and women, this is the place to go when you want to look fashionable but carelessly casual; the clothing here is ideal for a night out in the city's bars, especially Chueca.

## Food & Drink

**Convento del Corpus Cristi** (Las Carboneras; Map pp122-3; Plaza del Conde de Miranda 3) If you're after heavenly cookies and sweets, there's no substitute for the nuns of the Convento del Corpus Cristi, a closed order, and their rich and moist pastries made with almonds and egg yolks. To the right of the convent's main entrance is a small door with a call button. Ring the nuns, and you'll be let into a small, dark room with a rotating countertop (so that they never see their customers).

**Cacao Sampaka** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 521 56 55; Calle de Orellana 4) If you thought chocolate was about fruit 'n' nut, think again. This gourmet chocolate shop is a chocoholic's dream come true. It sells more combinations to go with humble cocoa than you ever imagined possible. The attached café serves breakfasts and great coffee, light lunches and cakes.

**Patrimonio Comunal Olivero** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 308 05 05; Calle de Mejía Lequerica 1) Spain is the world's largest producer of olive oils and some of the best in the country are to be found here. Those from Andalucía have the best reputation, but for a wide sampling why not try the box of 10 minibottles for just €8.

**Mantequería Bravo** (Map p120; ☎ 91 576 76 41; Calle de Ayala 24) Behind the attractive old façade lies a

connoisseur's paradise, filled as it is with local cheeses, sausages and wines. The produce is great for a gift, but everything is so good that you won't want to share.

**Bombonera Santa** (Map p120; ☎ 91 576 86 46; Calle de Serrano 56) If your sense of style is as refined as your palate, the exquisite chocolates in this tiny shop are guaranteed to satisfy. The packaging is every bit as pretty as the bonbons that fill them, but they don't come cheap – a large box will cost at least €120!

**María Cabello** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 60 88; Calle de Echegaray 19) You just don't find wine stores like this any more – family-run, with friendly and knowledgeable staff, and still decorated in the original 1913 style with wooden shelves and even a ceiling fresco. There are fine wines in abundance (mostly Spanish with a few foreign bottles), with some 500 labels on show or tucked away out the back.

## Handicrafts

**Antigua Casa Talavera** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 91 547 34 17; Calle de Isabel la Católica 2) The extraordinary tiled façade of this wonderful old shop conceals an Aladdin's Cave of ceramics from all over Spain. This is not the mass-produced stuff aimed at the tourist market, but comes from the small family potters of Andalucía and Toledo, ranging from the decorative (tiles) to the useful (plates, jugs and other kitchen items).

**El Arco Artesanía** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 365 26 80; www.elarcoartesaniam.com; Plaza Mayor 9) This super-stylish shop in the southwestern corner of Plaza Mayor sells an outstanding array of home-made designer souvenirs, from stone and glasswork to jewellery and home fittings. The papier-mâché figures are gorgeous, but there's so much here to turn your head.

**José Ramírez** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 531 42 29; Calle de la Paz 8) José Ramírez is one of Spain's best guitar makers and his guitars have been strummed by a host of flamenco greats and international musicians (even the Beatles). In the back of this small shop is a little museum with guitars dating back to 1830.

**El Flamenco Vive** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 547 39 17; www.elflamencovive.es; Calle del Conde de Lemos 7) This temple to flamenco has it all, from guitars and songbooks to CDs, polka-dotted dancing costumes, shoes, colourful plastic jewellery and literature about flamenco. The knowledgeable staff can also point you in the direction of Madrid's best flamenco *tablaos* as well.

**Gil** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 521 25 49; Carrera de San Jerónimo 2) You don't see them much these days, but the exquisite fringed and embroidered *mantones* and *mantoncillos* (traditional Spanish shawls worn by women on grand occasions) and delicate *mantillas* (Spanish veils) make a stunning and uniquely Spanish gift. Inside this 1880s-era shop, the sales clerks still wait behind a long counter to attend to you, like from another age.

**Casa de Diego** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 522 66 43; www.casadediego.com; Plaza de la Puerta del Sol 12) This classic shop has been around since 1858, selling and repairing Spanish fans, shawls, umbrellas and canes. Service is old style and the staff occasionally grumpy, but the fans are works of antique art.

**México** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 91 429 94 76; Calle de las Huertas 20) A treasure chest of original old maps, this is a great place to find a unique souvenir of Spain. Some 160 folders hold antique, original maps of Madrid, Spain and the rest of the world. These are all originals or antique copies, not modern reprints, so prices range from a few hundred euros to thousands.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Madrid's **Barajas airport** (Map p167; Aeropuerto de Barajas; ☎ 91 305 8343, flight information 902 353 570; www.aena.es) lies 15km northeast of the city. Although in 2005 it saw 25 million passengers pass through its doors, the February 2006 inauguration of the new and super-stylish terminal 4 (T4) dramatically expanded the airport's capacity to 70 million.

The new T4 deals mainly with flights of Iberia and its partners (eg British Airways, American Airlines and Aer Lingus), while other intercontinental or non-Schengen European flights leave from T1 (eg Air France, Alitalia, Austrian Airlines, British Midlands, Continental Airlines, EasyJet, German Wings, KLM, Lufthansa, Scandinavian SAS, Swiss and US Airways). Both Spanair and Air Europa operate from both T1 and T2, depending on the destination.

Inside the airport you'll find several banks with ATMs, post offices, tourist information and a hotel booking stand, and there are general information offices throughout the terminals. The airport is well connected to the centre, with regular buses and taxis, and a metro line that takes you there in minutes (see opposite).

### The major airlines operating at Barajas:

**Aer Lingus** (☎ 902 502 737; www.aerlingus.com)

**Air Berlin** (☎ 902 320 737; www.airberlin.com)

**Air Europa** (☎ 902 401501; www.aireuropa.com)

**Air France** (☎ 902 207 090; www.airfrance.com)

**Alitalia** (☎ 902 100 323; www.alitalia.it)

**American Airlines** (☎ 902 115 570; www.aa.com)

**Austrian Airlines** (☎ 902 257 000; www.aaa.com)

**British Airways** (☎ 902 999 262; www.britishairways.com)

**British Midlands** (☎ 902 111333; www.flybmi.com/bmi)

**Continental Airlines** (☎ 900 961 266; www.continental.com)

**EasyJet** (www.easyjet.com)

**German Wings** (☎ 91 625 9704; www.germanwings.com)

**Iberia** (☎ 902 400 500; www.iberia.es)

**KLM** (☎ 902 010 321; www.klm.com)

**Lufthansa** (☎ 902 220 101; www.lufthansa.com)

**Spanair** (☎ 902 131 415; www.spanair.com)

**Swiss** (☎ 901 116 712 in Spain; www.swiss.com)

**TAP Air Portugal** (☎ 901 116 718 in Spain; www.flytap.com)

**Transavia** (☎ 902 114 478; www.transavia.com)

**Virgin Express** (☎ 902 888459; www.virgin-express.com)

**Vueling** (www.vueling.com)

### Bus

**Estación Sur de Autobuses** (☎ 91 468 42 00; www.estaciondeautobuses.com; Calle de Méndez Álvaro 83), just south of the M30 ring road, is Madrid's main bus station (the nearest metro station is Méndez Álvaro). Most bus companies have a ticket office here, even if their buses depart from elsewhere.

Major bus companies include **ALSA** (Map p113; ☎ 902 422 242; www.alsa.es), **AutoRes** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 902 020 999; www.auto-res.net), and **Continental-Auto** (Map p113; ☎ 902 330 400; www.continental-auto.es).

### Car & Motorcycle

If you arrive by car, be prepared to face gridlock traffic. The city is surrounded by three ring roads, the M30, M40 and brand-new M50 (still not 100% completed). You'll probably be herded onto one of these, which in turn give access to the city centre.

### RENTAL

The big-name car-rental agencies have offices all over Madrid. Avis, Budget, Hertz, Europcar and Atesa/EuroDollar have booths at the airport. See the Transport chapter (p870) for more information.

### Train

Madrid is served by two main train stations. The bigger of the two is Antigua Estación de Atocha (Atocha Train Station; Map p112), at the southern end of the city centre. Chamartín train station (Map p113) lies in the north of the city.

The bulk of trains for the rest of Spain depart from Atocha, especially those going south. International services arrive at and leave from Chamartín, as do several services for northern destinations. Be sure to find out which station your train leaves from.

For bookings, contact **Renfe** (☎ 902 240 202; www.renfe.es) at either train station.

## GETTING AROUND

Madrid is well served by an excellent and rapidly expanding underground rail system (metro) and an extensive bus service. In addition, you can get from the north to the south of the city quickly by using *cercanías* (local trains) between Chamartín and Atocha train stations. Taxis are also a viable option.

### To/From the Airport

The easiest way into town from T1, T2 or T3 is line 8 of the metro (www.metromadrid.es; entrance in T2) to the Nuevos Ministerios transport interchange, which connects with other metro lines and the local overground *cercanías* train service. The metro operates from 6.05am to 2am; a single-trip ticket costs €1.

Alternatively, take **bus 200** (☎ 902 507 850; €1) to/from the Intercambiador de Avenida de América (transport interchange on Avenida de América; Map p113). The first departure from the city and the airport is at 5.20am. The last scheduled service from the airport is 11.30pm; buses leave every 12 to 15 minutes.

Until the metro line is extended to T4 in 2007, bus 204 runs from platform 17 of the Avenida de América transport interchange. Alternatively, take metro line 8 from Nuevos Ministerios to the final station (Barajas station), from where bus 201 runs to T4.

A **taxi** to the centre will cost you around €18 to €20, depending on traffic and where you're going. There are cab ranks outside all four terminals.

### Bus

Buses operated by **Empresa Municipal de Transportes de Madrid** (EMT; ☎ 902 507 850; www.emtma.drid.es) travel along most city routes regularly

between about 6.30am and 11.30pm. Night bus routes (*búhos*) operate from midnight to 6am. They run from Puerta del Sol and Plaza de la Cibeles.

### Car & Motorcycle

At first, driving in Madrid can be a little hair-raising. The grand roundabouts of the major thoroughfares sometimes require nerves of steel as people turn left from the right-hand lanes or right from the centre. The morning and evening rush hours frequently involve snarling traffic jams which are even possible in the wee hours of the morning, especially towards the end of the week when the whole city seems to be either behind the wheel or in a bar. The streets are dead between about 2pm and 4pm, when people are either eating or snoozing.

### PARKING

Most of Madrid is now divided up into clearly marked blue or green street parking zones. In both areas, parking metres apply from 9am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 3pm on Saturday; the Saturday hours also apply for every day in August. In the green areas, you can park for a maximum of one hour (or keep putting money in the metre every hour) for €1.80. In the blue zones, you can park for two hours for €2.55. There are also private parking stations all over central Madrid.

Should your car disappear, call the *Grúa Municipal* (city towing service; % 91 345 06 66). Getting it back costs €120, plus whatever fine you've been given.

### Cercanías

The short-range *cercanías*, regional trains operated by Renfe, the national railways, go as far afield as El Escorial, Alcalá de Henares, Aranjuez and other points in the Comunidad de Madrid. In Madrid itself, they're handy for making a quick, north-south hop between Chamartín and Atocha mainline train stations (with stops at Nuevos Ministerios and in front of the Biblioteca Nacional on Paseo de los Recoletos only). Another line links Chamartín, Atocha and Príncipe Pío stations. Single tickets, valid on *cercanías* only, cost €1.15.

### Metro

Madrid's modern metro (Map p917; % 902 444 403; www.metromadrid.es) is a fast, efficient and safe way to navigate Madrid, and generally easier

than getting to grips with bus routes. It has 11 colour-coded lines, in addition to the modern southern suburban MetroSur system, and operates from about 6am to 1.30am. Unless you're only passing through en route elsewhere, it's worth your while to buy a Metrobús ticket valid for 10 rides (bus and metro) for €6.15; single-trip tickets cost €1.

### Taxi

Madrid's taxis are inexpensive by European standards. They're handy late at night, but during peak hours it's quicker to walk or get the metro. Flag fall is €1.75, after which you pay €0.82 per kilometre (€0.95 between 10pm and 6am). Several supplementary charges, usually posted up inside the taxi apply, such as €4.50 to/from the airport and €2.40 from cab ranks at train and bus stations.

Among the 24-hour taxi services are **Radio-Taxi** (% 91 405 55 00, 91 445 90 08) and **Tele-Taxi** (% 91 371 21 31, 902 501 130). **Radio-Teléfono Taxi** (% 91 547 82 00, 91 547 86 00) runs taxis for the disabled.

## AROUND MADRID

The Comunidad de Madrid may be small but it promises many rewarding excursions that allow you to escape the clamour of city life without straying too far. Imposing San Lorenzo de El Escorial and graceful Aranjuez guard the western and southern gateways to Madrid and served as getaways for royalty down through the centuries. Also to the south, the beguiling village of Chinchón is a must-see, while Alcalá de Henares is a stunning university east of the capital. To the north, picturesque villages (and skiing opportunities) abound in Sierra de Guadarrama and Sierra del Pobre.

### SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL

pop 15,364 / elevation 1032m

The imposing palace and monastery complex of San Lorenzo de El Escorial is an impressive place, rising up from the foothills of the mountains that shelter Madrid from the north and west. The one-time royal getaway is now a prim little town overflowing with quaint shops, restaurants and hotels, many of them closed in the low season, catering to throngs of weekend *madriños*. The fresh, cool air here has been drawing city dwellers since the complex was first ordered to be built by Felipe II in the 16th century.

### History

Kings and princes have a habit of promising extravagant offerings to God, the angels, saints and anyone else who'll listen, in return for help in defeating their foes. Felipe II was no exception before the Battle of St Quentin against the French on St Lawrence's Day, 10 August 1557.

Felipe's victory was decisive, and in thanks he ordered the construction of the complex in the saint's name above the hamlet of El Escorial. Several villages were razed to make way for the huge monastery, royal palace and mausoleum for Felipe's parents, Carlos I and Isabel. It all flourished under the watchful eye of the architect Juan de Herrera, who was a towering figure of the Spanish Renaissance.

The austere style reflects both Herrera's stern approach to architecture and Felipe's own severe outlook.

The palace-monastery became an important intellectual centre, with a burgeoning library and art collection, and even a laboratory where scientists could dabble in alchemy. Felipe II died here on 13 September 1598. Various additions were made to the complex in the following centuries.

In 1854 the monks belonging to the Hieronymite order, who had occupied the monastery from the beginning, were obliged to leave during one of the 19th-century waves of confiscation of religious property by the Spanish state, only to be replaced 30 years later by Augustinians.



## Orientation

You can't miss the monastic complex that marks the town's southern border. Running parallel to the monastery's main wall is Calle de la Floridablanca, close to which you'll find the tourist office as well as some shops and restaurants. North of here are the narrow streets of the town proper, with Calle del Rey serving as the main thoroughfare and Plaza de la Constitución providing another major landmark.

## Information

**Internet** (☎ 918 90 15 33; Plaza de San Lorenzo, Galería Martin; €2 per hour; 11am-11pm)

**Tourist office** (☎ 918 90 53 13; Calle de Grimaldi 2; 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun)

## Sights

The main entrance to the **Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo** (☎ 918 90 59 02; www.patrimonionacional.es in Spanish; admission €8, free Wed for EU citizens; 11am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Mar, closed Mon) is on its western façade. Above the gateway a statue of St Lawrence stands guard, holding a symbolic gridiron, the instrument of his martyrdom (he was roasted alive on one). From here you'll first enter the **Patio de los Reyes**, which houses the statues of the six kings of Judah.

Directly ahead lies the **sombro basilica**. As you enter, look up to the unusual flat vaulting below the choir stalls. Once inside the church proper, turn left to view Benvenuto Cellini's white Carrara marble statue of Christ crucified (1576).

Next you'll be led through several rooms containing tapestries and an El Greco, and then downstairs to the northeastern corner of the complex where you'll find the **Museo de Arquitectura** and the **Museo de Pintura**. The former tells the story (in Spanish) of how the complex was built, while the latter contains a range of Italian, Spanish and Flemish art from the 16th and 17th centuries.

At this point you are obliged to head upstairs into a gallery around the eastern extension of the complex known as the **Palacio de Felipe II** or **Palacio de los Austrias**. You'll then descend to the 17th-century **Panteón de los Reyes** (Crypt of Kings), where almost all Spain's monarchs since Carlos I lie interred with their spouses. Backtracking a little, you'll find yourself in the **Panteón de los Infantes** (Crypt of the Princes).

Stairs lead up from the **Patio de los Evangelistas** to the **Salas Capitulares** (chapterhouses)

in the southeastern corner of the monastery. These bright, airy rooms, the ceilings of which are richly frescoed, contain a minor treasure chest of works by El Greco, Titian, Tintoretto, José de Ribera and Hieronymus Bosch (El Bosco to Spaniards).

You can wander around the **Huerta de los Frailes**, the orderly gardens just south of the monastery. In the **Jardín del Príncipe**, which leads down to the town of El Escorial (and the train station), is the **Casita del Príncipe**, a little neoclassical caprice built under Carlos III for his heir. The **Casita de Arriba** (Casa del Infant; ☎ 918 90 59 03; admission €3.40; 11am-6pm daily Jul-Sep, Sat & Sun only Oct-May), another 18th-century neoclassical gem, is along the road to Ávila.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Parrilla Príncipe** (☎ 918 90 16 11; www.parillaprincipe.com; Calle de la Floridablanca 6; s €42-44, d €53-59) Rooms here are bare and could do with a style overhaul, but they're clean and some have views of the monastery. The hotel's restaurant – where great grilled meats abound – is one of the best in town. It's open Wednesday to Monday and meals cost around €30.

**La Cueva** (☎ 918 90 15 16; www.mesonlacueva.com in Spanish; Calle de San Antón 4; mains €10-18; 11am-10pm Tue-Sun) A dimly lit place founded in 1768, this is one of the town's classic eateries. Nibble at the cosy bar downstairs or head up to the more formal dining room, where hearty Castilian dishes await.

## Getting There & Away

Every 15 minutes (every 30 minutes on week-ends) **Herranz** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 918 90 90 28) sends a bus to El Escorial from the bus depot outside Moncloa metro station, platform 3. The one-hour trip costs €3.15.

**San Lorenzo de El Escorial** is 59km northwest of Madrid and it takes 40 minutes to drive there. Take the A6 Hwy to the M600 Hwy, then follow the signs to town.

A few dozen **Renfe** (☎ 902 240 202; www.renfe.es) C8 *cercanías* make the one-hour trip daily from Madrid to El Escorial (€2.25).

## VALLE DE LOS CAÍDOS

If you want to understand the fault line that still to some extent runs through the heart of Spanish society, you really must visit Valle de los Caídos, dictator Francisco Franco's memorial of the 'fallen' in Spain's civil war. An extraordinary basilica and stone monument

northwest of Madrid, this place still evokes emotional responses from supporters of both sides of the war. The scale is impressive, although its special poignance derives from the fact that it was constructed by Franco's prisoners of war, many of whom died in the process. Unless you're fascinated by the small reactionary remnant of Franco supporters, avoid visiting on 20 November – the anniversary of Franco's death – when die-hard supporters come here to reminisce about Franco's rule, complete with stiff-armed fascist salutes.

At the **memorial site** (☎ 918 90 13 98; Carretera 600; admission €6; 11am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) you'll find a mammoth stone cross sitting atop a bunkerlike basilica dug into the mountainside in the middle of a pristine pine forest. Walking into the basilica, you basically enter into the heart of the mountain. By the altar lies Franco.

The turn-off and ticket booth is 9km north of El Escorial. It's another 6km drive to the shrine. Near the basilica are walking trails, a picnic area and a small restaurant. You can take a **funicular** (admission €2.50; 11am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4.30pm Nov-Mar) up the mountain to the base of the cross, where, if the wind doesn't blow you away, you can enjoy great views of the surrounding sierra.

## Getting There & Away

One **Herranz** (☎ 918 90 90 28) bus heads to the monument at 3.15pm Tuesday to Sunday. It returns at 5.30pm. You can catch the bus at El Escorial's Plaza de la Virgen de Gracia. The combined price of the bus and entry ticket to the site is €8.50.

If you're driving, you'll pass the entry to the Valle de los Caídos a few kilometres before you hit El Escorial coming from the A6 Hwy.

## SOUTH OF MADRID Warner Brothers Movie World

Disney World it ain't but this **movie theme park** (☎ 91 821 12 34; www.warnerbros.com; San Martín de la Vega; adult/child & senior €33/25; 11am-8pm, closing hours vary), 25km southeast of central Madrid, has much to catch the attention. Kids will love the chance to hang out with Tom and Jerry, while the young-at-heart film buffs among you will be similarly taken with the Wild West or remakes of the studio sets for such Beverly Hills greats as *Police Academy*. Entrance to the park is via Hollywood Blvd, not unlike

LA's Sunset Blvd, whereafter you can choose between Cartoon World, the Old West, Hollywood Blvd, Super Heroes (featuring Superman, Batman and the finks of Gotham City) and finally Warner Brothers Movie World Studios. It's all about the stars of the silver screen coming to life as life-sized cartoon characters roam the grounds, and rides and high-speed roller coasters (up to 90km/h) distract you if attention starts to wane. There are also restaurants and shops. Opening times are complex and change – always check before heading out here.

To get here by car, take the A4 (the Carretera de Andalucía) south out of Madrid and turn off at Km22 for San Martín de la Vega, about 15km east of the exit. Follow the signs to the car park, where parking is available for €5.

You can also catch one of the C3 *cercanías* that leave Atocha train station regularly headed towards Pinto. In Pinto change trains and get on the C3A line that goes to Parque de Ocio.

## Aranjuez

pop 43,926 / elevation 489m

Aranjuez was founded as a royal pleasure retreat, away from the riff-raff of Madrid, and it remains a place to escape the rigours of city life. The palace is opulent, but the fresh air and ample gardens are what really stand out.

Getting around here is easy; when you come into town, you cross Río Tajo and immediately enter into a large traffic circle. The *palacio* and its gardens are to your right, while the rest of town spreads out to your left and in front of you. The bus station is right off the central thoroughway on Calle Infantas.

## INFORMATION

The helpful and friendly staff at the **Tourist Office** (☎ 918 91 04 27; www.aranjuez.net in Spanish; Plaza de San Antonio 9; 10am-6.30pm Nov-Apr, 10am-8.30pm May-Oct) will load you down with information about the town and its attractions.

## SIGHTS

The **Palacio Real** (☎ 918 91 07 40; admission €4.50, EU citizens Wed free, gardens free; 11am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar, 11am-7.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep) started as one of Felipe II's modest summer palaces, but took on a life of its own as a succession of royals, inspired by the palace at Versailles in France, lavished money upon it in the 18th century.

With more than 300 rooms, this sprawling box of a palace is filled with a cornucopia of ornamentation. Of all the rulers who spent time here, Carlos III and Isabel II left the greatest mark.

Taking the obligatory guided tour (in Spanish) gives an insight into the palace history and the art that fills it. The *Sala de Porcelana* (Porcelain Room) is extravagant, its walls covered in handcrafted porcelain figures with echoes of a similar chamber in Madrid's Palacio Real (p127). It took two years to complete the decoration. The *Sala Fumadora* (Smoking Room) is almost as extraordinary – a florid imitation of an Alhambra interior, with Arabic inscriptions in stucco and an intricate stalactite ceiling carved in wood.

Afterwards, stroll in the lush gardens (admission free; 9am–6.30pm daily Oct–Mar, 8am–8.30pm daily Apr–Sep). They're a mix of local and exotic species that have rubbed along nicely since Spanish botanists and explorers started bringing back seeds from all over the world in the 19th century (an audio guide is available). Within their shady perimeter, which stretches a few kilometres from the palace base, you'll find two manmade attractions: the *Casa de Marinos*, which contains the *Museo de Falúas* (9am–5.15pm Oct–Mar, 10am–6.15pm Apr–Sep, reservation required), a museum of royal pleasure boats from days gone by.

Further away, towards Chinchón, is the *Casa del Labrador* (9am–5.15pm Oct–Mar, 10am–6.15pm Apr–Sep, reservation required), a tasteless royal jewellery box crammed with the raffers with gold, silver, silk and some second-rate art. It sits in the Jardín del Príncipe, an extension of the massive Palacio Real gardens.

Several walks begin on the historic paths that run through the Jardín del Príncipe or other palace gardens before branching off into forests or fields. One of the most popular leads past the Mar de Ontígola, a swampy area with unusual vegetation, and along the banks of Río Tajo, where you can spot a variety of birds and other animals.

Offering a fun tour around town and a very practical way to get to the Jardín del Príncipe, the *Chiquitren* (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Feb, 10am–8pm Tue–Sun Mar–Sep) is a tourist train that loops around Aranjuez. It makes stops at the *Casa del Labrador* and the *Casa de Marinos*.

Regardless of your views on bullfighting, the *museo* (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) housed in *Plaza de Toros* makes for an interesting stop. You'll find displays on the history of bullfighting, the natural attractions of Aranjuez and the entertainments to which the royal court once treated itself.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

**Hostal Castilla** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) housed in the *palacio* and the town centre, this friendly, charming *hostal* offers impeccable little rooms with attached bathrooms.

**NH Príncipe de la Paz hotel** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) sleek, modern design and attentive service make this the best hotel in town.

**El Rana Verde** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) meals €25–35; breakfast, lunch & dinner) The 'Green Frog' is a classic riverside restaurant whose speciality is frogs' legs; it's near the *palacio*.

**Casa José** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) lunch & dinner Tue–Sat, lunch only Sun) An elegant spot, *Casa José* is packed with *madrileños* on weekends who revere it as among the best in town for meats and local dishes.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

If you're driving from Madrid, take the A4 south to the M305, which leads to the city centre. Aranjuez is about 50km away.

The bus company *AISA* (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) has buses to Aranjuez from Madrid's Estación Sur every 15 minutes (€3.15, 30 minutes).

The easiest way to get here is by train. *Renfe* (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Feb, 10am–8pm Tue–Sun Mar–Sep) C3 *cercanías* trains leave every 15 or 20 minutes from Atocha train station. The trip to Aranjuez costs €2.17.

#### Chinchón

pop 4868

Chinchón is just 45km from Madrid but worlds apart. Although it has grown beyond its village confines, visiting its antique heart is like stepping back into another era and into a charming, ramshackle world. Chinchón's main attractions are its plaza (whose *terrazas*, or terraces, make for a heavenly spot for a drink) and the smorgasbord of traditional *mesón*-style (tavern-style) restaurants scattered around town.

#### THE STRAWBERRY TRAIN

You could take a normal train from Madrid to Aranjuez, but for summer romance it's hard to beat the *Tren de la Fresa* (Strawberry Train; 9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar). Begun in 1985 to commemorate the Madrid–Aranjuez route – Madrid's first and Spain's third rail line which was inaugurated in the 1850s – the Strawberry Train is a throwback to the time when Spanish royalty would escape the summer heat and head for the royal palace at Aranjuez.

The journey begins at 10.05am on Saturday and Sunday between early April and late June when an antique Mikado 141F-2413 steam engine pulls out from Madrid's Atocha train station, pulling behind it four passenger carriages which date from the early 20th century and have old-style front and back balconies. During the 50-minute journey, rail staff in period dress provide samples of local strawberries – one of the original train's purposes was to allow royalty to sample the summer strawberry crop from the Aranjuez orchards. Upon arrival in Aranjuez, your ticket fare includes a guided tour of the Palacio Real, Museo de Falúas and other Aranjuez sights, not to mention more strawberry sampling. The train leaves Aranjuez for Atocha at 6pm for the return journey.

Tickets can be purchased at any *Renfe* (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar, 10am–8pm Tue–Sun Mar–Sep) office or any travel agency that sells train tickets.

#### INFORMATION

**Police** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) Plaza Mayor

**Tourist office** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) Plaza Mayor 6; 10am–8pm Mon–Fri, 11.30am–8pm Sat & Sun May–Jun & Sep–Oct, to 9pm Jul–Aug, to 7pm Nov–Feb) Small office but very helpful.

#### SIGHTS

The heart of town is its unique, almost circular *Plaza Mayor*, which is lined with sagging, tiered balconies – it wins our vote as one of the most evocative *plazas mayor* in Spain. In summer the plaza is converted into a bullring, and it's also the stage for a popular passion play shown at Easter.

Chinchón's historical monuments won't detain you long, but you should take a quick look at the 16th-century *Iglesia de la Asunción* that rises above *Plaza Mayor* and the late-16th-century Renaissance *Castillo de los Condes* that is out of town to the south. The castle was abandoned in the 1700s and was last used as a liquor factory. Both are usually closed to the public, but the local tourist office has recently begun a program allowing sporadic visits. Ask at the tourist office for details.

To get an idea of the traditional lifestyle in the area, head to the *Museo Etnológico La Posada* (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar, 10am–8pm Tue–Sun Mar–Sep) Calle Morata 5; adult/child €3/2; 11am–2pm & 4–8pm Mon–Fri, closed Wed, 11am–8pm Sat & Sun), a well-run museum exhibiting old farm equipment, household items and traditional garb.

#### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The *Fiesta Mayor* is held from 12 to 18 August, when the town's main plaza is turned into a bullring that dominates the centre, and morning bullfights are held daily. Cheer from the surrounding balconies over breakfast and coffee.

#### SLEEPING

**Hostal Chinchón** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar, 10am–6.15pm Apr–Sep, reservation required) Calle de José Antonio 12; s/d/tr €35/42/54; ( ) The public areas here are nicer than the smallest rooms that are clean but worn around the edges. The highlight is the surprise rooftop pool overlooking *Plaza Mayor*.

**Parador Nacional** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar, 10am–6.15pm Apr–Sep, reservation required) Avenida Generalísimo 1; r from €113) The former Convento de Agustinos (Augustine Convent), *Parador Nacional* is one of the town's most important historical buildings and can't be beaten for luxury. It's worth stopping by for a meal or coffee (and a peek around) even if you don't plan to stay here.

#### EATING

Chinchón is loaded with traditional-style restaurants dishing up *cerdo asado* (roast lamb). But if you are after something a little lighter, there is nothing better than savouring a few tapas and drinks on sunny *Plaza Mayor*.

**Mesón Cuevas de la Comendadora** (9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 11am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar, 10am–8pm Tue–Sun Mar–Sep) Calle Teniente Ortiz de Zárate; meals €25–30, menu €12; 11am–8pm lunch & dinner Thu–Tue) For something substantial,



## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Café de la Iberia** (☎ 91 894 08 47; Plaza Mayor 17; meals €30; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Our favourite of the *mesons* on Plaza Mayor's perimeter, Café de la Iberia produces wonderful, hearty cooking from its wood-fired ovens and a series of intimate dining areas – either take a seat in the verdant internal patio or snaffle one of the few balcony tables overlooking the Plaza Mayor. If you're coming here on a weekend or holiday, don't even think of arriving without a reservation.

head to this homely place. Its basement is a maze of old cellars dug into the earth. They're worth seeing even if you decide not to eat here.

**Mesón Cuevas del Vino** (☎ 918 94 02 06; www.cuevasdelvino.com; Calle Benito Hortelano 13; meals €30-35; 🍴 lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) The atmospheric Meson 'Caves of Wine' is guaranteed to be an experience you'll write postcards about. From the huge goatskins (used to keep wine) and the barrels covered in famous signatures to the caves underground, it's sure to be memorable.

## GETTING THERE &amp; AWAY

**La Veloz** (Map pp114-15; ☎ 91 409 76 02) bus company has services (bus 337) approximately every hour to Chinchón. The buses leave from a stop on Plaza Conde de Casal, and the 50-minute ride costs €3.20.

Sitting 45km southeast of Madrid, Chinchón is easy to reach by car. Take the A4 Hwy and exit onto the M404, which makes its way to Chinchón.

## ALCALÁ DE HENARES

pop 197,804

So close to Madrid and just off an unappealing highway, Alcalá de Henares is full of surprises. It's like a smaller Salamanca with historical sandstone buildings seemingly at every turn. Throw in some sunny squares and the legendary university, and it's a terrific place to escape the city.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 918 81 06 34; Plaza de los Santos Niños; 🍴 10am-2pm & 5-7.30pm Jun-mid-Sep, 10am-2pm & 4-6.30pm mid-Sep-May)

## Sights

The city entered an era of prosperity when Cardinal Cisneros founded a university (☎ 918 83 43 84; 🍴 9am-9pm) here in 1486. Now centred on a much-restored Renaissance building, the university was one of the country's principal seats of learning for a long period. You can wander around various faculty buildings, dating mostly from the 17th century, but more interesting is the **guided tour** (six per day Monday to Friday, 11 per day Saturday and Sunday), which gives a peek into the Mudéjar chapel and the magnificent Parainfo auditorium, where the king and queen of Spain give out the prestigious Premio Cervantes literary award every year.

The town is also dear to Spaniards as the birthplace of the country's literary figurehead, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. The site believed to be Cervantes' birthplace is recreated in the Museo Casa Natal de Miguel de Cervantes (☎ 918 89 96 54; entrance on Calle de la Imagen 2; admission free; 🍴 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-1.30pm & 4-6.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-May), which lies along the beautiful, colonnaded Calle Mayor. It's filled with period furniture and bits and pieces relating to his life.

## Sleeping &amp; Eating

**Husa El Bedel** (☎ 918 89 37 00; www.husa.es; Plaza San Diego 6; s/d €90/105) A sophisticated hotel that offers spacious accommodation and a perfect location.

**El Ruedo** (☎ 918 80 69 19; Calle de los Libreros 38; 🍴 9am-11pm Thu-Tue) With a quiet patio for outdoor eating, this is a great place to get informal fare such as salads and mixed plates.

**Hostería del Estudiante** (☎ 918 88 03 30; Calle de los Colegios 3; menú €27; 🍴 lunch & dinner daily) Run by the national *parador* hotels, this elegant *hostería* is considered the best restaurant in town. With its wooden beams, open fireplace and adjacent courtyard, it's an atmospheric place to eat. In fact, one Lonely Planet author liked it so much he got married here! It's very near the main university building and a nearby building is being converted into a *parador* hotel.

## Getting There &amp; Away

Alcalá de Henares is just 35km east of Madrid, heading towards Zaragoza.

Several buses leave Madrid regularly (every five to 15 minutes) from depots at the Avenida de América and Estación Sur (€1.45, one hour).

A constant stream of C1, C2 and C7 Renfe *cercanías* make the trip to Alcalá de Henares (€1.15, 50 minutes) daily.

## SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA

To the north of Madrid lies Sierra de Guadarrama, a popular winter ski destination and the home of several charming towns such as Manzanares El Real and Cercedilla, which make great bases for those wanting to explore the mountains.

## Manzanares El Real

pop 6140 / elevation 908m

This is a sweet little mountain town, but what makes it stand out from others like it is the 15th-century storybook **Castillo de los Mendoza** (☎ 918 53 00 08; admission incl guided tour €2; 🍴 10am-2pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar). The perfectly (almost too perfectly) preserved castle looks like something out of a Disney cartoon with its evenly spaced turrets and strong round towers. There are great views of the sierra from the summit.

Near town, several trails lead into the Parque de la Pedriza, one of which brings you to freshwater pools. Rock climbers have a wealth of options, with 1500 climbing routes in the park. For advice check out the Centro de Educación Ambiental de Manzanares el Real (Environmental Education Centre of Manzanares el Real; ☎ 91 853 99 78; Camino de la Pedriza, Manzanares el Real; 🍴 9am-6pm).

Bus 724 runs regularly to Manzanares from Plaza de Castilla in Madrid (€2.55, 40 minutes).

## Cercedilla

pop 6698 / elevation 1188m

This mountain town and its surroundings are popular with walkers and mountain bikers. Several trails are marked out through the hills, the main one known as the **Cuerda Larga** or **Cuerda Castellana**. This is a forest track that takes in 55 peaks between the Puerto de Somosierra in the north and Puerto de la Cruz Verde in the southwest. It would take days to complete, but there are several options for shorter walks, including day excursions up the Valle de la Fuenfria and a climb up Monte de Siete Picos.

Mountain bikers can take their bikes up on the local train to Puerto de los Cotos (a lovely ride in itself), scoot across to the Bola del Mundo (in good winters the top end of

Guadarrama's best ski piste) and pedal downhill to Cercedilla.

You can get information at the Centro de Información Valle de la Fuenfria (☎ 918 52 22 13; Carretera de las Dehesas Km2; 🍴 10am-6pm), which is a couple of kilometres from Cercedilla train station. Accommodation is scarce in this area.

From Madrid's Chamartín train station, the C2 *cercanías* line goes to Cercedilla (€1.28, 80 minutes, 15 daily), or take bus 684 from platform 15 of Madrid's Intercambiador de Autobuses de Moncloa (€3, one hour).

## Skiing

If you're here in winter, you may want to head up to the modest ski resorts in the Guadarrama. The slopes aren't anything to write home about, but, hey, it's only 60km from Madrid! Snowless years are common and the available pistes are not extensive, but it's a popular business at the weekend, when the area is best avoided.

The main centre is **Navacerrada** (☎ 918 52 22 02; www.puertonavacerrada.com in Spanish; lift tickets €18-28), with 13km of mostly easy – and frustratingly short – runs. The **Valdesqui Ski Resort** (☎ 915 70 12 24; Puerto de los Cotos; lift tickets €25-34) is another option.

From Madrid's Chamartín train station, you can get to Puerto de Navacerrada on the C8B *cercanías* line (€1.51, two hours with train change in Cercedilla, four daily). Bus 691 from platform 14 of Madrid's Intercambiador de Autobuses de Moncloa also runs here regularly (€2.65, one hour).

## Sleeping &amp; Eating

**Hotel La Barranca** (☎ 918 56 00 00; fax 918 56 05 40; Valle del Pinar de la Barranca, Navacerrada; s with breakfast €75, d with breakfast €100; Ⓢ ) Tucked into a picturesque valley, the large La Barranca offers all the comforts, including pool and tennis courts. Its restaurant (mains €9 to €16) also comes recommended as one of the best in the area for excellent Castilian fare, such as roast suckling pig or pigs' trotters.

**Parador Nacional** (☎ 920 34 80 48; www.parador.es; Carretera Barraco-Béjar Km42; d €110-120) Spain's very first *parador*, this elegant stone hotel overlooks the sierra. The refined restaurant (menú €27) serves tasty local dishes.

**Sala de Guadarrama** (☎ 918 54 21 21; Carretera de los Molinos Km2, Guadarrama; mains €15-27; 🍴 lunch & dinner daily, closed 20 Sep-20 Oct) A solid bet, known for its

pricey but delicious and (given the location) surprising seafood dishes. This is a popular place, so you'll need to reserve far in advance if you plan to come on a weekend.

## NORTH OF MADRID

### Palacio Real de El Pardo

Built in the 15th century and remodelled in the 17th, this opulent **palacio** (☎ 913 76 15 00; www.patrimonionacional.es in Spanish; Calle de Manuel Alonso; admission €5; ⌚ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun Oct-May, 10.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun Jun-Sep) was Franco's favourite residence. It's surrounded by lush gardens, and on Sunday fills with *madrileño* families looking for a bit of fresh air and a hearty lunch. Of the art on display inside, the tapestries stand out, particularly those based on cartoons by Goya.

If you're driving from Madrid take the M40 Hwy to the C601, which leads to El Pardo. The 13km trip takes just 15 minutes. You can also take bus 601, which leaves every five to 10 minutes from the Intercambiador de Autobuses de Moncloa (Map pp114-15; €1.15, 25 minutes).

### El Molar

pop 5133 / elevation 850m

El Molar itself is a nondescript village 33km north of Madrid along the A1 Hwy to Burgos, but to the south is a small rise peppered with *cuevas* (cellars) old and new. *Madrileños* crowd into them to gorge on grilled meat in the relative cool during the summer months, although they're open year-round.

To find them, follow the yellow signs from the town centre to the *Bodegón de Olivares*. There you will find this *cueva* and all the others huddled together. Plenty of buses zip up from Madrid's Plaza de Castilla (€2.35, 45 minutes).

### Buitrago & Sierra Pobre

Buitrago is the entryway into the Sierra Pobre, a quiet stretch of mountain east of the busier Sierra de Guadarrama. Popular with hikers and others looking for nature without quite so many creature comforts, the sleepy Sierra Pobre has yet to develop the tourism industry of its neighbours. And that's just why we like it.

In Buitrago you can stroll along part of the old city walls. You can also take a peek into the 15th-century Mudéjar and Romanesque Iglesia de Santa María del Castillo and the small Picasso Museum (☎ 918 68 00 56; Plaza Picasso; admission free; ⌚ 11am-1.30pm & 4-6pm Wed-Mon), which contains a few works that the artist gave to his barber, Eugenio Arias.

Tiny hamlets are scattered throughout the rest of the sierra; some, like Puebla de la Sierra and El Atazar, make for pretty walks from Buitrago and serve as starting points for winding hill trails.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Posada de los Vientos** (☎ 918 69 91 95; Calle Encerradero 2, La Acebeda; r from €60; ⌚ Sat, Sun & holidays winter only) Housed in a tastefully converted barn, this is a charming small family inn where the rooms have exposed stonework and wooden beams. The owners are a friendly lot as well which adds up to a great Madrid getaway.

**El Arco** (☎ 918 68 09 11; Calle Arco 6; mains €12-15; ⌚ lunch only Fri-Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun) The best restaurant in Buitrago, El Arco is known for its fresh, creative cuisine based on local ingredients and traditional Spanish dishes.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **Continental Auto Company** (☎ 91 745 63 00; www.continental-auto.es) has a dozen daily buses connecting Madrid's Plaza de la Castilla with Buitrago (€4.35, 1½ hours).

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