

Olé Madrid

What to see, do, buy and eat in Madrid
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Editor's Letter

In school, I remember returning from summer vacations in Spain and answering many questions. Did I eat tacos and jalapenos? Was there running water? Was there anything to do there? I always explained that I had visited my grandmother, who lived in Madrid; a big city that not only had running water but a rich history and a dazzling variety of beautiful parks, stores, and museums. I shared Spanish candy with my friends and showed them photographs of my trip. I described my grandmother's cooking; delicious, taco-free and never spicy. The culture lesson didn't end there. I brought castanets for "show and tell" and for Halloween, I'm sure that my sister and I were the only children in Gambrills, Maryland that dressed as flamenco dancers. I have been an unofficial ambassador of Spanish tourism for as long as I can remember.

Perhaps, I was given little choice. My parents sent my sister and I to visit Madrid as often as their finances would allow. My aunts showed us every local cathedral and palace, took us to Zarzuela operettas, exhibitions and concerts and as well as their favorite shoe stores. My grandfather sent us postcards and magazines so we could read Spanish when we didn't have any friends to speak it with. My great aunt saved stacks of newspaper clippings about museums and events so we wouldn't miss out when we were away. My grandmother taught us to cook paella and brought us to the market where she bought every variety of *chorizo*, pastry, bread, cheese and wine for us to try. She gave us intimate tours of churches and streets that she's known since childhood. And no matter how badly I spoke Spanish or how much I wrinkled my nose at candied egg yokes and blood sausage, my mother's family always told me that I wasn't only American but a *Madrileña* too. It is my pleasure to share my knowledge of Madrid with you. I hope your visits will be as wonderful as mine have been. ■

Ana Hayes-Perez
Editor in Chief



Fast Food to Write Home About

Tourists are often in a hurry but eating fast food in Madrid doesn't have to mean resorting to a local McDonald's or Pizza Hut. The city is filled with places to have informal, quick meals and even the least adventurous eater can find something new to delight their belly. Don't forget that lunch is the largest meal of the day in Spain and that most restaurants will not open for dinner until 8:00 pm or later, with most *Madrileños* preferring to eat around 10:00 p.m.

Museo del Jamon

With hundreds of cured hams dangling from the ceiling, the Museum of Ham restaurants are easy to spot. Located throughout Madrid, their specialty is *jamon serrano*, a salt-cured ham similar to Italian prosciutto. Arguably a national obsession, the buttery ham is meticulously cut into transparent slices and served as an appetizer, in full-sized sandwiches or in *pulgitos* or flea sandwiches, so called because of the small, hump-backed roll. The highest quality and most expensive ham is called *pata negra* after a flavorful variety of black-hooved pig that dines exclusively on acorns.

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Every month, Olé Madrid will feature tips on what to see, do, buy and eat in Madrid.

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Fast Food to Write Home About (cont.)

Valor

Established in 1881, Valor is one of the oldest existing chocolatiers in Spain. The venerable company has two Victorian style cafés in Madrid that serve coffee, sandwiches and an impressive array of chocolate pastries. The Valor cafés are well known for the breakfast favorite, *chocolaté*, an extra dense drinking chocolate, served with *churros*, golden fried loops of dough or similar but denser rods-shaped *porras*. For those looking for gifts to bring home, the cafés sells beautifully boxed chocolates and old-fashioned favorites like *lenguas de gatos* or “cats tongues”, slender wafers of milk or dark chocolate.

Casa Mingo

Be sure to arrive early at this boisterous and inexpensive Asturian-style tavern. Casa Mingo opens at 8:00 pm and the tavern’s long wooden tables are quickly packed with families and university students sitting together, elbow to elbow. The harried waiters are admirably efficient, fortifying the jovial crowd with endless bottles of house-brewed hard apple cider. Asturias, the region along the northern coast of Spain, is known as “cider country” and Casa Mingo celebrates *sidra* in everything they serve. The brief menu includes cider-cured *chorizo* sausage, cider-flavored cheeses, and salads dressed with cider vinegar. Cider kegs line the rustic stone dining room, except for the back wall where you can watch the most popular entrée cook; cider-marinated chicken, sweetly succulent and smoky from rounds on the enormous wood-fired rotisserie. If you haven’t had enough cider by the end of your meal, try the dense cheese and cider cake, *tarta de cidra*.

Pans and Company

Pans and Company serves surprisingly good fast-food versions of Spanish favorites. The menu of fresh, crusty baguette sandwiches include *tortilla española*, *jamon serrano* and *manchego*, a regional cheese from Madrid. *Flan* and *gazpacho*, a cold tomato-based soup are sold in portable paper cartons. If you are feeling intimidated by tapas bars or have little time to eat, these ubiquitous and inexpensive restaurants can be a first step to exploring Spanish food. The tourist conscious chain also serves French fries, hamburgers and German beer, for the homesick and will gladly pack your meal to go (*para llevar*) for snacking on a train or park bench. ■



5 Must Have Souvenirs

Violet Candy

La Violeta

Plaza Canalejas, 6

Metro stop: Sevilla

The candy store La Violeta is a tiny Art Nouveau jewel, little changed since it opened in 1915. A chandelier sparkles above sinuous mahogany cases displaying mounds of glazed chestnuts, chocolate truffles and real violet flowers, glittering in a coating of lilac-colored sugar. The best sellers, violet-flavored hard candies, have been popular in Madrid for over a century. Elegant glass and ceramic containers can be filled with the confection of your choice or a mere euro will buy a pretty cardboard box of violet hard candies, gift wrapped in the store’s signature violet patterned paper and tied with a purple ribbon.

Handpainted Fans

In the summer months, Spanish women skillfully snap open painted fans with a twist of the wrist and cool themselves in parks, churches and subway trains.

Casa Jimenex

42 Preciados

Metro stop: Sol

Located on a side street of the Plaza Major, Casa de Diego has sold traditional Spanish clothing since 1858. The store brims with flamenco dresses and all varieties of Spain’s ancient regional costumes, still worn for holidays and festivals. The store specializes in authentic designs and handmade accessories including fans.

Escudo de Toledo

4 Plaza Convas del Castillo

Metro stop: Opera

This busy store sells every type of Spanish souvenir. Large bins separate fans by price range and style. Salespeople speak a variety of languages and will ship purchases to anywhere in the world.



Nativity Sets Plaza Mayor

Metro stop: Sol

At Christmas, miniature crèche scenes are displayed in most Spanish homes and churches. Some favor a simple manger while others have elaborate creations with hundreds of figures, real fountains, palm trees, tiny buildings and flocks of animals. In the 18th century, the tradition was brought from Naples with King Carlos III and today crèche figurines are still handmade in Spain from clay and stiffened fabric. Throughout the year, nativity sets can be purchased in any of the row of stores selling religious articles by the Plaza Mayor. ■



Day Trips from Madrid - Salamanca

Although tiny in size, the city of Salamanca is packed with centuries of history. Less than two hours from Madrid by bus or local train line, Salamanca's rich collection of historic sites are centrally located and easy to see on foot. The city boasts a well-preserved, first century Roman bridge as well as Spain's first university, established in the 13th century. Students still study in the buildings where Cervantes, the most famous alumni attended class. Nicknamed the "Golden City", Salamanca is also famous for its beautiful warm-colored sandstone architecture. Constructed during the Renaissance, buildings such as the *Casa de las Conchas*, replendent in filigree stonework and carved shells, are examples of Spain's ornate Plateresque architectural style. Even Salamanca's cathedral has a double dose of history, combining two buildings, one from the 12th century and the other from the 16th century. In the center of town, the handsome *plaza mayor* was built in the 18th century for bullfights and concerts but now features small shops, open cafes and plenty of people watching. A newer attraction is the *Casa de Lis* collection of Art Nouveau art, jewelry, glass and sculpture and the largest permanent exhibition of Victorian porcelain dolls. ■

Espadrilles

Espadrilles are a classic Mediterranean summer shoe and an excellent choice for walking around Madrid. The braided hemp sole is pleasantly cushiony while the woven canvas top is surprisingly cool on hot days. *Valencianas*, espadrilles with long ribbons for crossing around the ankle, descend from the footwear of practical-minded peasants. While common styles of espadrilles are inexpensive and disposable (most cost less than \$10) fancier pairs can now be found in silk and leather.

Calzados Hernanz

Calle Toledo, 18

Metro stop: Sol

Throughout the summer, a line of customers stretches out the door of this tiny shop and spills into the street. A rainbow of colors and styles fill the display windows. The Hernanz family has sold espadrilles for generations and it is rumored that the queen of Spain shops here. Once in the store, order by style, color and size and your shoe will be found among the boxes that line the tiny shop, floor to ceiling.

Sargadelos Porcelain

Sargadelos

Zurbano, 46

Metro stop: Sorolla

Established after the Spanish Civil War in response to Franco's crackdown on Galician culture, the strikingly modern designs and Cubist-flavored patterns of Sargadelos porcelain are based on traditional architecture, animals and people of the region as well as folklore from the Celts, who settled this northwestern province of Spain. The elegant place settings may not be suitcase friendly but there are many pieces that could be safely tucked into a bag: Celtic amulets to protect the wearer from theft and the evil eye and scores of whimsical figurines depicting everything from frogs and rabbits to fishermen and seamstresses.

Everything You Need to Know About Madrid's Metro

Don't even think about renting a car.

In Spain, Madrid is infamous for its clogged, car-packed streets. Fortunately, the metro or subway system is convenient, inexpensive and tourist-friendly. All of Madrid's major attractions are accessible by metro while all train stations, and Barajas, the main airport, are directly linked to metro stops. Newer stations feature patterned marble walls and flat screen monitors showing the metro's own news program but even the less picturesque stations are just as efficient, with trains running every five to ten minutes. All stations are open from 6 in the morning until 2 o'clock at night, every day of the week and you won't waste your vacation looking for parking.

Fares

There is no additional cost for transferring to different lines within the metro or traveling during rush hour; all trips on the metro cost the same amount. Although a one way fare seems like a steal at 1 euro, a 10 pass ticket is an even better deal at 6.15 euros.

Buying tickets

At the entrance of all metro stations, tickets can be purchased from vendors seated in kiosks, who only accept cash; or from large yellow machines that accept bills, coins or credit cards. Although fairly simple and visual, the machine's instructions are in Spanish so if your Spanish is limited it may be easier to purchase tickets from the vendor. Ask for *uno* for a single ticket or *uno de diez* (one [ticket] of ten [trips]) for a ten trip pass.

Accessibility

All newer and renovated stations have elevators. However, older stations do not have elevators and are not wheelchair accessible. The map on the Madrid metro website, www.metromadrid.es, has a wheelchair symbol marking stations that have elevators.

Renovations

Madrid's metro is constantly expanding and renovating. Although most stations remain open during renovations, the entire number eight line is currently closed and shuttle buses are provided for subway passengers. Check www.metromadrid.es for updates on renovation projects.

Planning your trip

The metro currently has twelve lines, each with a unique number and color. Consult the metro map; stations that connect lines are marked by hollow circles while regular stops are marked with solid circles. To find your

train, look for the number, color and the last stop in the direction you are traveling. All metro stations have local street maps and metro maps on display in the entrance and ticket vendors will also provide a paper metro map if requested.

Safety

Metro stations and trains have cameras and alarms, however, the most common crime, pick-pocketing, is hard to detect on crowded trains. The metro is a popular form of transportation, so most areas of the metro are filled with people, however, use caution late at night when walking alone in isolated connecting stairwells. ■

Tapas 101

Tapas bars are a tourist's best friend. Bustling with families, groups of friends and couples of all ages, these popular eateries have something for everyone. Coffee, a light breakfast, lunch, dinner and a drink can all be had at a tapas bar. *Madrileños* make a meal of three or four tapas, small appetizer-sized portions of food, and there is no better way to start learning about Spanish cuisine. Here are a few of the most popular tapas.

Gambas al ajillo- Shrimp cooked in olive oil, garlic and parsley and served sizzling in a terracotta dish. Served with bread for mopping up the flavorful sauce.

Tortilla Española- A dense omelet of potato and onion, similar to a fritata.

Chorizo- A mild smoky-flavored, cured sausage made of pork, garlic and *pimenton*, Spanish smoked paprika. There are many regional varieties of chorizo and they are served fried, grilled or uncooked.

Croquetas- Chicken, ham, spinach and pine nuts or cod mixed with flour, lightly breaded and then fried.

Ensalada rusa- A light potato salad made with homemade mayonnaise, potatoes, peas, roasted red peppers, olives and tuna.

Boquerones en vinagre- Raw anchovies cured in vinegar and served with olive oil, parsley and garlic.

Patatas bravas- Wedges of fried potatoes served with a spicy tomato sauce and often *alioli*, a garlic mayonnaise. ■