Introduction

THE TERRITORY

Majestic and stylishly dignified, the archway known as the Puerta de Alcalá (porta; gate), designed by the architect Sabatini in Spain’s Age of Enlightenment, is at once a symbol of a city eager to welcome the world, and a veritable gateway to Spain for millions of visitors from all around the globe.

Five and half million people live in the Madrid Region (Comunidad de Madrid), with approximately three million concentrated in the metropolitan area. This region is situated at the geographical centre of mainland Spain, and is bordered by Castile & León, whose domains extend northwards as far as the Cantabrian Range and westwards to nearby Portugal. Stretching away to the south and east are the plains of Castile-La Mancha, which convey the traveller down to the beaches of the Mediterranean.

Madrid stands on the Castilian high plateau or tableland (meseta) at a height of 646 metres (2,119 ft.) above sea level, where Barajas Airport is one of the most popular focal points for the forty-nine million tourists who flock to Spain every year. Radiating out from the city’s inner hub is a complex rail and road network that speeds travellers to any corner of Spain, to neighbouring France and Portugal, or to the sea frontier with North Africa. Surrounded by mountains and impressive scenery, the Madrid Region enjoys a temperate continental climate, with spectacular springs, hot summers, long, mild, brilliant autumns, and winters that, while not overly cold, bring snow to the nearby summits, thereby providing additional leisure and fun.
city of Madrid harks back to settlements on the banks of the River Manzanares in the remote past, its foundation as such did not take place until the arrival in the 9th century, of Mohammed I, the fifth Omayyad Emir of Cordoba. Testimony to that era of conquest and splendour of Moorish Spain is still visible in the remains of the Moorish walls, now converted into a venue that in summer stages zarzuela (Spanish operetta), drama and outdoor shows. It was King Alfonso VI, two hundred years later, who won the citadel for the Kingdom of Castile, a citadel that, with its long-vanished alcázar (fortress-palace) was thenceforth to become one of the bastions in the line held by the Christian kingdoms against the Moors. In 1110, the fortress courageously withstood the siege of the Almoravids, and in 1202 Alfonso VIII granted Madrid its Charter, thereby formally constituting the commonwealth of the city and its domains (Comunidad de Villa y Tierra, villa being equivalent to the French ville).

Madrid witnessed the court intrigues to secure the throne of Castile, initially for Juana la Beltraneja, and only subsequently for Isabella the Catholic. The so-called Comuneros (16th-century Segovian insurgency movement) passed through Madrid at the time of King Charles I of Spain, better known as the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and it was here too that the Court sat in 1561, under Philip II, with the town becoming the capital of an empire on which the sun never set, the centre of the then “civilised” world. Two principal royal houses, the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons (present to this day in the person of the present King Juan Carlos I), experienced the vagaries of fortune in the capital city of Madrid, an “old rambling town” transformed over the years into a royal and illustrious city. Today, with the Hapsburgs as your guide, you can visit the Madrid of the Plaza Mayor (main square) or Retiro Park. In Bourbon company, on the other hand, you can take in the Royal Palace, Prado Museum, Cibeles fountain or Puerta de Alcalá, on which the enlightened Charles III - nicknamed “Madrid’s best mayor" - left his indelible mark. In addition, there are just so many streets and avenues steeped in history, and so many lovely churches, under the protective umbrella of La Almudena Cathedral and the Church of St. Isidore, the legacy of a city that for centuries was the very image of spirituality for the Christian kingdoms.

Madrid, city of kings, is also the starting point for the highways and byways that lead to the Royal residences, namely, palaces, mansions or lodges that the monarchs had built in exquisite settings, and whose grandeur has come down to us intact. The Monastery of El Escorial, a short drive from Madrid on the Royal Way to Avila, is indisputably the jewel in the crown. Ensoenced in

HISTORY AND ARTISTIC HERITAGE

Behind the modern region that meets the eye today, there lies a significant body of history, which is undoubtedly one of its main attractions. Although the capital
A place that, without a shadow of a doubt, warrants a quick side-trip is Alcalá de Henares, which enjoyed a pinnacle of splendour from the latter part of the 15th century (coinciding with the foundation of the university) up until the 17th century. Birthplace of Cervantes, the universally acclaimed author of Don Quixote, Alcalá de Henares is a university city that has produced some of the most superlative examples of Spanish culture of all times. It has joined the ranks of the select group of officially declared UNESCO World Heritage Cities, just recompense indeed for the effort made by this town in recent years to rescue its enormous heritage. When travelling through Madrid Province, be sure not to miss certain gems, such as the town squares of Chinchón and Colmenar de Oreja, or the countless Madrid mountain villages and hamlets that have somehow managed to conserve their rustic charm despite their proximity to the capital.

**NATURAL HERITAGE**

If the Madrid metropolitan area is the indisputable administrative and business centre of Spain, with its core centred on the AZCA complex, Castellana boulevard and industrial belt to the south, then it would be no less true to say that Madrid, as a region, is a genuine ecological paradise. It has impressive natural areas and a booming agricultural sector, which in recent years has developed a number of foodstuffs bearing Madrid's own seal of origin. Likewise, if Madrid is the institutional capital that is the seat of the country's parliament, government and king, then it is no less true that the city is the greenest capital in Europe, with its two magnificent oases—Retiro Park (Jardines del Buen Retiro) and the heath-like Casa de Campo—which together head a long list of parks and gardens.

A stone’s throw from the major sights and bustling thoroughfares, the Madrid region also boasts singularly scenic spots that are being ever better protected and have made this part of Spain into one of the most ecological areas in Europe. There are innumerable green routes criss-crossing the region, and the wide range of activities on offer includes hiking, mountain climbing, mountain biking and cycling, horse and pony trekking. The Peñalara cirque and tarn possess a silent high-mountain beauty, in which the crystal-clear air and omnipresent greenery compete with the curiously weathered rocks and glinting sheen of the water. The same applies to the La Pedriza area, where delightful spots are to be found along the Manzanares River. For tree lovers, autumn in the Montejo Beech Tree Grove (hayedo) is a riot of colour, as it is in Fuenfría Valley and Herrería Woods (bosque). Without an idea of the evocative natural areas...
that surround the city, it is difficult to form an accurate picture of Madrid.

ESSENTIAL MADRID

Exploring its various routes, sure in the knowledge that a snack bar, restaurant, café or gathering point (a great number of which still remain) will always be at hand, bears out that Madrid is a city that permits visitors to admire the splendour of the past without sacrificing any of the comforts of the present. Admittedly, Madrid is its history. Nevertheless Madrid today, at the outset of the 21st century, is essentially a vibrant, dynamic metropolis, a bustling city, a permanent backdrop for art and culture from around the world.

A short distance from the so-called “Avenue of Art” -which leads from the Prado Museum to the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia via the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and contains one of the finest collections in the world- street artists form a living art gallery in the Plaza Mayor. Coexisting with the Theatre Royal (Teatro Real) and National Concert Hall, which together host some of the best opera and orchestral performances in the world, are countless live-music venues. Jazz, folk and blues, to say nothing of flamenco, take turns in providing the theme music for Madrid by night. This is a city that, in terms of its autumn festival (among others) is at a peak of cultural splendour, with music and drama as the main attraction. Walking the same streets once trodden by Cervantes and Quevedo are the most eminent writers working in Spanish today. Indeed, it is by no means uncommon to catch sight of one or more of them at some café or cultural event.

Yet, beyond all of this—the sights, the parks and the culture—Madrid’s main charm lies in Madrid itself, i.e., the city and its people. Innumerable traces of the traditional, typical or castizo Madrid, with its old buildings and their galleried courtyards, images that might have been lifted straight from the stage set of some comic opera, co-exist with a city that is easy to get around, thanks to its broad avenues, boulevards and shopping malls. The patron saint festivities in honour of San Isidro (St. Isidore) –a ploughman saint who, according to Gómez de la Serna, “convida a rosquillas” (invites one to have the local, small doughnut-like pastries) in May of every year– afford a matchless opportunity to discover the typical Madrid, including its famous bullfighting festival.

Men and women in traditional dress –chulos or chulapos sporting the chequered Madrid cap (parpusa) and manolás with an exuberant carnation in their hair– take part in a colourful mass fiesta in and around St. Isidore’s Hermitage Chapel and meadow, site of open-air dances, stalls, booths and picnic areas, in a way that is reminiscent of the revelry of another age.

Madrid is city of outdoor cafés in summer (terrazas) and taverns and good food. It is a city that never sleeps, day or night, where people enjoy talking and joking, where people tend to live at a fast pace and yet always have time for friendship, conversation and relaxation.

The open and convivial nature of the townsfolk is the best visiting card of a cosmopolitan city where no-one is a foreigner. Within just a few hours of first setting foot in its streets, newcomers get the feeling that they have lived here all their lives or have finally found their own particular niche in the world.

The local saying and its traditional rejoinder run as follows, “De Madrid al cielo… y un agujerito para verlo”, i.e.,
City tours

From the Plaza Mayor to La Almudena Cathedral

That age-old marketplace and backdrop for Madrid life, scene of autos-da-fé, proclamations, bullfights and festivities, the Plaza Mayor (main square) (1) is arguably the ideal meeting or starting point for any tour of the capital. While the writer Gómez de la Serna described it as “Spain’s back yard”, Alexandre Dumas (Sr.) claimed it had “the most beautiful and best painted vault” of all the theatres he had known, viz., the Madrid sky. Since its inauguration in 1620, the Plaza Mayor has been the symbol par excellence of Hapsburg Madrid (Madrid de los Austrias), with the lovely frescoes of the Casa de la Panadería (bakery) and the equestrian statue of Philip III as its most noteworthy features.

A total of nine archways afford access to this arcaded square flanked by shops and marquee-shaded outdoor cafes, where street artists continue to lend a touch of the Bohemian Madrid found hereabouts, the Madrid depicted by Benito Pérez Galdos. The Calle de Ciudad Rodrigo (calle; street) leads to the charming San Miguel Market (2). Here, up a flight of stairs, the El Pulipito Bar and Las Cuevas de Luis Candelas Restaurant conjure up the romantic atmosphere of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Madrid, when royalty might easily cross paths with tough swells and bandits.

The route continues as far as the urban ensemble of Puerta Cerrada. This, formerly the edge of an old ravine along which Segovia Street now runs, once marked the boundary of mediaeval Madrid. Continuing down San Justo Street, you come to the base of the original curved façade of St. Michael’s Basilica (San Miguel) (4). Calle Puñonrostro leads into the
structure that, after acting as the Italian Embassy and headquarters of the Italian battalions of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, is now home to the Italian Cultural Institute. Directly opposite is the Duke of Uceda’s Palace (also called the Palacio de los Consejos), which houses the Madrid Regional Military Headquarters. It was built by Philip III’s favourite, Cristóbal Gómez de Sandoval, the son of the Duke of Lerma, who added the Convent of the Holy Sacrament (Santísimo Sacramento) to the palace, with the intention of creating an ensemble that would rival the royal complex formed by the Alcázar and the Convent of the Incarnation. Facing the church is a monument to the victims of the assassination attempt that targeted King Alfonso XIII at this very spot on 31 May 1906.

From Emir Mohammed I Park, on the other side of Bailén Street, Madrid drops away and descends almost to the banks of the Manzanares River. This, the site of the Moorish Walls of Maherit (the city originally founded by the fifth Omayyad Emir of Cordoba), is now a venue for holding outdoor shows and concerts in summer. Across the way from the park is the entrance to the neo-Gothic crypt of La Almudena Cathedral, designed by the Marquis of Cubas in 1879. Rising above the crypt, the rest of the church was concluded by Fernando Chueca Goitia in the closing years of the 20th century, thus making it an altogether contemporary cathedral standing on a site that dates back to the earliest history of Madrid.

Plaza del Conde de Miranda, the site of the cloistered convent of the Hieronymite nuns, Las Jerónimas del Corpus Christi (5), better known as Las Carboneras (by reason of a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary found in a coal yard and donated to the convent) where a splendid “Last Supper” by Vicente Carducho (Vicenzo Carducci) is on display in the chancel, and delicious homemade cookies can be purchased through the agency of a turntable.

At this point, Calle del Codo turns sharply and opens out into Madrid’s “other” town square, the Plaza de la Villa (6), at the centre of which Philip II’s legendary admiral, Don Álvaro de Bazán, continues to preside over the capital’s public life. It was here, in the Lujanes Tower (7), the city’s oldest civil building and a rare 15th-century example of the Mudejar style in Madrid (mudejar being the term used to describe the style favoured by the Moorish minorities), that the French king, Francis I, was imprisoned after being defeated at Pavia by the Emperor Charles V. What was at one time the municipal newspaper and periodicals archive is now home to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. Bridged high up by a narrow passage, Cisneros House (8) and the Casa de la Villa (City Hall) (9) complete the remaining sides of the square.

On the right, at the lower end of Calle Mayor, stands the Abrantes Palace (10), a 17th-century
From the Royal Palace to Puerta del Sol

Madrid's Royal Palace (Palacio Real) (15) is the starting point for this tour. Built over the old Hapsburg fortress, which was razed to the ground in 1734, it combines its Baroque style with the tradition of Spanish royal residences. The stairway, Throne Room, Hall of Columns, Royal Chapel, and tapestries and paintings by the likes of Mengs, Goya and Luca Giordano are complemented on the exterior by the Sabatini and Campo del Moro Gardens, Plaza de la Armería (Armoury Square), and the spectacle of the changing of the guard at the main gate. The building was designed by Filippo Juvara, Juan Bautista Sacchetti and Francisco Sabatini for Philip V and Ferdinand VI, neither of whom was ever to take up residence here. Those who did reign here however included Charles III, Charles IV, Ferdinand VII, Isabella II, Alfonso XII and Alfonso XIII.

At the behest of Napoleon’s brother, the unpopular Joseph Bonaparte I, the Plaza de Oriente (16) was intentionally laid out to keep possible uprisings at bay from the population’s rulers. For the equestrian statue of Philip IV that presides over the plaza, the king’s face was based on sketches by Velázquez, who lived on the square before it was remodelled. Indeed, no less a personage than Galileo Galilei was involved in the project: he was enjoined to study the problem of balance posed by the horse rearing up on its hind legs.

Opposite the palace, on the far side of the square, is the Theatre Royal (Teatro Real) (17), which was revived as an opera house in 1997, and has now recovered the splendour enjoyed by opera under Isabella II in the 19th century. Flanking the northern side of the square is the Royal Monastery of the Incarnation (Real Monasterio de la Encarnación) (18), a religious complement to the Royal Palace. The reliquary room, scene every 27 July of the working of the “miracle” of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Pantaleon, is indubitably its most popular attraction, but the gatehouse,
Hapsburg rule; the chapels surrounding the cloister, the spectacular Royal Staircase, the mock balcony from which Philip IV and his family appear to look down, and the Tapestry Room are just a tiny sample of the exquisite, secluded atmosphere in which Tomás Luis de Victoria, the Royal Chapelmaster, composed some of his most sublime pieces.

The route now crosses Arenal Street to pass by the popular Church of San Ginés (24). Standing on the remains of an old mediaeval church and rebuilt after successive fires in the 17th and 19th centuries, the church houses a magnificent El Greco. Outside, the lane known as the Pasaje de San Ginés, with its Chocolatería (selling hot chocolate and the typical fried pastries known as churros) and second-hand bookshops, is an enduring landmark of the Madrid of the Romantic Age.

The last stretch of the street brings you to the very heart of Madrid, the zero kilometre mark for all Spanish roads, the Puerta del Sol (25). A modern equestrian statue of Charles III stands opposite the Casa de Correos, the former post office which now acts as the seat of the Madrid Regional Authority and has featured prominently in a good few episodes of the city’s recent history.
From St. Isidore's Church to Toledo Bridge

Starting in the most typical part of Madrid, at St. Isidore's Church (San Isidro) (26), this route follows in the steps of the patron saint of all Madrileños (the term applied to the city's denizens). The retable of the Holy Family by Sebastián Herrera, and the chapel of Jesús del Gran Poder are some highpoints of a church which was designed along the lines of Il Gesù in Rome by Pedro Sánchez, and whose foundation stone was laid by Philip IV.

Close by, is one of the very few remaining examples of mediaeval Madrid, i.e., the Church of St. Peter the Old (or Royal St. Peter's) (27), built by Alfonso XI over the erstwhile Morería Mosque. Its old Mudejar tower was rebuilt in the 14th century.

From St. Peter's make your way to the Plaza de la Paja, the site of the Bishop's Chapel (Capilla del Obispo) (28) built in 1518 by Francisco de Vargas and Inés de Carvajal, and an almost unique example of the transition from Gothic to Renaissance.

At No. 2 Plaza de San Andrés, the former site of the Count of Paredes' Palace where the worker saint once lived as a servant, is the present-day San Isidro Museum (29). It houses the miraculous well where the saint saved his son from drowning, as well as an interesting collection of palaeontological and archaeological remains of Madrid.

From here, the itinerary continues down Carrera de San Francisco as far as the Church of St. Isidore's (26), Church of St. Peter the Old (or Royal St. Peter's) (27), Bishop's Chapel (28), San Isidro Museum (29), Church of St. Francis the Great (30), Toledo Gate (31), and Toledo Bridge (32).
Distributed over its three floors, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (33), our starting point for this intensive art-filled itinerary, brings together a select, permanent art collection, which is further enriched by intensive exchange of temporary exhibitions with leading galleries around the world. In 1992, the architect Rafael Moneo managed to preserve the neoclassical façade of the former Villahermosa Palace and yet transform the building into a modern art gallery that holds one of the world’s finest private collections, with over 800 paintings, sculptures, tapestries and objets d’art, dating from the 13th through to the closing years of the 20th century.

Just around the corner from the Thyssen is the Spanish Parliament (Congreso de los Diputados) (34), a 19th-century structure with clear Renaissance echoes, designed by Narciso Pascual y Colomer.

Cross the Plaza de las Cortes and walk up Calle del Prado to get to the mansionhouse that is the Prado Museum.
The itinerary continues through the Plaza de Jesús and along Calle de Duque de Medinaceli, site of the Church of Jesus of Medinaceli (38), which traditionally enjoys a strong and devout following among Madrileños. Diagonally opposite Parliament is the Hotel Palace, which dates from the early 20th century and maintains the glamour of the grand European hotels, complete with liveried doormen.

Coming full circle, you get to the Plaza de Cánovas del Castillo, presided over by the Neptune Fountain (39), portraying the god of the sea resplendent in his chariot. In the adjoining Plaza de la Lealtad, the monument to the fallen is flanked by the classical Stock Exchange building and the elegant Hotel Ritz, built in 1910. Nearby is the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (Real Academia Española de la Lengua) (40) and the striking Church of San Jerónimo el Real (St. Jerome) (41), traditionally the setting for events of great significance in the life of Spain’s Bourbon monarchy.

Heir to the royal collections, the Prado Museum (42) has been fulfilling its role as an art gallery since 1818 and is without rival in the world. It is installed in a building that was originally designed and constructed in 1785 by Juan de Villanueva to act as a Museum of Natural Sciences. The Prado, with facilities that have already been extended as far as Los Jerónimos to allow it to display its vast collections, houses masterpieces by Goya, Velázquez, Murillo, Ribera and Zurbarán. In addition, it is unique for its Flemish and Italian works, the
legacy of Spain's imperial era in Europe. The Museum's three main doors are respectively guarded by like statues of Goya, Velázquez and Murillo.

To accompany what was intended to be the Museum of Natural Sciences, the Botanical Gardens (43) in the Plaza de Murillo are imbued with romanticism and possess an interesting variety of plant species. Running along the far side of these gardens is the incline known as the Cuesta de Moyano, lined with stalls dealing in old and second-hand books.

Overlooking the Glorieta de Carlos V, but with its entrance on Calle de Santa Isabel, the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía National Museum (44) completes this art tour. In addition to its splendid collection of contemporary art, it also holds a number of temporary exhibitions. Built on the site of an old hospital, the centre combines its eye-catching, avant-garde elevator shafts with neoclassical lines, thereby converting itself into hallmark of modern Madrid. Picasso’s world-renowned painting, “Guernica”, is, without doubt, one of the gallery’s most visited exhibits.

THE THREE GREAT ART GALLERIES

PRADO MUSEUM
Paseo del Prado, s/n
Underground station: Banco de España or Atocha
www.museoprado.es

CENTRO DE ARTE REINA SOFÍA NATIONAL MUSEUM
Santa Isabel, 52
Underground station: Atocha
www.museoreinasofia.es

MUSEO THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA
Paseo del Prado, 8
Underground station: Banco de España
www.museothyssen.org

From calle de Alcalá to Retiro Park

At the point where Alcalá Street begins, the area around the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando (45) is one of Madrid’s most monumental spots, dotted with large artistic buildings, the head offices of banks and major companies. Though founded in 1744, it was not until 1773 that the Academy took up lodgings in its present premises, a former palace designed by Churriguera. The Academy’s superb art gallery prides itself on its Goya’s and a priceless collection of over 15,000 drawings, ranging from Raphael through Rubens, Tiepolo, Velázquez and Rodin, all the way to Picasso.

On the left-hand side of this initial section of Calle Alcalá is the 17th-century Church of Las Calatravas (46), which features a lovely dome and a high altar piece, posthumously attributed to Churriguera. Marking the end of this particular stretch is the Metrópolis Building, a paradigm of the entire area, which was erected between 1905 and 1911 for La Unión y el Fénix Insurance Company, and which divides Alcalá from Gran Vía. Grouped around this same intersection are St. Joseph’s Church (San José) (47), the Ministry of Education, and the Fine Arts Circle (Círculo de Bellas Artes) (48). The latter, which was designed by Antonio Palacios and is considered to be the prime example of art deco in Madrid, is spectacularly
crowned by a tower and Vasallo's statue of the goddess, Athena Pallas.

Madrid's symbolic centre and landmark, the Plaza de Cibeles, is flanked by a series of notable buildings. These include: the Army General Headquarters (49), housed in the Buenavista Palace, which dates from 1769; the country's central bank, the Bank of Spain (Banco de España) (50), built along Renaissance lines in the 19th century; the Palacio de las Comunicaciones (General Post Office) (51), an early 20th-century design by Otamendi and Palacios; and the former Linares Palace, a late 19th-century neo-Baroque building which is now home to the Spanish-Latin American cultural centre known as America's House (Casa de América) (52), Cibeles Fountain (53), designed by Ventura Rodríguez and built by Roberto Michel and Francisco Gutiérrez, represents the Earth Mother, Cybele or Sybil.

The Cibeles Fountain is directly aligned with the Puerta de Alcalá (54), and at night this short walk acquires all the grandeur of a magical stage set. Designed by Francisco Sabatini and erected in 1778, this gate stands as a reminder that Charles III was "Madrid's best mayor". Continue down Alfonso XII Street: bordering Retiro Park and keeping the Casón del Buen Retiro (55) as your reference point, turn into these royal gardens, originally created for Philip IV. The oversize hothouse known as the Crystal Palace (Palacio de Cristal) (56), the pavilion-like Velázquez Palace (57), the Cecilio Rodríguez Gardens, the artificial lake—presided over by Alfonso XII's haughty figure—or any of the many paths with their birds and darting squirrels, are sure to transport you far from the roar of the big city to a bucolic world which functions as a veritable green “lung” in Madrid's urban anatomy.
From Gran Vía to the Conde Duque Barracks

As it proceeds along Gran Vía, a street that goes back to the turn of the twentieth century, this itinerary passes through one of Madrid’s leading leisure and entertainment areas, lined with cinemas, theatres, cafés, restaurants and department stores. From the start, the street is flanked on either side by large buildings. Rising to your left, directly opposite the Museo Chicote bar—a traditional haunt back in the Bohemian Madrid of Ava Gardner and Orson Welles—is the Caballero de Gracia Oratorio (58). This elegant neoclassical building designed by Juan de Villanueva in the latter years of the 18th century, stands on the street of the same name.

Farther on, the Telefónica Building (59), designed in 1929 by the American architect, Weeks, was the first skyscraper in Madrid, and marks the end of Red de San Luis and the beginning of new stretch of Gran Vía that leads as far as Plaza del Callao. Here, giant cinema hoardings look down from stylish buildings, such as the Palacio de la Premsa, influenced by the Chicago School, and the Carrón Building which, like the Capitol Cinema it houses, dates from the early years of the 20th century.

The last leg leads down to Plaza de España (60), a square dominated by two tall buildings, the Edificio España and Torre de Madrid, which command sensational city views. Before entering the Plaza de España, a short detour is recommended to see the Baroque-style Church of St. Mark (San Marcos) (61), designed by Ventura Rodriguez.

A monument to Cervantes and Don Quixote stands in the middle of the square, which affords welcome respite in this busy part of Madrid. Nearby, the Ferraz Gardens, which eventually lead into the Parque del Oeste, and the Temple of Debod (62), brought stone by
stone from Egypt, are a superb vantage point from which to see how Madrid is expanding. On the other side of Calle Ferraz is the Cerralbo Museum (63), a stately 19th-century mansion containing an important collection of furniture and art treasures.

Once again the traveller is confronted by the great architect, Ventura Rodríguez, since the street that bears his name leads back to Calle de la Princesa and the Liria Palace (64), the Duke of Alba’s Madrid residence, designed by him in 1780. Behind the palace, the Conde Duque Barracks (Cuartel del Conde Duque) (65), graced by a fine Baroque portal, no longer act as military quarters. Instead, the building houses the Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art, the Municipal Newspaper and Periodicals Archive (hemeroteca), Municipal Historical Archive, a number of exhibition rooms and other municipal departments, and in summer, its quadrangle becomes a venue for evening concerts and shows.
To all intents and purposes, the rectangle formed by Fuencarral, Carranza and San Bernardo streets and the area to the rear of Gran Via encloses the district which served as the setting for the famed Spanish “scene” (movida) of the 1980s, and which continues to be one of Madrid’s choice nightlife areas. The Churches of St. Placidus (San Plácido), St. Martin (San Martín) and San Antonio de los Alemanes, the Municipal Museum (66), the Architect Ribera Gardens leading to the Romantic Museum (Museo Romántico) (67), and the Theatre Museum, are all concentrated around the Plaza del Dos de Mayo (68), the name of which commemorates the townsfolk who rose up in the insurgency against the Napoleonic invasion in 1808.

PLAZA DE COLÓN AND THE SALAMANCA DISTRICT

Stretching from the Puerta de Alcalá almost all the way to Maria de Molina Street, and covering the streets running parallel and perpendicular to Calle de Serrano, is the elegant Salamanca District (barrio), designed in the 19th century by the Marquis of Salamanca. Fashionable boutiques and furniture shops, art galleries, cafés and offices line this quarter, with its stately buildings and spacious avenues that flow past the Descubrimiento Gardens (69) in the Plaza de Colón (Colón; Christopher Columbus), flanked by the splendid architectural group formed by the National Library (70) and National Archaeological Museum (71).
THE FARO DE MONCLOA AND AMERICAS MUSEUM

In the vicinity of the university campus at the north-western approach to Madrid, the Moncloa district combines urban expansion, large parkland areas –from the Parque del Oeste across to the Dehesa de la Villa– with a motley, irrepressible university atmosphere. From the Faro de Moncloa (lighthouse), which is over the way from the Americas Museum (Museo de América) (72), the views are extraordinary and reveal Madrid as truly being the “green” capital of Europe. The Triumphal Arch and Herrerian-style Air Force General Headquarters are architectural points of interest in a district dominated by students.

FROM SEGOVIA BRIDGE TO SAN ANTONIO DE LA FLORIDA

The Puente de Segovia (73) is the oldest of the city’s bridges over the Manzanares River. Designed by Juan de Herrera in the late 16th century, it affords the best view of the Royal Palace and La Almudena Cathedral. Moving upstream, through parks and groves of trees, you get to the district of San Antonio de la Florida (74). The church’s outstanding features include its twin chapels, housing the remains of Goya and his spectacular frescoes.

LITERARY MADRID

Madrid is a city where it is hard to find a single spot that does not have its own literary reference, ranging from major symbols such as the National Library or Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, to cultural centres such as the Fine Arts Circle, Atheneum, Centro Cultural de la Villa or the eternally restless university halls of residence. What is more, history is at hand to confirm it.

The Golden Age of Spanish literature is present in the so-called literary quarter, delimited by the Plazas of Cánovas del Castillo and Carlos V. Gongora, Quevedo and Tirso de Molina once walked the street hereabouts, not far from the Lope de Vega House and Convent of the Trinitarians. Close by, in the Plaza de Santa Ana, the statue of Calderón contemplates the Teatro Español, whose façade recalls some of the country’s most celebrated playwrights. This was also the site of the Corral de la Pacheca and Café del Príncipe, haunts of the intellectual circle known as the Peña el Parnasillo -a symbol of literary Madrid in the 19th century- which numbered Larra, Espronceda, Ventura de la Vega and Mesonero Romanos among its members.

The Madrid of Benito Pérez Galdós still survives in the environs of the Plaza Mayor. Similarly, in and around the Puerta del Sol it is still possible to witness scenes that might have been taken straight from Valle-Inclán’s play, “Luces de Bohemia”. In his book “La sagrada cripta del Pombo”, Ramón Gómez de la Serna heaps praise on the café that used to be on Carretas Street and for many years was the paragon of all Madrid cafés, genuine circles of discussion (tertulias) and power, some of which, like the Café Comercial on the Glorieta de Bilbao or the Café Gijón on Paseo de Recoletos, continue the tradition to this day.

Here in Madrid, the writers of the Generation of 98 -Azorín, Baroja, Unamuno, Machado and Valle-Inclán- passed the torch to the Generation of 27, all of whom were based at the Residencia de Estudiantes on Pinar Street. It was here too that Juan Ramón Jiménez, Pablo Neruda and, in particular, the group comprising Lorca, Alberti, Dámaso Alonso, Gerardo Diego, Vicente Aleixandre, Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, left their mark.

Dotted about the city are sculptures that honour writers of all eras and from all parts of Spain who at some time or other made Madrid their literary centre.

As a general rule, museums and art galleries are open from Tuesday to Saturday, mornings and afternoons, on Sundays and Public Holidays during the morning only, and close on Mondays. For fuller information kindly consult the nearest tourist information office.
Art and culture

Museums and art centres

Hermitage Chapel of San Antonio de la Florida
Chapel in which the world-renowned Spanish painter, Francisco de Goya, lies buried. The dome was designed by the artist himself.
Glorieta San Antonio de la Florida, 5. Underground station: Príncipe Pío

Royal Monastery of the Incarnation
Painting and sculpture dating from the 16th to 17th centuries.
Plaza de la Encarnación, 1. Underground station: Ópera

National Archaeological Museum
Valuable archaeological pieces from all over Spain, along with coins and ceramics.
Serrano, 13. Underground stations: Serrano or Colón

Waxworks (Museo de Cera) Wax figures of famous personalities down the ages, set against faithfully re-created backdrops.
Plaza de Colón Underground station: Colón

Natural Sciences Museum
Permanent Exhibition of Natural Sciences.
José Gutiérrez Abascal, 2. Underground station: Nuevos Ministerios or Gregorio Marañón

Municipal Museum
Housed in an old hospice built by Pedro de Ribera, the museum is a fine example of Baroque civil architecture. Different collections of prints, paintings, drawings, porcelain, coins, medals and photographs, connected in some way with Madrid.
Fuencarral, 78. Underground station: Tribunal

Sorolla Museum
House-Museum that displays works by Joaquín Sorolla and paintings that the artist collected over his lifetime.
General Martínez Campos, 37. Underground station: Rubén Darío

Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando
The Academy houses one of the finest collections of the 16th- to 19th-century Spanish School. In addition there are drawings, sculpture and porcelain.
Alcalá, 13. Underground station: Sol or Sevilla

Exhibition rooms

National Library
Founded by Philip V in 1712, the library acquired most of its valuable old books in the 19th century. It holds exhibitions, lecture cycles and book presentations.
Paseo de Recoletos, 22. Underground station: Colón

Fine Arts Circle
Antonio Palacios’ building has been officially declared a national monument. The Círculo de Bellas Artes devotes itself to holding exhibitions and cultural events of the highest order.
Alcalá, 42. Underground stations: Sevilla or Banco de España

Juan March Foundation
Private institution created in 1955 by the financier, Juan March, to act as a modern cultural centre.
Castelló, 77. Underground station: Núñez de Balboa

Classical music

National Concert Hall (Auditorio Nacional de Música)
This building, designed by the architect, José María García de Paredes, is home to the Spanish National Orchestra & Choir (Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España).
Principe de Vergara, 146. Underground station: Cruz del Rayo

Zarzuela Theatre
Built in the 19th century at the instance of composers such as Barbieri, Gaztambide and Arrieta, this theatre sets the standard for staging zarzuela and other Spanish musical genres.
Teatro María Guerrero  
Centro Dramático Nacional,  
Calle Tamayo and Baus, 4  
Underground station: Banco de España, Chueca and Colón

Teatro Palco  
Infanta Isabel  
Barquillo, 24  
Underground station: Banco de España

Teatro Clásico  
Embajadores, 9  
Underground station: La Latina

number of cinemas in other parts of the city and the suburbs.

Cinemas in the Plaza de España area screen subtitled films in the original version. Likewise, the Filmoteca Nacional (National Film Institute) holds original version cycles, with subtitles or simultaneous translation, at the Doré Cinema (calle de Santa Isabel, 3; Antón Martín Underground station). 3-D movies are shown at Imax Madrid (Parque Tierno Galván; Méndez Álvaro Underground station).

Entertainment guides listing films, times and cinemas can be found in the appropriate section of all mass circulation dailies, which usually publish leisure supplements on Friday. There are also specialist publications that carry information on all shows and events taking place in Madrid each week.
Giordano, and the vestry and chapterhouses, with paintings by Titian, El Greco, Ribera, Velázquez and Tintoretto.

In the palace area, there is a surprisingly stark contrast between the spartan-like austerity of Philip II’s quarters—with notable portraits by Sánchez Coello and Pantoja de la Cruz—and the sheer luxury of the Bourbon palace of Charles III and Charles IV—decorated with rich tapestries by Goya, Bayeu and Castillo. The Throne Room, Library and chamber where King Philip II died in September 1598, complete the tour through this monumental complex.

In the grounds of El Escorial, you can also visit the pleasure palaces known as the Casita del Príncipe and Casita del Infante, designed by Juan de Villanueva for Charles IV and Prince Gabriel respectively. The “Silla de Felipe II”, a natural seat formed in the rocks, and the Herrería Woods form a scenic counterpoint to a town that boasts a long cultural tradition, complete with market, cafés and local handicrafts. Here too, Madrid’s Complutense University holds summer courses, intended to bring universal knowledge to students through the medium of participants actively involved in the decision-making process.

The return trip to Madrid affords the chance to compare the imperial dreams of Philip II against that other dream nurtured by General Franco in the Spain of the 20th century, viz., the Valle de los Caidos.
The Royal Residence of Aranjuez (an officially declared World Heritage Cultural Landscape) stands on the River Tagus, 47 kilometres (30 miles) south of Madrid via the A-4. On a spot that the Catholic monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand had used as a retreat, Juan de Herrera built the Royal Lodge (Cuarto Real) and Botanical Gardens for Philip II, taking advantage of the mildness of the climate in the river valley. In the 18th century, as a token of gratitude for the town's support of his cause in the War of Succession, the Bourbon King, Philip V, moved his court to Aranjuez. His son Charles III had the two wings of the present Royal Palace built over the remains of Philip II's Lodge, destroyed by fire in 1655. Charles IV put the finishing touches to the whole with the Jardín del Príncipe and Casa del Labrador.

The stairway, Throne, Porcelain and Moorish Rooms are some of the chief attractions of this sumptuous palace. The east overlooks the French-style Parterre Garden, with the late 18th-century Hercules Fountain as its centrepiece. Head for the Jardín de la Isla, where plants, statues and gushing water jets make for a magic, fairy-tale atmosphere. On the site of Ferdinand VII's orchard-garden, Charles IV charged Villanueva to design the adjacent Jardín del Príncipe, now home to the Falúas Museum (testimony to Spain dream of a link between the interior and the sea), and the fanciful Casa del Labrador.

From May to October, the so-called Strawberry Train (Tren de la Fresa) follows the 19th-century railway line and, in a pleasant trip that takes a little under an hour, covers the distance between Madrid and Aranjuez. For those who prefer to go by road, however, the route continues as far as the Mar de Ontígola, a dam with its ecological footpath and bird observatory, near Oreja Castle, where the Military Order of St. James (Santiago) had its first convent.

After passing through Villacorres, the centre of a rich melon-growing area where there is even a melon museum, and -if you feel inclined- making a short detour to take an ecological stroll along the Laguna de San Juan, the itinerary moves onwards to Chinchón, with its slogan of “plaza, castillo y mesón” (square, castle and tavern). The town's outstanding feature is its stunning 16th-century Plaza Mayor, which has served as the stage-set for films such as “Around the World in 80 days” and Orson Welles’ “Chimes at Midnight”; 234 balconies (called claros by the locals) overlook a square which has been a marketplace, the scene of mystery plays and the setting for an ancient form of bullfighting using lances, and which is still used today as a bullring and venue for all manner of shows. Sights worth seeing include: the Church of the Assumption, which was built between the 16th and 17th centuries, and has a Goya, attesting to the fact that the artist spent considerable periods of time here in the company of his brother, the chaplain; St. Augustin's Convent (today a Tourist Parador); and the castle.

The vineyards lining the road from Chinchón are a sure sign that, apart from its 18th-century buildings, Ulpiano Checa Museum and 16th-century fortress-church of St. Mary Major (Santa María la Mayor), good wineries await in Colmenar de Oreja. The town's jewel, however, is the lovely Plaza Mayor, a typical two-tier Castilian square of superb proportions built from the local stone used in a number of other Madrid...
monuments, such as the Palace of Aranjuez and La Almudena Cathedral.

## Alcará de Henares

Officially declared a World Heritage Site in 1998, Alcará de Henares, lying 20 miles from Madrid on the A-2 highway, still displays all the splendour of its rich past as a model Renaissance university city. Alcará, the birthplace of Cervantes, keeps the memory of the world-famous author of "Don Quixote" alive in a 16th-century House-Museum. Furthermore it is the city of Nebrija, who penned the first Spanish grammar, and above all, a reflection of Cardinal Cisneros’ innovative Christian humanist vision.

Alcará, which first appeared as an Iberian settlement known as Ili celea and then became the Roman city of Complutum, received its present name of “Al-Kala en-Har” (castle or citadel) under the Moors. Alfonso VII retook the city in 1129, and in 1293 Sancho IV founded the Estudios Generales, the forerunner of the future university. The first academic course imparted by Cisneros’ university took place in 1508. The institution was to come directly under the King’s purview, was to have its own charter, police and gaol, and in the years that followed, Calderón, Quevedo, Lope, St. John of the Cross (San Juan de la Cruz), St. Ignatius of Loyola and Jovellanos were all destined to study here. Its brilliant trajectory was cut short in 1836 when the University was moved to Madrid, from which it did not return until 1968, coinciding with the city centre’s designation as an Historical Artistic Ensemble.

The Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso, built by Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón from 1541 to 1553, is a superb example of the Plateresque style (plata denoting the style’s resemblance to silver filigree) and has become a symbol synonymous with the University. Moving inside, be sure to see the Santo Tomás de Villanueva Quadrangle (patio), the Patio Trilingüe (Three Languages Quadrangle where Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were taught), the Great Hall and the magnificent lecture podium. Monuments to Cisneros and Nebrija, and the former’s imposing tomb are to be found in the San Ildefonso Chapel. The Jesuit Colegio Máximo, Colegio de San Francisco de Paula and Carmen Calzado building, among others, form the impressive complex of university centres which today house the different faculties.

Important though its university may be, Alcará de Henares is much more. Shining with a light of its own is St. Justus’ Cathedral (Catedral Magistral, a title conferred upon collegiate churches whose canons were also University professors –magister). This Cathedral, where the remains of the child martyrs Justus and Pastor are venerated, was rebuilt by Cardinal Cisneros in the 16th century and features a beautiful portal containing elements Late Gothic and Plateresque. The Archbishop’s Palace, designed by Covarrubias, has a Renaissance façade of note. Other sights include several sections of the old town walls, as well as the Madre de Dios and San Bernardo Convents. In today’s busy, modern city, this ensemble renders it possible to recapture all the charm and magic of one of the foremost examples of the Renaissance.

## El Pardo Palace and Montes de El Pardo

Although practically annexed to the city of Madrid now, the El Pardo district formed part of 20th-century Spanish history. For more than forty years, General Franco controlled Spain’s destiny from El Pardo Palace. In the midst of this magnificent holm-oak forest, the largest in Europe, populated by wild boar, roe deer, common deer and birds of every kind, stands the Zarzuela Palace,
the permanent residence of the Spanish Royal Family.

A string of sports and leisure clubs, and numerous restaurants serving good food and game line the road, which winds through the rolling countryside that has traditionally been a royal hunting ground. The Emperor Charles V and Philip II were frequent occupants of the Pavilion of Enrique el Doliente, built in 1405 and transformed by Juan de Mora into a palace for Philip III, after a fire had destroyed the old building. Murals by Bayeu and Maela and rich tapestries from the Royal Tapestry Factory adorn this well-proportioned palace, where King Alfonso XII died. Today, it is used as accommodation for foreign dignitaries paying official visits to Spain.

Gregorio Fernández's moving carving of the recumbent Christ in the Holy Christ Hermitage Chapel is one of the highlights of any a visit to the Montes de El Pardo. The suburb of El Pardo, which lies along the Manzanares River, is a small village from which different trails lead off to outdoor eating spots, the Quinta Palace and the heart of the woods.

### Lozoya Valley and El Paular Monastery

The Laguna Grande and Laguna de los Pájaros are both glacial lakes lying in the bowl of a sizeable fertile valley where nature has combined with history to form one of the most singular areas in the Madrid Region. In fact, the tour through the Lozoya River Valley, the source of Madrid's drinking water for the last 150 years, commences at the foot of the valley, namely, at the village of Buitrago de Lozoya, on the Madrid–Burgos road. Probably Celtic in origin, the town reached its zenith in the 15th century, when it paid allegiance to the Mendoza. Completing a visit to the walled Medieval Quarter, which includes the Clock Tower (Torre del Reloj), Church of Santa Maria del Castillo and Plaza de Armas -now transformed into a bullring- are the views to be had of the town and its moat-like river, as well as a somewhat unexpected Picasso Gallery, with sixty of the artist’s works collected by his friend Eugenio Arias, a native of these parts.

Before continuing, it is well worth your while-time permitting- to make a side-trip from Buitrago to see the magnificent Montejo Beech Tree Grove in Montejo de la Sierra, and the upper reaches of the Jarama River, characterised by scenic mountain villages and reservoirs. Otherwise, the original itinerary goes as planned, via Villavieja del Lozoya, San Mamés, a village with a splendid twenty-metre high waterfall an hour’s walk away, Navarredonda and Gargantilla del Lozoya, to the intersection with the M-604. From the crossroads, the route then continues onwards to Rascafría, passing through Lozoya which, with its emblazoned houses and 16th-century church, lies alongside La Pinilla Dam.

You pass Alameda del Valle and Oteruelo del Valle on the left and eventually come to the picturesque mountain village of Rascafría, a departure point for many outings in the area, thanks to its location at the foot of the region’s highest peaks: Mt. Peñalara –2,428 metres (just under 8,000 ft.)- and Mt. Cabeces del Hierro –2,383 metres (7818 ft.). From here, one can either continue up to the Navacerrada Pass or complete the circle by returning to Madrid via Mirafloros and Canencia. A “must” before going back, however, is a visit to El Paular Monastery, founded by John I. Highlights include the Plateresque portal, 16th-century cloister, church door attributed to Juan Guas and high altar piece. Adjoining the monastery, Henry III’s handsome palace is now used as a hotel.
Leisure and entertainment

Local cuisine

For centuries, Madrid has been famed for its good food. The capital's nouveau cuisine successfully manages to produce a menu that combines typically Madrid dishes with painstakingly prepared domestic and international recipes. Two of the local highlights are callos (tripes) and cocido madrileño (Madrid-style stew), a tasty stockpot of chickpeas and vegetables enriched with meat and sausage, which calls for a veritable rite when eaten. Other dishes, such as besugo al horno (baked seabream) or cod (bacalao) in its many guises, compete with T-bone and fillet steak (chuletones) and solomillos (tenderloins), which still have a clientele that for years, or even centuries, and which have managed to survive the innumerable bars that line the city streets and outlying areas, and serve the famous round cream-filled fritters (buñuelos de viento). Indeed, “ir de tapeo”, stopping at different bars in search of their respective specialties, is an inerterate custom among Madrileños.

Specialities made throughout the country’s rich gastronomic geography are easily come by. It is no coincidence that Madrileños claim to have the best fish and seafood, plus the choicest meat, in Spain. Indeed, some of the city’s best restaurants are Basque, Galician, Asturian or Andalusian.

Here, it is only right to add that, along with the range of “domestic” food on offer, there has been an upsurge in the variety and quality of restaurants serving foreign cuisine – from Chinese to European, Latin American, and Arab.

Shopping

Large department stores and megastores specialising in CDs, books and videos can be found in and around the Puerta del Sol, on Princesa and Goya Streets or along the Paseo de la Castellana, as well as in all the major shopping malls on the city outskirts. The most select fashion boutiques, jewellery, footwear, furniture and gift shops of all kinds are to be found in the Salamanca, Salesas and Chueca Districts.

Keep your eyes peeled, and in the Old Quarter of Madrid it is still possible to come across numerous traditional shops which have managed to survive for years, or even centuries, and which still have a clientele that ensures their continuity. Shops selling espadrilles, rope, hats and religious objects are located around the Plaza Mayor, where shopping still retains the flavour of old. The same can be said of Madrid’s street market par excellence, the Rastro, the popular Sunday morning open-air flea-market (extending from Tirso de Molina, Cascorro and La Latina, as far down as Embajadores), where anything and everything is bought, sold and bartered at outdoor stalls and colourful local shops.

Madrid is also a good place to purchase art and antiqua. The art galleries which tend to congregate in the Salamanca District, Calle Barquillo and the area around the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia are a true reflection of the worldwide importance of Spanish art, past and present. The modern “art supermarkets” provide an outlet for works by young and upcoming as well as better-established artists. In addition, a wide range of antiques can be found in the Salamanca District, Puerta de Toledo Market or any of the permanent shops in and around the Rastro. Coin- and stamp-collecting have their “GHQ” in the Plaza Mayor, the scene every
Apart from cinemas, clubs and shows of every hue and colour, Madrid nightlife tends to be a thing of bares de copas, which tend to congregate in a few specific areas. The pedestrian precinct from Huertas Street to Plaza de Santa Ana, is one of the liveliest of these “strips”. The same can be said of the Alonso Martinez, Bilbao and Plaza de Santa Bárbara area, which practically merges with that of Malasaña, in the streets leading off from Plaza del Dos de Mayo. Moncloa and Argüelles are frequented by a somewhat younger, university crowd. The Castellana, Recoletos and Prado boulevards are likewise dotted with fashionable spots, which in the hot months multiply, thanks to the appearance of the popular outdoor terrazas which have become such a symbol of the Madrid summer season. At this time of year too, Paseo del Pintor Rosales turns into a parade of pavement cafés and marquees where only the sea breeze is missing; in its place, there is the cool fragrance wafting in from the Parque del Oeste.

Yet Madrid’s best night spectacle takes place in its streets. Except in the depth of winter, the prevailing good weather means that Madrileños can venture outdoors at the slightest opportunity, going from one bar to the next, between dinner and a concert, or between dates at some fashionable nightspot.

In such cases, there is a wide and varied range of music on offer, whether recorded -with different venues specializing in different styles- or live -with rock clubs, singer-songwriters and jazz.

Festivities

Christmas time in Madrid has a special flavour, with the typical Christmas market in the Plaza Mayor, the New Year’s Eve celebration in the Puerta del Sol and all the hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping. At this time of year, the fairy-tale decorations transform the city into a fantastic light show. The traditional procession of the Three Magi (Cabalgata de Reyes) takes place on 6th January.

With each passing year the Madrid Carnival has grown in terms of participants and onlookers to the point where it has become a very popular celebration, outstanding for the imaginativeness of the costumes and the sheer number of scheduled events.

The Region’s festivities, centred on 2nd May, are a foretaste of the outdoor dances and spectacles to come on 15th May, the feast day of Madrid’s patron saint, San Isidro. An outdoor pilgrimage (romeria) sees thousands of people gathering at St. Isidore’s Hermitage Chapel and meadow, as well as the holding of the world’s most important bullfight festival. Organ grinders, sugary “rosquillas”, and typically dressed chulos and manolas make for a colourful fiesta with a deeply traditional atmosphere.

On St. Anthony’s day, 13th June, at the Hermitage Chapel of San Antonio de la Florida down by the Manzanares riverside, marriageable young girls seeking suitors continue the seamstresses’ tradition of depositing thirteen pins in the baptismal font in the hope of finding favour with the saint.

August is the month when traditional castizo Madrid takes to the streets for the festivities of St. Cayetano, St. Lawrence and the Virgin of La Paloma, with processions, open-air dances and pavement cafés open until late into the night.

Other long-standing festivals are held in the Madrid Region, such as the Chinchón Passion Play, the Romería de la Virgen de Gracia in San Lorenzo.
Similarly, the Madrid Popular and San Silvestre Vallecana Marathons are races with a big following. The same can be said about the final stage of each edition of the Tour of Spain Cycle Race.

The region has close on one hundred outdoor sports facilities, over a hundred tennis clubs and a score or more of golf courses, in addition to any number of municipal sports centres. There are also major skiing facilities: less than an hour’s drive away are the ski resorts of Valdesquí –at Cotos, with 22 kilometres of ski runs– and Navacerrada, at the Navacerrada Pass, with 10 kilometres of pistes.

Theme and other parks

Completing its leisure and entertainment facilities, Madrid boasts: three aquatic parks, i.e., Aquasur, Aquamadrid and Aquópolis; a Zoo Aquarium, which is one of the world's foremost zoos, in terms not only of the number of different species and animals, but also of its constant work in the fields of research, conservation, reproduction and education; an animal safari park (Safari Madrid); and the Fun Fair (Parque de Atracciones), with more than forty rides catering to all tastes and concerts in summer.

Faunia is a biological nature park, where fauna and flora combine with the very latest, environment-friendly technology to create different natural ecosystems. Warner Bros. Movie World, one of the most spectacular theme parks in the world and the largest in Europe, reproduces the fantasy world of Warner Brothers films with a series of attractions spread over a 250-hectare plot, located near the town of San Martin de la Vega and easily accessible by road or rail.

Sports

Madrid is a city that hosts important sports events, particularly in the case of football. Every weekend, Madrid’s three most famous soccer stadiums –the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium (home of nine-time European Champions, Real Madrid), the Vicente Calderón Stadium (where Atlético de Madrid is based), and the Teresa Rivera Stadium (Rayo Vallecano’s home ground)– are the scene of important matches watched by thousands of fans.

February, is an international barometer of trends in contemporary art; and enjoying the same standing in its particular field is SIMO TCI, the International Computer, Multimedia and Communications Fair held in November. Yet the range is enormous, spanning over 70 fairs from almost all sectors of the economic and social fabric of western society. The Madrid Trade Fair Board (Institución Ferial de Madrid - IFEMA) is in charge of scheduling and coordinating all the various trade fairs. Juan Carlos I Park, adjoining the showgrounds, is itself worth exploring.

Trade Fairs

Madrid’s status as the capital of Spain has made it the traditional venue for national and international trade fairs and conventions, with an intense year-round schedule.

The Juan Carlos I Showgrounds (Parque Ferial) cover an area marked by trade-fair pavilions, modern office buildings and the Municipal Convention Centre, plus two hotels and a large park. Being strategically located and well connected by Underground, the showgrounds are easily and readily accessible from Barajas International Airport and the major train junction of Chamartín Railway Station. In the Casa de Campo, a handful of regional restaurants and pavilions are a reminder that this once served as the showground site. Indeed, certain trade fairs are still held here.

The International Tourism Fair (Feria Internacional del Turismo - FITUR), held early in the year, is one of the best showcases of world tourism. ARCO, held in
Three World Heritage Cities an hour from Madrid

Lying approximately one hour from Madrid by road or rail, Avila and Segovia in the Castile & León Region, and Toledo in the Castile-La Mancha Region, are a trio of world-famous historical and artistic gems, officially accorded World Heritage City status by UNESCO.

AVILA

Ringed by its town walls, Avila’s striking medieval beauty comes as a surprise. From its possible beginnings as a Celtic castro (fortified encampment), the former Roman city of Avila had become an impregnable stronghold by the time of the Reconquest. The Cathedral, which was begun in the 12th century and whose apse (known as the Cimorro by the townsfolk) forms an integral part of the defensive structure of the walls, houses an authentic treasure trove. Outstanding features include the high altar piece, with works by Pedro Berruguete, the ambulatory by Fruchel, the richly-carved retrochoir, the tomb of Alonso Fernández de Madrigal, “El Tostado” by Vasco de la Zarza, and the Cathedral Museum.

Outside the wall’s nine gates—some of which, such as the

SEGOVIA

Presided over by its Roman aqueduct, the city’s immediately recognisable landmark, Segovia can also lay claim to other unique sights, such as: its Gothic Cathedral, built over the old cathedral that was burnt to the ground in retaliation for giving safe haven to the Comunero insurgents; and its Alcázar, majestically perched atop the Rivers Eresma and Clamores, a royal residence since the 13th century which, despite its incomparable location, has always been used more as a palace than as a defensive redoubt.

Seemingly made for walking and famed for its excellent food, Segovia also possesses a good
number of stately houses and prize churches, such as those of St. Andrew, St. Martin, the Knights of St. John (San Juan de los Caballeros) and the splendid Romanesque Church of St. Stephen, with its bell tower and atrium, used for church services. The Plaza Mayor is a lively meeting place, around which it is easy to lose oneself meandering along lanes and alleys of another age.

Close by, nestling in the neighbouring Guadarrama Mountains, is La Granja Palace, where Philip V was intent on establishing his own Versailles-type court. The palace, begun by Ardemans and completed by Sachetti and others, is only rivalled by its lovely park and gardens, whose fountains provide a constant spectacle.

In the middle ages, Toledo was the model par excellence of co-existence of the three great cultures, namely, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Its towers, walls and gates such as the Puerta de Bisagra, are evidence of a warlike city, which also enjoys the privilege of being the site of Spain’s Primatial Cathedral. This, one of the most stunning Gothic cathedrals in the country, was begun in the 13th century by Ferdinand III (Fernando III el Santo), over the remains of what had once been the great mosque of the Moors. San Juan de los Reyes, a spectacular monastery commissioned by the Catholic Monarchs, and the Holy Cross Museum (Santa Cruz), housed in the old 15th-century hospital of the same name, together provide a magnificent sample of the cultural wealth of Christian Toledo. Moorish influence can be traced to the Bab al Mardum and Tornerias Mosques, whilst the mark left by the Jews is still visible in the Jewish Quarter and Tránsito and Santa María la Blanca synagogues.

Convents and palaces, as well as the Tavera Hospital, the El Greco House-Museum and the artist’s powerful rendering of “El entierro del Conde de Orgaz” (Burial of the Count of Orgaz) in St. Thomas’ Church (Santo Tomé), and the Alcázar, where the Army Museum recalls the defence of this position during the Spanish Civil War, make Toledo and its monumental sights an absolute “must”. 
Itinerary I
1. Plaza Mayor
2. San Miguel Market
3. Calatrava Arch
4. St. Michael’s Basilica
5. Convent of Las Jerónimas
6. Plaza de la Villa
7. Lujanes Tower
8. Cimmeros House
9. Casa de la Villa (City Hall)
10. Abrantes Palace
11. Duke of Uceda’s Palace (or Palacio de los Condes)
12. Convent of the Holy Sacrament
13. Emir Mohamed I Park
14. La Almudena Cathedral

Itinerary II
15. Royal Palace
16. Plaza de Oriente
17. Theatre Royal Opera House
18. Royal Monastery of the Incarnation
19. Senate House
20. Palace of the Marquis of Grimadilla
21. Convent of Las Pphanseras
22. Plaza de Isabel II
23. Desclaisas Reales Monastery
24. Church of San Ginés
25. Puerta del Sol

Itinerary III
26. St. Isidore’s
27. Church of St. Peter the Old (or Royal St. Peter’s)
28. Bishop’s Chapel
29. St. Isidore’s Museum
30. Church of St. Francis the Great
31. Toledo Gate
32. Toledo Bridge

Itinerary IV
33. Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum
34. Parliament
35. Madrid/Adyntec
36. Lope de Vega House-Museum
37. Church and Convent of the Terendalians
38. Church of Jesus of Medinaceli
39. Neptune Fountain
40. Royal Academy of the Spanish Language
41. Church of San Jerónimo el Real
42. Prado Museum
43. Botanical Gardens
44. Centro de Arte Reina Sofia National Museum

Itinerary V
45. Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando
46. Church of Las Capuchinas
47. St. Joseph’s
48. Fine Arts Circle
49. Army General Headquarters
50. Bank of Spain
51. General Post Office
52. American House
53. Chirinos Fountain
54. Plaza de Alcalá
55. Casón del Buen Retiro
56. Crystal Palace
57. Velázquez Palace

Itinerary VI
58. Caballero de Gracia Ochoa
59. Telefónica Building
60. Plaza de España
61. St. Mark’s
62. Temple of Debod
63. Cerralbo Museum
64. Liria Palace
65. Conde Duque Barracks

Itinerary VII
66. Municipal Museum
67. Romantic Museum
68. Dos de Mayo Square
69. Desalvadromos Gardens
70. National Library
71. National Archaeological Museum
72. American Museum
73. Segovia Bridge
74. San Antonio de la Florida

SYMBOLS USED
- Tourist information office
- Post
- Hospital
- Car park
- Police station
- Bus & Coach station
- Railway station
- Bullet train (Tren Alta Velocidad-AVE)
- Commuter train station
- Underground (Metro) station