



MADRID, THE GASTROCULTURAL CITY

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As the capital city, a cosmopolitan city, a business centre, seat of the central government, Spanish Parliament, and residence of the Spanish monarchy, Madrid is also the political centre in Spain. Madrid is characterized by intense cultural and artistic activity and a very lively nightlife.

Madrid is the serious part of the Government but at the same time is the cultural main focus in Spain with its many great museums and the crazy fiesta until the early morning. Food and drinks are part of the life in Spain, more than in any other part of the world, and in Madrid you can see how Madrilenians invest a huge amount of their time and energy in eating and drinking. Forget your diet here and live healthy when back home.

The day starts with a nice breakfast, on weekends eating out, at the counter of a bar and usually sweet food: croissants, ensaimadas or even churros (sugar coated deep fried strips of batter) together with thick hot chocolate or with coffee. Or even porras, really typical for Madrid, which are thick tubes, always sweet. Chocolatería San Ginés would be the right place to be. Sugar dominates the morning scene. Sightseeing time, don't miss out on the Almudena Cathedral, Puerta del Sol Square, Plaza Mayor and do some culture: Buy yourself an art passport. For euro 15 which is your key to what has been called, slightly facetiously, Madrid's Golden Triangle – made up of the city's three art palaces – the Prado, the Reina Sofía and the Thyssen. The combined treasures of these three are priceless, and my favourite, the ham museum and of course the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium,



the other local temple. The best way to have an idea of Madrid is to do a tour with the tourist bus, then hop off where you want, where you can lost in its small streets.

Time for aperitivo, this ritual must be experienced in a taberna or tasca. Patatas bravas, tortilla de patatas, prawns, olives, boquerones en vinagre and some ham, together with some wine or beer. After the aperitivo you can jump into a cheap menú del día where most locals go, or a high gastronomy restaurant, where there are plenty in Madrid.

The after work drink starts in Fuenarral street or in the neighbourhood la Latina located in the centre of Madrid near the awesome Plaza Mayor, the movement runs between the squares of Plaza Cebada and Plaza de la Paja. You start drinking in one bar and keep going into the next one. Entertaining and social affairs among the locals, don't hesitate to do what you see.

Dinner at ten o'clock, it lasts and past midnight you start with the gintonics or cubatas (rum, whisky with usually coke) and the night starts. If you are awake til

dawn it's time to go further and fight the hangover with chocolate con churros, yes, around 5 or 6 in the morning is what Spaniards usually eat. Not light, not healthy but delicious.

Where to sleep in Madrid

Hospes Hotel with the best views of the Puerta de Alcalá and in a building of 1883 offers a jewel with its 41 rooms, a boutique hotel with a relaxing spa and a bar where local meet, <http://www.hospes.com>

Ritz Madrid is a baroque palace in the heart of Madrid's 'Golden', it was built in 1910 according to the wishes of King Alfonso XIII and now is the iconic Orient-Express landmark established Madrid, <http://www.ritzmadrid.com>

Room-Mate, contemporary, pricy and hip, among the four in town, I choose Mario for its funky terrace <http://www.room-matehotels.com/>

Where to eat typical Madrilenian food in Madrid

La casa del Abuelo since 196 offering tapas culture, with the best prawns and langoustines, <http://www.lacasadelabuelo.es>

Las Bravas with their amazing patatas bravas, spicy and delicious <http://www.lasbravas.com>

La Daniela for is unique tortillas and cocido madrileño, <http://www.tabernal-daniela.com>

Casa Lucio since 1933, the most famous and unforgettable huevos estrellados you will eat in your life, <http://www.casalucio.es>

Casa Revuelta for is amazing bacalao and La Mina for its well-known prawns. No website, ask in your hotel, don't miss them

Mercado de San Miguel the newest gastronomy temple, all Spanish delicatessen under one roof, shop, choose and eat, the concept, <http://www.mercadodesanmiguel.es>

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