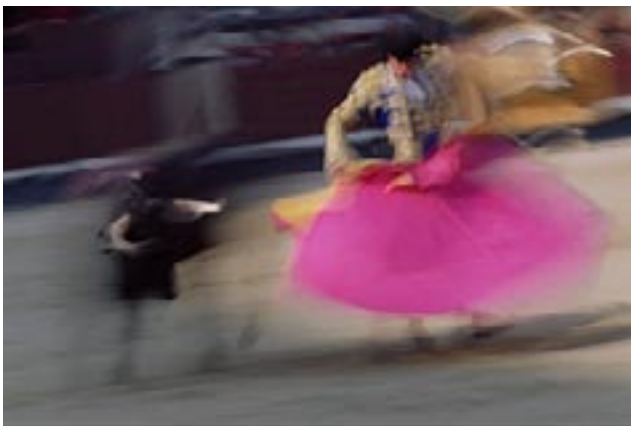


Welcome to
Madrid



Information Brochure 2006-2007

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Options within *BEST* Programs

An overview of our programs in Spain and Belgium



Come to the source and experience modern Spain or Belgium in an economical way. *BEST* offers three programs to choose from, each consisting of an intensive Spanish or French language course in one of our centrally-located, fully-equipped language schools combined with other attractive options.

1. Study – Internship Program in Belgium

French language in combination with an internship in a Belgian company

Immerse yourself in a two or three month program in the heart of the European Union. First, prioritize your language skills which we will bring up to par in a two-week crash course. Then apply that knowledge to your professional field of interest in an internship in a Belgian company.

2. Study - Internship Program in Spain

Spanish language in combination with an internship in a Spanish company

Self-improve while you enjoy yourself to the limit. For people interested in improving their Spanish while increasing their professional experience. The internship program offers two weeks of intensive Spanish classes followed by an internship in a Spanish company. We hand pick companies for interns, placing them in any field of their choice. Options in Madrid, Barcelona and Seville.

3. Seville University Program

Combine an international work experience with university courses

Combine undergraduate courses, for credit or auditing, in business and/or tourism with the real-life challenges of an internship in a Spanish business in Seville. The program is designed to the many people who are passionate about European culture and wish to improve their Spanish while making contacts for the future. The centrally-located University of Seville offers *BEST*'s participants a curriculum in English and Spanish and a bilingual coordination at the most competitive cost on the market.

4. *BEST* CulTours

Language Classes, Cooking Classes, Bike Tours, Music Festivals and Culture

Three-week programs aimed at but not limited to participants 50 and over. Regardless of your age, you will live an exciting multi-cultural and multi-lingual experience. In **Madrid, Spain**, we offer six classes in Spanish Mediterranean cuisine, two-week intensive Spanish course, Cultural event in dance, music, arts or opera. See our website for other 50+ programs in Holland, Belgium and Italy.

Internship Program in Spain

Introduction to Madrid

Meandering through the cobblestone paths to the crowded Plaza Mayor filled with painters; sitting at the bar in a small Café with a cup of freshly brewed coffee; dancing to the beat in a local pub at four in the morning.

Historical importance. Architectural beauty. Museums filled with international treasures. Never ending nightlife. Whatever your passion may be, you will easily find it in Madrid. This brochure is filled with useful information to help you prepare for your exciting new life in the city that never sleeps.



History

Madrid's name comes from the Arabic word *magerit* meaning "an abundance of water" and there are many areas of Madrid referring to water: Pozuelo, Somosaguas, etc. This is rather ironic given the low level of Madrid's water table nowadays.

The city started to develop under the Arabs in the 9th century. The Peninsula was under Islamic occupation on and off for 7 centuries until 1492 (the year Columbus discovered America) when the Catholic King and Queen, Isabel and Fernando, united the entire country.

Madrid developed little by little and assumed greater importance during their reign in the 15th century. They also defeated the Moors at Granada in 1492, and sponsored Christopher Columbus on his global

wanderings. In the 17th century the Bourbons made Madrid the capital of Spain in an attempt to centralize power.

During the last fifty years the face of the city has fundamentally changed. Madrid has spread considerably to the south to accommodate a steady stream of migrants from all over Spain. The population has almost tripled in 25 years, so you can see why Madrid has become one of the most dynamic cities in Europe, while still retaining a *pueblo* atmosphere.

A popular motto coined by the inhabitants of Madrid is: "De Madrid al cielo", meaning the only place left to see after Madrid is heaven. This might be an exaggeration but it demonstrates their pride and love for the city.

Quick Facts

Country:	Spain
Area Madrid:	504 880 sq km
Population Madrid:	5 964 143
Population Spain:	44 395 286
Elevation:	665 m
Time Zone:	GMT/UTC +1 (plus two hours in summer)
Telephone Area Code:	+34

Madrid Monuments

Madrid is a great city to live in and if you want to do a small walking tour of Madrid to see how the different eras have changed the city, then take this guide with you. The following sites will quench anyone's architectural thirst. The close scrutiny of a city map is necessary, but that is all a part of the adventure!



Plaza Mayor

Before 16th Century

Walls of Madrid:

Cuesta de la Vega: Remains of the historical fortifications of the town, of Moorish (9th and 10th century) and Christian (12th and 13th century) origins.

16th Century

Bridge of Segovia

Valuable work of architect *Juan de Herrera*, consisting of 9 arches. It became infamous during the 19th Century as the site of numerous suicides and now has a glass protection to prevent anyone from "slipping".

17th Century

Casa de la Panadería

Plaza Mayor: A beautiful building, now belonging to the city with remarkable wall paintings on its exterior.

Monasterio de la Encarnación

Plaza de la Encarnación: Monastery of 17th century, one of the best examples of Madrid's typical baroque style, *Barroco Madrileño*.

Claustro de San Jerónimo el Real

Moreto, 4: This Monastery is a typical example of the Renaissance style of the early 17th century.

From top:
 Palacio Real
 Plaza de Cibeles
 Museo del Prado
 Casa de la Villa



Plaza Mayor

Philip III had built this impressive square between 1617 and 1619, to give additional prestige to his kingdom. The buildings are mostly Renaissance style; in the center there is a statue of the king by *Juan de Bolonia* and *Pietro Tacca*. During 17th century this square was the scenery of theater performances and bullfights, and trails by the Inquisition. It also served as meeting-place of the *Gremios*, the associations of craftsmen. In 1790 the *Plaza Mayor* was almost completely destroyed by a fire, but rebuilt later on.



Iglesia Catedral de San Isidro

Toledo, 37 – 39: This baroque church originally belonged to the monastery *Antiguo Colegio Imperial de la Compañía de Jesús*, and was later on the Cathedral of Madrid, now supplanted by the Almudena at the Royal Palace.



Casa de la Villa (Town Hall)

Plaza de la Villa: Originally projected in 1644 by *Juan Gomez de Mora* to be a prison, this building became Madrid's town hall when it was finished in 1787.

Iglesia de San Ginés

Calle Arenal between Sol and Opera: In spite of its Baroque exterior it is one of the 10 oldest churches in Madrid. It was probably begun in the 11th or 12th century and built on top of an old Arab mosque.



Convento de las Trinitarias Descalzas

Behind the Corte Inglés in Puerta del Sol: The convent was founded by the Princess *Juana de Austria* in 1559 in this building which was the palace of her birth. It contains 10,000 pieces of art and is still occupied and run by the order of the "Clarissas Franciscanas".

18th Century

Palacio Real

Calle de Bailén: Madrid's *Royal Palace* is an impressive example of classical Italian baroque style.

The architects Juvara, Sabatini and Sachetti began construction under Philip V. *Charles III* was, in 1714, the first king to have his residence here. In the interior of the palace we find numerous rooms which can be visited, especially remarkable is the *Throne Hall*, the collection of clocks and the collection of wall tapestries. Worth visiting as well are the gardens, *Jardines de Sabatini and Campo del Moro*.

La Casa de Correos (Post Office)

Cibeles Plaza: This building with its impressive facade was designed by French architect *Maquet*

between 1766 and 1768. The goddess Sybille adorns the fountain in the center of the square, a gift from Mexico to the people of Madrid.

Real Casa de Aduanas

Alcalá 5, 7, 9: Royal Custom office, built by *Sabatini* between 1761 and 1769.

Museo del Prado

Paseo del Prado: Perhaps the most beautiful neoclassic building in Madrid. Built in 1785, it was intended to be a museum of natural history. Having been used



Left: Botanical Gardens
Right: Puerta de Alcalá

as an arsenal during the wars against *Napoleon*, it became Madrid's Museum of Art in 1819 to house the king's painting collection.

Fountain of Cibeles

Paseo del Prado: This beautiful fountain, designed by *Ventura Rodriguez*, is a well-known landmark in Madrid. Also, the location for Real Madrid football fans to celebrate after a big win. For this reason it is barricaded with scaffolding whenever there is an important match at the Estadio Bernabeu.

Fountain of Neptune

Paseo de la Castellana: Another fountain designed by *Ventura Rodriguez*.

Puerta de Alcalá

Plaza de la Independencia: The *Alcalá Gate* is a beautiful triumphal arch made by *Francisco Sabatini* (also designed the *Royal Palace*) in 1778, after the arrival of King Charles III to Madrid.

Botanical Gardens

Paseo del Prado: Planned by Juan de Villanueva in 1811.

19th Century

Teatro Real (Opera House)

Plaza de Oriente, Plaza de Isabel II: Madrid's impressive opera house recently reconstructed with state-of-



From top:
 Passage at Palacio Real
 Puerta del Sol
 The Bear and the Madroño tree
 Palacio de Cristal



the-art innards, was built in 1818 by *Cuatodio Moreno*. Opera tickets are almost impossible to obtain but there are student tickets available for Sunday morning concerts.

Plaza de Oriente

This square in the east of the Royal Palace and west of the Teatro Real (Opera House) was designed at the time of *Joseph Bonaparte*, who, after the victory of his brother *Napoleon* against Spain, took over the government. The French wanted to build a wide boulevard in the style of *Champs Elysées* in Paris, but the project was truncated by *Napoleon's* final defeat.



Puerta de Toledo

Glorieta de la Puerta de Toledo: A triumphal arch, built in 1817 after the victory against *Napoleon's* troops.

Palacio del Senado (Senate Palace)

Plaza de la Marina Española: A neogothic library established in 1883 and built by *Francisco de Mora*.

Congreso de Madrid

Plaza de las Cortes: Madrid's *Congress* is a Renaissance style building originally constructed in 1843 which has now been completely modernised. The facade includes a marvelous neoclassic portal with two famous statues of reclining lions on the steps. The original building contrasts sharply with the often-criticized modern annex built next to it.



Puerta del Sol

This door was, in 15th century, the main entrance to Madrid. Today *Puerta del Sol* and the square, form the very center of the Spain's capital. The monumental clock and the statue of a bear eating from a berry tree (called *madroño*) are landmarks of Madrid. You will see everybody gathering around the statue of the bear in the evenings, as it is a very popular place to meet up, to then go on somewhere else.

Palacio de Cristal (Crystal Palace)

Parque del Retiro: A beautiful building of metal and glass, built in 1887 as a winter garden for exotic plants.

Teatro de la Zarzuela

Calle Jovellanos: A theater where *Zarzuelas*, Spanish operettas, can be seen. It was built in 1856, imitating the style of Milan's *Scala*.

Torres KIO (Puerta de Europa)

Plaza de Castilla: These two towers were built in 1996 by the Kuwait Investments Office. Each building is 115 m tall with an inclination of 15°.

Torre Picasso

Plaza de Pablo Ruiz Picasso: One of the highest skyscrapers in Spain is 157 m high and was finished in 1988. The architect, Minoru Yamasaki, also designed the World Trade Center.

Estadio Santiago Bernabéu

Concha Espina 1: The home stadium for Real Madrid was inaugurated in 1947. After several renovations it now can hold 80 000 spectators. For fans who want to see every corner of the stadium such as trophies exhibition there is a stadium tour available. See link: www.madrid-football-tickets.com/publicacio/instalacio/32#info



From top:
Torres KIO
Estadio Santiago Bernabéu

Museums



Here is an extensive list of museums, some of which are world renowned and others which are interesting for curiosities.

Prado

Paseo del Prado. Open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays closed. Free on Sundays and with a Student ID the cost is 1.50 €. Open Sunday afternoons in August.

Certainly one of the most important collections of paintings worldwide. There are special rooms for masters like *Goya*, *Velázquez*, *El Greco*, *Zurbarán*, *Murillo* and *Tiziano*, as well as for representatives of

the *Flemish school*. To avoid overload, we recommend that you narrow your focus each visit to one or two of the above masters.

Museum Thyssen-Bornemisza

Paseo del Prado, 8. Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Mondays closed. Open at night for special exhibits in the summer until 11.

In this museum, which was inaugurated in 1993, one can view one of the most important private arts collections in the world. It is especially renowned for its collection of German expressionism.

National Museum Reina Sofía

Santa Isabel, 52. Open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. This is one of few museums in Madrid which is open on Mondays and closed on Tuesdays.

Madrid's collection of modern and contemporary



From top/left:
Sorolla
Goya
Dalí

art features *Dalí*, *Picasso* and *Miró* among many other greats. The shop is worth a visit as well as the building, which is a reconstructed hospital with a central garden for strolls. They have interesting expositions and free concerts. This museum completes the “Arts Triangle” along with the Prado and the Thyssen.

Costume Museum (Traje)

Juan de Herrera 2 (Ciudad Universitaria). Open 9.30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Thursdays also 9.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. Sundays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays closed.

From prehistoric clothing to the work of modern Spanish designers.

Museum of Palacio Real

Bailén s/n. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays and Holidays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Museum Sorolla

Paseo General Martínez Campos, 37. Open 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesdays 9.30 to 6 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Open at night on Thursdays in the summer from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m., Mondays closed.

Works of the great Spanish impressionist painter *Sorolla*, in his home made into a museum. Sorolla

Painted the murals on the library walls of the Spanish Institute in New York City. Well worth a visit. Recently renovated. See also the beautiful garden.

Museum Cerralbo

Ventura Rodríguez, 17. Open 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays closed.

An extraordinary collection of paintings, sculptures, ceramics and tapestries. Offers concerts too.

National Museum of Decorative Arts

Montalbán, 12. Open 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays closed.

A large collection of ceramics, glass-objects, textiles and furniture.

Open Air Sculpture Museum

Paseo de la Castellana

Museum Lazaro Galdiano

Serrano, 122. Open 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., Tuesdays closed.

Private collection of paintings, jewelry and objects of enamel, ceramics and ivory.

Useful Information

The old part of Madrid is fairly small and most things are within walking distance once you are in the center, but you have got to know how to find them! Here are some useful things to help you orient yourself and get things done.



Atocha (Train station)

Communications

Internet Cafes

You will find Internet Cafés with high-speed connections everywhere within the city. However, high speed in Spain is much slower than every other country in Europe. Still in Madrid, you will find prices inexpensive, around 1,00€ to 2,00€ an hour. A café that serves food and drink while you surf will most likely cost more. Most Spanish language schools provide free Internet access.

Personal Computers

If you are considering bringing your own laptop computer there are a few things you may want to keep in mind. Internet access in your apartment or home in Spain is very rare, and if there is access, remember that you will need to know how to reconfigure your computer for it. However, a personal computer is always useful for other things like downloading pictures from your digital camera or using your computer for music and entertainment.

Telephone Calls

To make international calls we recommend buying a calling card. According to past participants, the *Happy Card* is good. It can be bought in most *Tabacalera* stores, otherwise known as "un estanco", and is especially cost efficient for calls to the United States. There is a lot of variation amongst other phone cards and they can be unreliable. They make not work and you cannot return them once you leave the shop. Which ever phone card you buy, make sure to check that the pin number is not scratched off and that the card is in

its plastic envelope when you buy it. If you decide to experiment and find something better than the Happy card, please let us know!

If you have a personal computer you can also make international calls through www.skype.com. They have extremely inexpensive direct dial calls, and if you call computer to computer it is free.

Another economical method to phone internationally is in a phone center, a small store with individual phone booths. Phone calls are limitless and you are charged after the completion of your call.

Cellular phones are a necessity when living and commuting in a large city. For the seasonal resident, the prepaid, contractless phones are what we recommend. The *Corte Inglés*, *Vodafone* or *The Phone House* sell new phones with minutes for 49€ to 90€. If you have a cell phone that works in Spain you can buy a new SIM card with a Spanish number. It should cost around 25€. Minute rates may vary. Beware that phone calls made before 4:00 p.m. are significantly more expensive. In which case, text messaging is the cheapest alternative, costing around 0,15€ per message.

Post boxes

The post offices are yellow and plentiful, so they are easy to spot on a crowded street. If you want to buy stamps, go to a *Tabacalera*, the same outlets in which you can buy phone cards. Postcards and letters to the

United States cost 0,75€. The main post office is on the Plaza Cibeles (metro Banco de España). Open Monday to Saturday, from 9 until 21 h. Call for information on 003. It's one of the most impressive buildings in Madrid, immense Gothic-Victorian, so you won't miss it! The mail service is rather mediocre and unreliable. If you are sending something important be sure to register it (certificado).

Embassies

The US embassy is on Calle Serrano 75. Tel: 91 5774000. The British Embassy is located at Calle Fernando el Santo 16, E-28010 Madrid. Tel: 91 3190200. If you're out and about in Spain and you need to get to a consulate, there are British consulates in Seville, Alicante, Barcelona, Tarragona, Bilbao, Lanzarote, Las Palmas, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Málaga, Palma, Ibiza, Santander, Menorca and Vigo.

American Express office

Plaza de las Cortes, 2. Tel: 91 5720303.

Western Union offices

If you need to wire money or receive money fast there are Western Union Offices in all post offices and in the Plaza Callao on the Gran Vía. You will need the location number and your passport to be able to receive money.

Transportation

Traveling around the city is relatively simple, unless you have a car. The metro and bus systems are well priced, safe and convenient. And the taxis are among the cheapest in Europe.

"Abono Transporte" Pass

If you plan to frequently use the public transportation in Madrid, such as buses, trains or the metro, invest in a monthly "Abono Transporte" pass. These ID cards can be bought in the ever so useful *Tabacalera* shops that scatter the streets with their maroon and yellow signs. This government owned chain store, *Tabacalera*, is the same outlet where you may buy phone cards, postal stamps and transportation tickets.

El Teleférico



These passes last from the first to the end of the month and are the most economical choice as you jump from bus to metro with an unlimited number of rides. The appropriate pass will depend on where you live and how old you are. If you live in the A zone, buy the A pass, which costs 25,40€ if you are under 21 and if not 39€. If you take the green buses, you must buy a B1 pass, which costs 28,75€ if you are under 21 and if not 45,25€.

Bring with you some passport-sized photos for this pass. You will also need a copy of your passport if you are under 21, which takes ten days to process. If you are over 21, you can sign up for it in five minutes.

Metro and Municipal Buses

Alternatively, you can buy a *Metrobus* pass for ten journeys for 6,15€ or a single ticket for 1€. The tickets for the metro can be used on the municipal busses, but not on all other busses. The last metro is at 1:30 at night. There is also night circuit of buses called the *buhos*, (meaning owls) which leave from Cibeles, near the central post, every hour and a half, beginning at 1:00am until 6:00am when the metro starts again. The *buhos* for Pozuelo leave from Moncloa (only Fridays and Saturdays) and for other areas, from Sol. This service is also being improved with more buses and more routes.

Municipal buses in Madrid give change for up to 5€. The fees and tickets are the same as for the metro: a single journey costs 1€ and the *Metrobus* (6,15€) can also be used. Note that Madrid's municipal buses are notorious for following their own schedule. Do

not be surprised to see a handful of local commuters impatiently waiting at a bus stop for 20 to 30 minutes. Frequency of buses is significantly reduced on the weekends.

Cercanias means ‘commuter trains’. These are one step up from the metro in size, price, distance and comfort. They go from the center of Madrid to the surrounding areas, and are perfect to use for a day or weekend trips. The main place for taking a cercanias is from Atocha or Chamartín, the two major railway stations, but you can get on one at metro stations that have a red ‘C’, and at the cercanias stations themselves. Cercanias are also usable with an *Abono Transportes* pass.

Renfe are trains that run all over Spain, and are again very cheap by European standards. The more popular train routes are more expensive, like the swanky *Ave*, fast train to Sevilla, or a train to Barcelona. The main stations for journeys are Chamartín (metro line 10), for the north, and Atocha (metro line 1) for the south. For information you can call on 91 3289020. If you plan on taking a trip to Sevilla on the *Ave* you should reserve your tickets at least one week in advance. The *Ave* is full all weekend long. You can call the *Ave* and reserve your ticket by phone. You then have 48 hours to go to Atocha to pick it up.

Buses

Although the long distant buses are cheap and show bad films, they are a great way to see the countryside. If you only take one bus journey in Spain, make it be the one to Granada; the sea of olive trees that rolls over the southern sierra is staggeringly beautiful.

There are various bus stations for national and international journeys, the main one being *Méndez Alvaro* off of metro line 6. Each bus company has their own area in Spain. For example, you won’t find five bus companies all going to Barcelona. In order to find out which bus company you need, it is better to go to the bus station in person. You will NOT find what you need on the Internet or by phone. The earlier you plan, the better.

An example of the price difference between a bus and train ticket is one way to Huesca on the bus is 15€ and on the train it is 21€. Another bus station, Estación de Auto-Res, is located near the metro stop of Conde de Casal. Which station you need to go to depends on your destination you are going to in Spain.



Metro

English Language Publications

Due to the high volumes of English speakers that reside in Madrid, there are a number of English language publications, which vary in target audience and quality. If your Spanish is a bit rusty or you just fancy reading something in English, check out the following publications.

In Madrid is a free entertainment newspaper which comes out every month, and proclaims to be for the “hip, cool, and transient.” As you can see from the copy enclosed in your orientation folder, it has tons of information about everything. On one page it tells you all the places where you can find a copy. If you want to find a conversation partner to work on your Spanish or advertise yourself for a language interchange, then this is a good place to do it. Free classified ads.

The Broadsheet, now called simply TBS, has an up-market image and describes itself as a lifestyle magazine. It’s still free and can be found in many of the same places as *In Madrid*.

International Bookshops

Petra’s International Bookshop is a secondhand bookshop which has books in a variety of languages. The books are cheap, you get a partial refund on books you buy there, read, then bring back, and there is a really cool notice board which has notices from people look-

ing for things, organizing things, and is generally a good source of information, as is Jenny, the owner. The address is Calle Campomanes, 13 (off metro Opera or Santa Domingo.) Hours: Monday to Saturday 11 am–9 pm. Tel: 91 541 7291

Other places to buy books in English are the *Casa del Libro* on Gran Via (metro lines 1 and 5) which has a fairly extensive selection of books in English. Also, *FNAC*, next to metro Callao (lines 5 and 3), *Booksellers* on José Abascal, 48, metro Gregorio Marañón, line 10 and *Paisajes* on Génova, metro Alonso Martínez.

Spanish Language Publications

Guía del Ocio

To find out what's going on at the cinema, in the bars, clubs, museums, exhibitions and theatres, where to eat and more, you should get the *Guía del Ocio* (free time guide), which comes out every week, costs 1 euro, and is sold in all newspaper kiosks. It not only has where to eat, but also the general prices and nationality of the food served, in special categories. You only have to be a bit careful with the cinema times they put down, i.e. turn up half an hour before the time written, because they sometimes get it wrong.

Despite this it is the main guide used by *Madrileños* to decide what to do and where to go and therefore an invaluable source of information. There is also one for Barcelona and other major cities in Spain. You can find it on the Internet too. The website for *Guía del Ocio* is www.guiadelocio.com. Also recommended is www.spainalive.com for a culture and entertainment guide in English.

Segunda Mano

“Segunda Mano” is a classified newspaper which comes out several times a week and has a large section of rentals and shared living situations. They are online at www.segundamano.es.

Our advice is not to underestimate the power of personal contacts and recommendations in Spain, for whatever it is that you might need. Then, if all else fails proceed with caution and refer to the “Segunda Mano”.

Health

Madrid has been suffering a lowering of its water table. Since the dryness is severe, please keep in mind that conservation of water is very important.

- The tap water in Spain is drinkable, especially in Madrid where the water comes fresh from the mountains.
- Genetically modified foods are not on sale, especially not in the market places.
- Despite all the meat scares that have been rushing around Europe over the last few years, Spain's meat quality remains very good.
- Organic products are very hard to find, but there is a small range at *el Corte Inglés* for example.
- Condoms can be bought openly and there are often vending machine that dispense them at a small price. These are found in lavatories and outside of pharmacies.
- The pill is available in pharmacies without prescription. The morning after pill, however, is hard to come by and sometimes pharmacies do not stock it for reasons of conscience. In case of an emergency, a doctor will advise what you should do.
- *Farmacias de guardia* are pharmacies that stay open all night. These vary, as they are normal pharmacies that take it in turns to stay open for a night shift. If you need to go to the pharmacy at night, you can either phone 098, or look in that day's newspaper, or find any pharmacy and look at the sign or list in the window.

Insurance

If you hold an European passport, and you filled out an E-111 form before coming to Spain, then any medical treatment will be refunded in part or in full, but you will have to pay up front. If you do not have this, then medical insurance is a wise idea.

BEST participants have insurance through *Mapfre*, the biggest national insurance company in Spain. It includes travel, accident and health insurance, covering: medical (doctor's visits, hospitalization and prescription up to 3000 euros), emergency dentist visits up to 60 euros, (transport, lodging, extended stays, prior returns, messages), covering of costs due to delays in luggage arrival (min. 12 hrs.) up to 60 euros, transport of lost luggage once found, reporting to authorities, civil responsibility up to 60000 euros. It does not cover loss from robbery. No deductible.

Gyms

If you are determined to keep fit a well-equipped gym is easy to find in Madrid. Most gyms charge an enrollment fee and offer cheaper rates if you use the gym in the mornings during specific hours. Ask about student discounts and rates. In addition, a basic gym membership usually does not include other activities such as the cardiovascular room (treadmill, stair master, bicycles, elliptical), yoga, aerobics, spinning, etc. That is usually a separate fee, but reasonable. All

gyms will charge you 4-6 euros extra for the gym ID. This bit of information is usually not mentioned on the *hoja informativa* (information sheet with prices and gym services) nor does anyone feel obliged to say this when you pay.

The following gyms are ones that we have tried out. If none of these are easily accessible to you, consult “páginas amarillas” for more information.



Gimnasio Argüelles Club

C/ Andrés Mellado 21
Tel.: 91 549 00 40
Metro Argüelles
www.gimnasioarguelles.es

Fees	Days	Time	Month	Tri- mester
Mornings, all activi- ties	Monday - Friday	8 – 13 h	55€	150€
One Activ- ity	Everyday	8 – 23 h	57€	154€
All Activi- ties	Everyday	8 – 23 h	70€	190€
All Activi- ties	Weekends & holidays only	9 – 15 h	40€	

Gym Hours: Mon. to Fri. 8 - 23 h.; Weekends & Holidays 9 -15 h.

Activities: Weights, Cardio Room, Aerobics, Step, Spinning (Official Schwinn Center), Yoga, Pilates, Latin Rhythms and many more.

Rates (in 2006): Enrollment Fee, 25€. (Included if you pay by trimester.)

Comments: The staff on this gym is quite friendly, which, believe me, makes a difference when you're a foreigner. The gym decor is very 80's, but all the equipment is in great condition. The gym is spacious and the cardio room has plenty of machines so it is unlikely that you will be waiting.

Avanti Sport Center

C/ Isaac Peral, 14
Tel: 91 544 83 20
Metro Moncloa

Activities: Aerodance, Step, Cardio Box, Wellness, Stretching, Spinning, Cardio Fitness, Body Tonic, Weights. For a special fee also Yoga, Dance classes, Pilates, Tai chi, Capoeira, Nin Jutsu, Kung fu.

Rates (in 2006): Enrollment Fee, 25€

Fees	Time	Month	Trimester
Everyday	8 – 18 h.	50€	139€
Everyday	8 – 23 h.	60€	170€
3 days/ week	8 – 23 h.	55€	154€
3 days/ week (un- der 25)	8 – 23 h.	50€	140€

Gym Hours: Mon. to Fri. 8 - 23 h; Weekends 10:30 - 14:30 h.

Comments: This gym is very nice and modern, but small. The cardio equipment is good, but limited in number. This gym does not have a cardio room so most of the bicycles are lined up in the passageway leading to the weight room. Most of the members are Spanish students. I didn't find the staff to be very friendly or informative, but maybe I caught them on a bad day. If you want to "sample" this gym, it is free for the first visit. This gym and Gimnasio Argüelles are located within five minutes walking distance of each other.

City Yoga

C/ Artistas, 43
Tel.: 91 553 47 51
Metro Cuatro Caminos
www.city-yoga.com

Hours: 10 – 22 h.

Activities: Pilates, Hatha Yoga, Tai Chi (all levels)

Comments: This yoga studio is very posh and boasts a serene atmosphere. It is hard to find a place that offers good yoga or pilates. The classes are pricey (since pilates and yoga are trendy). For a complete listing of prices and class schedules, please look at their website.



Lodging

The *BEST* participants that live in shared apartments or host families will need to be ready to confront different living customs. The shared apartments are usually regulated by a landlord. Each landlord has his or her own rules about how you should keep up the apartment, if you can or cannot have guests over, and other living issues.

Families also have their own customs, and the best advice for you is to just come with an open mind. Again, you should be aware of the attitude the family has towards visitors in the home. It is not very likely that your family or landlord will allow guests and/or friends of yours in the house or apartment.

For more on this subject see “*What to Expect*” in the section on Culture.

Many of you also want to know about lodging for friends and relatives who come to visit. The Gran Via area is loaded with cheap hostels that are clean and well situated. 25€ to 40€ is the standard price for a decent room. Be sure to remember, however, that a hostel is not a first class hotel and they may have different customs in how they do business. You may find that you are more controlled and that the owners are always watching what you are up to. The following hostels have been recommended by former students.

- **Hostal T.I.J.C.A.L.**, Calle Zaragoza 6, 3º, metro Puerta del Sol next to the Plaza Mayor, has web page: www.hostaltijcal.com, tel. 91-365-5910.
- **Hostal Ágape**, Calle Veneras, 2, 3º puerta, metro Callao or Santo Domingo. Has e-mail: agapehostel@eresmas.es, tel. 91-547-8181. Rates 2006: Single room 16€, Double room 24€.
- **Hostal Riosol**, Calle Mayor 5, metro Puerta del Sol, clean and safe but noisy, sometimes hard to get, tel. 91-532-3142.
- **Hostal Armesto**, Calle San Agustín 6, 1º Dcha (1st floor right hand side), near Plz. Sta. Ana and the Cortes, clean and comfortable. Has web page: www.hostalarmesto.com, Tel. 91-429 09 40, 91-429 90 31.



CULTURE

Culture in Spain

Spain is a western country with attitudes, habits, and a standard of living that is similar to Britain and the United States. This doesn't mean that you won't need time to get used to the sights, sounds, tastes and smells of your new surroundings, though. This overseas adjustment period is what people generally call “culture shock”.

Jeremy Packer's *Jobs and Careers Abroad* states:

“Everyone who moves to another country will experience, to a greater or lesser extent, a phenomenon known as ‘culture shock’. It is as well to be aware of this before you go, and to be prepared for its effects ranging from elation to disappointment, according to the person, the environment, and the experience he or she has. You should understand that living abroad has its highs and lows, and that this is to be expected.

There are several stages in this process which you can expect to go through, beginning with what is known as the *Honeymoon Stage*, when you do not let small irritations spoil your enjoyment and admiration of your new environment.



The next is *Crisis and Disintegration*, as you become more aware of differences in values and behavior: isolation and a search for comfort and security are its consequences. It is quite normal to go through this stage. Indeed, the time to worry is when you don't!

Then there is a period of *readjustment* or 'reintegration', which begins with a return to your own values and beliefs, and a rejection of the new culture. You keep company with people from your own, or similar countries... You may cling to stereotypes about your own country which you find reassuring. But all this is not entirely negative. You are beginning to assert yourself, and to find your own space in this new and unfamiliar world. With time, and growing self-esteem, you move towards a state of *autonomy*. You can then enjoy the positive aspects of the new culture; and are less concerned with the negative differences, but accept them for what they are."

Some strategies for beating culture shock are:

- Being aware of the symptoms, which can include physical and psychological effects ranging from headaches and tiredness to sleep problems and irritability.
- Good preparation is important, for example contacts with people from that country before your departure.
- Find out about the country before you go there.
- Try to avoid mixing only with expatriates and other foreigners.
- Reduce stress by keeping healthy with physical exercise.
- Write down the bad things and the good things to see if you can find a way of changing the bad things or of finding a way to live with them.

What to Expect

Living with a Spaniards

Whether you have a host family or live with Spanish roommates they are a very important part of your overall language immersion experience, because you will not only have the opportunity to learn about the culture but also you will be able to practice Spanish.

Helpful hints

- Normally you will eat the same food as the family.
- Most Spanish people tend to eat meals much later than you may be used to. Breakfast usually consists of coffee and biscuits. Lunch is the most important meal of the day; usually served between 2 pm and 4 pm. Dinner is a lighter meal usually served around 10 pm.
- Unless you have indicated special diet restrictions on your application form, you should not expect your family to make you special meals.
- If you cannot live without your favorite type of food, we recommend you buy it in a local supermarket. These kinds of food are normally imported and very expensive by Spanish standards.
- You will probably be offered many things you are not used to eating like octopus, blood sausage, pigs' ears, and tripe, to name some of the strangest ones. Be prepared to either try them or to refuse them with delicacy.
- If for some reason you are having dinner elsewhere, please be courteous and notify your family of your change of plans. Sitting down for a family meal once a day is very common in Spanish homes.
- Make sure to close and lock doors and gates properly - it may seem silly, but many locks here seem to have tricks to them. *Learn them* before

you get locked out or lock someone else out.

- Leave your bedroom tidy and presentable when you go out.
- Do your best to conserve water and electricity; this means turning the lights off when you are not in your room. Make sure to close taps properly.
- Do not wake the family if you are returning home late.
- Do not use the family belongings without permission.
- Do not wash personal belongings by yourself - follow the family laundry routine and ask what the family thinks is best.
- Communicate with your family.
- If you do not feel comfortable discussing something with you family, please ask *BEST* to assist you with the situation.
- Finally - overnight guests are NOT allowed!

Living in Shared Flats/Apartments

- Leave the common rooms clean and presentable.
- Wash dishes after use.
- Do not wake up flat mates when returning late.
- Do not invite “just made” friends to stay in the residence.
- Damage or technical fault should be reported immediately.

Making the Adjustment

Culture

Be prepared for a bit of a culture shock when you come to Spain. Spanish people have very different ideas about many things. But the best thing to do is to realize that *you* are the visitor, and that the burden of cultural adjustment is upon you. Even though the Spanish style of life is not completely different from your own, there will be significant changes to which you will have to adjust. Besides, if everything were exactly the same as what you are used to, where would the fun be? With this in mind here are some other differences you should be prepared for.

Try to look at the differences as something to learn from, or something to enjoy. If you have that attitude, we can assure you that Spain and its people will not let you down.

Customs/ Etiquette

Eating out

In general, Spaniards eat lunch anywhere from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., and dinner is frequently at 10:00 p.m.

The best way to find out about eating out is to consult the *Guía del Ocio* mentioned above in the section

Spanish Language

Publications. Some advice

is to eat out at lunchtime rather than in the evening if you want a good menu at a cheap price. This is when you'll see the signs outside saying '*Menú del día*' with a list of the specialty food for the day. A *menú del día* usually costs around 9 € and you can expect to get three courses and with drink included, and then you'll find out why everyone has a siesta after lunch! In the evening it's more difficult to find such good prices, and a meal of the same quality might cost you 20 € or more.



Restaurants

Waiters are very slow, wait for them to take your order, and don't go up to the bar to order.

The concept of service is different. Sitting and waiting should be observed as comfort time

to enjoy the company that you are spending it with. Waiters will never ask you to leave. Again, the concept of noise in restaurants is something that you may not be used to; people go to out to have a good time so the noise level is high.



Tipping is not the norm in Spain. Simply leaving your change or a few coins is usually satisfactory. About 1€ per person is good for a meal.

Eating with both a fork and a knife is the style and common table manners. The knife is used not only to cut food but also to push food onto the fork.

Asking to take your left over food home with you (i.e. doggie bag) is virtually unheard of and often considered cheap.

Family

In general families stay together much longer than you may be used to. The Spanish lifestyle is very family oriented. It is common for three generations of families to be living together under the same roof. It is a way to increase the household income and to help one another. In addition, most young people don't leave home until they marry and doing so is often interpreted as a lack of love for their parents.

Although families have animals as pets, they are usually not as pampered as pets in the United States.

Noise level

Quiet and peaceful households are a rarity. Whether it is dogs barking, car horns beeping, street noise, neighbors or relatives visiting or a señora banging around in the kitchen making a meal, much of Spain is noisier than what you might be used to. People often talk loudly. They are not yelling at you.

Greetings

You'll be happier here if you learn to greet and bid farewell. It is considered very, very bad manners if you don't. Try to greet people whenever it might be necessary; getting into taxis, coming into a roomful of people, walking into a small store, coffee house, elevator, etc. When entering a shop, it is often customary to say *Buenos Dias*, *Buenas tardes*, or *Buenas noches* and *Adios* or *Gracias* when leaving even if you don't know the people.

Spaniards tend to place more emphasis on physical contact than North Americans. When men greet men, they shake hands. When men greet women or vice versa, they apply a light kiss on both sides of the person's face. Conversations occur at a much closer physical distance than you may be accustomed to in the US. Moving away to establish distance is considered unfriendly.

In store lines

Expect to encounter people pushing their way to the front of the line. Many times, a person will enter the shop where there is a line and say *Quien es la última?*, they want to know who is the last person in line and you may need to say, "Yo" (me).

Dress

Most Spaniards dress nicely all the time. They almost never wear shorts. Shorts are normally only worn



when going to the beach or by tourists. There are some dress restrictions at some nightclubs/discos. Also, dress better when entering churches or for meetings or interviews. Going barefoot is considered unhealthy.

La Siesta

Most shops close some time between 1 pm – 5 pm, so get what you need before they close, or after they open for evening hours.

Catalan language

Catalan is its own language and, therefore, it is incorrect to say to Catalans that it is a dialect of Spanish. Some feel so strongly about their identity that they don't consider themselves Spaniards.

Concept of time

Most Spaniards do not plan ahead and many things are spontaneous. Impromptu dinners and outings are normal. For example people start planning summer vacations in April or May.

Job Market

It is very difficult to find a job in Spain, especially for non-residents. There is unemployment in Spain. Labor laws are strict and confining. Trade unions are powerful calling general strikes at least once a year.

Housing

You will find, if you are trying to rent your own apartment, that procedures are quite unpredictable. For example, telephone installations, when you ask for a new line, can take a long time and cost over 100€.

Conservation

Gasoline, electricity and the telephone are very expensive and should always be conserved, i.e. turning off lights when leaving the room, making sure that radios are not left turned on in your rooms etc.

Recycling

Even the Spaniards are realising the importance of caring for the environment. So if you are environmentally conscious, there are bins for recycling paper, plastics and glass on almost every street. There are also many battery recycling bins around the city.

Smoking

The general attitude towards smoking is lenient in Spain. They base their idea in the belief that smokers have their rights too. In an effort to follow the European trend, a smoking law was passed in the spring of 2006 to regulate smoking in places of work. Smoking is prohibited now in workplaces, however the law has a loophole, so most cafes, restaurants, clubs and bars under 100 square meters still allow smoking in fear of losing customers. Some larger restaurants have no smoking sections but most of the smaller ones do not.

Safety

Madrid is very safe compared to London or New York; people are constantly out in the streets, the metro is well policed by security companies and used by everyone at all times. On the night buses, everyone is usually thinking about going to bed.

That is not to say that a minimum precaution isn't necessary, a certain amount is sensible, so don't leave your brains at the border.

The culture of street life in Madrid means that it is always crowded so what you have to be the most careful of are pickpockets. Beware there are many, but if you're careful where you put your purse or wallet, this won't be a problem either. The statistics for this type of robbery are on the rise so do not carry things of value with you. Be very careful of any type of contrived distraction like someone dropping money, photos, spilling something on you, bumping into you, telling you that you dropped something, etc. Another method is to cover the hands with a large map, a newspaper or with a garment over their arms under which they

“work” without being seen. Mind your possession on busses (long and short distance) and in fast food establishments.

Pickpockets in Madrid are magicians with kid gloves. Artists and professionals. I guarantee you they can lift almost anything off you without you taking the slightest notice. This said, experience unfortunately, is the best teacher. Most of the pick pocketing is done on public transportation (40%) and in tourist areas of the city. You won't lose your life, but you may lose your wallet, your passport and your credit cards. They target tourists, so look as little like a tourist as possible. This isn't easy since there seems to be generalized tourist attire which we fall into while travelling for comforts sake. This includes shorts, sandals, white socks, unironed clothes, etc. One of these could pass but combined with a general look of disconcerted interest that most visitors have, they are sitting pigeons for the pickpockets.

This is what you can do to avoid being victimized:

- Do not flaunt your possessions: your camera, wallet, guidebooks or maps.
- Do not wear expensive jewelry or provocative clothing.
- Don't carry your money together with your credit cards and other valuables. I carry all my paper money loose in my handbag, my credit cards in a case and my change in a purse. If one of them is robbed, at least I have saved the others.
- Photocopy everything - your credit cards and your passport. Carry the copy of your passport. Keep the copy of your credit cards for emergencies.
- Carry only the amount of cash that you are prepared to lose. Use the ATM machines that are all over town.

To reiterate:

- Carry the following with you at all times:
 - A copy of your passport (keep originals in safe place)
 - Try not to carry more than 50 € with you in cash
 - Name, address, and number of your family or place of lodging
 - A map of the city
 - One ATM/credit card
- Money belts under your clothing work well but fanny packs, which you may think are safest of



all, are dead ringers.

- Do not count money in front of people.

Other helpful pointers:

- Be aware of your surroundings!
- Walk in a group at night and avoid poor neighborhoods.
- Do not get into a taxi if there are other people with the taxi driver.
- Do not consume or transport illegal drugs. The laws in Spain are severe with respect to this topic.
- Never offer money to the police. If you encounter a situation that you do not understand, insist on talking with someone from your host family or to someone at BEST.
- Make sure that someone knows where you are at all times. If you are traveling on weekends, leave emergency phone numbers with your family and friends. If you are delayed on your return, call your host or friends and let them know.
- Buy a cell phone and keep it on you and turned on at all times.
- Be careful when crossing streets (even if you have the green light). In many drivers' views, pedestrians do not have the right-of-way and stop and traffic signs seem like mere suggestions.

Free time

Madrid is a great place to spend free time, because there are a million things to do. Whatever you're into, there's going to be something for you. Here we've given you some basics,

and ways of finding out more. There is only a little bit of information about the areas to go out, to act as a taster, the rest is up to you to explore and find what you like and don't like.

General

In Spain, people generally tend to go out later and stay out later, so be prepared for some long nights! There are two 'shifts' for going out in Madrid; the first is for people up to the age of about 17, and is from around 8 p.m. until around 12 a.m. After that they all go home and the biggies come out, the streets hitting maximum fiesta at around 1.30 or 2 in the morning. At this time in many of the popular places you will struggle to get into bars and have to weave your way down streets which become pedestrian through sheer force of numbers. *La marcha* is very, very important in Spain.

The present city hall has been trying to phase out the habit of drinking on the streets which is called the "botellón". Before this they tried to enforce an earlier closing hour in bars and clubs. As you may well see, many prefer to ignore the rules.

Nonetheless, people still have fun. Spain is a nation that consumes a lot of alcohol, and while it is often in the form of straight beer or wine, they have some interesting variations; *Kalimocho* is a favorite amongst the younger crowd, it is a mixture of bad cola and bad red wine and ice cubes. The idea is that you mix them both to take away the taste of the other. You can often buy kalimocho in cheap bars, always sold in *minis* which are one-liter plastic glasses; also *tintos de verano* are popular. That is wine with lemon or orange pop. It is

similar to a *sangria*, without the fruit.

Copas are your basic mixed spirit drink, which come in tube like glasses with lots of ice. You will be blown away when you see the bar staff free pouring whatever spirit you asked for, often until you tell them to stop. For the price you pay, which is usually between 3 and 6 euros, they're good value. *Una caña* is a glass of beer (around 2€ or less) and you will rarely hear people ask for *una cerveza*, but *una caña* instead. You have no choice over the type of beer, but its all cold lager.

Una clara is a mixture of beer with 7-up or lemon soda. *Sidra* is cider, but when it's from Asturias, the great cider region in the north of Spain, it's a little different because you get it in the bottle with a wide based glass, and you have to pour it yourself, which is an art form for professionals and a disaster for beginners. I'll say no more, go and check it out!

Finally, you've probably heard all about *tapas*, the pieces of food you often get with a drink, which can vary in size and quality depending on the bar, the barman, the weather... Basically, you should always get a *tapa* with any alcoholic drink, and if you don't get one, ask for one! It's in this way that the Madrileños (all Spaniards for that matter) keep going all night; a mixture of drink, food and walking from place to place. If you wonder why they say *tapa*, it means "cover" and originally referred to the piece of bread which accompanied the appetizer and covered it.

Barrios (Neighborhoods)

Barrios are neighborhoods, or districts, and in Madrid, as in any major city, the scene changes depending on the area. It's possible to go out anywhere in Spain and find people celebrating something, every day of the week, so this little guide is based on the more popular *barrios*.

Huertas

On the southern side of Puerta del Sol, and centered around the Plaza Santa Ana. This is a major going out area for a wide mix of people. It has a good combination of *tapas* bars and *bares de copas*. The famous Café Central for listening to jazz music is in the Plaza del Ángel, 10 (metro Sol or Antón Martín).



Barrio de Asturias

Alonso Martínez

(Metro Alonso Martínez) The people tend to dress up a bit more here. The scene centers around Calle Santa Teresa which has *copa* bars playing mainstream *ba-calao* (which literally means cod), but is the term used for the dance beat put behind regular pop songs, which is the musical fare here. Although it's not quite as diverse as Huertas or other barrios, the street is always full of people, winter or summer, so it's fun.

Lavapíes

(Metro Lavapíes) Guide books often call this the 'colorful' part of town, because it has lots of artists and immigrants. I'm not sure why this should necessarily make it colorful as such, but it's definitely a really cool place to go if you want to try North African and Middle Eastern food, stumble across an evening of surreal slide projections onto the side of a building, and find some really good, cheap bars with really friendly atmospheres.

Malasaña

(Metro Tribunal) Malasaña centers around the Plaza Dos de Mayo, named to celebrate the day that Napoleon attacked Madrid (after having said he only wanted to come through on the way to attack Portugal), and all the Madrileños came out of their shops and houses and fought him.

Today the scene here is very much indie/mod/punk, the bars playing a lot of Rolling Stones, the Clash, and Spanish groups, too. Again it is a big street scene and

a lot of fun, and well priced with fewer copa bars and more places selling minis of *kalimocho* and beer.

Chueca

(Metro Chueca) was formerly a place of ill repute, and quite dangerous, until the Madrid gay community began to move in, and it is now one of the trendiest areas in the city. The Plaza Chueca has some nice terraces, although a little expensive, and the nightlife is excellent.

Avenida de Brasil

(Metro Gregorio Marañón) is expensive. It has ‘The Irish Rover’ which is the best-known Irish pub in town, and well worth a visit, and a collection of flashy bars and clubs around that the young professionals come straight to from their jobs to work off some of their high finance stress. It’s very smart and lacks the character of all the other places, being a modern street next to the Paseo de la Castellana, but if you fancy dressing up a bit, try it out.

Cinema

In Spain the norm is to dub foreign films. There is a highly respected school of actors who train to do this, but it still doesn’t make up for the fact that their lips don’t move with the words! Cinema is hugely popular in Spain and so the big cinemas perhaps fear that subtitling everything would ruin the industry. So if you don’t mind seeing a film dubbed, then you have a massive range of cinemas to choose from, many of them on Gran Via, going down towards Plaza de España.

There are also many cinemas that show films in v.o.s., which means original version subtitled in Spanish (*version original subtitulada*), and these show all the biggest films, albeit a couple of weeks or months later, and have more European cinema too. Again the *Guía del Ocio* gives you a list of all the cinemas which show films in v.o.s.

Tickets cost around 6€ normally with Wednesday being a discount day during the week. Many cinemas sell tickets in advance at the box office or by phone with a credit card.



Discotheques

Some dance clubs recommended by our former participants include:

- Forocio parties on Thursday nights in the Palacio Gaviria
- Kapital
- Joy Eslava
- Pacha

Of course, there are many, many other clubs. Look in *In Madrid* or any other entertainment publication for recommendations. *Be careful with your belongings at clubs and discotheques!*

Excursions

If you want to get away for a day or a weekend, then there are lots of great places to go within the Community of Madrid itself and just outside that can be reached easily by bus, train and car.

Mountains

Surrounding the north of Madrid, making up the Sierra de Guadarrama. In the winter there is some skiing at *Puerta de Navacerrada* and *Val d’esqui*, but these are small resorts and as you can imagine get very crowded



at the weekends. Around this high area there is some nice hiking in forest and on the higher, open plains too. To get there you need to take a *cercanias* train to *Cercedilla*, and then get the small, rickety funicular train up to *Cotos* or *Puerta de Navacerrada*. The journey from *Atocha* will take you about 1.5 hours.

Alternatively, you can take a bus out to *Manzanares el Real*, a little village 45 minutes outside of Madrid, and walk into the national park. The rock is all pink granite and lunar in shape, and you can see vultures, goats and the occasional golden eagle. Take the bus from stand number 6 from the bus station at Plaza de Castilla. *Manzanares* also has some fantastic rock climbing on the *Pedriza* mountain which towers over the village. Well worth a visit.

Alcalá de Henares

30 kilometers out of Madrid is located this old university town which was blooming during the Renaissance era. Almost every building in the old center has an enormous stork's nest on its roof. They are real!

The University, founded in 1498 by *Cardinal Cisneros*, certainly deserves a visit. More attractions are the 15th century city walls and the church *Iglesia Magistral*, the 17th century Convent of *Bernardas* and *Casa de Cervantes*, the house of the author of *Don Quixote*. Around the town are to be seen ruins from prehistoric, Gothic and Roman eras.

Aranjuez

Made famous by *Joaquin Rodrigo's Concierto de Aranjuez*, this small town attracts tourists with its

beautiful palace built during the 16th and 17th century. Of particular interest are the *Porcelain Room* and the *Throne Room* in the main palace.

There is also the *Casa del Labrador*, a small recreational palace in the adjoining park worth a visit. You should see the large collection of old clocks and porcelain works, as well as the gardens. *Aranjuez* is famous for its green asparagus and its strawberries.

Chinchón

This romantic medieval village, located some 50 kilometers from Madrid, is famous for its beautiful main square, *Plaza Mayor*, surrounded by arcades. During traditional festivities bullfights take place here and theatrical performances. Other sights are the ruins of a 15th century castle and a painting by *Goya*, in the church. *Chinchón* is also reknown for its well-reputed gastronomy. The *anisette-brandy* made here is known throughout the country.

El Escorial

This famous monastery, *San Lorenzo de Escorial*, which *Philip II* had built 50 kilometers out of Madrid, is of course a must to see for any visitor to Spain's capital. It took 21 years to build by architects *Juan Bautista de Toledo* and *Juan de Herrera* during the 16th century. The most impressive thing about it is probably its gigantic measures in the shape of a grill representing the instrument by which *San Lorenzo* was put to death. Among the mayor attractions are the main chapel, *Capilla Mayor*, the *Pantheon* of kings' tombs, the *Throne Room*, the Italian decorated *Library* and the museum in the summer palace of *Philip II* on the grounds.

There are modern trains with classical music hourly from Madrid for under 2 € which will take you to the nearby village *San Lorenzo del Escorial*. The scenery is beautiful.

El Valle de los Caídos

General *Franco* had this colossal monument built to pay tribute to the fallen of the Spanish Civil War in 1940, and he himself is buried here. It consists of a gigantic cross, 150 meters high, on top of a rock that was hollowed out to incorporate a church, and is located 8 kilometers from *El Escorial*. It was built by prisoners of war and cost many lives.

Traveling Abroad

If you should get the chance, Europe is filled with beautiful places to visit.

Before buying tickets anywhere you should always inquire with Forocio, Calle San Jerónimo, 14, 1º, 91-522-5677. As a participant of BEST Programs, you are automatically a member of Forocio so it is an excellent place to start if you are planning a trip. With your card

you are given a 10% discount on organized student trips to many Spanish cities and festivals. You can pick up your Forocio membership card at their office. Information on how to pick it up is included in the orientation packet that you will receive upon arrival in Madrid.

You can look in www.hostelworld.com for inexpensive hostels.

Web Sites

Spain

www.madmadrid.com

In Spanish and English

www.el-mundo.es/metropoli

In Spanish

www.timeout.com

In English with a weekly entertainment guide

www.guiadelocio.com

Spanish entertainment guide

<http://madrid.lanetro.com>

Entertainment guide and map

www.qdq.com/indexfotos.asp

City map of Madrid with photographs of every street and building facade

<http://enjoymadrid.eresmas.com>

City guide on everything

www.lanetro.com

Great maps of cities all over Spain

www.segundamano.es

Classified newspaper

www.museummusei.com

Spanish museum gift shop

www.madridculture.com

Guide where you can get free entrances for nightclubs

<http://calleacalle.paginasamarillas.es>

Spanish city maps where you can get your specific points of interest pointed out

General

www.hostelworld.com

Find a hostel anywhere

www.travelprice.com

Cheap flights all over Europe

www.mappy.com

Another good site where you put the street address and city in the search engine and get a street map of the area.

This booklet is a wikiguide or a collaborative effort. Our best advice to you is to read this and help those who follow you by sending us your feedback.

Thank you and have a great time!

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