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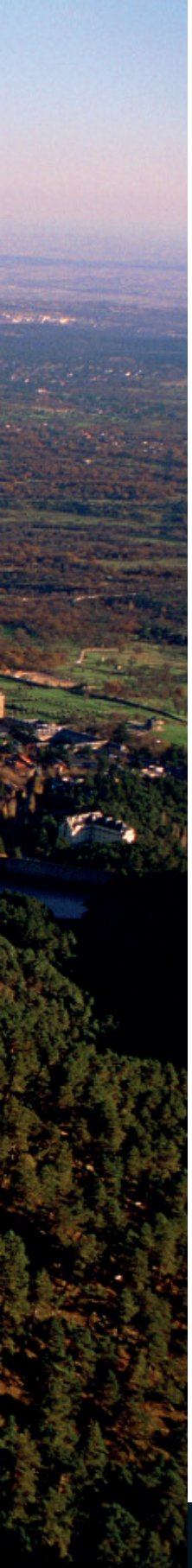
THE MADRID REGION



The Madrid region is one of the 17 autonomous regions in Spain and is situated in the geographical centre of the country, at the south-west tip of Europe. It covers a surface area of 8,028 sq km and has borders with two other Spanish regions: Castilla y León in the north and west, and Castilla-La Mancha in the east and south. It is bathed by the River Manzanares and the most notable characteristic of its climate is undoubtedly its vast range of temperatures, which can be as low as 0 ºC in winter and as high as 40 ºC in the summer.

The region's current population is over 6 million inhabitants, the great majority of whom live in the metropolitan area. As the capital of Spain since 1561, Madrid is home to the country's principal institutions: it is the seat of the central government and the official place residence of the Spanish king and queen, and it boasts major national organizations such as the Royal Spanish Academy, and international bodies such as the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). All of this has turned it into one of the principal destinations for major multinational companies, which have located their headquarters here and made Madrid one of the most important business centres in the world.

Madrid has witnessed the birth of celebrated universal figures such as Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Francisco de Quevedo, Jacinto Benavente, Enrique Jardiel Poncela, José Ortega y Gasset, Gregorio Marañón, Juan Gris, Juan de Villanueva, Ruperto Chapí, Federico Chueca and Joaquín Rodrigo. The list of contemporary figures who were born in Madrid includes Iker Casillas, Raúl González, Fernando Torres, Fernando Verdasco, Manolo Santana and Jorge Garbajosa, in the field of sport; Mariano Barbacid and Pedro Duque, in science; José Tomás and Fran Rivera Ordoñez, in bullfighting; Nieves Álvarez and Ágatha Ruiz de la Prada, in fashion; David Muñoz, Juan Pablo Felipe, Paco Roncero and Mario Sandoval, in gastronomy; and Penélope Cruz, Julio Iglesias, Plácido Domingo, Alejandro Sanz, José Luis Garci and Fernando Trueba in the arts.

In terms of travel connections, its magnificent transport network provides visitors with easy access by road, air, train or underground, while for internal travel Madrid boasts one of the finest public transport services in the world. Its flagship in this respect is the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport, which as the principal port of entry into Spain is the gateway port of departure and arrival to Latin America. By volume of passengers, Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas is one of the largest airports in the world.

Thanks to all of this, Madrid is a region that is open to everyone who wants to discover it, a region that offers numerous cultural, gastronomic, business, leisure and entertainment options, a region whose tourist amenities are among the most consolidated and diverse in Europe and the world.

CULTURE

If the Madrid region is famous the world over for anything, it is surely for its solid network of cultural amenities, which are capable of fulfilling the expectations of the most demanding tourist as well as meeting the needs of those just beginning to discover the world of art. Over 100 museums, 200 theatres, countless galleries, exhibition spaces and arts centres, plus a wide variety of world-class events, combine to create a cultural infrastructure of the highest standards.

Theatres and festivals

Throughout the year, large, medium-sized and small performance venues in the capital and towns in the region offer the best of the theatre, music and dance scenes, with productions that transport audiences to magical worlds dreamed up by the greatest directors and choreographers. The Teatros del Canal, Teatro Real and Teatro de la Zarzuela, the “Corral de Comedias” theatre in Alcalá de Henares and the theatre-auditorium in San Lorenzo de El Escorial are fine examples of this.

All of which explains why the Madrid region plays host to so many major festivals –international ambassadors for the region’s arts agenda– such as the Spring (formerly, Autumn) Festival, which year after year brings together the best of the international arts

scene; the Madrid en Danza International Festival, which acclaimed dancers and dance companies clamour to attend; Teatralia, the Festival of Performing Arts for Boys and Girls, targeted at the youngest artists; Animadrid, which showcases the most outstanding Spanish and international animated films; the Clásicos en Alcalá Festival, the essence of classical drama; and Suma Flamenca, which turns the region into the last word in flamenco, to name just a few. All of these offer a varied arts programme ranging from classical to ground-breaking drama, classical and contemporary dance, and every imaginable music genre.

Then there is Madrid's very own Broadway, the Gran Vía, which for the last hundred years has watched its pavements fill with crowds thirsty to see the latest musicals.

Museums and art

Meanwhile, with its age-old trees and the finest museums in Spain, the Art Walk offers tourists a wonderful experience. The Prado Museum, the Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Reina Sofía Museum and Art Centre welcome with open arms all those who want to steep themselves in art, from the great masterpieces in the universal

history of art to the latest trends at the vanguard of art today. These amenities are complemented by a rich variety of galleries and other arts venues, whose temporary exhibitions enable Madrid to showcase the latest innovations in photography, painting, sculpture and installations, and over 100 additional museums around the region.

Culture in the street

Emblematic spaces such as the Plaza Mayor and Plaza de Oriente squares, the National Library, the Royal Palace and the Church of Los Jerónimos present Madrid at its most monumental, without forgetting the towns and various sites around the region.

Major arts centres such as the Círculo de Bellas Artes, La Casa Encendida, the Centro Cultural Conde Duque, Caixa Forum and the Casa de América have become driving forces for culture throughout the region, while for the space of their duration events such as the Madrid Book Fair, ARCO (the International Contemporary Art Fair) and PHotoEspaña turn the national and international spotlight on the Madrid region.

But culture can also be felt on the street, as the region promotes numerous activities that surprise residents and visitors alike. Countless manifestations emerge spontaneously on any street corner to claim their place in Madrid life –such as the puppets in the Retiro Park, now a tradition that beckons children every weekend.

Finally, annual events such as the “Night of the Theatres” (27 March), “Museums Night” (17 May) and the “Night of the Books” (23 April) mean that those who want to can enjoy culture until the early hours.

BUSINESS

Madrid is one of the busiest regions in Spain in terms of the number of events it organises. As such, it is also one of the principal benchmarks for the national business tourism market and is rapidly gaining ground in the European market. All of this is thanks to its range of quality hotels, the vast number of national and international companies that have established their headquarters in the region, and its excellent transport infrastructures that make access so easy.

According to a survey by Standard & Poor's, one of the world's three leading international financial analysis agencies, the Madrid region is the third global business centre. Proof of this is that a great majority of the tourists who come to our region do so for business purposes.

Meanwhile, according to the White Paper on Tourism in the Madrid Region, the capital of Spain has over 500 meeting rooms and nearly 52,000 places, plus 85 spaces and almost 82,000 places for the fairs and conventions held at IFEMA, the largest trade fair organisation in Spain, which annually hosts the International Tourism Fair FITUR, the most important event of its kind in this sector.

IFEMA: A flagship

Situated in the Juan Carlos I Trade Fair Park, IFEMA hosts over 80 highly specialised trade events every year, all of which are highlights of the international trade fair calendars. Together, the halls occupy a net surface area of 1.4 million square metres, attracting the participation of 42,000 companies and 4.5 million visitors. Meanwhile, the grounds offer 200,000 square metres of exhibition space, 12 halls, 2 auditoriums and 97 rooms.

In addition to IFEMA, the principal motor of development in the region, Madrid boasts other modern facilities for the organisation of events and conferences, the most important of which are the Municipal Conference Centre, the Madrid Conference Centre and the Casa de Campo Trade Fair Centre. All of these sites are equipped with sophisticated infrastructures and the necessary technology and services to satisfy the demands of the market.

The towns in the region also offer a range of business tourism infrastructures, located either in hotels or other types of venues. The main ones in terms of the capacity of their facilities are Alcalá de Henares, Alcobendas, Aranjuez, Las Rozas, Pozuelo de Alarcón, San Lorenzo de El Escorial and San Sebastián de los Reyes.

LEISURE

Cinemas, theatres, shopping centres and areas, bars, restaurants, theme parks, museums, historic monuments, parks and gardens… are all great options for spending a few fun days in the Madrid region, the perfect choice for those who want to be sure of having their leisure and entertainment expectations met.

For example, if you want to see a musical and then dine at one of the numerous bars, taverns or restaurants offering tradition and quality, the Centro or central district near the Gran Vía is the ideal place. But if you prefer to have everything on the same spot, there are a number of large shopping centres both in the city and on the outskirts whose stores, cinemas and vast range of eateries are all geared to the tourist's convenience.

If you want to discover the other side of Madrid, its vibrant night life is sure to live up to your expectations, thanks to the numerous bars

and clubs to be found in every district in the capital and towns in the region. But if it's peace and quiet you're looking for, parks and gardens such as the Retiro, Madrid Río, Capricho and Royal Botanical Garden, and the cafes, chocolateries and hotels show Madrid at its friendliest, ensuring that visitors feel at home. And then there are the pavement cafes that fill the region with such vitality and are adored by Madrid residents and visitors alike.

Between the months of May and November, tourists can take the "Strawberry Train" to Aranjuez, one of the loveliest towns in the region. However, if you're looking for a really good view of the capital, the best option is to take one of the numerous panoramic bus tours of the city.

The various towns in the Madrid region also have lots to offer in the way of music events, theatres, cinemas and a rich variety of bars and restaurants for those who want to escape the hustle and bustle of the city.

Family fun

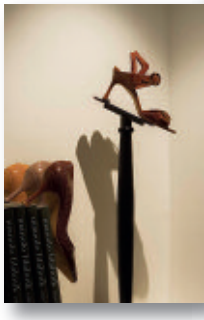
The whole family can enjoy a day in the Madrid region by choosing from a whole range of leisure options and activities, from the educational workshops and visits for children offered by some of the museums in the region, such as the Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Reina Sofía, to fantastic experiences such as being able to ski all year round at the Madrid SnowZone.

If you choose to go somewhere like Zoo Aquarium or Faunia, your children can experience nature and the animal world first-hand, whereas at the Warner Bros Park and the Madrid Amusement Park they'll have a great time on the different rides. The National Archaeological Museum, Madrid Planetarium, Micropolix, Caixa Forum Madrid, the Wax Museum and the Natural Science Museum are just some of the other numerous options available for families. However, if you prefer to spend your leisure and free time communing with nature, the region boasts beauty spots such as the Lagunas del Sur lakes near Chinchón, the Montejo Beech Forest and the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park.

SHOPPING

In recent years the Madrid region has earned a national and international reputation as a quality tourist destination. Madrid is the second most popular destination for shopping tourism in Europe. It boasts one of the largest and most interesting tourist infrastructures in the world, and is also one of the globe's most important destinations for shopping and luxury items.

Tourists spend an average of 3 or 4 days in the region, using at least half of that time to shop. As such, the capital of the Madrid region, like any other great modern city, is home not only to large shopping centres but also smaller, individual establishments, therefore offering tourists –both those with their hearts set on shopping and those with others interests– a rich array of stores to choose from, with products to suit all styles and pockets.



The Golden Mile

The so-called Golden Mile, in the Salamanca district, is a must for tourists in search of luxury items. In this area, great Spanish fashion designers such as Loewe, Amaya Arzuaga, Kina Fernández, Adolfo Dominguez, Purificación García, Manolo Blahnik and Angel Schlesser rub shoulders with exclusive international icons such as Chanel, Armani and Valentino. Jeweller's shops, shoe shops, the most prestigious names in the fashion and accessories sector, art galleries and antique shops can also be found in this area. Shopping at the boutiques and other establishments in the Salamanca district is a pleasure reserved for those with the most generous budgets.

Avant-garde and the ultra-modern

If you're looking for the latest fashions, or something original, avant-garde or boho, then head for the area between Chueca and Fuencarral, where you'll find a whole array of small establishments catering for young and quirky customers keen to keep up with the latest trends. This area falls within the remit of the Triball Madrid project, which aims to turn this part of the city into a major

commercial and tourist hub, on a par with New York's Soho district. The flagship is the Fuencarral Market, which houses the outlets of craftsmen and women, designers and small retailers from all over Spain, selling highly original products difficult to find elsewhere in the region.

Shops and tradition

The Puerta del Sol, the Gran Vía, Preciados and Princesa all form part of the city's most commercial area. Amid the constant hustle and bustle of the people, tourists will find all the high-street fashion names with the latest styles at affordable prices, as well as one of Spain's most famous department stores selling all kinds of products and souvenirs. This part of the city was designated an Area of Great Tourist

Interest for commercial purposes, which means that all the shops are entitled to open every Sunday and public holiday of the year. It is therefore the nerve centre for shopping tourists all year round.

Meanwhile, tourists can also find the most traditional Spanish products in Madrid's Centro district. Handicrafts, pottery, silverware, leather goods, fans, guitars and different kinds of musical instruments complement all the other items on sale in this shopping area where tiny establishments dating back several centuries remain as active as the day they opened.

Madrid offers a wide variety of shopping centres, such as El Corte Inglés, Príncipe Pío, Moda Shopping, ABC Serrano. Outside the capital you find Las Rozas Village (Las Rozas), Gran Plaza 2 (Majadahonda), Plaza Norte 2 (San Sebastián de los Reyes), Parque Sur (Leganés) and Madrid Xanadú (Arroyomolinos).

Outdoor markets

Mention must also be made of Madrid's markets. These retail outlets, which are typical throughout the region, are usually set up in the open air, in public spaces and on specific days of the week. The products they sell vary enormously, including food, clothes, household items, plants, fashion jewellery, etc. They have always been extremely popular, offering a whole array of articles on the same spot and at lower prices than traditional establishments.

In addition to the typical clothes and food markets, there are also specialist markets that should not be missed. These include the book market on the Cuesta de Moyano, where genuine literary gems can be found; the "hippy" stalls on the Avenida de Felipe II, at the heart of the Goya area; the traditional stamp market in the Plaza Mayor, Old Engines Market in the Madrid Railway Museum and the market in the Plaza Conde de Barajas, which has an excellent sample of paintings.

However, the most famous of Madrid's outdoor markets is the Rastro, which originated in medieval times and is now one of the city's great icons. It is held every Sunday at the Plaza de Cascorro, spreading on to the nearby streets, and boasts numerous stalls selling antique, new and second-hand items such as clothes, handicrafts, furniture and countless other curiosities. The other interesting markets in the region include the one in Majadahonda and the Medieval Markets in Alcalá de Henares, Manzanares el Real and Buitrago del Lozoya.

GASTRONOMY

Although gastronomic tourism is still in its infancy in the Madrid region and is often associated with other types of tourism, it nevertheless offers great potential. Gastronomy as a leisure option is increasingly valued by tourists and the region is well-placed to satisfy this demand, boasting over 10,000 restaurants, 40,000 bars and 3,000 cafes. This array of establishments represents not only the best in Madrid cuisine, but also the cuisine from other regions in Spain and the wider world.

Due to its strategic location, the Madrid region is able to offer one of the finest gastronomic infrastructures in the Europe. In fact, according to the most prestigious gastronomic guides, Madrid boasts the largest number of officially recognised quality establishments. One selection of these have Michelin stars, the highest distinction in the catering sector, thanks to chefs such as David Muñoz (Diverxo), Sergi Arola, Mario Sandoval, Diego Guerrero, Óscar Velasco, Ricardo Sanz, Ramón Freixa, Paco Roncero and Juan Antonio Medina, all of whom are international references in Spanish signature cuisine and have made the region their refuge. Meanwhile, tourists looking for tradition will enjoy restaurants that are now over a hundred years old, such as the Taberna Malacatín, Casa Ciriaco, La Bola, Botín, Casa Labra, the Café Gijón and Lhardy, where Madrid's

history and culture combine with the pleasure of fine eating.

The region also offers other types of gastronomic activities, such as visits to wineries associated with the “Vinos de Madrid” designation of origin, the “Aceites de Madrid” olive-oil factories and the local cheese factories.

Local products

The wide range of local products is one of the reasons behind the sucess of Madrid’s cuisine, providing added value to the gastronomic experience. The region boasts six quality certifications: the Wines of Madrid, virgin olive oil, Campo Real olives, anisette from Chinchón, meat from the Sierra de Guadarrama mountains and ecological products. It is also famous for locally-grown products such as the strawberries and asparagus from Aranjuez, the melons from Villaconejos, the vegetables from Villa del Prado, mountain honey, judión beans from the Northern Sierra, pure sheep’s cheese, and various others.

These products provide the raw ingredients for the great dishes for which our gastronomy is renowned, such as cocido madrileño (a thick chickpea stew), garlic soup and potaje de garbanzos (a different type of

chickpea stew, often served with cod and spinach), as well as typical almond and honey pastries such as bartolillos, pestiños and rosquillas de San Isidro, a type of ring doughnut.

Events and "tapas" areas

Then region also hosts numerous events and activities related to haute cuisine, such as the Wines of Madrid Show, Millésime, the international Gourmet Club Show and the great "Madrid Fusión" Gastronomic Summit, when for the duration of this show Madrid becomes the gastronomic capital of the world.

There are countless areas in the capital where tourists can sample the best of Madrid's cusine at bars and restaurants. In the Centro or central district, for example, you will find squid sandwiches, vermouth on tap and ancient restaurants. La Latina, with its typical, classical taverns, becomes one of the liveliest areas in the city at weekends, as do Huertas, the Cava Baja district, the Plaza de Santa Ana, the traditional Chamberí neighbourhood, gastronomics markets as the Mercado de San Miguel, San Antón, San Ildefonso and Platea to name the most famous sites. Naturally, the towns around the region also offer numerous places to sample "tapas".

TOURISM

The Madrid region conveys to the world its energy, growth, diversity, freedom, strength, passion, friendliness, etc. It is also for this reason that the region is open to tourists whose interests lie in different areas from those mentioned above. For these, it offers the chance to practise language, golf, gay&lesbian, architectural or religious tourism.

Language tourism

In relation to language tourism, the region ranks third in the number of students of Spanish it receives, behind Andalucía and Castilla y León, offering an excellent range of centres specialising in the teaching of Spainsh for foreigners.

The Madrid region boasts highly attractive destinations for this type of tourism. One such is Alcalá de Henares, which in addition to its history and famous university is also the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes and the seat of the teacher-training centre for the Instituto Cervantes, as well as being home to various official schools of Spanish for foreigners.

Language tourists do not only look at the number and type of schools on offer, but also place great importance on the general

amenities in the town or city and its perceived image, and in this respect the Madrid region clearly lives up to all their expectations.

Golf tourism

Meanwhile, in terms of its potential, tradition and infrastructure, golf is one of the greatest sports tourism products in Spain. In fact, this country is the leading glof destination for the principal European markets.

Madrid is the third Spanish region in terms of the number of golf courses – 34 in total and most of them public. According to the Royal Spanish Golf Federation, the growing external demand is matched by an enormous internal demand. In fact, in the last years the number of golf licences in Madrid has risen by 300%.

The capital is famous for two things in this respect: it boasts Europe's first city-based glof course, the 18-hole Centro Nacional de Golf near the Monte de El Pardo; and since 2006 it has played host to the Madridgolf fair, the most important event of its type in Spain.

LGBT tourism

The Madrid region is the capital of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) tourism in Spain. Calle Fuencarral and the Chueca district have become modern icons of Madrid and the

principal gay area, with rainbow flags welcoming visitors. Here, bars, restaurants, night clubs, cafes, bookshops, hairdresser's, etc. all welcome tourists with open arms.

For this reason, the Madrid region plays host to numerous events devoted to leisure, culture and sport targeted at this collective, such as the 2017 World Pride, The 31st IGLTA Global Annual Convention and the Madrid Lesbian, Gay and Trasnsgender Film Festival (LesGaiCineMad). The most important event, however, is Gay Pride Week, which culminates in a multitudinous festive parade of brightly-coloured floats through the city centre, attractig more than a million participants every year.

Architectural tourism

Another landmark of the region is its architecture, where history and modernity blend together to offer interested tourists an excellent overview in which constructions built by our ancestors coexist in harmony with the latest architectural innovations. The Royal Palace, the National Library, the Spanish Parliament, the Temple of Debod, the Plaza Mayor square, the Prado Museum, the Telecomunications Palace, the Bank of Spain, the Metropolis

Building, the Círculo de Bellas Artes and the Plaza Mayor square in Chinchón are among many other emblematic constructions that unfold before visitors and provide an insight into the history of Madrid. Meanwhile, Picasso Tower by Minoru Yamasaki, Puerta de Europa by Philip Johnson & John Burgee (Kio Towers), BBVA building, Caixa Forum by Herzog & de Meuron, the Prado Museum extension by Rafael Moneo, the T4 terminal at Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport by Richard Rogers & Estudio Lamela, and the Four Towers Business Area of Madrid (comprising Torre Espacio by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, Torre Bankia by Norman Foster & Partners, Torre Sacyr Vallehermoso by Carlos Rubio Carvajal and Torre Cristal by César Pelli) rise imperiously above tourists keen to admire the city's more avant-garde constructions.

Tourists will take equal delight in smaller historic gems such as the world heritage sites of the Monastery and Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, the Aranjuez Cultural Landscape and the University and Historic Precinct of Alcalá de Henares; as well as the old fountains of Cibeles and Neptuno, the Monument to the Fallen Angel in the Retiro Park, and the imposing Puerta de Alcalá gate at the Plaza de la Independencia.

Religious tourism

The region also offers countless possibilities for religious tourists. Spain is traditionally a Catholic country, and the Madrid region is therefore teeming with churches, convents and monasteries. The most important religious monuments include the cathedrals of La Almudena, San Isidro, the Catedral Magistral in Alcalá de Henares; churches such as San Francisco el Grande, Los Jerónimos and the Colegiata de San Isidro; the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial; and the convents of Las Descalzas Reales, El Sacramento and La Encarnación. Meanwhile, throughout the year the region plays host to a variety of religous celebrations such as the Holy Week processions in the capital and the towns, the finest example of which is “The Passion” in Chinchón, the feast days of La Almudena and San Isidro, the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception, and the nativity scenes, both as models and live representations can be visited in numerous spaces during the Christmas period.

Due to its Muslim origins, the region has also preserved certain parts of the Arab city walls, which acquired Historic-Artistic Monument status in 1954, as well as the ruins of the Tower of Narigües and the base of the Arab watchtower known as the Tower of the Bones. The finest example, however, is the Great Mosque of Madrid, near the M-30 ring road. Due to the growth of the Muslim population in Madrid, nowadays the region is home to different communities and has several mosques, as well as associations and restaurants that sell halal food.

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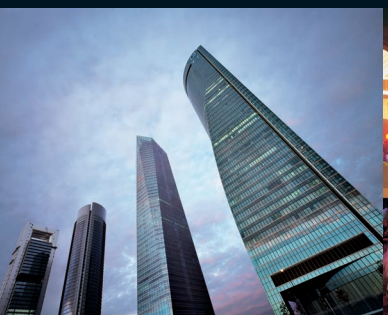
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