



>>> A paella grande of history, tradition, and modernity: Cafe de Oriente, Hotel Urban, and La Torre Del Oro.

DESTINATION: MADRID



STATS

CURRENCY: 1 USD = .83 EURO

AIRPORT: Madrid Barajas Airport (MAD)

POPULATION: 3 million

WHEN TO GO: October, and March through May. If you like to party, Fiesta is in May, but you'll need to book ahead.

FAST FACTS:

- At 2,100 feet, Madrid towers as Europe's highest city.
- The seven stars on Madrid's coat of arms represent its seven hills.

At the heart of Spain lies the capital Madrid—a treasure trove of history and tradition with cutting-edge architecture and vibrant nightlife. Madrileños may know how to siesta with the best of them, but they undoubtedly make up for it when they come out at night.

International jetsetters are getting an interior design fix second-to-none at the new **HOTEL PUERTA AMERICA** (Avenida América 41, 34-91 744-5400). A concept hotel calling itself “an adventure of creative freedom,” every inch is designed by a veritable who’s-who of architects and designers—from Jean Nouvel’s technicolor facade and Zaha Hadid’s sci-fi rooms to Marc Newson’s bar and the Christian Liaigre-designed **BLACK TEARS** restaurant.

For surroundings considerably less avant garde, proceed as 280 years of Spaniards have before you to **RESTAURANTE BOTIN** (Cuchilleros 17, 34-91 366-4217, www.botin.es). *Guinness World Records* endorses it as the “earliest restaurant in the world,” but it’s the famed roast suckling pig and exquisite gazpacho that keep the locals loyal. Ask for a table in the rustic cellar, where you’re close to both the history and the wine.

Whether expanding your palate in the area’s numerous tapas bars or merely walking off a robust dinner, take a peek in **LA TORRE DEL ORO** (Plaza Mayor 26, 34-91 366-5016, www.torredeloro.wellsoc.org). Home to Andalusian tapas served under the stoic gaze of wall-mounted bulls’ heads, the photographs of horn-impaled matadors that line the walls are a must-see.

After a typically late night on the town, you can rest your weary head at the centrally located **HOTEL URBAN** (Carrera de San Jerónimo 34, 34-91 787-7770, www.derbeyhotels.com). If the sleek serenity of the soundproof rooms isn’t enough, both the impressive art collection from the Clos Archaeologic Foundation and the rooftop pool make this boutique hotel worth experiencing.

Jump-start your day with the fresh pastries and café con leche at **LA MALLORQUINA** (Puerto del Sol 8, 34-91 521-1201) before taking in the numerous museums and monuments peppered throughout the city. Be sure to make a design stop-and-shop at **ZARA HOME** (Princesa 58, 34-91 544-6150, www.zarahome.com). Internationally known for its cosmopolitan urban wear, Spain’s own Zara has introduced some of the best modern and ethnic-inspired home furnishings east of the Atlantic.

To truly savor old Madrid and the best in traditional Spanish cuisine, a lunch at **LHARDY** (Carrera de San Jerónimo 8, 34-91 521-3385) is not to be missed. Dine with heads of government upstairs in the elegant Isabelline dining room, where wild game such as fallow deer or the delicious champagne sole are perfectly paired with regional wines.

Leave on a high by scaling to the ancient monastery ruins at Michelin-starred **CAFE DE ORIENTE** (Plaza Oriente 2, 34-91 541-3974), neighboring the Teatro Real. Stylish patrons wile away their time gazing at the dramatic view of the Palacio Real. Dining atop ancient ruins is a perfect royal send off. —ANDI TERAN