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Travel To Madrid: Europe's Eldest Infant

By Frank Johnson

Madrid may have been full of life by 1200 A.D. but it was not until 1979 that the capital city of Spain held its first free and democratic elections. The tumultuous tribulations of the 20th century have left a distinct flavor about the art, attitude and culture in Madrid. Visitors will find a thriving and exuberant local population proud and eager to share its resilient, if not neglected, history with the world.

The modern heart and soul of Spain is central to the entire Iberian Peninsula, making Madrid the ideal place to initiate your Spanish adventure. Madrid is also rich with Moorish heritage as it was a contentious battleground between the Islamic and Christian Empires for much of the modern era. A stroll through Barrio de la Morería (Moorish Quarter) invokes an essence of Medieval Madrid through ornate Islamic architecture and hidden plazas. The art and architecture of Madrid also speaks of the temporary but influential Habsburg and Bourbon Rules.

Museum Hop `Til You Drop

Madrid is the internationally celebrated home of Spain's most prominent art collections. The Museo del Prado houses the world's largest and most prized collection featuring over 8,600 master works by Velázquez, Goya, El Greco, Ribera, Raphael, Botticelli, Fra Angélico, and Rembrandt, to name a few. Since 1819, the collection has been moved twice - during the Spanish Civil War and WWII - and has sustained immaculate condition. The Prado is also a work of art in its own right, designed by famed 18th century architect Juan de Villanueva. For the grandeur and curious intricacies of contemporary Spanish art, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia is a crucial visit. Once you have managed to overcome the awe of Picasso's Guernica, make sure to explore the fascinating world of Spanish photography, sculpture and film along with an incredible collection of Kandinsky, Miró and Dalí. Finally, take a journey through royal Madrid at the Palacio Real. The 2800-room palace is no longer inhabited by the royal family, but the walls are lined with elaborate frescos and original artwork by the likes of El Greco and Goya. Stop by the two beautiful gardens and get your fix of ancient apothecary remedies in the Farmacia Real.

Madrid in Present Tense

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In Madrid it is easy to leave history behind and become immersed in the boisterous blooming lifestyle that fills the streets. The pulse of Madrid's beating heart can be found in the Plaza Mayor, the town square built in 1619 by Juan Gómez de Mora. Although it's unlikely you'll be able to throw stones at heretics here anymore, console yourself with an alfresco drink and pastry at one of the many cafes. For the resilient shopper, do not miss the Sunday Rastro flea market along the Calle de la Ribera de Curtidos, where bargain hunters and pack-rats alike will be in seventh heaven.

Travel to Madrid for the perfect beginning to your Spanish vacation. Many captivating destinations lie just beyond the city, including the world heritage town of Alcala de Henares, the royal Aranjuez and the picturesque mountain town of Manzanares El Real.

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Apartments In Madrid: For Those Seeking Alternatives To Traditional Hotel Accommodation.

By Tavis J. Cooper

There are many reasons for you to rent apartments in Madrid. Madrid is, as everyone knows, a popular tourist destination. The weather is warm, the people are hospitable, and the night life is just simply unimaginable, and that is no lie. And, although Madrid is such a popular destination, and so is getting a little more costly, it is still affordable when compared with many of the bigger cities like Paris or London. The fact is that renting an apartment in Madrid might be just the thing for you if you want to spend a few more years seeing the wonders of this world before settling down in your boring little town.

If you want to be some place peaceful and quiet, you probably should stay away from apartments in Madrid. Unless you are living on the suburbs, or in the countryside, the urban area of Madrid is really bustling with activities day and night. Sometimes it can be pretty loud and crazy. Although it is no New York City, there is still some pollution out there, so there are better places for you if you are a fresh air maniac. The convenience is great, but it all comes with a compromise, as everything else seems to.

The best thing about apartments in Madrid is, of course, the location. I visited Madrid last year for just about three months (most of the summer and the very beginning of fall) and I can assure you that you will never find a more pleasant destination. I moved around once, but both of the apartments in Madrid where I stayed were neighborhoods where you could spend hours and hours walking and exploring without feeling bored.

These apartments were also close to places that boasted the world famous Madrid cuisine that I had heard so much about before moving out there. Just recalling my experience in my Madrid apartments really makes me salivate and my stomach rumble with hunger. But, of course, staying in apartments in Madrid is not for everyone.

Of course, if you are open minded enough, or bitten by the wander bug, as my mama used to say, to consider living in apartments in Madrid, then you probably are enough of a world traveler to know that

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there are all kinds of neat places just waiting for you to explore. If you find that apartments in Madrid are not really your style, I am sure that you will soon find somewhere else that is. After all, there is a whole wide world out there to explore, and all of it is yours for the taking. See you in Madrid!

Tavis J. Cooper provides readers with up-to-date commentaries,

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and reviews for

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