

The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

Our top 15 Insider Tips



INSIDER TIP Singing waiters

Opera arias on the menu: professional singers serve you your dinner in the atmospheric La Favorita restaurant → p. 59

INSIDER TIP Browse a museum shop

Architecture, design, art, photography, newspapers, posters and creatively designed knick-knacks: the Reina Sofia museum bookstore has an incredible selection to choose from → p. 49

INSIDER TIP Eat for less

Good food need not always come with a steep price tag or in a stylish setting – something the Public in the trendy Triball neighbourhood understand → p. 63

INSIDER TIP Visit an enchanted garden

Discover the El Capricho de la Alameda de Osuna – a park with its ruins, fountains and a labyrinth – tucked away between the trade fair grounds and the airport → p. 54

INSIDER TIP Watch an Egyptian sunset

Come to the far side of the city forest Casa de Campo and watch the spectacle created by the setting sun bathing the Templo de Debod in its golden light – there is no better place to be (photo above) → p. 47

INSIDER TIP A terrace by night

Enjoy the ambiance of the illuminated viaduct while you sip away at your mojita on the terraza of the Marula Café → p. 83

INSIDER TIP Relax by the river

Arguably Madrid's wisest urban planning decision was to banish the city motorway underground to make way for the Madrid Río parkland – a stretch of green belt along the Manzanares River for all to enjoy → p. 92

INSIDER TIP All that jazz

Café Central has always been Madrid's jazz hotspot, but nowadays El Junco on the Plaza de Santa Bárbara is just as popular → p. 81

INSIDER TIP Subterranean Madrid

Discover Madrid's medieval past beneath the multi-storey car park on the Plaza de Oriente where there are the remains of *atalaya*, or Moorish, watchtower → p. 42

INSIDER TIP Every day is market day

Madrid's market halls have a wonderfully varied selection of fresh produce and the Mercado Vallehermoso in Chamberí is well off the tourist track, making it all the more appealing → p. 73

INSIDER TIP Flamenco fever

Aside from the less than authentic flamenco – enacted all over Spain for the benefit of tourists – there is also a very sophisticated and contemporary side to this emotional dance art. Come see for yourself at Tablao Las Carboneras on the weekend (photo below) → p. 79

INSIDER TIP Goya gem

This little-known museum is often overlooked, yet the Museo del Ro-

manticismo in Malasaña is a veritable treasure trove of art and its Goya masterpiece alone makes it well worth a visit → p. 46

INSIDER TIP Peaceful park

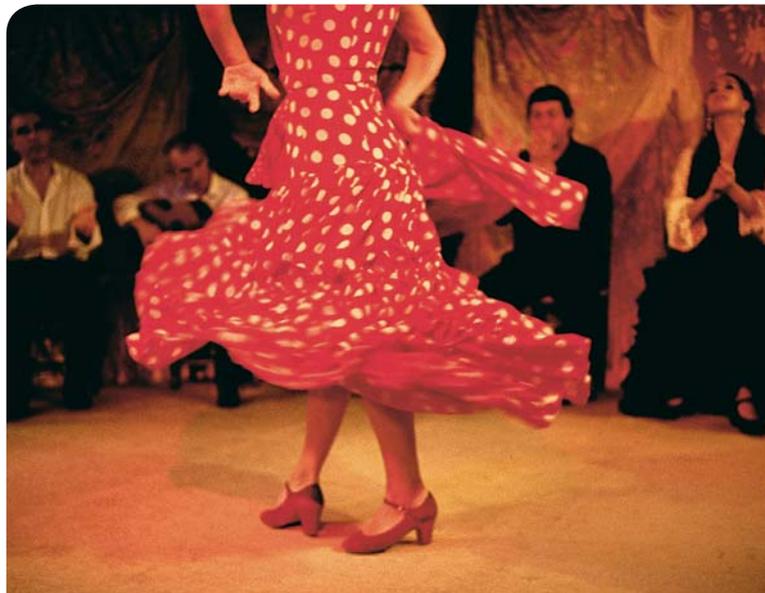
Stroll in royal style through the gardens behind the Royal Palace – the Campo del Moro is never busy and always peaceful and it is also a great place from which to view the Palacio Real in all its splendour and glory → p. 38

INSIDER TIP Red light dimming

Until recently the Triball neighbourhood was considered a thorn in the city's side but it has undergone an urban revival and its historic streets are filling up with trendy shops, cafés and restaurants → p. 44

INSIDER TIP A quiet place to stay

The intimate Posada del León de Oro is a small, romantic, privately run boutique hotel located in the picturesque and bohemian La Latina neighbourhood → p. 86



BEST OF ...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

● Green oasis

You have to experience the *Retiro* first hand to get a true feel for it. Locals come here to practise their yoga or t'ai chi, to jog or even to enjoy their mandatory afternoon siesta. On Sundays the festive atmosphere attracts couples flaunting their ballroom dancing skills on the *paseo*, while the Crystal Palace and the Velázquez Palace exhibit contemporary art from the Reina Sofía museum for free → p. 36

● Madrid's latest museum marvel

What a remarkable museum, and what remarkable exhibits! The *Caixaforum*, on the Paseo del Prado, was sponsored by the Caixa Bank and it is a truly magnificent addition to Madrid's cultural life. The building, by architects Herzog & de Meuron, is a revelation in itself (photo) → p. 30

● An afternoon in the palace

Understatement is synonymous with the Spanish royal house and true to this they only make use of the *Palacio Real* on official occasions. You can view the treasure trove of valuables contained within its 2500 rooms and halls for free: simply join the queue on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon but you must have your passport with you → p. 41

● A peek into the Prado

Before heading out to your nightly *marcha* why not stop by the *Museo del Prado* to admire some of the famous pictures that you've always wanted to see in real life. It won't put a dent in your pocket – entry is free between 6pm (Sundays from 5pm) and 8pm! → p. 33

● Back in time to the 19th century

Stroll through the *Museo Cerralbo* and experience the enviable lifestyle of a 19th century marquis – admission is free on Sundays and on Saturdays between 2pm and 3pm → p. 45

● Refreshed frescoes

Extensive restoration work means that *Francisco de Goya's beautiful frescoes* embellish the *Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida* once again → p. 54



●●● Dots in guidebook refer to 'Best of ...' tips

ONLY IN MADRID

Unique experiences

● Churros con chocolate

What better way to round off a night on the town than with *churros con chocolate*? The *Chocolatería San Ginés* between the Puerta del Sol and Plaza Mayor is one of the city's most popular places and your best bet. It is always open and you will be forgiven for mistaking the thick creamy portion served here for hot chocolate but it is actually for dunking the *churros* – a delicious, deep-fried pastry. Heavenly! → p. 77

● As in Goya's day

The *Fiesta de San Isidro* is an occasion for the residents of Madrid to don their traditional outfits and to celebrate in true Spanish style. The fiesta is held in May and honours the city's patron, locals make a picnic pilgrimage to the *Ermita de San Isidro* across the river *Manzanares* in a scene reminiscent of Goya's 'La Pradera de San Isidro' now gracing the Prado → p. 100

● Live like there is no tomorrow

Seeing is believing – there are traffic jams on the *Gran Vía* in the middle of the night – the alleyways and streets of Madrid's *centro* are jam-packed with late night revellers and it is not only the young. Drop in at one of the many open air *terrazas* and you will see the familiar sight of *Madriños* of all ages up until the early hours of the morning → p. 82

● Meeting place for intellectuals

There is no trace of the small tobacco kiosk that once marked the entrance to the *Café Gijón*. But even without the smoke wafting through it, this iconic coffee shop continues to remain one of Madrid's intellectual institutions. Made famous over the past 130 years by the likes of *Camilo José Cela*, *Ortega y Gasset* and *Rosa Montero* → p. 58

● A second-hand world

Madrid's main flea market is an institution, a ritual that goes far beyond the mundane of buying and selling. You will find whatever your heart desires at the *Rastro* – you need only look long enough (photo) → p. 69

● Tapas tasting

Eating out and going out become one thing when you do as the locals do and go on a *tapeo* – a tour of all the various *tapas bars* – a mandatory stop has to be the *Bocaíto bar* on the *Calle Libertad* in *Chueca* → p. 64



ONLY IN

THE PERFECT DAY

Madrid in 24 hours

09:00am HEART AND SOUL OF THE CITY

Make an early start and begin your day in the symbolic centre – not only of the capital city but of the whole of Spain – the *Puerta del Sol* → p. 36. Grab yourself a coffee and a sweet pastry at *La Mallorquina (Puerta del Sol 8)* a very popular confectionary shop established in 1893 and you will be all set for the day ahead. Batteries recharged head down the Calle de Alcalá towards the *Gran Vía* → p. 44 where the ornate landmark building, the *Metrópolis*, glistens in the early morning light.

10:00am PLAZA TO PRADO

Carry on your walking tour via the *Plaza de la Cibeles* → p. 34, where Real Madrid's fans love to celebrate their victories, and stroll on down the Paseo del Prado and decide which of the museums you would like to visit. This stretch includes the *Prado* → p. 31 (centre photo), the *Thyssen-Bornemisza* → p. 33 and a little further on, the *Centro de Arte Reina Sofía* → p. 48 (photo left).

00:30pm WALK IN THE PARK

After taking in so much art and culture the best place to retreat to is the *Parque del Retiro* → p. 36. Here you can stroll through the lovely rose garden, hire a row a boat and go out on the Estanque or just pick a gazebo, at one the many cafés dotted around the lake, and relax in the sun.

02:30pm COSMOPOLITAN CHUECA

Next is lunch in the lively Chueca neighbourhood. Take the Metro to the next station, Banco de España, or a taxi directly to *Calle Libertad 21*. The restaurant to eat in is *Bazaar* → p. 62 where the food is good and the prices reasonable. Make some time afterwards to browse through Chueca's boutiques and along Calle de *Fuencarral* → p. 68 – Madrid's fashion mile.

06:00pm MADRID SIGHTSEEING

The best way to get to know Madrid is on a guided walking tour. They leave from the Oficina de Turismo on the *Plaza Mayor* → p. 35. A free English language guided walking tour of the old city through the former artists' district *Barrio de las Letras* → p. 29 takes place every Monday to Saturday (15 June–15 Sept at 4pm). Go to www.descubremadrid.com for other guided

Get to know some of the most dazzling, exciting and relaxing facets of Madrid – all in a single day

walking tour options but be sure to check with tourist information beforehand.

09:00pm TAPAS AND TAVERNAS

Do as the Madrid locals do and go tapas hopping. Restaurants that are ideal for this are *La Chata* or *La Taberna del Tempranillo* in the *Cava Baja* → p. 64. Aside from their excellent tapas selections they serve some rather good wines (photo). Also worth trying is the *Almendro 13* → p. 63 taverna in the alleyway with the same name just around the corner.

11:00pm ALL THAT JAZZ

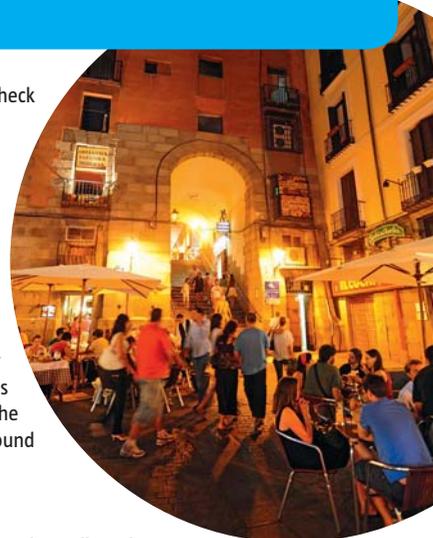
Now it is time for a change of scene and a walk to the historic *Plaza Santa Ana* → p. 28 which takes you past the *Café Central* → p. 80. If jazz is your thing then you should make a stop here, you can either sit outside on the vibrant square or opt for the hotel roof lounge in the *ME Victoria*.

02:00am LET'S DANCE

Half of the city's residents are still up dancing so why turn in just because it is well past midnight? Even if a taxi can be hard to come by at this time of night, sooner or later one will stop for you so you can head to the city's historic *Malasaña* → p. 43 district. *Nasti (Vicente Ferrer 33)* is small but happening while *Pacha (Barceló 11)* on the other hand is large and chic. If clubbing and dancing is not your thing then try the *Museo Chicote* → p. 77 – the famous cocktail bar on the Gran Vía.

05:00am ONE FOR THE ROAD

A night on the town in Madrid wouldn't be complete without *churros con chocolate*. Of course the time-honoured *Chocolatería San Ginés* → p. 77 is the place to have yours and don't be shocked to find it buzzing at five in the morning. Here the hot chocolate is so thick that you can only eat it with a spoon, do as the locals do and dunk your *churros* – delicate fried pastry – into it. A delicious Madrid ritual!



Metro lines to the starting point: 1, 2, 3
Metro station: Sol
Best time to set out:
early morning