



# Vintiquing in MADRID

With its parades of vintage stores, boutiques and design shops, you won't leave the Spanish capital empty-handed, says **Oliver Hurley**

An original oil painting was not on my shopping list when I visited Madrid. But the colourful beach scene, with its coarse brush strokes and appealing palette – one of 80 or so paintings by an amateur artist for sale on a little stall in the incredibly hectic market El Rastro – had a folksy charm that was irresistible. It's a perfect example of what makes the Spanish capital such a great shopping destination: you might think you're looking for, say, a vintage shawl or an antique coffee grinder, but the city's raft of independent stores, boutiques and design emporiums, each with an identity all of their own, have so much to offer that you can never quite be sure what you'll come home with.

The city spreads out from the Puerta del Sol, which marks *kilometro cero*, the point from which the entire Spanish road network is measured. To the south is La Latina, the city's oldest area, while newer, hipper districts such as Chueca and Malasaña are to the north. The main area for vintage is around Calle Ribera de Curtidores, a long, sloping street peppered with

antiques and retro shops (it's also home to El Rastro on Sundays). Other parts of the city that you should make time for are Triball – an arty, up-and-coming neighbourhood just north of Calle Gran Vía – and the neighbouring Conde Duque, with its intriguing assortment of small independent businesses.

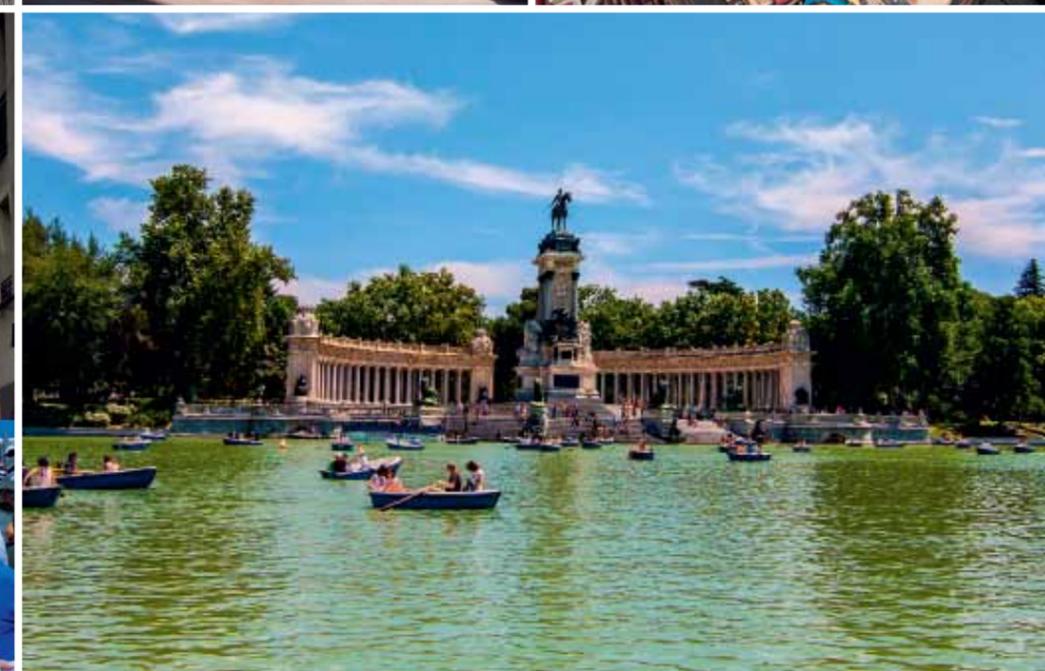
The key to fitting all this into just a few days while still enjoying a relaxing break is to settle into the city's easy-going atmosphere and embrace the local schedule. Many shops don't open till 10am – so you can have a lie-in without missing out on anything – and then close again for a few hours in the afternoon, allowing for a restorative siesta. Late nights are the norm – no one goes out to eat until at least 9pm.

Whatever you decide to do, just make sure you keep your eyes open as you stroll around. While hunting for antiques shops near Calle del Prado, I stumbled across Capas Seseña (Calle de la Cruz 23), a 111-year-old cape shop that once counted Picasso as a customer. It's charming, quirky and packed with history – much like Madrid itself...



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**  
The Metropolis building on Gran Vía; CaixaForum's vertical garden, designed by Patrick Blanc; vintage books at El Rastro; Retiro Park's boating lake; the imposing Palacio Real; the tiled exterior of a chemist's in Malasaña; taking a break in Plaza Mayor; El Rastro attracts over 100,000 visitors every Sunday

ROBERT HARDING/AGE FOTOSTOCK; MARCO CRISTOFORI/ROBERT HARDING; PEDRO RUFO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; MARQUES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; DAMIEN SIMONIS/LONELY PLANET IMAGES



## NEED TO KNOW...

### GETTING THERE

● H&A travelled as a guest of Kirker Holidays (020 7593 2283; kirkerholidays.com), which organises luxury short breaks and holidays to Europe, India and southern Africa.

### WHERE TO STAY

● H&A stayed at the Westin Palace on Plaza de las Cortes (westinpalacemadrid.com/en), where Kirker offers three nights' accommodation with

return scheduled flights, a MadridCard and private airport transfers from £769 per person. Kirker can also arrange three-night breaks in Madrid from £519 per person.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

● For details of events, exhibitions, day trips and more, visit the website of the Madrid Visitors & Convention Bureau at esmadrid.com.  
● If you're planning on doing lots of sight-seeing, a

MadridCard could save you money. It provides entry to over 50 museums (with priority admission in many), including 'The Big Three' (see p136) and Palacio Real, plus gives you discounts at major stores and restaurants. From €39 for 24 hours. See madridcard.com for details.  
● It's easy to get caught out by trying to go shopping in the afternoon. Many retailers – especially smaller,

independent outlets – close at lunchtime and don't open again until 4pm or 5pm.  
● For art and entertainment listings, see in-madrid.com.  
● The centre is eminently walkable but if you want to hop from one side to another, the metro system is efficient and easy to use – ticket machines even have an English option. For maps and further information, see metromadrid.es/en/index.html.



# MADRID'S BEST KEPT SECRETS

There's something for everyone – if you know where to look...



## MARKET FORCES

You can't go to Madrid without paying a visit to **El Rastro** (Plaza de Cascorro/Calle Ribera de Curtidores), the city's sprawling flea market, which takes place on Sundays and public holidays. The stalls' wares run the gamut from the enticing (patchwork rugs, vintage clothing, handmade jewellery) to the utterly optimistic (one pitch consists of a few pairs of old shoes and some phone chargers), but you should go as much for the atmosphere as the chance to bag a bargain. The area is also home to an array of antiques shops, including **Galerías Piquer** (Calle Ribera de Curtidores 29), a purpose-built courtyard with 20 outlets on two floors that specialise in art deco, lamps, retro knick-knacks and more. Go on a different day to the market and you'll be able to browse the shops without the crowds.

### 1 PESETA

**Noviciado 9; peseta.org**  
It's well worth the effort of finding this delightful store (on an unlikely looking street just down from a fishmonger), which boasts an extensive selection of pretty fabrics. There are also purses, bags, tablecloths and parades of bunting in a colourful hotchpotch of florals, checks, spots and stripes. Every item is designed and made in a back room on the premises, where regular sewing workshops are also held.

### 2 TIEMPOS MODERNOS

**Arrieta 17; tiempos-modernos.com**  
I could happily kit out my entire living room with the timeless mid-century furniture in Tiempos Modernos, which focuses on '20th-century antiques' and has pieces dating from 1920s French deco to the 1970s. But it was the eye-catching array of carefully restored old lamps that had me considering my baggage allowance. The shop also serves as an art gallery, with new exhibitions every few months.

### 3 ANTIGUA CASA TALAVERA

**Calle de Isabel la Católica 2**  
Identifiable by its remarkable tiled facade, the 'first house of Spanish ceramics' is full of handmade pieces by potters from all over Spain, including Seville, Valencia and the blue-and-yellow Talavera work from which the shop takes its name. Now run by the grandson of the original owner, there are both original and reproduction ceramics, with patterns that date back 1,000 years.

MAP: ZARA PICKEN; PHOTOGRAPHS: OLIVER HURLEY



Lamps in Tiempos Modernos



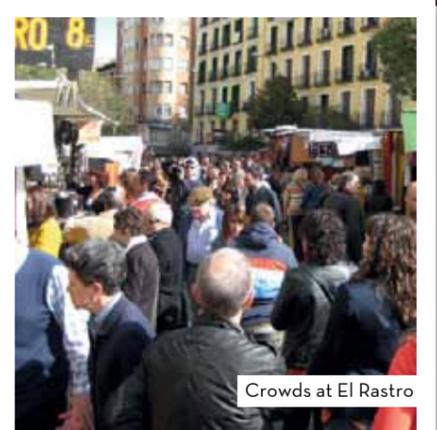
Galerías Piquer's courtyard



Handmade goods in The 2nd



Antigua Casa Talavera



Crowds at El Rastro

### 4 KIKEKELLER

**Corredera Baja de San Pablo 17; kikekeller.com**  
Expect retro furniture and accessories with a twist in this vibrant boutique in the fashionable area of Malasaña – think storage units created from rabbit hutches, chairs with tubular steel frames, and customised magazine racks on skateboard wheels. And if you can't bear to leave, on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays it transforms into a bar that's open from 7pm – don't miss the expertly crafted mojitos.

### 5 COMERCIAL AMPARO MERCERIA

**Calle del Marqués Viudo de Pontejos 5**  
As soon as you enter this old-fashioned haberdashery store, which is located down a side street not far from Plaza Mayor, you gain the impression that little has changed since it first opened in 1861. Behind the original wooden counter are dozens of neatly labelled boxes of ribbons, lace, buttons, zips, sequins, needles and even wedding dress accessories. It remains so popular that it employs a supermarket deli counter-style ticketing system.

### 6 ANTIGÜEDADES

**Calle del Prado 8**  
This narrow street houses a number of antiques shops but Antigüedades (literally 'Antiques') is the most compelling, with its blend of huge statement pieces (I was particularly taken with a lifesize pair of 15th-century Chinese horse sculptures) and more realistic buys. In between the



Fabric store Peseta

18th and 19th-century furniture and pricey paintings, the shop is packed with coins, ornate chandeliers, art nouveau statuettes and china.

### 7 PASSAGE PRIVÉ

**Moratín 29; passageprive.es**  
If you're after a quirky piece to add a final flourish to a room, this vintage emporium is the place to look. Its eclectic and ever-changing stock can veer from outsize Playmobil figures to stacks of 1950s luggage, via 1970s sporting goods (American football helmet, anyone?), retro advertising signage, a large clock by French company Brillié, an airplane trolley and a conspiracy of model ravens. I especially liked its playful collection of old wooden tennis racquets converted into mirrors.

### 8 THE 2ND

**San Pedro 18**  
Originally a tiny shop in the Chueca district that opened in 2006, The 2nd moved last year to these larger premises behind the modish CaixaForum art gallery (which you should pop into on the way). Everything in the store is handmade, including elegant vases, wooden bowls and jewellery along with artisan throws, rugs and blankets that are hand-woven in Spain, Turkey, India, Syria and Morocco.

# MADRID'S BEST THINGS TO SEE



## **MOUTh-WATERING MADRID**

It's difficult to avoid tapas in Madrid – even if you just order a drink in a bar, you'll be given a bowl of olives, often accompanied by a chunk of bread. For something more substantial, rather than ordering multiple plates at a time, locals tend to wander from place to place, ordering a single dish in each establishment. The best location for a night of tapas bar-hopping is Calle de la Cava Baja, with its medieval facades that mark what were once old Madrid's city walls. You can't go far wrong with any of the eateries on the gently curving street, although aficionados head for Casa Lucas (Cava Baja 30), which specialises in creative tapas such as *albondigas estofadas* (veal and cuttlefish meatballs with garlic mash); Txakolina (Cava Baja 26), which has a range of 30 *pintxos* (Basque tapas); or Tempranillo (Cava Baja 38), with its 160 Spanish wines.

## **PLAZA MAYOR**

This elegant plaza (below) was constructed in the 15th century as a market square but was later rebuilt when Philip II moved his court here in 1561. In the 17th century it was the site of the Spanish Inquisition's gruesome *autos-da-fé*, while hangings also took place here until the late 18th century. Less dramatically, it's now the site of the tourist office. It's also an ideal spot to watch the world go by over a drink, while entertainment is provided by a curious gaggle of street performers.

## **'THE BIG THREE' MUSEUMS**

Between them, Madrid's three main museums house an astonishing selection of important works. The star attraction at Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Santa Isabel 52; [museoreinasofia.es](http://museoreinasofia.es)) is Picasso's vast anti-war painting *Guernica* but don't overlook pieces by Joan Miró, Rothko, Dalí and Man Ray. The collection in Museo Nacional del Prado (Paseo del Prado; [museodelprado.es](http://museodelprado.es)) is highlighted by Goya's 'Black Paintings' and *Las Meninas* by Velázquez, supposedly the most technically accomplished painting ever. Finish off at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Paseo del Prado; [museothyssen.org](http://museothyssen.org)), which provides an overview of art from the Renaissance to the late 20th century.

## **PALACIO REAL**

Conceived by Philip V after the Muslim fortress constructed by Madrid's founders burned down in 1734, the enormous Palacio Real (Calle de Bailén;



[patrimonionacional.es](http://patrimonionacional.es)) is among Europe's most impressive palaces. Open to the public are 50 of its 3,000 rooms, including an armoury that contains El Cid's sword, the throne room and royal apartments – Spain's royal family lives elsewhere and today only uses the building occasionally for state visits.

## **RETIRO PARK**

Tucked behind Paseo del Prado, this beautiful park – designed in the 1630s as part of the Buen Retiro Palace – is just the place for a relaxing evening

stroll. Among the beautifully maintained gardens you'll also find a boating lake, buskers, children's shows and Palacio de Cristal (above), modelled on London's Crystal Palace.

## **PLAZA DE TOROS DE LAS VENTAS**

Whatever your views on bullfighting, it's an important part of the region's cultural heritage, inspiring artists and writers such as Picasso, Goya and Hemingway. This huge auditorium (Calle de Alcalá 237; [las-ventas.com](http://las-ventas.com)) is the home of Spanish taumachy but, even if you don't come to watch a fight, you cannot help but be impressed by the sheer scale of the building, Madrid's preeminent example of neo-Mudéjar architecture. The museum includes a selection of beautifully decorated matador outfits, which can contain up to 5kg of gold embroidery.

