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— Texts and
the city

*My essay is about
'carajillo' (hic)*



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ESSAY 01

Talking shop *Boutique boom*

Spain's retail scene is blossoming again after the financial crisis. Madrid, home to both fresh independent brands and long-established names doing the right things well, is particularly fertile ground.

by Nelly Gocheva,
Monocle

While scouting the cobbled streets of Madrid and hunting for hidden gems for this guide, one thing hit me bright and clear: retail – from the biggest players to independent small-scale ventures – is alive and kicking in this city. Whether it's the well-off Salamanca neighbourhood or the characterful backstreets of Las Letras, the capital is a labyrinth of shops with more and more smaller retailers supporting a new wave of Spanish craftsmanship and a focus on local design.

In its abundance, Zara is to Spain what Starbucks is to the US. This is nowhere more evident than in the nation's capital: outlets by the Galicia-based retailer and its sister companies Massimo Dutti and Bershka are generously

sprinkled across the Madrid *centro*. At the other end of the spectrum is Spanish luxury brand Loewe (*see page 52*) with its flagship shop in the heart of Madrid on Gran Vía, which includes an opulent fashion-meets-art Galería exhibition space. However, global fast-fashion chains and high-end brands aside, what surprises a returning visitor such as myself is the deepening diversification of local retail, much of which proudly waves the “Made in Spain” flag: evidence of the welcome return of entrepreneurial spirit to post-crisis Madrid.

Independent brands such as Masscob and Steve Mono have been impressing loyal customers with their much-treasured lines of women's clothing and leather bags respectively for successive seasons. But an increasing clutch of younger designers are making a name for themselves in the capital and beyond. Among them is Andrés Gallardo with an atelier-cum-shop (*see page 64*) in multicultural Tirso de Molina, a short walk from the city's epicentre: Puerta del Sol. Gallardo, whose handcrafted porcelain pendants are now sold at Paul Smith in London, joins a stable of designers who have been regenerating Spain's porcelain industry, adding a contemporary twist to a centuries-old tradition.

The figurines from cherished Spanish ceramics brands Lladró and Sargadelos can be found in homes across Spain but Gallardo has captured the imagination of a younger audience by rethinking classic motifs and creating elaborate modern designs, reminiscent

“Global fast-fashion chains and high-end brands aside, what surprises a returning visitor such as myself is the deepening diversification of local retail, much of which proudly waves the ‘Made in Spain’ flag”

Three shops to check out

- 01 Galería Loewe**
Browse Loewe's high-quality leather goods.
- 02 Glent**
Head here for bespoke men's shoes.
- 03 Andrés Gallardo**
A mecca for quirky porcelain jewellery.

of classy old-school Spanish jewellery. In other words, expect a significant number of flowers, birds and tree branches in block colours.

Alongside Gallardo is Helena Rohner, who sells her exclusive tableware and porcelain jewellery out of a snug showroom (*see page 52*) on the cobbled Calle del Almendro. Rohner's whimsical tea sets for Georg Jensen have been gracing kitchen tables across Europe since the 1990s, when the Barcelona-born designer first collaborated with the Danish silversmith. Since then she's gained plenty of devoted followers with an appreciation for small-run handmade products.

Rubbing shoulders with Gallardo and Rohner is young Álvaro Ruiz of Guantes Luque (*see page 61*), a glove shop and manufacturer that has been in business since 1896. Beyond the cute canine logo embellished above the entrance, Ruiz – the fourth generation of this family business – purveys hand-cut and hand-stitched gloves that garner the attention of Spanish socialites and European royals, as well as playing a star role in Disney's latest version of *Cinderella*. The tiny atelier has managed to stay afloat despite the country's recent economic turmoil by only producing small batches of the intricate designs – and, to ensure steady sales, never dropping the ball on quality.

Speaking of longlasting traditional businesses, here comes Antigua Casa Crespo (*see page 61*) on the unassuming Calle del Divino Pastor in Malasaña.

Entering this charmingly cluttered espadrilles haven is like stepping back into the past; the venture opened its doors in 1863 and not much seems to have changed since. What started as a shop selling simple sandals for workers now handcrafts and sells espadrilles of various styles and colours, attracting everyone from Spanish *abuelas* waiting to replace their decades-favourite models to overly excited Harajuku girls anxious to get hold of a precious pair.

If you visit you'll get to know the dark wooden façade very well as no doubt you'll be confronted by a tedious queue – but be patient as it's well worth the wait. The average price is €25 per pair and Antigua Casa Crespo also happens to be the only store in Madrid with its own factory. As the latest member of the founding family to take the reins, Maxi Garbayo never misses an opportunity to talk about his production house's humble location in the village of Cervera del Río Alhama. Just remember not to touch the display merchandise if you want to stay on his good side.

The strategy of keeping retail small and in the family seems to be paying off for the likes of Garbayo, Rohner, Ruiz and Gallardo – and soon it might be catching on elsewhere in Spain. The latest economic figures show a continuous rise in retail sales, helping the domestic economy to grow at one of the fastest rates in the EU.

So it seems like good news for the Spanish economy, as well as small family-run shops in the city and ultimately us – the shoppers. Make sure you leave some room in your suitcase on your way here – and pack some comfortable walking shoes. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Gocheva is the founding editor of *The Monocle Travel Guide Series*. Having been with *MONOCLE* since 2009, she also set up the Toronto bureau and has done her fair share of travels around the world. The best part of her job? Scouting her favourite cities for top retail, obviously.

ESSAY 02

Ripe for a refill *Vermouth's revival*

For a long time in Madrid, 'vermut' would be ordered solely by elderly gents propping up the bar and reliving their youths. But the fortified wine has made a welcome return – and it's much classier than sangría.

by Paula Mòvil,
food journalist

If you've just touched down in Madrid you might not yet realise it but vermouth is in the midst of a comeback. For years it was seen as the exclusive drink of the bevy of elderly Spanish men hanging about the old-style bars dotted across the city. However, a new generation of young *Madrileños* has started switching their *cubatas* (tall spirit-based drinks) for a glass of richly flavoured *vermut*. Perhaps it was borne of the need for a lighter drink as they sat on sun-drenched terraces nursing their Sunday

hangovers, or maybe it's a natural offshoot of Spain's gastronomical boom and the insatiable search to reinvent old trends. What is clear is that the newfound embrace of this elixir is in full swing. If chefs are the new rock stars, vermouth is the new hit song.

The first thing you'll need to know before you order your own *vermut* is how to pronounce it. A true *Madrileño* drops the "t", affectionately referring to their favourite drink as *vermú*. This fortified wine is flavoured with up to 80 macerated botanicals and is actually one of the most *castizo* (a term for anything that is authentically Spanish) concoctions in the capital. However, the roots of this medicinal wine can be tracked all the way back to India in 1500BC and traces of it were even found inside a Chinese mummy from 1200BC.

Fast forward a few millennia to 1786 and an Italian named Antonio Benedetto Carpano was so inspired by a bitter botanical called *vermut* (German for wormwood) that he created his own label: Carpano Antica Formula. This went on to inspire other concoctions around Europe and in Spain the tradition took hold in Reus in Catalonia with wineries such as Miró, De Muller, Rofes and Yzaguirre. This Spanish offshoot was flavoured with cinnamon instead of the vanilla favoured by the Italians.

The main champions of vermouth are the popular traditional

Vermut hotspots

- 01 **El Boquerón, Lavapiés**
Rowdy hangout for locals.
- 02 **Bodegas Casas, Atocha**
This 'taberna' serves 'vermut' with a splash of 'sifón'.
- 03 **Casa Camacho, Malasaña**
Well-versed drinkers and young enthusiasts.

bars that have been serving it on tap for generations. For a while though it was an endangered species, following decades of creeping domination from big-name beer and wine. You may also be wondering where sangria fits into this distilled equation. While we love to indulge in a pitcher of the latter while holidaying down by the beach or rampaging at a fiesta at home, the truth is that Spaniards don't drink this fruity mixture as much as the foreign stereotype would have you believe. If you're looking to avoid raising eyebrows as another misled *guiri* (foreigner), approach the bar with confidence, look the bartender in the eye and order a *vermú*.

Almost every 100-year-old *taberna* in the city serves *vermut de grifo* (vermouth on tap) and a sign on the façade is usually a surefire sign of whether a bar is worth your valuable drinking time. One such bar is El Boquerón (Calle Valencia 14), a bastion of tradition within the multicultural Lavapiés district (see page 130). You'll only fit in here if you're partial to throwing olive

pits, napkins and prawn heads on the ground as you slurp down some juicy oysters with one hand and sip on the perfect glass of *vermut* with the other. A short walk from Atocha's railway station, Bodegas Casas (Avenida de la Ciudad de Barcelona 23) is another venue that serves the drink to perfection with a splash of *sifón* (soda water) – but only if you manage to successfully fight your way through the army of patrons crowding the steel-surfaced bar.

Many of the older gentlemen at bars such as these can testify to the charming allure of *vermú* in their younger years. In the past, if you wanted to get near a young woman on a Sunday after church, inviting her to drink a glass of *vermut* was the way to do it. Today, as these same men stand at the bar reminiscing about their former womanising ways, they are joined by a younger generation who are watering down *vermut's* reputation as an old man's drink. A perfect place to witness this is Casa Camacho (Calle de San Andrés 4), which is located right in the middle of the buzzing Malasaña

“Approach the bar with confidence, look the bartender in the eye and order a ‘vermú’”

neighbourhood (see page 128) and opened in 1928. Dusty bottles line the shelves on the back wall and the traditional *raciones* of food filter out of a

questionably grimy kitchen. Yet the bar is always packed due to the quality of their *vermú*. For an extra kick ask for the *yayo*: a dangerous mix of gin, vermouth and soda.

The ideal time to knock back this drink is *la hora del aperitivo* or “the time of the aperitif”, which is assigned to the late evening, usually just before one of the city’s infamously late dinners. Without running the risk of derailing your appetite, you may want to order the perfect edible accompaniment: a skewered *tapa* or *gilda* made of olives, peppers or anchovies. Remember the movie *Gilda*? Well actress Rita Hayworth was considered to be “spicy and hot” just like the *piparra* (green pepper) on this skewer.

The spirited comeback of vermouth, fuelled by a new enthusiastic generation, has certainly given this liquid a new lease of life in Madrid. Sure, the city is ripe with the newest gastronomic trends and home to a multitude of Michelin-starred restaurants but before you tantalise your palate with these modern morsels, take a moment to embrace the sacred ritual of the aperitivo. Raise your glass to the resilience of this traditional tittle as you toast: “*Viva el vermú!*” — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Móvil is a food journalist from Guatemala who moved to the Spanish capital in 2003. Together with her partner Roberto Castán, she converted her obsession for *vermut* into La Vermutería Pop-up, a mobile bar that springs up at some of the city’s (and country’s) most popular events.

ESSAY 03
Acquired tastes
Madrid’s must-tries

Although the Spanish capital is overflowing with global flavours, its local signature dishes – from intestines to testicles – are required eating if you want to experience the culinary scene in all its glory.

by María Arranz,
 editor

Madrid has a reputation for welcoming people from all over the country and being a good host. In fact, a huge chunk of Spain’s rural population migrated from the countryside to the capital in the mid-20th century in search of greener urban pastures. This has underwritten the city’s love of more humble delicacies but may also explain why residents are so willing to try new flavours.

It explains how in a neighbourhood such as Lavapiés you can still see *manolo* bars (traditional working-class drinking spots) alongside restaurants fragrant by the exotic aromas of curried vegetables prepared by a new wave of south Asian immigrants. The cramped streets are home to more than 80 nationalities and restaurants offer tastes from Africa (Baobab, La Teranga), the UK (Los Chuchis) and Mexico (Antigua Taquería).

At weekends the *calles* of La Latina are a popular stomping ground for *Madrileños* as they peruse the stalls of the famous

El Rastro flea market. But traditional *tabernas* are now wedged between diverse gastronomic proposals such as the Russian specialities of El Cosaco, the Italian and Argentinian recipes of Camoatí and the renowned fusion cuisine of LaCava, with a menu that mixes French, Mexican, Arabic and American flavours.

However, while it’s perfectly understandable that you would want to take your palate on a whirlwind world tour, if you’re in Madrid (and you have a strong stomach) you ought to try some of the more extreme and greasy specialities that are unique to the city itself. The flagship dish is the *cocido Madrileño*: a hearty stew made from chickpeas, vegetables and a wide assortment of meats, whose recipe goes back to mediaeval times. Originally a humble dish, its popular reputation saw it travel up the social hierarchy to the tables of kings. Ask anyone where to find the best *cocido* and they will probably point you in the direction of their mother’s house. But there are a number of restaurants known for this speciality, such as Lhardy, La Bola and the classic among classics, Malacatín. If you’re feeling even more ravenous (and adventurous) try *callos* (tripe stew) and *casquería* (offal), the most authentic of Madrid meals. Thanks to the skills of the city’s chefs, people are usually surprised at just how delicious these dishes are in traditional *tabernas* like Maldonado 14, Bodegas Ricla and San Mamés.

Food heroes

01 Malacatín

Serves a revered version of hearty stew ‘cocido Madrileño’.

02 Bodegas Ricla

This ‘taberna’ has mastered the most authentic of Madrid meals.

03 Chocolatería San Ginés

An institution that will suitably satiate any sweet tooth.

“If you’re feeling even more ravenous (and adventurous) try ‘callos’ (tripe stew) and ‘casquería’ (offal), the most authentic of Madrid meals”

gallinejas, *entresijos* and *zarajos* (chicken or lamb intestines).

Still feeling bold? Indulge in some succulent *criadillas* (testicles), a star item on the menu of the Chamberí district’s Casa Ricardo. Other restaurants, such as the Arganzuela district’s Freiduría de Gallinejas, fry up servings of For those with a sweet tooth, Madrid also has a longstanding tradition of deliciously greasy sweets. *Churros* and *porras* reign from breakfast through to the wee hours, when they are devoured by those stumbling home after a big night. The crunchy batter and dipping chocolate are also popular during the folkloric festivals that pop up in various neighbourhoods during the warmer months. But legendary institution Chocolatería San Ginés, just a few paces from Plaza Mayor, makes them all year round. *Torrijas*, an unlikely dessert made from slices of bread soaked in milk or wine and then fried, is most popular during Easter.

If you’re still feeling tentative about sinking your teeth into these treasures, include a trip to the corner bar first. One of the city’s skilled *caña*-pouring bartenders will be at the ready to serve you a welcome dose of liquid courage. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: The editor of magazines *Madrid* and *Fuet*, Arranz specialises in gastronomy and food culture. She has left the city in search of greener pastures on numerous occasions – admitting to a love-hate relationship with her home city – but she always comes back.

ESSAY 04

City of two halves *Real vs Atlético*

Think of football in the Spanish capital and the first club to spring to mind will be Europe's most successful: Real Madrid. However, that would be to forget Atlético: rivals and a key part of the city's sporting culture.

by Ben Olsen,
writer

When getting to grips with a new city, exploring its geography, language, history and current affairs can add a valuable sense of context. Yet in Madrid, football paints an equally valid picture. Here the beautiful game left bullfighting way back in the Ernest Hemingway era as Spain's number-one sport; it has the power to bring the city to a standstill and turn traditionally back-page headlines into front-page news. The colours of its two largest clubs – the white of Real Madrid and striped red and white, or *rojiblanco*, of Atlético Madrid – are emblematic of the city. The clubs' contrasting histories and fortunes play a large part in defining those who live here.

Madrid's footballing heritage is legendary. In the form of Real Madrid, the capital can lay claim to Europe's most successful club – having won more trophies than any other team on the continent – and the world's richest, topping Deloitte's World's Richest Club list for 10 years running. The club's champagne moments have been delivered by a generation-spanning who's who of sporting greats, including Zinedine Zidane, David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Propped up by a sophisticated global marketing wing, the club's presence plays a major role in drawing tourists to the city. Yet as fans of the city's second-largest club Atlético Madrid point out, despite a relative lack of success there is more to the story than *Los Blancos*.

The two clubs embody Madrid's turbulent modern history and the socio-economic and political divisions between its people. Both teams, founded within a year of each other at the turn of the 20th century, occupy opposite sides of the city. Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabéu stadium is in the leafy,

“The two clubs embody Madrid's turbulent modern history and socio-economic and political divisions”

wealthy northern district of Chamartín, near the major banks and glitzy commerce of the Paseo de la Castellana. Atlético ply their trade at the more modest Vicente Calderón stadium, which is set between a brewery and the choked M30 motorway by the Manzanares River in the unfashionable south.

Historically one of Madrid's poorer neighbourhoods, Arganzuela's working-class population has traditionally shaped the *rojiblanco* fanbase that has lived in the shadows of their illustrious rivals for years. Ever since General Franco piggybacked Real Madrid's dominance in the European game during the 1950s for political capital, the club's association with the regime and the nation's upper echelons has burned bright. Atlético was seen at the time as an outlet for the rebellion: the people versus the power; Robin Hood versus the rich.

Although such lines have since blurred in the bodegas around the capital, badinage between both clubs' fans treads similar lines. The phrase *Atléti hasta la muerte, Real hasta la próxima derrota* (Atléti till I die, Real until the next defeat) reflects the perceived difference between those through-thick-and-

thin fans who stand by Atlético – season-ticket sales famously went up when the team were relegated to the second tier – and Real Madrid's hobbyist fans who'll only sing when they're winning. Yet ask a Real fan and they'll likely laugh this off, point towards the club's monumental success and possibly bring up the old “*Patético Atlético*” insult. Playing on the *rojiblanco*s lack of success, a famous advertisement from 2006 once saw a young boy ask his father why they support Atlético; his father struggles to find a response.

For all their differences, Real and Atlético are key parts of the city's beating heart. Keeping an industry of cleaners in jobs sweeping up the discarded husks of *pipas* – the salted sunflower seeds eaten in bulk in both stadiums – the sport is part of *Madrileños'* shared identity. A hotly contested annual event sees runners of both stripes race between the Bernabéu and Calderón stadiums. Matchdays transform the city into colourful pageants, fans toting *bocadillos de jamón* and Mahou beer as they flock from Nuevos Ministerios Metro in the north and Pirámides in the south towards their respective grounds.

Plaza de Cibeles has been adopted by Real Madrid's fans as a site of celebration, trophy wins seeing tens of thousands descend on the square and the team's flag draped over the statue. When Atlético triumph it's the nearby Neptune Fountain that gushes red and white. Yet, as the club's fans are

Ways to stay fit

01 Cycling

Explore the city on two wheels and complete the Madrid Río cycling lap.

02 Swimming

Try Piscina Municipal El Lago.

03 Running lounge

We've mapped out routes that weave past the sights (see page 126).

more than aware, these occasions are far rarer.

It's when the two teams meet head to head in *El Derbi Madrileño* that visitors witness the sport's full effect on the city. The world's highest-profile club competition – the European Champions League – saw the teams meet in the 2014 final and although the game was played in Lisbon, the build-up in Madrid was deafening. Allegiances were displayed across the city and giant replica shirts draped in Puerta del Sol. Despite taking the lead in the first half, Atlético conceded an equaliser after 93 minutes before Real won the game 4-1 in extra time, securing *la décima*: a record-breaking 10th Champions League victory. Half of the city rejoiced with a two-day party soundtracked by a cacophony of car horns. Real ruled the capital once more – though Atlético fans had the solace of first place in that season's domestic league, having finished three points ahead of their city rivals.

So 2014 was just another chapter in the city's sporting drama. In victory and defeat, it's the perennial hopes, near misses and euphoric triumphs that embellish the cultural dividing line that defines Madrid's passionate people. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Previously MONOCLE's senior sub editor, Olsen is now a freelance writer. This naturally gives him more flexibility when it comes to attending important football games, be they in Spain or his homeland of England.

ESSAY 05
Reel Madrid
The city on screen

Pedro Almodóvar, Spain's most famous director, brought the capital to the film world's attention by making it the star of numerous outings. Since then it has played host to everyone from Jason Bourne to the Antichrist.

by David Bernal,
film critic

In one of Pedro Almodóvar's first films, *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982), the son of an emperor travels to Madrid and declares it "the most fun city in the world". He wasn't wrong. At the time the city was experiencing an explosion of creativity in the post-Franco era, known as *La Movida Madrileña*. The countercultural movement was a catharsis that marked the transition from old Madrid to the Madrid of today. But many of the older rituals in the film have not been lost: waking early on a Sunday for El Rastro (a flea market in the old La Latina quarter that dates back to 1740) then snacking on a calamari sandwich at one of the *tabernas*.

Almodóvar is the director who has best portrayed Madrid's soul on film and his work cannot be understood without taking into account the city's influence. In his films Madrid is always a main character, sharing the big screen with the likes of Penélope Cruz, Antonio Banderas, Carmen Maura and Victoria Abril. The drama *What Have*

I Done to Deserve This? (1984) was set in one of the working-class *colmena* residences, while comedy *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) was shot in a penthouse. Both films star Carmen Maura but while the first is a neorealist depiction of the city, the second opts for modern imagery. So which is more accurate? Well, both. Madrid is a city of contrasts where everyone mixes together. At a party you may rub shoulders with a duchess and a drag queen. This is its charm.

The filmography of *el Manchego*, as Almodóvar is known, serves as a guide to some of the city's most beautiful corners. Characters from *The Flower of My Secret* (1996) dance under the stars in a deserted Plaza Mayor. The nurse in *Talk to Her* (2002) watches silent films in the Cine Doré on Calle de Santa Isabel 3, a cinema that houses the Spanish film archive.

Almodóvar isn't the only one to use Madrid as a film set. Film-makers of the 1990s no longer saw the city as a capital dominated by a dictator; instead they painted a cosmopolitan metropolis. These new films broke with tradition and embraced Hollywood genres.

In *The Day of the Beast*, (1995), director Álex de la Iglesia set the arrival of the Antichrist atop the Torres Kio, a pair of skyscrapers in the financial district. The premise had some justification: Madrid is one of the only cities with a monument to Lucifer, standing tall in Retiro Park. Iglesia's picture includes one of the most iconic images in Spanish film: a priest and a

metalhead hanging from the Schweppes sign crowning the Gran Via skyline.

Two years later Alejandro Amenábar, Spain's highest-grossing director, emptied the city's busiest boulevard to film a sequence in his thriller *Open Your Eyes* (1997). Tom Cruise tried to emulate the scene in Times Square but his 2001 remake *Vanilla Sky* lacked one key element: Madrid.

Despite the city's modernity, a pure Madrid still exists. This Madrid *castizo* is caricatured in the *Torrente* saga, whose five instalments star comedian Santiago Segura as the antihero: a scumbag cop and Atlético fan who struts the ungentrified streets and frequents bars with floors covered in prawn tails. American and French producers bought the rights for a remake but such characters are usually lost in translation.

Obviously Madrid hasn't gone unnoticed in Hollywood. *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007), for example, includes scenes in Atocha's railway station and alongside the iconic Viaducto de la Calle Bailén. But the film-maker who perhaps best took Madrid's pulse was Jim Jarmusch. *The Limits of Control* (2009) shows the space-age architecture of the Torres Blancas residence near Avenida de América and actress Tilda Swinton meeting assassin Isaach De Bankolé in Plaza de San Ildefonso, Malasaña. As it happens, this bohemian neighbourhood is the perfect place to drink *cañas* and gather evidence for Madrid, quite possibly, being the most fun city in the world. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Madrid-born film-buff Bernal has shared his film knowledge in *Cinemanía*, *Rolling Stone* and *El País* and reviewed films on radio station Cadena SER and cable TV station Canal+. His favourite Madrid film is *The Day of the Beast*.

Madrid's movies

- 01 Almodóvar's oeuvre**
The city is the backdrop for most of his pictures.
- 02 The Day of the Beast**
Taking its premise from the notorious monument of Lucifer.
- 03 Open Your Eyes**
Madrid's busiest boulevard was emptied for this film.

ESSAY 06

Modern makeover *Reshaping the city*

Charming relics still remain here and there on Madrid's streets but an energetic new generation is taking the lead on urban renewal. This heady mix of old and new makes for an all-singing – and all-inclusive – city.

by *Liam Aldous,*
Monocle

Shaped by centuries of conservative royal rule and a stifling 40-year fascist dictatorship, Madrid is derided by most Spaniards as an old-fashioned cloister for the country's political and economic elite. It's too *casposo* they say, screwing up their faces as if being forced to chew on some bitter *jamón*.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the joys of Spanish jargon, the literal translation of *casposo* is “dandruffy”. The term is usually applied to disparage “old Spain” and conjures up the image of an elderly *señor* with a stiff upper lip, his hair slicked back with Brylcreem and shoulders speckled with flakes of dandruff. Deeply ingrained perceptions are hard to

shake and even though Madrid has undergone a modern makeover, much of the country still regards the capital with dandruff-laden disdain.

But if you're travelling to Madrid (or are already here) pay no attention to the naysayers. Today it is barely recognisable from the stuffy city of old. The most visible tokens of change have been the big-ticket infrastructure projects such as Madrid Río (*see page 111*) and the relocation of city hall to the Palacio de Cibeles. However, a protracted economic crisis and political malaise have seen other massive projects grind to a halt, prompting residents to step into roles as reformers and spur change on a smaller scale.

The explosion of entrepreneurial energy continues to reverberate across each boisterous *barrio* and down nearly every colourful *calle*. In Las Salesas an old bread factory has been converted into organic food market and restaurant El Huerto de Lucas (*see page 46*); a former newspaper's HQ is now El Imparcial (Calle Duque de Alba 4), a smart restaurant with an

Top three revivals

01 Matadero Madrid

This cultural precinct is not to be missed (*see page 98*).

02 San Antón Church

The pews have been given a hi-tech upgrade.

03 El Huerto de Lucas

An organic food market that you could potentially spend all day in.

“Proud business owners and grateful residents are spearheading a more sustainable city facelift”

editorially themed gift-shop; while a hollowed-out cinema has been remade into multi-level fitness centre Gymage (*see page 122*). As privately financed dreams have become a reality, proud business owners and grateful residents are spearheading a more sustainable city facelift.

Nowhere is this metamorphosis more evident than in the rebadged Ballesta Triangle. Tucked away behind Gran Vía, these streets fell into disrepair following Spain's economic crisis in the 1990s, becoming sullied by crime, drugs and debauchery. In 2007 a private investment group purchased the dozens of brothels smothering the streets, renovating each premise and intentionally lowering rents to attract creatively inclined tenants. In the years since, the turnaround has seen independent retailers such as Kikekeller (Calle Corredera Baja de San Pablo 17) move in to sell a range of metallic furniture (and transform its space into a bar at night), while a former butcher has become the Microteatro (Calle de Loreto Prado y Enrique Chicote 9): a miniature theatre complex for acting, writing and directing talent.

Yet as moribund spaces have been snapped up, stripped back

and reborn, many of the vestiges of a different era still litter the streets. A whistle worthy of the Pied Piper heralds the arrival of a gypsy knife-sharpener who regularly wheels his cart around the city in the evenings. *Serenos* – a dying breed of night watchmen – still patrol certain streets in Chamberí; a dogged museum continues to attract fans of *taurromaquia* in the Las Ventas bullfighting ring; and legions of pilgrims do some serious heavy-lifting as they prepare for Semana Santa (Holy Week). This daily juxtaposition between old and new further stirs up the city's chaotic feel but it also grounds the capital in authenticity.

As a new generation of spirited citizenry begins to eclipse the old guard, the city's resilient character has also given rise to some bizarre quirks. For example, the Church of San Antón in the Chueca district, best known for its annual blessing of animals, recently went hi-tech: it installed television screens with a live feed to the Vatican, free wi-fi, smartphone-charging points and a confessional iPad app, available 24/7.

In addition, those looking to satisfy their sweet tooth can visit young entrepreneur Isabel Ottino, who has opened small repository El Jardín del Convento (Calle del Cordón 1) near Plaza Mayor, which sells traditional cakes and confectionery from convents around the country. Over in Malasaña, a traditional delicatessen has even installed a street-side

vending machine that dispenses neatly packaged *jamón ibérico*, manchego cheese and tortilla.

But the city's rebirth is not merely cosmetic. Madrid is more tolerant and liberal than ever; waves of immigrants have added progressive flavour to its menus and culture. The city's gay pride festival draws about two million people onto the streets in a celebration of diversity and, in 2015, new 71-year-old mayor Manuela Carmena stood before crowds to proclaim the "importance of sexuality and sensuality in the quest for individual and social happiness". The contrast with leaders of old was astonishing, the applause deafening.

So what of that rancid, recalcitrant, dandruff-speckled man who once personified Madrid? He may be less ubiquitous than ever but if you look hard enough you might still spot these walking relics inside the unchanged drinking holes of Barrio Salamanca or Chamberí. Some hug the bar, sipping on *cañas* as they grumble about Madrid's loss of innocence. However in true *Madrileño* form, most simply shrug their shoulders, acquiescing to the inevitable march of change that has been ushered in by a more determined generation. What a difference a decade makes. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: MONOCLE's man in Madrid moved to Spain from Australia in 2011. Between his assignments for us he has worked as everything from teacher to tourism blogger and even scored a (fleeting) role on one of Spain's popular TV shows: *El Intermedio*.

ESSAY 07

Facing Franco *Putting history to bed*

Four decades after the death of Francisco Franco, the legacy of Spain's dictator can still be felt in Madrid's streets and buildings. Plans are afoot to change that – but still no one can decide what to do with his mausoleum.

by Pablo León,
writer

Spain's dictator Francisco Franco died on 20 November 1975 after 40 years in power. The country has now been a democracy for as long as it was stifled by his authoritarian regime. Madrid, the capital city, the cosmopolitan apple of the country's eye, the effervescent epicentre of all things cultural, was also Franco's city. The elite of El Caudillo (or The Leader) would sashay along its roads; they were mayors, ministers and industrialists and Madrid's avenues were soon named after them. Entire neighbourhoods, such as Salamanca, became hubs for Francoist ideology.

Since then we've had the *Transición*: the process by which Spain evolved into a democracy, completed by the approval of its current constitution in 1978. Then there was the 2007 law under the then prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, which condemned Franco's regime and sought to right the wrongs of that era. Yet still El Caudillo hasn't left the

Spanish capital completely. You can still walk the Calle de los Caídos de la División Azul, a street that is dedicated to the Fallen of the Blue Division, a detachment sent by Franco to help the Nazis during the Second World War. In the city's north you can also visit Nuevos Ministerios, a gargantuan ministerial building that resembles an edifice from Hitler's Berlin.

"Let's go walk in the city centre; we'll get off at the Gran Vía Metro stop and we can walk from there," I say to my 82-year-old grandmother. "That was José Antonio's stop," she replies automatically. She is one of the last of her generation to remember Madrid's turbulent history first-hand. She goes on to tell me how Gran Vía, Madrid's iconic main street, was officially inaugurated by King Alfonso XIII on 4 April 1910. But Franco later changed its name to honour José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the commander behind one of Spain's biggest coups d'état (there have been quite a few) and a leader of the Falange, the political organisation behind Spanish fascism.

"Franco's mausoleum is open for tourists and attracts quite the crowd. It receives more than 200,000 visitors each year, who are drawn there either by morbid curiosity or a respect for history"

the Metropolitan Real Estate Agency to symbolise the prosperity of Franco's Spain. Work on the former started during the dictatorship's heyday in

Three buildings from Franco's era

- 01 Edificio España**
This neo-baroque building is an imposing landmark.
- 02 Torre de Madrid**
Get a great view of the city.
- 03 Nuevos Ministerios**
Sprawling cement ministry in the financial district.

1948. The design was intended to follow that of the Chicago School: to build a towering skyscraper and attract the world's attention. It was inaugurated on 4 October 1953 and lauded by the press. "Our city's standing as one of the great European capitals is elevated by the luxurious Plaza Hotel in the superb Edificio España, the pride and joy of this new and grand Madrid," said the *ABC* paper, as it sang the praises of El Caudillo's city.

The reach of Franco's legacy extends to the outskirts of the Spanish capital. The first thing a visitor will notice in the nearby Cuelgamuros Valley is the imposing Cruz de los Caídos ("The Cross of the Fallen") on top of the Valle de los Caídos basilica. It was inaugurated on 1 April 1959, two decades after the Day of Victory that ended the Civil War and marked the beginning of the Franco era.

The dictator himself was at the unveiling of the memorial. "I sang for him – I sang for Franco," says Ángel de la Torrent, an 80-year-old parish priest whose connection to the cross is almost a lifelong affair. More than 30,000 of the soldiers who fell in the Civil War are buried there. And in November 1975, they were joined by Franco himself. His corpse still lies there today.

Franco's mausoleum is open for tourists and attracts quite the crowd. It receives more than 200,000 visitors each year, who are drawn either by morbid curiosity or a respect for history. As a historical monument it could be so much more and a number of people

would argue that there is a conspicuous absence of information about the Civil War and the dictator himself. Even four decades after the end of Francoism, the country still can't come to an agreement on how to treat this controversial valley. "It's a hot potato for any government no matter what their ideology is," says Pablo Linares, president of the Association in Defense of the Valley.

After 40 years of democracy the shadow of the imperial eagle seen in Franco's version of the Spanish flag has continued to glide over Madrid. However, change is in the air. A new political party took the reins of the city council in June 2015 and has promised to rethink the destiny of the remaining Franco-era street signs.

Such a move is certain to stir the ghosts of Spain's recent past but mayor Manuela Carmena believes it will also help Madrid's inhabitants to reimagine these contentious parts of the city map through an open, inclusive debate. Locals will finally have their say on who they think deserves to be honoured by the city and see the names of some more inclusive figures emblazoned on the capital's *calles*. — (M)

i ABOUT THE WRITER: León has been covering culture, travel, history and politics for Spanish daily *El País* since 2009. An avid cyclist and proud fourth-generation *Madrileño* (which makes him a *gato*), the young writer can often be spotted around the city having a beer with his sprightly grandmother.

ESSAY 08

Winning isn't everything *Olympic optimism*

Madrid has fallen at the last hurdle on three bids for the Games. Yet a legacy is apparent regardless: improved infrastructure and an impressive public-transport network. Has triumph emerged from adversity?

by Luis Mendoza,
Monocle

Ever since Barcelona hosted the 1992 Olympics, Madrid has tried to mirror the deed in an attempt to gain international recognition and attract the flocks of tourists that come with it. You can't accuse the city of lacking tenacity: its first unsuccessful bid was back in 1972 when General Franco was still in power.

However, the real push has been over the past decade as the city has flexed its administrative muscles, determined to devise a winning bid. It tried to secure the 2012 games but lost out to London, then narrowly succumbed to Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 event and most recently were deprived of the 2020 Games which, despite high hopes, were awarded to Tokyo.

This stubbornness is understandable. In Spain the 1992 Barcelona games are seen as a coming-of-age moment for an old-fashioned nation, still viewed as the turning point in a long journey to becoming a modern democracy. As a city Barcelona continues to revel in its Olympic

legacy, which endures as an exemplary model of transformation and regeneration. The sporting event remade the Mediterranean city from an industrial backwater into a cosmopolitan seaside metropolis. It was a boost for jobs, infrastructure and tourism; Barcelona is now the 10th most visited city in Europe, luring more than seven million visitors a year (Madrid currently attracts four-and-a-half million).

Add the infamous Madrid-Barcelona rivalry to the mix and it's no wonder the capital has been trying to bask in some of its own Olympic glow. Nonetheless, consistent failure across three consecutive bids has prompted a mild inferiority complex – and disparaging comments from their proud Catalan compatriots certainly haven't alleviated the pain.

That said, once you cut through the politics you can see just how much the city has already benefited from these failed attempts. It begs the question: who needs the headache of hosting the world's biggest sporting event if the city has already been transformed? Successive bids have improved the city's transport infrastructure as well as cultural and sport facilities. A number of stadiums were built (although perhaps one too many) and the city now enjoys an ample network of modern venues to host international competitions, big conferences and festivals for music and the arts. A good example is the Caja Mágica, an impressive cubic structure with retractable roofs that

"Who needs the headache of hosting the world's biggest sporting event if the city has already been transformed?"

can accommodate important tennis and basketball tournaments as well as concerts.

Another grand project is Madrid Río (*see page 111*). The park is probably the capital's most ambitious and

far-reaching redevelopment to date, having buried the city's main ring road that used to run along the Manzanares River and split the city in two. The ambitious plan returned plenty of public space to *Madrileños* in the form of a vast riverside green playground with additional sport facilities that are open to the public. It also included the redevelopment of Matadero Madrid (*see page 98*), an old abattoir in the Arganzuela district that quickly established itself as the premiere cultural precinct with large venues accommodating various art exhibitions, theatre festivals and music gigs.

Moving around the city on public transport is also much easier thanks to Madrid's seemingly endless pursuit of the Olympic dream. Today, the Metro is lauded as one of Europe's most comprehensive and efficient networks. Many new lines have been built to reach the city's outskirts, allowing more people to get to work using the underground and making the city less car dependent in the process. In recent years city hall has been trying to encourage urban cycling too, launching public bicycle scheme BiciMad in 2014. It was especially good news for a city so commonly scourged by painful traffic jams.

Of course many of these Olympic-fuelled improvements have come at a hefty cost. Quite a few residents would say that while infrastructure redevelopments were indeed timely and necessary for the capital, many of the new imposing stadiums have

Key stations

01 Nuevos Ministerios
Get your airport-bound train from this station.

02 Ópera
Host to an underground archaeological museum.

03 Atocha
The city's first railway station is a must-visit.

burdened the city with unnecessary debt. A subsequent financial crisis has seen the desire to host the Games waver and a weary public now believes that perhaps it's about time to take our hat out of the Olympic ring altogether.

The previous bids have helped the city learn some valuable lessons. In 2013, when former mayor Ana Botella took to the podium to tout Madrid's virtues in a final speech for the 2020 bid, her cringe-worthy English was universally ridiculed at home and abroad. While many *Madrileños* responded to the embarrassing speech with humour (signs sprung up around the city offering one of the mayor's *café con leche*, to which she jarringly made reference), it was a searing reminder that Spaniards need to work harder on their English skills if they want to welcome a more international crowd.

The growth of our transport network has also highlighted how important urban mobility is to the city's changing fortunes as a financial capital. The bids may have been put on hold for now but no one thinks local authorities should drop the ball on a proud public-transport network.

Most importantly there has been a more practical shift in priorities. Instead of chasing the elusive games, the city has started to look closer to home and is investing in a new generation of young *Madrileños* instead. After all, these homegrown entrepreneurs are the modern-day athletes most likely to deliver the city onto the podium of prosperity. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Madrid-native Luis Mendoza is MONOCLE's creative solutions executive. Mendoza moved to London four years ago but returns home regularly as he can't keep away from his favourite Spanish delights: *jamón* and his mother's *croquetas*.

ESSAY 09

Nocturnal adventures *Madrid's nightlife*

If you want to discover the essence of this city – whether you're planning a crucial business meeting or a relaxed drink with the locals – wait until the sun sets. It's after dark that Madrid truly comes alive.

by Rodrigo Taramona,
blogger

The second the sun disappears below the Sierra de Madrid mountains in the west, the city gets noisier, sexier and truer to itself. The night isn't only a time for leisure. Any kind of social interaction, even if strictly professional, is best undertaken once dusk sets in.

The capital's signature approach is to discuss business at lunch, after work or, even better, over dinner. It could be at a crowded bar in Malasaña, the city's coolest quarter; a fancy restaurant on Calle Ponzano, which has the city's best ratio of food fodder; or at one of the many old-fashioned cafeterias on every corner.

Late-night culture runs deep in Madrid's DNA. The infamous – and thankfully unsuccessful – 1981 military coup organised by Lieutenant-Colonel Antonio Tejero was planned in a cafeteria called Galaxia (now the Van Gogh Café) on Calle Isaac Peral. The perpetrators named their secret mission after the bar where it all started: “Operación Galaxia”.

During countercultural movement *La Movida Madrileña* in the 1980s, there was a generation that had missed the golden age of Madrid's iconic cocktail bar Museo Chicote (Gran Vía 12), where figures such as writer Ernest Hemingway, actress Ava Gardner and bullfighter Manolete spent their wildest days. As such they had to be inventive in finding a suitably unruly drinking hole. Already writing the blueprint for Madrid's modern subculture, the city's young cultural elite were dismayed when the bars and *discotecas* closed each morning at 05.00. This is when *el tanatorio de la M30*, the city's mortuary on Madrid's famous M30 ring road, became the new late-night hangout for artists and streetwise “cats” (this is what natives call each other: *gatos*) to drink the night and morning away.

Picture the scene: distraught families and friends, grieving for their loved ones, confronted by large groups of heavily inebriated late-night revellers. This clash often produced the unlikeliest of conversations: people coming together

“Fly solo around the city on any night of the week and odds are you'll meet someone and end up partying together”

around the city you may notice that the people here like to talk a lot. No matter where you're from or what language you speak, someone will gladly chat your ear off. Fly solo around the city on any night of the week and odds are you'll meet someone and end up partying together. If you're still sceptical, pay a visit to Plaza de San Ildefonso in the Malasaña district, where *La Bicicleta* (see page 41) is a melting pot: locals and tourists gather from early morning all the way through the night.

to chat about the fleeting nature of life, for example. Such profound thoughts are often replicated across town; *Madrileños* have a tendency to want to *arreglar el mundo* (“fix the world”) when drink is involved.

As you stroll

Late-night hangouts

- 01 Van Gogh Café**
Northern neighbourhood favourite on Calle Isaac Peral.
- 02 Museo Chicote**
Longest-standing cocktail bar in Madrid still exuding old-school charm.
- 03 1862 Dry Bar**
Sip on some of Malasaña's best cocktails.

When its doors shut, walk downhill to The Passenger (see page 43) or the nearby 1862 Dry Bar (see page 41) to sip on some of the neighbourhood's best cocktails.

Fast forward to the break of dawn and you might find yourself having a beer for breakfast – along with a dish of delicious bacon and eggs – at Bar Iberia (Glorieta de Ruiz Jiménez 4), renowned for its unusually early opening time (06.00 is extremely early for a late-sleeping city such as this), making it a favourite pit stop for taxi drivers and night owls.

Madrid's wild behaviour is hard to put into words but an old saying has become the unofficial city slogan: *de Madrid al cielo, y en el cielo un agujero para verlo* (“From Madrid to the skies, and from the skies [we'd want] a small hole to see Madrid”). The phrase, coined by playwright Luis Quiñones de Benavente in the 1600s, resonates because wherever *Madrileños* end up, they continue to look fondly on their colourful, chaotic and nocturnally inclined city. And if this long-distance pang of nostalgia involves more than a couple of them you can bet there will be plenty of empty bottles on the table as they sit around putting the world to rights. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Former teenage actor, co-owner of The Passenger bar and social-issues blogger for *glamour.es*, Taramona also moonlights as a DJ. He spends his remaining time mending the damage wreaked by his sociopathic yet nonetheless charismatic beagle.

ESSAY 10

Alfresco alliances *Outside space*

With its perpetual sunshine, open-air terraces and welcoming plazas, Madrid is a city that lives for the outdoors. Join us for a leisurely stroll down some sociable streets.

by Marcus Hurst,
editor

Populated by immigrants from across Spain and Latin America, people have long taken to Madrid's streets in search of opportunities. They've mingled among market stalls and in the plazas to meet people, find work and build new lives.

From the 17th century many newcomers to the city settled in *corralas*: cramped buildings held up by wooden pillars, with interior patios and no running water. Often up to eight people were crammed into a space of just 20 sq m so these living quarters were exclusively for washing and sleeping. To have any semblance of a life, time spent in public spaces was an absolute necessity.

The weather helped and still does: annual rainfall barely hits 60 days a year so Madrid's open-air terraces and parks are busy year round. Age is no barrier so as night falls it's not uncommon to see a septuagenarian sandwiched between young revellers drinking at a crowded bar or picking their way through a packed plaza.

The real turning point for this love of inhabiting the streets came during La Movida, the countercultural movement in the 1980s that made Madrid the place for hedonism. Film-maker Pedro Almodóvar is the most famous son of this post-Franco renaissance, a time of earth-shattering cultural change that irrevocably changed the city. The Spanish youth, who during the previous four decades of Franco's dictatorship had been told that everything was a sin, helped elect Enrique Tierno Galván, a 60-year-old university professor, as mayor. Despite his formal attire, he was anything but conservative and embraced the unbridled spirit of La Movida. At a rock concert in 1984 he took to the stage to belt out the infamous words: “*El que*

“On weekends, more than half a million people would fill the ‘calles’; the city soon became synonymous with fun and debauchery”

no esté colocado, que se coloque!” (“Whoever’s not high yet, get high!”). With Franco repression still fresh in the memory it was a watershed moment.

The mayor continued to encourage people to let loose by bringing back fiestas and street concerts. It wasn't uncommon to find Galván himself having a shot of absinthe in a bar or a cocktail on a pavement terrace. On weekends more than half a million people would fill the *calles*; the city soon became synonymous with fun and debauchery.

Leafing through the history books, this penchant for the outdoors is further apparent. Until the early 20th century, most residents did their shopping on the streets, with stalls lining major thoroughfares and squares. Shops used the inside part of their premises to store their products, conducting their business on counters sitting along the front windows. One could buy milk that had only just been extracted from its source, contentedly lowing behind the scenes.

Squares to circle

01 Plaza de San Ildefonso

The heart of Malasaña is abuzz around the clock.

02 Plaza de Olavide

Chamberl's bars, shops et al are centred around this square.

03 Plaza de Guardias de Corps

Small Conde Duque hangout.

In recent years, local authorities have extended terrace licences to 365 days a year to raise tax revenues. The pavements and plazas are more crowded than ever, prompting a citywide debate about the private domination of public space (one of the upsides is being able to drink in a square without the threat of a hefty fine). Fortunately there are still plenty of out-of-the-way places that get the balance right. The expanse of La Latina's Plaza de la Paja has several quality restaurants to choose from; the historic Plaza del Alamillo is only a short walk away; and the Plaza de Guardias de Corps in Conde Duque is a pint-sized meeting spot for neighbours.

Prosperity may have reined in the city's wild spirit and banished the cows back to the fields but *Madrileños* are still zealous conquerors of the outdoors. People come to the city to work but they're also drawn in by its fun. If you're a newcomer you'll often find yourself being welcomed by people who, not long ago, were also fresh arrivals. In the public domain everyone is seen as equal and these empathetic *Madrileños* will look you in the eye and make you feel included. You may never see them again but on a warm Madrid night, friendships form easily. It's the city's enduring legacy – and a source of pride. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Hurst is co-founder of *Yorokobu Magazine*, a Spanish-language monthly publication and blog that covers design, creativity and great ideas based in Madrid. He arrived in the city from the UK 10 years ago and has never looked back.

ESSAY 11

Dawn till dusk *The city's bar scene*

If you're in Madrid with a thirst it won't take long to quench it; in fact, the choice of venues can be bewildering. You won't go too far wrong wandering into the first place you see; failing that, we've picked out some favourites.

by Pablo Bautista,
engineer

In 1980 an article published in a Madrid weekly suggested that between the Atocha roundabout and Anton Martín Square – a stretch of barely 700 metres – there were “more bars than in all of Norway”. I can't vouch for the importance that other world capitals attach to their bars but in Madrid it's a longstanding tradition to count them.

In the 19th century the writer and city chronicler Ramón de Mesonero Romanos wrote “every building houses a taberna and some even have more than two”. In the 1600s a popular song boasted that the city had “300 *tabernas* old and new but only one bookshop”. This numbers game endures but

while it's fun to count, let me offer some more practical advice.

If you are yet to set foot on Madrid's bustling streets, you may still be hanging on to a few misguided, preconceived ideas about the bar culture. The innards of each Spanish bar often contain large wooden, steel or marble *barras* but the service they provide, the diversity of patrons and the long opening hours make these establishments more than just simple watering holes.

From the early morning hours, *churros* (a deep-fried dough pastry) and *porras* (larger, thicker *churros*) begin flowing over the counter as a sweet and speedy breakfast, while more people appear at around 10.30 for their *café de la mañana*: a sacred morning tea or coffee break that is even stipulated in some workplace agreements and popular among public servants.

Eyes are glued to the TV as people watch the *telediario* news broadcast, cheer as their favourite team scores a goal or scan the endless stream of celebrity gossip programmes, known as the *crónica rosa*, which are favoured by a more elderly audience. Having whirred into life at 07.00, these bars don't roll down their shutters until 02.00. No other type of Spanish business stays open for so long – and they are everywhere.

So where to start? Before asking for tips, explore the streets around your hotel, entering the first one that catches your eye. Leave your

Bars to frequent

01 Stop Madrid

A stalwart on Madrid's bar scene – don't be alarmed by the littered floors.

02 Taberna Ángel Sierra

More highbrow but stick to beer, wine and 'vermut'.

03 El Doble

Quench your thirst with a double draft beer.

prejudices at the door: appearances can be deceiving. One foolproof sign is to see how busy the bar is just before lunch or dinner (lunch usually starts around 14.30 and dinner is not earlier than 21.00). You should choose the most crowded. If you can barely make it through the door you're in the right place.

Once inside head straight for the counter; if it's made of marble or stainless steel you might have just stumbled upon a Madrid landmark such as Stop Madrid (on Calle Hortaleza 11) or Cervecería Cervantes (Plaza de Jesús 7). Don't be alarmed by all the shrapnel on the ground: most residents still have the bad habit of throwing their napkins and leftovers on the floor – and proprietors tend to use their brooms sparingly.

If you're inside a classic establishment such as Taberna Ángel Sierra (Calle Gravina 11) and ask for anything other than a beer, wine or vermouth, don't be alarmed if heads turn: people rarely order outside of this holy trinity. For centuries wine reigned

supreme in Madrid's bars but in recent decades beer has begun taking its place. Small bottles called *botelines* are popular but if you want to feel like a true Madrileño order a well-poured *caña*. It is just under half a pint of lager, served

“You should choose the most crowded bar. If you can barely make it through the door you're in the right place”

are liable to go broke in under a month so it's serious business. If a small beer won't quench your thirst, double up by ordering *un doble*. Better yet, pay a visit to El Doble (Calle Ponzano 58), which is said to pour the city's best.

Don't be surprised if your drink is accompanied by a complimentary *tapa*. These popular morsels originated when barmen would cover (or in Spanish “*tapas*”) wine glasses with small slices of bread topped with a piece of cold meat in order to prevent flies getting into patrons' drinks. While flies aren't much of a problem these days, many bars in the city still continue the tradition (although not to the competitive extent of their peers in Granada, Salamanca

from a keg at the right pressure with at least half an inch of froth. Ritual demands that the glass be left for a few seconds on the counter and tapped by the waiter. Bars that don't serve well-drawn beer

or León). In bars such as Casa Curro (Calle Cava Baja 23) this timeless tradition attracts all sorts of customers, from friends partaking in the jolly custom of *ir de cañas* (bar-hopping) to colleagues gathering for a small *ración* of delicious *gambas*. All of them can be seen sharing delicious tidbits, devouring them with forks, toothpicks or fingers.

The food selection entombed inside the glass casing atop each bar can often be bewildering. You may recognise the *ensaladilla rusa* (potato salad) but choosing from the rest is often a question of pot luck. Avert risk and try Bar Fide's smoked sardines – at one of its outposts on Calle Ponzano 8 or Bretón de los Herreros 17 – the tomato steak at Celso y Manolo (Calle Libertad 1) or the soft-shell crab at Juana La Loca (see page 34).

There's a strong chance that, between all the beers and new-found friends, your list of museums and monuments becomes secondary or just ends up trampled among the napkins on the ground. You're advised to view this as an opportunity: missing out on the Prado will provide a perfectly reasonable excuse to come back for a second trip – and another round. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: Bautista lives in the Chamberí district. After helping to redesign Madrid's tourism brand from within the city council, he went on to co-found strategic marketing company Idonika and co-ordinates urban trends festival Mulafest.

ESSAY 12

Cultural pursuit *The Prado*

A trip to the capital resulted in Monocle's editor making a last-minute dash to stand in awe of a masterpiece in one of the world's finest galleries. He recommends you do the same – and sample the gin.

by Andrew Tuck,
Monocle

It's a Thursday morning after a fun – and late-running – Wednesday night. Breakfast has been devoured, several *cortados* sipped to find some vigour and we are back on track. Our colleagues have vanished but MONOCLE's Culture editor Robert Bound and I have a couple of hours to kill before take-off. We could crack open our laptops, pretend to read *El País* or perhaps... is there time? Watches are checked. If we left now? Don't dawdle – let's do it.

We jump out into the sunshine of Gran Vía, hail the first cab we see and tell the driver to hit the gas, *por favor*. We want to be the first in the queue when the doors open. We arrive and join a small cluster of people waiting for someone to unlock the doors to the Prado, one of the world's greatest collections of paintings and certainly the finest gathering of Spanish artworks. But while some are waiting to see national treasures such as El Greco's "Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest", whose long face stares at us from his high-pitched ruff,

Cultural highlights

01 CentroCentro

A rare glimpse into the city's marbled history.

02 Museo Sorolla

An adventure into the heart of Spanish impressionist painter Joaquín Sorolla.

03 Galería Helga de Alvear

Europe's biggest private collection.

or Francisco Goya's "The Third of May 1808", depicting Napoleon's troops exacting revenge on Spanish rebels, we are here for a more northerly piece of art exposure.

Tickets are bought and a floorplan secured. If we move fast we will be in front of our quarry within five minutes. We ignore the thousands of faces trying to catch our eyes from behind veils of fissured varnish, turn the corner and there it is: Hieronymus Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights", a triptych that takes you from heaven to hell (no, that's not a reference to our Wednesday night). All sorts of sin and lust are depicted and you can see where Salvador Dalí found some inspiration. It is glorious and gory and spectacular.

Robert, being wise to these things (handy if you are the Culture editor), gives me his take. But mainly we just stand there staring at the morality play in paint in front of us, our gin-and-tonic-induced befuddlement evaporating. Then it's reverse tack. A few minutes later the concierge is shutting the trunk on our luggage and we are off to Barajas Airport.

Should you go to Madrid? Yes, even for one painting. For one deep 10-minute inhalation of culture – and a few gins the night before. You'll end up in a heavenly scene. Promise. — (M)



ABOUT THE WRITER: MONOCLE editor Tuck is also a presenter of various Monocle 24 radio programmes, including *The Urbanist*. Tune in to monocle.com to hear tales from the cities we love – including Madrid, of course.