WHAT’S WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED IN THE WORLD’S GREAT MUSEUM?

ART IN MADRID

WHY DOES VELÁZQUEZ APPEAR IN LAS MENINAS?

A HISTORIC PIECE: GUERNICA

THE ROYAL PALACE, SETTING OF THE COURT

THE LADY OF ELCHE, AN IBERIAN SCULPTURE

SOROLLA, ILLUSTRIOUS RESIDENT OF CHAMBERÍ

WHAT ARE GOYA’S FINEST WORKS?
Art in Madrid

In addition to being the city where Goya and Velázquez – both court painters to the Spanish monarchs – worked, Madrid also boasts an important cultural heritage encompassing most European styles. This guide provides a basic introduction to the city’s main museums, covering the most frequent thematic elements of Western art. The high point of this itinerary is of course the Art Walk (Paseo del Arte), roughly one and a half kilometres of green spaces housing three of the world’s top galleries – the Prado, Thyssen-Bornemisza, and Reina Sofia museums – offering a complete overview of art from the Middle Ages to the present. Art lovers also won’t want to miss the Royal Sites, the group of buildings and gardens linked to the Spanish Crown which are now managed by Patrimonio Nacional, the National Heritage Institution. The city of Madrid is home to the royal monasteries of Las Descalzas and La Encarnación as well as El Pardo Palace and the Royal Palace, and the greater region of Madrid is home to Aranjuez Palace and the Monastery of El Escorial, whose collections boast particularly fine examples of the sumptuary arts, furniture and painting. Meanwhile, although its collections harbour more than just works of art, the National Archaeological Museum reveals the various ways of life and the customs of civilisations that have passed through the Iberian Peninsula or have shaped the idiosyncrasies of the Mediterranean. There are also several other museums in Madrid which are less well-known, such as the Cerralbo and Sorolla, and the museums of Romanticism, the Americas, Anthropology and Decorative Arts. To the list we can add the Lázaro Galdiano Museum, which inherited its holdings from a private collector who gave the foundation its name. For its part, the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts is a unique institution, which, besides promoting the study, dissemination and safeguarding of art, also boasts one of the most interesting museums you can visit in the city. It would take a lifetime to become intimately acquainted with all of the museums in Madrid, the world’s great art gallery, which invites us to marvel at many of the finest masterpieces of all time.
Monarchs and Emperors

A large portion of the Prado Museum’s holdings originate from the painting collections of Spain’s monarchs. Court portraits thus abound. Standout pieces include Titian’s The Emperor Charles V at Mühlberg and the portraits painted by Anthonis Mor, Sánchez Coello and Sofonisba Anguissola for Philip II and his family. The museum’s two most iconic paintings, however, are Las Meninas by Velázquez – a scene that depicts Princess Margaret, daughter to Philip IV, surrounded by her maids of honour and jesters – and The Family of Charles IV by Goya. In both works the painters showed exceptional boldness, breaking an unwritten rule by immortalising themselves alongside members of the Royal Family. By painting himself into the portrait, Velázquez asserts his own nobility as well as that of the art of painting, as does Goya.

Classical Myths

For centuries Greco-Roman mythology was the perfect excuse for artists to depict nude figures. Tales of gods and heroes made it possible to paint scenes that would otherwise have been precluded by morality and decorum. There is no question of the eroticism of Titian’s “poems” – as they were called at the time – such as The Bacchanal of the Andrians, or of many of Rubens’ works, particularly The Three Graces, a painting that was among his most prized possessions and for which his second wife, Helena Fourment, posed. Velázquez also depicted multiple mythological themes, although his intent was not to arouse the senses but to offer allegories reflecting on power and authority. The Spinners and The Feast of Bacchus (aka The Triumph of Bacchus) are examples of this.

Religious Paintings

Particularly remarkable among the museum’s religious pieces are Rogier van der Weyden’s The Descent from the Cross and Fra Angelico’s The Annunciation, two prime examples of 15th-century European art, the first produced in Flanders and the second in Florence. Worthy of special mention are the halls devoted to Venetian painting, which feature outstanding works including Tintoretto’s The Washing of the Feet, and to 16th- and 17th-century Spanish art, where El Greco’s The Holy Trinity, Ribera’s The Martyrdom of Saint Philip, Zurbarán’s Saint Elisabeth of Portugal and Murillo’s The Immaculate Conception are displayed.

A Window to the Past

Through two of Goya’s paintings, The Executions and The Fight Against the Mamelukes (aka The Charge of the Mamelukes), we can relive the rebellion of Madrileniens against Napoleonic troops in May 1808. With these paintings, the artist changed the way the genre of history was understood, giving it a much greater immediacy. In the Prado’s 19th-century halls, you can also find some later pieces, such as The Execution of Torrijos and His Companions on the Beach at Málaga by Antonio Gisbert Pérez.
In 1992, the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection arrived in Villahermosa Palace. It reflects the tastes of the two men chiefly responsible for assembling it, Baron Heinrich and Baron Hans Heinrich, who were well-versed in central European artistic tradition. Since then the palace has been one of Madrid’s top museums, and the collection has been expanded with works acquired by Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza. 17th-century Dutch painting, 19th-century American painting, Impressionism and the historical avant-garde are very well represented.

Revolution of the Portrait

There is a heavy focus on portraiture at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, with some outstanding Renaissance works such as Ghirlandaio’s Portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni and Carpaccio’s Young Knight in a Landscape, one of the first full-body portraits ever painted. Also from the same period, but from northern Europe, are Hans Holbein’s Portrait of Henry VIII of England and Robert Campin’s Portrait of a Stout Man. Among the 20th-century portraits, pieces like Otto Dix’s Hugo Erfurth with Dog, Bacon’s Portrait of George Dyer in a Mirror and Lucian Freud’s Reflection with Two Children (Self-Portrait) show a strong individual personality, although they are, in some manner, heirs to this same tradition.

Around the World

Through the works in the collection you can travel around the world in the space of a few metres: from Piazza San Marco in Venice, painted in the 18th century by Canaletto, to Rue Saint-Honoré in the Afternoon. Effect of Rain, as it was painted in 1877 by Pissarro, and from the landscapes of Tahiti, the inspiration for so many of Gauguin’s paintings, such as Mua (In Olden Times), to the Wild West, which was so aptly depicted by the painters of the Hudson River School, led by Thomas Cole. This evocation of travel is even present in one of the collection’s most famous pieces: Hotel Room by Edward Hopper. The painter, who visited Spain during his formative years as an artist, acknowledged that his work was enormously influenced by Goya, who he discovered in Madrid.
The Curtain Rises
As paintings appeal to the sense of sight, many canvases also present themselves as scenes from the theatre. In the late 19th century, Degas was the artist of choice for shows, ballet and horse races. Swaying Dancer stands out in the collection due to its great immediacy. In Circus, August Macke depicts a fallen trapeze artist. For his part, Picasso, who is known for his musicians and clowns, contributed to the museum with Harlequin with a Mirror.

Abstract and Figurative Art
As if it were a guide to art history, the collection is so comprehensive that it allows us to appreciate the diversity of the historic avant-garde in great detail. Movements like Expressionism, Cubism, Constructivism and Surrealism are thoroughly represented, but the collection also encompasses American art from the second half of the 20th century. Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and Hyperrealism. Of particular note among its most important works are those by Braque, Popova, Mondrian, Lichtenstein and Rothko.

Geniuses
You could do a tour of the Thyssen Museum focusing solely on artists that made history for their legendary personalities, that is, for being viewed as “painting geniuses”. These include Dürer, featured in the collection with Jesus Among the Doctors; Caravaggio, who fled Rome accused of murder shortly after painting Saint Catherine of Alexandria; Rembrandt, who painted a whole host of self-portraits, one of which is housed here in Madrid; and Van Gogh, who painted Les Vessenots just days before he committed suicide.
Reina Sofía Museum

One of Europe’s most interesting contemporary art collections is designed around Guernica, the painting that Picasso created for the Pavilion of the Spanish Republic at the 1937 Paris Exposition. The museum has an incredibly extensive programme of exhibitions and activities and in its halls, which are always being reimagined, there is a particular focus not only on painting but on all of the arts, including conceptual and performance practice in art.

The Civil War
During the conflict, the government of the Republic turned the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition into a platform for spreading propaganda that would convey it in a positive light. In addition to the large canvas painted by Picasso which denounced the bombing of Guernica, the museum houses some of the works that were included in the pavilion as well as a model of the building, designed by Josep Lluis Sert and Lluis Lacasa. These same halls portray the rise of totalitarianism in Europe with works like Mask of Montserrat Screaming by Julio González and Great Prophet by Gargallo.

Violence
The successive and bloody armed conflicts, complex post-colonial relations, multiple freedom movements, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the redistribution of the centres of power and the periphery have drawn a map full of political tensions which have expressed themselves in very disparate ways. Informalism, which in Spain was led by the El Paso and Dau al Set groups, Arte Povera and the new European realisms are just some examples of this very interesting map of the second half of the 20th century. Two outstanding works of particular relevance in this respect are The Trumpets of Judgement by Pistoletto and The Clothes Rack by Carlos Leppe.

Dreams
The dream universe was a source of inspiration for many avant-garde artists, including Salvador Dalí, who developed the paranoid-critical method which he used to transfer dreams to the canvas. The museum houses some of the painter’s most famous works, like Figure at the Window and Face of the Great Masturbator. Other artists of the Surrealist movement include Óscar Dominguez and Miró. The museum displays several of the latter’s works, such as Snail, Woman, Flower, Star.

Feminism
Until well into the 20th century it was exceptional for a woman to work professionally as an artist, but the Reina Sofía devotes special attention to the work of female avant-garde trailblazers. Names include María Blanchard, whose paintings are often confused with those of Juan Gris; Sonia Delaunay, who lived in Spain from 1917 to 1921; Maruja Mallo, who was a member of the Vallecas School along with Alberto Sánchez and Ángeles Santos, who painted A World, one of the most enigmatic pieces in the collection. Among the late 20th-century works, those by Lygia Clark, Nancy Spero, Louise Bourgeois and Esther Ferrer should not be missed.
Poets and Intellectuals
All through its permanent collection, the museum highlights links between intellectuals with a heavy focus on literature, ranging from Gutiérrez Solana’s *The Gathering in the Café del Pombo*, presided over by Ramón Gómez de la Serna – a great promoter of the avant-garde in Spain – to the counter culture of the 1970s and 1980s, to the La Barraca theatre company directed by the charismatic Federico García Lorca, where many artists of his time worked.

Study of Ramón Gómez de la Serna
The Museum of Contemporary Art houses the study of writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Its walls are covered with countless pictures cut out of books and magazines, turning the space into a work of art in itself.

El Retiro Park
El Retiro Park is a historic garden associated with the former Buen Retiro Palace. Since the late 19th century the monuments that adorn its paths have made it an outdoor sculpture museum. In addition, the Glass Palace and Velázquez Palace host exhibitions organised by the Reina Sofía Museum.
The Art Walk
The route along which the Prado, Thyssen-Bornemisza and Reina Sofia museums are located is known as the Art Walk. There is a pass that includes one visit to each of the museums which is good for one year from the date of purchase, as well as a mobile application called the “Essential Art Walk” that provides information on 24 masterpieces that nobody should miss.
Royal Palace

This majestic building, constructed by architects Filippo Juvarra and Giambattista Sacchetti on the same lot where the Royal Alcázar of the Hapsburgs once stood, opens its doors every day as a museum, except when state ceremonies are being held. Its extensive collection of paintings, sculptures, weapons and decorative arts is unique in the world. Although it is the official residence of Spain’s king and queen, they actually live in Zarzuela Palace on the outskirts of Madrid.

Decorative Arts
Despite the vicissitudes of history, Madrid’s Royal Palace has reached our current times with much of its original furniture. Particularly striking in their magnificence are Gasparini Hall, a masterpiece of Rococo art that was used as a dressing room by King Charles III; and the Gala Dining Hall, decorated during the reign of Alfonso XII with delicate tapestries by Guillermo Pannemaker, woven in the 16th century. The clocks, commodes, chairs and lamps in this palace have borne witness to conversations of great political importance, and continue to do so during solemn ceremonies.

Iconography of Power
In addition to the painted ceilings – those of the Throne Room were done by Tiepolo and those of the Royal Chapel by Corrado Giaquinto – the palace boasts various portraits by Goya and a painting by Caravaggio, entitled Salome with the Head of John the Baptist. Juan de Flandes, Rubens and Winterhalter are a few more of the endless list of painters present in the collection.

Musical Instruments and Weapons
Of particular note in the palace’s extraordinary collections are Royal Quartet, comprising two violins, one viola and one violoncello made by Stradivarius for Charles III. The Armoury also houses pieces of enormous value, such as an ear dagger from a Nasrid workshop in Granada – an outstanding example of Hispano-Islamic refinement – and a parade helmet that belonged to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor.

San Francisco "El Grande"
A short distance from the palace you’ll find a church that is undoubtedly one of the most monumental in Madrid, the Basilica of San Francisco “El Grande”. The church is nicknamed “The Largo” due to the colossal dimensions of its dome: 33 metres in diameter.
Royal Sites

The royal convents of Las Descalzas and La Encarnación have always been linked to the Crown, and El Pardo Palace was a recreational site for members of the Court. Places of particular historic value outside of the city include Aranjuez Gardens and the Monastery of El Escorial, which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts

In 1752, Philip V founded the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts, in an imitation of the academies that already existed in Italy and France. Since then it has led public debate on painting, sculpture and architecture. It should also be noted that until 1967 Goyeneche Palace, the building that houses the institution, was the site of the School of Fine Arts attended by Picasso and Dali. Its museum boasts one of the most important collections of paintings and etchings by Goya in existence.

Teachers and Models
The museum boasts important works by some of the institution’s own academics, including Van Loo, Mengs and Goya. Of particular note by Goya are the portraits of Manuel Godoy, Duke of Alcudia, Prince of the Peace and of the actress La Tirana, as well as the painting The Burial of the Sardine, which depicts the Carnival atmosphere on Ash Wednesday in the early 19th century. There are also works by Alonso Cano, Murillo and Rubens, among many other European painters, whose art was the basis for the standards that students were expected to follow. José Gutiérrez Solana, Antonio López and Lucio Muñoz studied at the School of Fine Arts.

Unique Personality
In addition to works that were used as models, the Academy has also held onto some curiosities. One of the most striking is The Spring, a bust by Mannerist painter Arcimboldo consisting of a head formed entirely by flowers. Other exceptional paintings include Antonio de Pereda’s The Knight’s Dream, which depicts a man sleeping in front of all of the ostentation of life, which will ultimately bring death, and the mysterious Woman at Prayer by Julio Romero de Torres, the most noteworthy exponent of a certain type of Spanish symbolism in the early 20th century.

National Museum of Chalcography
Also housed in Goyeneche Palace is the National Museum of Chalcography, founded in 1789 to undertake important engraving projects that arose in association with Enlightenment policies. Its greatest treasures are the copper plates used by Goya to make his series of aquatint etchings: The Caprices, The Disasters of War, Bullfighting and The Follies.
Exhibition Halls

In addition to the exhibitions held across Madrid’s museums, there are many other halls associated with private and public foundations and cultural centres that put together first-rate exhibitions. Some musts on Madrid’s cultural map are CaixaForum, CentroCentro Cibeles, the Juan March Foundation and the Recoletos Exhibition Hall at the Mapfre Foundation, which also boasts a permanent space devoted to Joan Miró.
National Archaeological Museum

Like the world’s other top museums devoted to exhibiting artefacts that bear witness to their country’s past, the National Archaeological Museum, founded in 1867 by Queen Isabella II, harbours collections of antiques that reveal the ways of life of the different cultures that have passed through the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean. Particularly noteworthy among its most remarkable pieces are the Iberian sculptures, Roman mosaics, Visigoth grave goods, Hispano-Islamic ivory boxes and medieval architectural elements.

The World of the Dead
The Lady of Elche is undoubtedly the most famous work displayed in the museum. There has been speculation that it was a funerary urn. In any event, the harmony and serenity of the lady’s expression are surprising, and make the piece exceptional among the art produced by the Iberians, one of the peoples who lived in the Peninsula prior to Romanisation. The Egyptian and Guanche mummies, the Celtic grave goods and the Roman sarcophagi, like that of Orestes, are just some examples of the riches offered by the world of the dead.

Architecture
The museum also houses a nice set of very important architectural elements, such as its Roman mosaics, which are exhibited as if they were paintings; its Mudéjar coffered ceilings – that is, ceilings made for Christian buildings using Hispano-Islamic techniques – and a set of Romanesque capitals. The halls devoted to the Middle Ages and the Modern Age also deserve thorough exploration.

Sumptuary Objects
Precious items such as mirrors, gems and unguent jars are among the objects displayed in the collection held by the National Archaeological Museum. The most striking of these include the Votive Crowns of Guarrazar, a set of Visigoth offerings and the Pyxis of Zamora, a delicate piece of ivory commissioned by Al-Hakam II, the Caliph of Cordoba.

Temple of Debod
In Cuartel de la Montaña Park stands genuine 2rd-century BC Egyptian temple that was donated to Spain in thanks for its assistance on the construction of the Aswan Dam.
**Ethnographic Museums**

Many of the objects exhibited in the National Museum of Anthropology, the Garment Museum and the Museum of the Americas are extraordinarily beautiful, for example, the Pre-Columbian ceramics and Fortuny gowns. A visit to these centres is a must, and it’s worth making sure you stay abreast of their programmes of activities, which include exhibitions, film screenings, lectures...
Lázaro Galdiano Museum

In addition to being an exceptional collector, José Lázaro Galdiano was the editor of La España Moderna, which published texts by Pardo Bazán, Unamuno, Galdós, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Flaubert in the late 19th century – on some occasions translated for the first time into Spanish. Over the course of his life he acquired works of art, jewellery, weapons, furniture, books and documents of great value which can be viewed in the Parque Florido mansion, where he lived with his wife on Calle Serrano.

The Spanish School
José Lázaro Galdiano was very interested in Goya and in Spanish artists influenced by him. As well as a set of paintings by the Aragón-born artist, including the particularly outstanding Witches’ Sabbath and The Spell, the museum boasts important works by Federico Madrazo, such as the portrait of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, and others by Eugenio Lucas Velázquez and his son, Eugenio Lucas Villaamil, who is responsible for the mansion’s ceilings. There are also three halls devoted to 16th- and 17th-century Spanish masters, with pieces by Murillo, Zurbarán, El Greco and Juan Carreño de Miranda.

His Own Unique Taste
In contrast to other Spanish collectors of the period, Lázaro Galdiano was able to appreciate the beauty of late medieval painting, acquiring panels as remarkable as Virgin of Mosen Sperandeu of Santa Fe by Blasco de Grañén. His cosmopolitan spirit gave him an appreciation for English art, which is represented in the museum with portraits by Lely, Reynolds, Lawrence and Romney. Two works are particularly striking in their singularity: Bosch’s Saint John the Baptist and The Adolescent Saviour, a mysterious painting by Boltraffio which for many years was attributed to Leonardo de Vinci.

Bibliophilia and Other Gems
The library of the Lázaro Galdiano Museum harbours exceptional works, such as books of hours by William Hastings and Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, various Persian and Mughal miniatures plus a 17th-century manuscript of Quevedo’s The Swindler. Among its most unique documents, the letters from Lope de Vega and Francisco de Goya are particularly noteworthy. As the fragility of paper makes permanent exhibition impossible, it organises periodic shows to display its holdings. The museum also has an excellent collection of decorative arts, with unique objects like the Sword of the Count of Tendilla and several ivory boxes, as well as archaeological artefacts of great value including a Tartessian jug and Visigoth bronzes.

El Capricho Park
The paintings Witches’ Sabbath and The Spell adorned the walls of the country estate of the Duke and Duchess of Osuna, constructed between 1789 and 1839. Today its Romantic-style garden is one of Madrid’s most beautiful public parks.
Sorolla Museum

Today the house that was built by painter Joaquín Sorolla in the Chamberí neighbourhood is a museum that houses many of his masterpieces. The Valencian artist, who achieved great success in the early 20th century with his marinas, gardens and typical Spanish characters, developed a special technique to capture light on water and foliage.

Marinas
Beaches, on both the Mediterranean and the Cantabrian coasts, are a recurring theme in Sorolla’s paintings, from quintessential folk scenes depicting fishermen to paintings of summer holidaymakers under umbrellas that shelter them from the sun. If you look carefully you’ll see a surprising number of colours used to reproduce wet sand and skin. *Walk on the Beach*, with its powerful low-angle view that frames the figures below the line of the horizon, and *Swimmers, Javea*, which depicts the body’s movement through the water, are two of the artist’s masterpieces.

Spain
After receiving a commission to decorate the library of the Hispanic Society of America in New York with Spanish themes, Sorolla travelled around the country looking for typical characters, picturesque landscapes and secret gardens – like the one at his house in Madrid, which he painted on several occasions. He thus became one of Spain’s best cultural ambassadors to the USA during the reign of Alfonso XIII. Outstanding works include *Lagartera Bride* and the paintings of views of the mountains and courtyards of the Alhambra. Sorolla also collected typical ceramics and historic furniture, which are now part of the museum’s collection.

Progress and Misery
The painter was also a chronicler of early 20th-century Spanish society. In addition to portraying many of the intellectuals, aristocrats and politicians of his time, Sorolla used his paintings to show the different ways of life in Spain. Particularly evocative in this regard are paintings like *Doctor Simarro at His Laboratory*, which applauds the development of Spanish science in the so-called Silver Age, and *White Slave Trade*, an example of the thread of social concern that so often runs through the artist’s oeuvre.

Tiles
The Andalusian-style garden at Sorolla’s house could be the starting point of a tour of the city’s most interesting tiles. Very nearby is the tiled tunnel of Andén 0 (Platform Zero), a former station on Madrid’s metro line, which began to operate in 1919.
House Museums

In addition to the large collections of paintings, there are other museums in old mansions which boast extraordinary sets of examples of the sumptuary arts. The “Five Museums. Another Madrid” pass includes admission to the Lázaro Galdiano Museum, Sorolla Museum, National Museum of Decorative Arts, Cerralbo Museum and Museum of Romanticism.
Art Week
February
Over one week the city hosts various art fairs in connection with ARCOmadrid, which draws the world’s best galleries to Feria de Madrid every year.

PHotoEspaña
June, July and August
Museums, galleries and cultural centres take part in this photography and visual arts festival, with dozens of exhibitions held all around Madrid.

Architecture Week
October
Among other activities, the COAM Foundation organises guided tours of the city’s most interesting buildings.

Museum Night
May
In honour of International Museum Day, held around 18 May, on this night many of the city’s cultural centres extend their opening hours and hold special activities.

Apertura
September
After the summer, the season kicks off in September with an open weekend organised by art galleries, which welcome visitors with a few bites to eat.

Feriarte
November
This meeting place for auctioneers, antiques dealers and art galleries is distinguished by the extremely high quality of the pieces exhibited. The furniture and collectors’ items are particularly fine.
“Diego Velázquez is the greatest painter that has ever existed. He alone is worth the trip to Madrid.”

Édouard Manet
Painter