

→ Parks and gardens

Its tree-lined streets, vast parks and growing commitment to the environment make this city one of Europe's greenest capitals. In 2021, El Retiro Park and Paseo del Prado were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the category of Cultural Landscapes, a distinction that recognises the way the area brings together nature, culture and science in a single urban setting. Both places are part of the Landscape of Light, so named because it was precisely during the era of the Enlightenment, under Charles III, that the entire area underwent a spectacular transformation. The city also has a large number of historic gardens and parks such as Campo del Moro, El Capricho and Casa de Campo, as well as former recreational estates. In Madrid, you can always find somewhere to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of the big city.

HISTORIC GARDENS

→ Parque de El Retiro

Plaza de la Independencia, 7
METRO: Retiro, Príncipe de Vergara, Ibiza, Estación del Arte
INFO: April–September: Monday–Sunday 6am-midnight
October–March: Monday–Sunday 6am–10pm

Ask anyone from Madrid what their favourite spot in the city is and it's likely many of them will choose El Retiro Park. It used to be the historic garden of Buen Retiro Palace, which once stood on the site built around 1630 as a recreational ground for King Philip IV and the members of the court. The lake—watched over by the Monument to Alfonso XII—, the stunning Glass and Velázquez palaces, which are used by the Reina Sofia Museum for temporary exhibitions, and Paseo de Coches, where Madrid Book Fair is held every spring, are just some of the sites of interest that are worth seeking out when you visit the city's green lung. In 2021, together with Paseo del Prado, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the category of Cultural Landscapes.



→ Real Jardín Botánico

Plaza de Murillo, 2
METRO: Banco de España, Estación del Arte
INFO: November–February: Monday–Sunday 10am–6pm
March & October: Monday–Sunday 10am–7pm
April & September: Monday–Sunday 10am–8pm
May–August: Monday–Sunday 10am–9pm

In the mid-18th century, King Charles III dreamt of transforming the Paseo del Prado boulevard into the epicentre of Spanish science. On top of San Blas Hill, he commissioned the construction of the Royal Observatory of Madrid, and just metres away, the Cabinet of Natural History—the building which now houses the Prado Museum—and these wonderful Royal Botanical Gardens. The main buildings that form the complex were designed by Neoclassical architect Juan de Villanueva. In addition to harbouring roughly 5,000 species of live plants, the gardens are of great artistic value and are a cornerstone of the complex envisioned by the king.



→ Jardines de Sabatini

Bailén, 2
METRO: Plaza de España, Ópera

On the northern side of the Royal Palace are the Sabatini Gardens, named after an architect who designed numerous works in Madrid, such as the Puerta de Alcalá gate. The gardens were built after the royal stables were demolished in the mid-20th century.



→ Jardines del Campo del Moro

Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, s/n
METRO: Príncipe Pío, Ópera
INFO: October–March: Monday–Sunday 10am–6pm
April–September: Monday–Sunday 10am–8pm

This Romantic-style garden, commissioned by Queen Maria Christina, is located on the western side of the Royal Palace. Featuring a number of architectural gems, it is one of the most peaceful spots in the entire city.



→ El Capricho de la Alameda de Osuna

Paseo Alameda de Osuna, 25
METRO: El Capricho
INFO: October–March: Saturday–Sunday & holidays 9am–6:30pm
April–September: Saturday–Sunday & holidays 9am–9pm
Closed 25 December & 1 January

Built by the Duke and Duchess of Osuna, El Capricho was once frequented by 18th-century artists and thinkers, including painter Francisco de Goya and writer Leandro Fernández de Moratín. The garden is home to multiple fantastical constructions—such as the witch's house, the apiary and the hermitage—, as well as a labyrinth and a lake.



OTHER PARKS

→ Parque del Oeste

Paseo de Camoens y Valero, 4
METRO: Plaza de España, Moncloa, Argüelles, Príncipe Pío

In the late 19th century, the Mayor of Madrid, Alberto Aguilera, had the idea of creating this vast park on the site of what was once an urban landfill. Today it is home to the Temple of Debod, a rose garden and various bunkers from the Spanish Civil War.



→ Parque de Berlín

Avenida de Ramón y Cajal, 2
METRO: Concha Espina

This park bears the name of the German capital, a city with which Madrid shares a symbol: the bear. In the centre of one of its fountains stand three segments that formed part of the Berlin Wall.

→ Parque Enrique Tierno Galván

Meneses, 4
METRO: Méndez Álvaro

A stone's throw away from the city's southern bus station, Estación Sur de Autobuses, lies this park named after Madrid's first mayor following Spain's transition to democracy. The capital's Planetarium is located atop one of its hills.

→ Parque Lineal del Manzanares

Camino de Perales, 47
METRO: Hospital 12 de Octubre
INFO: Autumn & Winter: Monday–Sunday 7am–10pm
Spring & Summer: 7am-midnight

Designed by architect Ricardo Bofill, this park is located along the banks of the River Manzanares. At its highest point is a striking sculpture by Manolo Valdés, which is commonly known as *The Lady of the Manzanares*.



→ Parque Cerro del Tío Pío

Benjamín Palencia, 2
METRO: Buenos Aires, Portazgo

One of the best views in all of Madrid is the one offered by this park, located in the district of Puente de Vallecas, whose seven hills have been nicknamed “the seven boobs” by the city's residents.



→ Parque Juan Carlos I

Glorieta S.A.R. Don Juan de Borbón y Battenberg, 5
METRO: Feria de Madrid
INFO: June–September: Monday–Sunday 7am–1am
October–May: Sunday–Thursday 7am–11pm
Friday–Saturday 7am-midnight

Located right by the Feria de Madrid trade fair grounds, Juan Carlos I Park is one of the largest in the city. It boasts an artificial river and numerous abstract sculptures.



→ Parque Forestal de Valdebebas-Felipe VI

Avenida de las Fuerzas Armadas, 11
INFO: 2 March–31 May: Monday–Sunday 8am–8:30pm
1 June–14 October: Monday–Sunday 8am–10pm
15 October–1 March: Monday–Sunday 9am–6:30pm

The most recent major park to open in the capital is inspired by the different ecosystems found in the Iberian Peninsula.

FORESTS AND COUNTRY HOMES

→ Casa de Campo

Paseo Puerta del Ángel, 1
METRO: Lago, Casa de Campo

This pine and holm oak forest, located in the western part of the city, has an area of 1,700 hectares and was originally the country villa of the Vargas family, one of the richest in Madrid in the early 16th century. It later became the property of the Royal Family and then, after the arrival of the Second Republic, of the City Council. Its lake was designed by Dutch engineer Pietre Jansen for the enjoyment of the monarchs. The park is home to a great many rabbits, and you can also see starlings, great tits, orioles and nightingales, among many other birds. Inside the fenced area, you'll find the trade fair grounds, the Parque de Atracciones de Madrid amusement park and the Madrid's Zoo Aquarium.



→ Monte de El Pardo

Multiple entrances

Just ten kilometres from Puerta del Sol is one of the best-preserved Mediterranean forests in all of Europe, perhaps because a large portion of it is closed to the general public. For centuries, it was the favourite hunting ground of Spain's monarchs, who built a palace with the same name (El Pardo) on the site. You can also visit the Prince's House and the Quinta del Duque de Arco baroque garden. Behind the fence that protects the parkland, you can spot wild boars and deer. A stroll along the banks of the River Manzanares is also highly recommendable.



→ Quinta de la Fuente del Berro

Enrique D'Almonte, 1
METRO: O'Donnell, Manuel Becerra
INFO: April–September: Monday–Sunday 6:30am-midnight
October–March: Monday–Sunday 6:30am–10pm

This country home in the Barrio de Salamanca neighbourhood was one of the first to be built in the eastern part of Madrid, near Calle de Alcalá. Privately owned by the Royal Family, in the 19th century it became a recreational park for the bourgeoisie and was renowned for the quality of the water that fed its fountain.



→ Quinta de Torre Arias

Alcalá, 551
METRO: Torre Arias
INFO: October–March: Monday–Sunday 9am–6pm
April–September: Monday–Sunday 8am–9:30pm

This country home has a history that stretches back to the 16th century, and although it is now a public park, it still plays host to agricultural activities.

→ Quinta de los Molinos

Alcalá, 527
METRO: Suanzes
INFO: Monday–Sunday 6:30am–10pm

In 1920, César Cort Botí, a councillor and a professor at the School of Architecture of Madrid, transformed this property into an estate for plants that are typically found in the Mediterranean. The park is filled with almond trees whose buds burst into beautiful blooms every February.



→ Olivar de Castillejo

Menéndez Pidal, 3
METRO: Cuzco, Pio XII, Colombia
INFO: Opening hours subject to activities

In 1917, José Castillejo, a teacher at the progressive Free Educational Institution (ILE), bought this property, which is now the headquarters of the foundation that bears his name. During the summer months, it holds numerous cultural activities.

→ Finca Vista Alegre

General Ricardo, 179
METRO: Oporto, Vista Alegre
INFO: November–February and last week of October: 9am–6pm
March and rest of October: 9am–7pm
April & September: 9am–8pm
May–August: 9am–9pm

Finca Vista Alegre, in the district of Carabanchel, was built in 1802 but rose to the height of its glory in the mid-19th century when it was the summer home of Maria Christina of the Two Sicilies, Ferdinand VII's fourth wife.

GREEN ROUTES

→ Hapsburg Madrid to Lavapiés

Duration: 1 hour
Difficulty: easy

Our first route begins in front of the Royal Palace in Plaza de Oriente, one of the city's leafiest squares, surrounded by the Cabo Noya Gardens and the Lepanto Gardens. From there, head down Calle de Bailén to Calle Mayor and turn right and continue to Emir Mohamed Park, where you can see the remains of the Arab city wall. Climb the steps of Cuesta de los Ciegos to get to Las Vistillas Gardens, which host outdoor dances during the eagerly-awaited local festivities. Take Calle de San Buenaventura to reach the Basilica of San Francisco el Grande, whose southern side boasts a garden that is home to 21 types of roses. Heading down Carrera de San Francisco, continue on to Plaza de los Carros, and from there to Plaza de la Paja and the delightful Príncipe de Anglona Garden, which belonged to the palace found next to it. Before leaving the area known as Madrid de los Austrias (Hapsburg Madrid), head to Calle del Almendro, where remains of the Christian city wall can still be seen. Continue on to Plaza de Puerta Cerrada and Plaza de Tirso de Molina, with its Flower Market. Walk through the neighbourhood of Lavapiés to reach El Casino de la Reina, which was gifted by the City Council to Maria Isabel of Braganza, the second wife of Ferdinand VII, and is now a public park. Finally, head to Calle del Doctor Fourquet, which is very close to the Reina Sofia Museum, to visit the urban garden Esta es una Plaza (“This is a Square”).

→ Malasaña to Chamberí

Duration: 1 hour
Difficulty: easy

Departing from Plaza del Dos de Mayo, the epicentre of the neighbourhood of Malasaña, head to the Arquitecto Ribera Garden. Just metres away, on Calle de San Mateo, is the Museum of Romanticism, which has a beautiful interior garden. Take Calle de Fernando VII to Plaza de las Salesas, which is presided over by a spectacular church that shares the square's name, and head around the former monastery to reach Plaza de la Villa de París, where the Supreme Court and the National High Court are located. Continue along Calle de Orellana until you reach Plaza de Santa Bárbara, known for its outdoor bars and cafés, and then leave the city's central core via the Plaza de Alonso Martínez roundabout, heading over to the district of Chamberí. Your first stop is Plaza de Olavide, a landscaped pedestrian zone. On Paseo del General Martínez Campos, you will find the gardens of the Sorolla Museum, the house where the renowned Impressionist artist lived. Finally, head up to the gardens of Canal de Isabel II and admire its circular exhibition hall.

→ Madrid Río

Duration: 1 hour
Difficulty: easy

From Príncipe Pío station to Matadero Madrid, the banks of the River Manzanares offer a stroll with wonderful views and numerous green areas. From north to south, you will pass Huerta de la Partida Garden, which is part of Casa de Campo Park, the area around Virgen del Puerto Chapel, the gardens at Puente de Segovia bridge and Puente de Toledo bridge, Arganzuela Park and the Greenhouse at Arganzuela Crystal Palace. Along the route there are a dozen children's play areas with swings, ziplines and see-saws. Madrid Río Park also boasts an artificial beach and multiple fountains, and is the ideal place to go skating or for a bike ride. If you've got time to spare, you can take a bit of a detour to San Isidro Cemetery, an impressive monumental complex which also offers panoramic views of the city centre.



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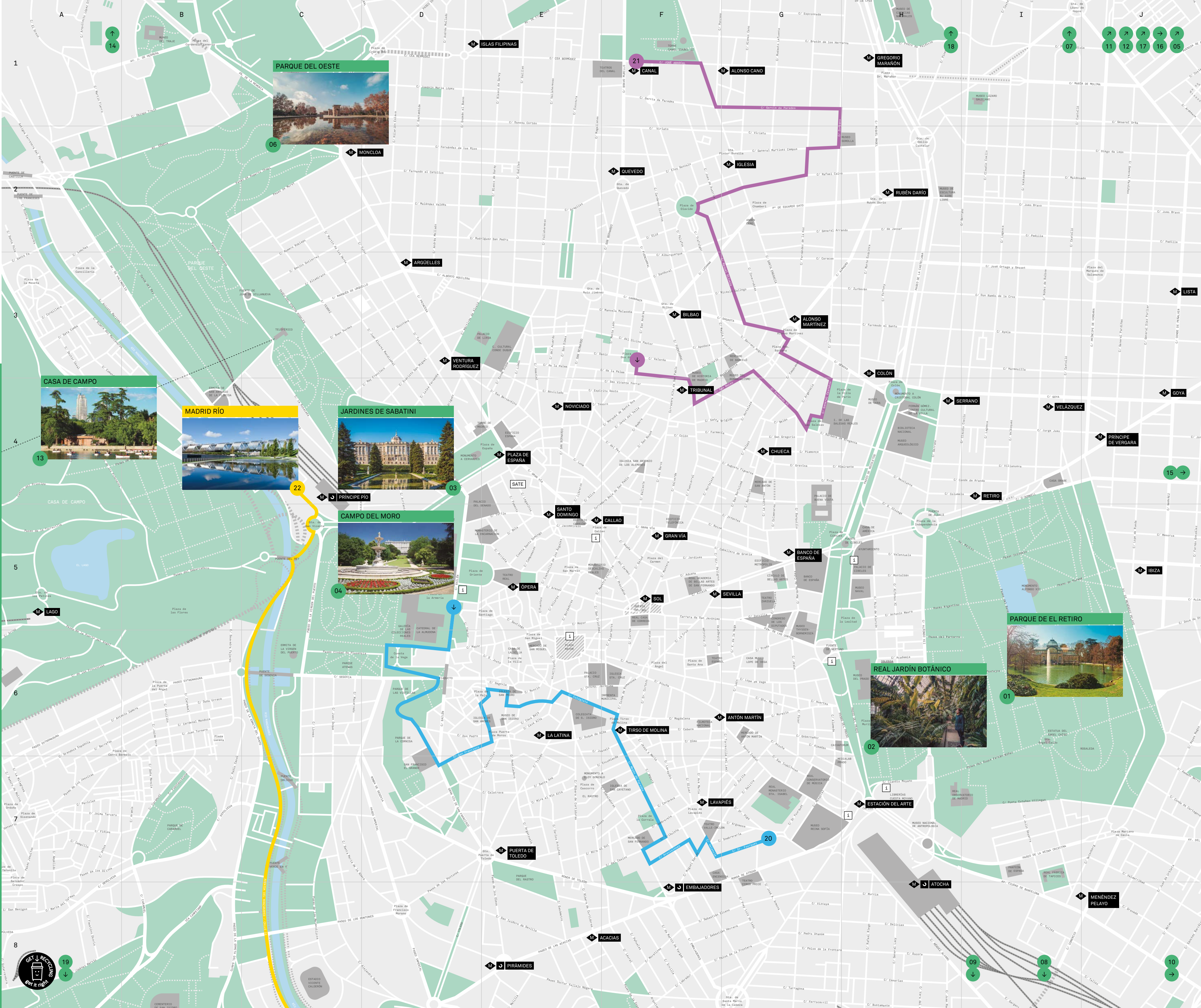
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