

Madrid Itinerary

January 6 - 9

Madrid is a great city to visit any time of year (except for perhaps in the middle of the summer unless you are a big fan of heat) but January is particularly pleasant coming from Paris. The chances are fairly high of bright sunny days and near-60 F temperatures (15 Celsius). With museums, parks, traditional and more modern restaurants, intriguing architecture, excellent shopping (at prices lower than in Paris) and great nightlife, it's hard to run out of things to do.

Date	To	Flight/Hotel/Car Details	Cost	Comments
Fri, Jan 6	Madrid	<p><i>Flight:</i> Easyjet Paris Charles de Gaulle (Terminal 2B) to Madrid (Terminal 1)/Depart 20:55, Arrive 23:15/Flight 3909</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> Hotel Regina, Calle Alcalá, 19, Tel. +34915214725, info@hotelreginamadrid.com, http://www.hotelreginamadrid.com</p> <p>We could not have done better than Hotel Regina—only €62 per night for a hotel right in the center of town (by Metro Sevilla—you can walk to pretty much everything from there), a large room and a huge private terrace (I think we must have gotten a free upgrade). I would definitely stay there again.</p>	<p><i>Flight:</i> US\$115.76 per person (one way)</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> €186/3 nights total (double room)</p>	<p>Remember that Madrileños eat late! Many restaurants don't open until 9pm, and often stay open until midnight or later. We went to one bar that offered Happy Hour prices until 2:30AM. That's Madrid for you.</p> <p>For a late dinner, we walked the (mostly pedestrian) streets around Plaza Santa Ana, Plaza Mayor and La Latina, stopping at a few tapas bars, including El Abuelo (Calle Victoria, 12, off Calle de la Cruz near Puerta del Sol) for its <i>gambas al ajillo</i> (shrimp in bubbling garlicky olive oil) and <i>croquetas de gambas</i> (shrimp croquettes). At most neighborhood bars you can get a glass of wine (<i>una copa</i>) or of beer (<i>una caña</i>) for just two or three euros. This website lists a number of tapas bars in Madrid, a number of which I can vouch for personally: http://tapstalk.wordpress.com/tapas-bars/.</p>
Sat, Jan 7	Madrid	<p><i>Hotel:</i> Hotel Regina</p> <p><i>Lunch:</i> 14h30: Zerain, c/ Quevado, 3, Tel.: +34914297909, http://www.restaurante-vasco-zerain-sidreria.es</p> <p><i>Dinner:</i> 21h: La Cocina de San Antón (reserve ahead!) http://www.mercadosananton.com/?q=restaurante-terrazas C/ Augusto Figueroa, 24 28004 Madrid Tel. +34.91.330.02.94</p> <p>We barely made room in our stomachs for a light dinner at the Mercado San Antón, but it was well worth the trip. Mercado San Antón is a newly renovated covered market in Chueca with a Spanish restaurant upstairs (tapas and some mains with the option of buying your meat in the market and having them prepare it as you wish) in an impressively designed room overlooking the market. There is also a terrace with heat lamps that would make a wonderful stop for an afternoon or evening drink.</p>		<p>Both Saturday and Sunday we ran in the Retiro (just 5 minutes running from Hotel Regina) to take advantage of the sun and visit this sizeable and wonderfully laid-out city park.</p> <p>We splurged a bit on a traditional Basque lunch at Zerain, but it was still an excellent value. For €38 per person, we had a menu of salt cod (two preparations to choose from), steak (an entire cow, I'm pretty sure), salad, unlimited house cider, a glass of wine, dessert and coffee.</p> <p>In the afternoon, we roamed the streets of the old center, many of which are pedestrian, caught the sunset by Templo de Debod (an ancient Egyptian temple originally built near Aswan and moved to Madrid before the construction of the Aswan Dam that would have threatened this archeological site), then strolled by the <i>Palacio Real</i> (royal palace) and the surrounding neighborhoods.</p>
Sun, Jan 8	Madrid	<p><i>Hotel:</i> Hotel Regina</p> <p><i>Dinner:</i> 21h: Mercado de la Reina, c/Gran Vía, 12, +34915213198, http://www.mercadodelareina.es/ENG/index.html</p>		<p>Sunday brought us to another newly renovated market. The stylish, glassed-in Mercado San Miguel just west of the Plaza Mayor is architecturally impressive. Some stalls sell produce, meats, etc. to bring home but most offer tapas or other treats to eat on the premises. It's a wonderful gathering place for an informal bite or a glass of wine.</p> <p>Once again, I was not too hungry for dinner, but had a wonderfully fresh salad and <i>croquetas de jamón</i> (ham) at Mercado de la Reina (which actually is not a market, but a rather trendy restaurant).</p>

Mon, Jan 9		<i>Flight:</i> Vueling Flight number: VY8202/Madrid T4 (7h45) to Paris CDG T3 (9h50)	<i>Flight:</i> €7.74 per person (one way)	Due to the early flight, I taxied back to the airport (20 minutes, €25) but the metro does run all the way to the airport for only €2.50.
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Although we did not manage to fit in paella this time, if you are of the philosophy (and rightly so) that **no trip to Spain should be without paella**, another favorite of mine is **La Barraca**, Calle de la Reina, 29, Tel. +34915327154, info@labarraca.es, http://www.labarraca.es/control.php?sph=s_idm=3%%a_art_iaa=10 .