



INSIDER'S TRAVEL

Classic Madrid: Art & the Artisans

5 day Private Tour - you choose when

Madrid: there is no better city in the world for looking at paintings. The Golden Triangle of Art comprises three of the greatest cultural treasure houses on Earth, all within a few steps of each other. The walls of the Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza, and the Reina Sofia are awash with masterpieces, but the Spanish capital has long been home to some of the world's most avid private collectors too, and even the hidden backstreet galleries can be dynamic showcases for sublime work by less familiar talents and up-and-coming stars.

This 4-day trip is designed to lead you through the past and present of Madrid's endlessly rich and rewarding art world, by way of in-depth visits with knowledgeable, passionate, and highly specialised guides. Tours are scheduled in the morning and tailored to your preferred pace, with free time in the afternoon and special organised activities in the evenings.

Highlights

- Tapas tour like a local in Madrid
- Fast-track Access tours: the Prado, Thyssen, Reina Sofia, and Sorolla museums through the eyes of an expert art historian and guide
- Day trip to Toledo, a World Heritage City of Three Cultures, and former Spanish capital
- Private drawing class in professional artist's studio
- **Behind-the-scenes tour:** Meet local artisans and learn from them about what goes into their craft
- **Behind-the-scenes tour:** Evening with a flamenco dancer with an informal chat over tapas followed by a live show in a buzzing flamenco tablao
- **Behind-the-scenes tour:** tour and dinner at the Botin, the world's oldest restaurant

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Day 1. Reina Sofia & Tapas Tour

Greeted on arrival by your chauffeur, you're taken to the five-star Urso Hotel & Spa. This gives you a luxury base in the charming neighborhood of Alonso Martínez, a short walk from the central Plaza del Sol and adjoining elegant neighbourhoods Salesas and Salamanca. In the immediate vicinity there's a thriving local market, streets lined with high-end boutiques, and a mix of Madrid's famously hip bars and relaxed café terraces.

12pm-4pm or 6pm-10pm (to suit arrival time) Meet your local guide, a veteran art historian, in the hotel lobby midday or early evening to taxi over to the Museo Reina Sofia. Originally built as Madrid's first general hospital, the monumental building was transformed and expanded by modern architects Ian Ritchie and Jean Nouvel into a grand repository for one of the world's largest collections of 20th-century art. Here you will see defining masterpieces by the two blazing names to emerge from Spain in that era: Salvador Dalí and Pablo Picasso. The latter's oil painting *Guernica* is the pride of the museum, a response to an air raid in the early days of the Spanish Civil War that now stands as one of humanity's profoundest artistic statements on violence. Lesser-known gems will surely catch your eye – we also love *The Violin* by Juan Gris and *Madrid Since Capitán Haya* by Antonio Lopez, to name just two.

Meanwhile, living, breathing artists and gallerists are making, showing and selling new work just behind the museum, almost in its shadow, on a backstreet called Calle del Doctor Fourquet. We'll pass that way for a refreshing primer on the 21st century scene before stopping for tapas at two of our favourite bars. As soon as you take a seat, you're a part of Madrid's glorious social life, and you can amplify that sense of welcome by trying the city's most popular dishes – pulpo a la gallega, pimientos del padrón, and jamón ibérico. Learn the casual etiquette at stake and the 'dos and don'ts' of ordering as we set you up to navigate the rest of your stay in Madrid.

Day 2. Prado & Sorolla Museum. Private Drawing Class in Artist's Studio

10am-2pm This is the big one for any art-lover: exploring the emblematic Museo del Prado. And even for the well-informed it's hard to know where to begin, given the museum's vast collection of European art, and the Royal Collection of Spanish paintings that spans from the Middle Ages to the edge of modernity. Luckily our guide is extraordinarily well-versed in the unmissable highlights – Bosch's mind-blowing triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Velázquez's deeply enigmatic court portrait *Las Meninas*, Goya's wild and weird *Black Paintings* – as well as the beautiful curiosities and obscurities waiting in quieter corners.

A short coffee break lets you decompress and change gears before moving on to the compact and intimate Museo Sorolla, which occupies the former home of the artist himself. Adored in the early 20th-century by fellow painters who enjoyed much greater renown – Claude Monet declared him "the true master of light" – Sorolla also lovingly acquired his own extensive personal collection of art and artefacts, now displayed alongside some of his best work. See for yourself Sorolla's marvelously intuitive and painstaking approach to the capture of light and movement on canvas, then take a walk in the gardens that he designed for his own pleasure, inspired by the grounds of the Alcázar Palace in Seville and the Generalife at Granada's Alhambra citadel.

6pm-8pm You are met at your hotel by the professional painter who will be your guide for the evening. He walks you to his nearby private studio – an inviting, evocative space beside Plaza Mayor, designed and aligned to make the best use of Madrid's distinctive light. Renaissance genius Diego de Velázquez worked within those sharp-angled sunbeams in his 17th-century studio on this very same street. An aperitif and some carefully curated jazz music will help with your transition from tourist to artist as you take gentle instruction on making your own traditional bodegón, or still-life painting, in the style of Velázquez himself. Then you'll shift your focus across a few centuries of art history, to try your hand at cubism in the manner of Pablo Picasso. Our specialist affords you personal attention, direction and encouragement throughout, helping you gain the perspective and refine the technical skills required to make a fluid and vivid apprentice piece. This short lesson can be a simple, pleasurable and calming exercise just as much for those who haven't drawn since they were young and those who regularly pick up a pencil.

Day 3. Toledo & Behind-the-Scenes Flamenco Uncovered Dinner & Show

9.30am-1.30pm The morning begins with a quick 30-minute train ride across the meseta plain from Madrid to Toledo, where your guide meets you on the platform. An ancient, atmospheric city that forever conjures images of swords and witches in the minds of Spaniards, it was slowly fused together by three distinct cultures to become the country's medieval capital. You dig down through the layers at the city's cathedral, which stands on the site of a former mosque that was in turn built over a Visigoth church. The nearby temple of Santa Maria la Blanca is a thousand-year-old synagogue beautifully designed by Muslim stonemasons and later given Christian title, while another synagogue, the Transito, now houses a museum on the rich, turbulent history of Spain's Sephardic Jews. Toledo was also the adoptive home to the wandering Renaissance painter known as El Greco, whose phantasmic visions included the Burial of the Count of Orgaz. Now on display at Santo Tome Church, that masterpiece makes a hallucinatory highlight of the tour, and serves as a primer on the city's art history. Then you can take a little free time to walk around before your train back to Madrid.

7pm-10pm The dancer moves like a slow flame or a sudden explosion on the stage. The guitarist watches her feet and picks up her rhythm. The singer cheers or laments as the mood demands. And their energy travels across the room, into the blood and bones of the audience. This is flamenco – a spontaneous artform of unspoken codes and intuitions, which aspires to a form of folkloric magic known as the *duende*. Our own flamenco dancer and local guide initiates these mysteries over dinner in a charming tapas bar, before a 5 minute walk to our favorite *tablaó* venue for a thrilling live performance of the art itself.

Day 4. Special Access Artisans & Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum tour, Behind-the-scenes tour: Evening Botin Experience Farewell Tour & Dinner

10am-2pm Where other city centres have been dominated by generic high-street flagships and chain stores, Madrid maintains its proud tradition of independent commerce by way of small, family-run businesses that have become valued institutions over the decades (or centuries). Today you'll meet local artisans possessed of an infectious love and enthusiasm for their city and trade. Visit the only shop in the world to exclusively sell the Spanish cape, with Picasso and Carolina Herrera among the list of past clients. Then learn just how much painstaking artistry and craftsmanship goes into the building and shaping of the Spanish classical and flamenco guitars at a specialist workshop run by masters of the trade.

Then it's on to the final museum of the Golden Triangle of Art, the Thyssen-Bornemisza. Occupying the former Villahermosa Palace, this is one of the world's most eye-popping private collections of priceless European art. Many of its highlights were bought from struggling American millionaires during the Great Depression by Heinrich, Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza de Káson, and taken together they effectively "filled the gaps" in the Prado and Reina Sofía collections, buying and showing the Italian primitives, Dutch masters and American pop artists the others never made space for. This makes for a full-spectrum whirl through the talents and movements of the last seven centuries, from Titian to Gauguin and Van Gogh, from Picasso's cubism and Rothko's colour fields to the Benday dot technique of Roy Lichtenstein's *Woman in the Bath*.

7pm-10pm Sobrino de Botin is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's oldest restaurant, founded by a Frenchman in 1725 and renowned for cooking sucking pigs in a clay oven where the fire is said to have burned undimmed for almost three centuries. After meeting a member of our Insider's team outside its iconic wood-fronted facade, begin your evening with some of the richest anecdotes about the place and its mythic former patrons, from Goya to Ernest Hemingway and Jackie Kennedy. Descend to the brickwork cellar and get a rare, privileged peek into the medieval tunnels that run beneath the restaurant and the historic square above. We leave you in the care of our colleagues at Botin, as you sit down to a tasting menu of the restaurant's classic dishes.



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Day 5. Tour Conclusion

All good things come to an end! Your car and driver meet you at your hotel to take you to the airport for your returning flight home. **If you are spending extra time in Madrid or travelling somewhere else, this service can be arranged for another day or can be changed to take you to the train station instead of the airport.*



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Price: 2-3 people, 2269€ per person
4-6 people, 1669€ per person
7-15 people, 1399€ per person

Single Supplement: 369€

Deposit: 500€ per person

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What's Included:

- 4 nights Urso Hotel & Spa, 5* with breakfast
- Private transfers by luxury car to and from airport
- Round trip train tickets to Toledo
- Three dinners
- All privately guided visits, activities & entrances mentioned in the itinerary

Not included

Airfare and flights; meals not mentioned above; travel insurance, gratuities for guides

** prices vary according to availability