

GAY & LESBIAN MADRID

top picks

- **Mamá Inés** (p225)
Café that serves as the unofficial gay meeting point in Chueca.
- **Wagaboo** (p224)
Fun restaurant with an unmistakably gay ambience.
- **B Aires Café** (p225)
Chueca bar-café where so many nights start.
- **Local Café Bar Lounge** (p225)
Intimate lounge-bar where you can't help but dance.
- **La Fulanita de Tal** (p225)
Outrageously lesbian club.
- **Sunrise** (p225)
Extravagantly gay nightclub that parties until dawn.
- **Hostal La Zona** (p226)
Great little *hostal* on the fringe of Chueca.
- **Chueca Pensión** (p226)
Lovely *pensión* in the heart of Chueca.

GAY & LESBIAN MADRID

Madrid has always been one of Europe's most gay-friendly cities. The city's gay community is credited with reinvigorating the once down-at-heel inner-city barrio of Chueca, where Madrid didn't just come out of the closet, it ripped the doors off in the process. Today the barrio is one of Madrid's most vibrant and it's very much the heart and soul of gay Madrid. Restaurants, cafés and bars clearly oriented to a gay clientele abound, and new book, video and adult-toy shops aimed at gay people continue to spring up in and around Chueca, as well as gay-friendly hostels. But there's nothing ghetto-like about Chueca. Its extravagantly gay and lesbian personality is anything but exclusive and the crowd is almost always mixed gay-straight. As gay and lesbian residents like to say, Chueca isn't gay-friendly, it's hetero-friendly.

It's a great time to be gay in Madrid. Under laws passed by the Spanish Congress in June 2005, same-sex marriages now enjoy the same legal protection as those between heterosexual partners. At the time there was a conservative backlash, but opinion polls showed that the reforms were supported by more than two-thirds of Spaniards. The best time of all to be in town if you're gay or lesbian is around the last Saturday in June for Madrid's gay and lesbian pride march (p18).

The places listed throughout this chapter are overwhelmingly aimed at a gay and/or lesbian clientele. Loads of other places in town are gay-friendly; some of these are cross-referenced below.

SHOPPING

LIBRERÍA BERKANA Map pp110-11 Bookshop

☎ 91 522 55 99; www.libreriaberkana.com, in Spanish; Calle de Hortaleza 64; ☎ 10.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-9pm Sat, noon-2pm & 5-9pm Sun; **M** Chueca

One of the most important gay and lesbian bookshops in Madrid, Librería Berkana stocks gay books, movies, magazines, music, clothing, and a host of free magazines for nightlife and other gay-focused activities in Madrid and around Spain; this is the place to pick up your copy of *Shanguide*, *Shangay Express* and *MENsual* (see p226).

A DIFFERENT LIFE Map pp110-11 Sex Shop

☎ 91 532 96 52; www.lifegay.com, in Spanish; Calle de Pelayo 30; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm Mon-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat, 12.30-9.30pm Sun; **M** Chueca Yes, A Different Life has the usual sex-shop products – DVDs, magazines and 'erotic gifts' – but it also does a line in gay novels and DVDs focusing on gay themes or with predominantly gay characters. As such, it's somewhat less in-your-face than other shops.

AMANTIS.NET Map pp110-11 Sex Shop

☎ 91 702 05 10; www.amantis.net, in Spanish; Calle de Pelayo 46; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 4.30pm-9pm Sun; **M** Chueca

A fairly standard gay sex shop, Amantis.Net is open to the street; by entering, there's no sense that you're doing anything illicit, as can be the case with other sex shops.

EATING

If they're in Chueca, restaurants simply wouldn't survive if they weren't gay-friendly, so turn to p174 for a more extensive list. Among these, some stand out, such as **Restaurante Momo** (p176), **Baco y Beto** (p176), **Tepic** (p175) and **Restaurante Vega Viana** (p176). See p158 for a guide to price symbols.

TXUECA Map pp110-11 Basque €€

☎ 91 522 16 91; Plaza de Vázquez de Mella 10; meals €20-25; ☎ 1pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; **M** Gran Vía

Txueca has clean lines, tasty Basque cuisine and friendly waiters. The crepes start at around €8, but there are a host of cold *pintxos* (tapas; around €3) after the restaurant empties. Basque cooking and Chueca innovation combine for some pretty creative choices, and if you can't choose, there's always the plate of six *pintxos* (€13).

WAGABOO Map pp110-11 Fusion €

☎ 91 531 65 67; www.wagaboo.com; Calle de Gravina 18; meals €15-25; **M** Chueca

Serving an almost exclusively gay clientele, Wagaboo offers cheap and cheerful pasta

and noodle dishes (the tagliatelle *Stolichnaya* is an acquired taste, though) and an unmistakable *frisson* ripples across the room whenever the door opens. There's another **Wagaboo** (Calle de San Marcos 28) not far away.

DRINKING

Apart from the Chueca landmarks that follow, other good watering holes with a partly gay or lesbian vibe include **Antik Café** (p194), **Antigua Casa Ángel Sierra** (p196) and **Diurno** (p193).

B AIRES CAFÉ Map pp110-11 Café-Bar

☎ 91 532 98 79; Calle de Gravina 4; ☎ 3pm-1am Sun-Wed, to 2am Thu & Fri, to 2.30am Sat; **M** Chueca

This oasis of sophistication in anything-goes Chueca is perfect for a quiet conversation, and most gays and lesbians passing through Chueca spend some time here, either resting from nights of partying, taking some down time in preparation for the night ahead or simply as an end in itself.

CAFÉ ACUARELA Map pp110-11 Café-Bar

☎ 91 522 21 43; Calle de Gravina 10; ☎ 2pm-3am; **M** Chueca

Right on Plaza de Chueca and long a centerpiece of gay Madrid – a huge statue of a nude male angel guards the doorway – this is an agreeable, dimly lit salon decorated with, among other things, religious icons! It's ideal for quiet conversation and catching the weekend buzz as people plan their forays into the more clamorous clubs in the vicinity.

MAMÁ INÉS Map pp110-11 Café-Bar

☎ 91 523 23 33; Calle de Hortaleza 22; ☎ 10am-2am Sun-Thu, to 3.30am Fri & Sat; **M** Gran Vía or Chueca

A gay meeting place with its low lights and low music, this café-bar is never sleazy and has a laid-back ambience by day and a romantic air by night. You can get breakfast, yummy pastries and all the gossip on where that night's hot spot will be.

LOCAL CAFÉ BAR LOUNGE Map pp110-11 Café-Bar

☎ 91 532 76 10; Calle de la Libertad 28; ☎ 5pm-3am; **M** Chueca

With its swirling colour scheme and funky soul, hip-hop, disco and deep house beats,

Local has drawn a loyal following. The crowd can be mixed gay-hetero, but don't hold that against them as no-one else in Chueca will.

NIGHTLIFE

The proportion of gay and lesbian revellers in many nightclubs is high, among them **Cool** (p201), **Suite Café Club** (p203), **Susan Club** (p204) and **La Lupe** (p202). The nightclubs listed are overwhelmingly gay.

LA FULANITA DE TAL Map pp110-11

☎ 91 360 47 02; www.fulanitadetal.com, in Spanish; Calle del Conde de Xiquena 2; ☎ 10pm-3am Sun-Wed, to 4am Thu-Sat; **M** Chueca

Run by women, this outrageously uninhibited nightclub draws a predominantly lesbian crowd, but the club's refusal to stay within boundaries means gay men, hetero couples and just about anyone can turn up here. The music's mostly pop dance tunes, with a bit of funk and R&B.

OHM Map pp110-11

Sala Bash; ☎ 91 531 01 32; Plaza del Callao 4; ☎ midnight-6am Fri & Sat; **M** Callao

The DJs who get you waving your hands in the air like you just don't care have made this club one of the most popular nightspots for Madrid's gay community, although, typically, everyone's welcome. The music never strays far from techno-house.

SUNRISE Map pp110-11

www.sunrisechueca.com, in Spanish; Calle de Barbieri 7; ☎ midnight-6am Thu-Sat; **M** Chueca Sunrise could just be Chueca's most popular gay nightclub and it's definitely the barrio at its most outrageous, with a mostly gay crowd on the prowl and often playing dress ups. There's occasional live cabaret. This place goes wild during the Orgullo Gay festivities (see p18).

SLEEPING

Most Madrid hotels won't bat an eyelid if you're a same-sex couple asking for a double bed. One place that goes out of its way to make gay couples welcome is Hotel Óscar (p237), which also applies to other Room Mate hotels; see the boxed text, p236. For a guide to price symbols, see p229.

HOSTAL LA ZONA Map pp110–11 Hostel €
☎ 91 521 99 04; www.hostallazona.com; 1st fl, Calle de Valverde 7; s/d/tr from €50/60/85; Gran Vía Catering primarily to a gay clientele, the stylish Hostal La Zona has exposed brickwork, subtle colour shades and wooden pillars. We like a place where a sleep-in is encouraged – breakfast is served from 9am to noon, which is exactly the understanding Madrid's nightlife merits. There's free internet and wi-fi, Arnaldo and Vincent are friendly hosts, and every room has air-conditioning/heating.

CHUECA PENSIÓN Map pp110–11 Hostel €
☎ 91 523 14 73; www.chuecapension.com; 2nd fl, Calle de Gravina 4; s/d/tr €40/60/85; Gran Vía There are few better Chueca bases than this lovely *pensión*. Features include hardwood floors, free wi-fi and large rooms, while the bright bedspreads add a splash of colour lacking in many *hostales* in this price range. Best of all, Beni Uria, the owner, is a welcoming host. There's no lift.

CASA CHUECA Map pp110–11 Hostel €
☎ 91 523 81 27; www.casachueca.com; 2nd fl, Calle de San Bartolomé 4; s/d/tr from €40/50/70; Gran Vía If you don't mind lugging your suitcase up to the 2nd floor, Casa Chueca is outstanding. The rooms are modern, colourful and a cut above your average hostel; in keeping with the barrio that it calls home, Casa Chueca places a premium on style. Add casual, friendly service and you'd be hard pressed to find a better price-to-quality ratio anywhere in central Madrid.

FURTHER RESOURCES MAGAZINES

A few informative free magazines are in circulation in gay bookshops (especially Librería Berkana (p224) and gay-friendly bars. One is the biweekly *Shanguide*, which is jammed with listings (including saunas and hard-core clubs) and contact ads. Its companion publication *Shangay Express* is

better for articles with a handful of listings and ads. The *Mapa Gaya de Madrid* lists gay bars, discos and saunas. Also useful is the *Punto Guía de España para Gays y Lesbianas*, a countrywide guide for gay and gay-friendly bars, restaurants, hotels and shops around the country. The monthly *MENSual* costs €2.20 at newsstands; there's a web version at www.mensual.com.

WEBSITES

You can also check out the following sites on the web:

Chueca.com (www.chueca.com, in Spanish) Its Guía de Locales (for bars and clubs) is only available to subscribers to Chueca XL (the members-only section of the website; €20 per year).

Guía Gay (www.guiagay.com, in Spanish) Forums, news and public events.

Nación Gay (www.naciongay.com) News on the gay community across Spain.

Orgullo Gay (www.orgullogay.org, in Spanish) Website for the gay and lesbian pride march and links to gay organisations across the country.

ORGANISATIONS

The **Colectivo de Gais y Lesbianas de Madrid** (Cogam; Map pp110–11; ☎ 91 522 45 17; www.cogam.es; Calle de la Puebla 9; Callao or Gran Vía) offers activities, has an info office and social centre, and runs an **information line** (☎ 91 523 00 70; 🕒 5–9pm Mon–Fri).

The Comunidad de Madrid's **Programa de Información y Atención a Homosexuales y Transexuales** (Map pp110–11; 4th fl, Gran Vía 16; 🕒 10am–2pm & 5–9pm Mon–Fri Sep–May, 8am–3pm Mon–Fri Jun–Aug; Gran Vía) also has a toll-free **information line** (☎ 900 720 569).

The **Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales & Bisexuales** (Felgt; Map pp110–11; ☎ 91 360 46 05; www.felgt.org; 1st fl, Calle de las Infantas 40; Chueca) is a national advocacy group that played a leading role in lobbying for the legalisation of gay marriages.

Fundación Triángulo (Map pp126–7; ☎ 91 593 05 40; www.fundaciontriangulo.es; 1st fl, Calle de Eloy Gonzalo 25; Iglesia) is another source of information on gay issues; it has a separate information line, **Información LesGai** (☎ 91 44 66 394).

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