

THE ARTS

top picks

- **Teatro Real** (p213)
Madrid's opera house and premier classical music venue.
- **Cine Doré** (p214)
Wonderful old cinema showing Spanish-language films.
- **Yelmo Cineplex Ideal** (p214)
One of the best cinemas for films in their original version with Spanish subtitles.
- **Galería Moriarty** (p214)
Near-mythical private Madrid gallery.
- **Teatro de la Zarzuela** (p215)
Home to Madrid's musical *zarzuela* extravaganzas.

You've killed the night by staying out till dawn and you've raced around to the major monuments and art galleries for which Madrid is famous. Time for a change of pace. Madrid's contribution to high artistic culture extends beyond the Museo del Prado and the city is an excellent place to take in a classical music, opera or dance performance, visit the engaging little private galleries scattered across the city or watch a blockbuster musical in one of the city's many theatres. Such performances are attended more often by locals than tourists, which may be an attraction in itself, but these genres take you deeper into the world of the Spanish-language arts that receive little coverage beyond the Spanish-speaking world. Indeed this is the best place in the world to see Spanish drama (both classical and modern) and *zarzuela* (a Madrid cross between opera and dance). Then again, you could always just join the throngs of Madrid's cinema-goers, either in English or in Spanish.

Although Spaniards consider those quintessentially Spanish pursuits of flamenco and bullfighting to be artistic endeavours, an overall look at flamenco appears on p45, flamenco venues are covered on p204 and bullfighting can be found on p221.

WHAT'S ON

All of the following publications and websites provide comprehensive, updated listings of showings at Madrid's theatres, cinemas and concert halls:

EsMadrid Magazine (www.esmadrid.com) Monthly tourist office listings for concerts and other performances; available at tourist offices, some hotels and online.

Guía del Ocio (www.guiadelocio.com, in Spanish) A Spanish-only weekly magazine available for €1 at news kiosks.

In Madrid (www.in-madrid.com) The monthly English-language expat publication is given out free at some hotels, original-version cinemas, Irish pubs and English bookshops, and has lots of information about what to see and do in town.

La Netro (<http://madrid.lanetro.com>) Comprehensive online guide to everything that's happening in Madrid.

Metropolis (www.elmundo.es/metropolis) *El Mundo's* Friday supplement magazine has information on the week's offerings.

On Madrid (www.elpais.com) *El País* also has a Friday supplement with listings for the week.

Salir Urban (www.salirsalir.com) The magazine (€2.50) is mostly for bars, restaurants and live music, but its online version has a section on theatres.

What's on When (www.whatsonwhen.com) The Madrid page covers the highlights of sports and cultural activities, with some information on getting tickets.

CLASSICAL MUSIC & OPERA

Yes, Madrid loves to party, but scratch beneath the surface and you'll find a thriving city of high culture, with venues dedicated to year-round opera and classical music. Orchestras from all over Europe perform regularly here, but Madrid's own *Orquesta Sinfónica* (www.osm.es, in Spanish) is a splendid orchestra that normally performs (or accompanies) in the Teatro Real or Audi-

torio Nacional de Música. The *Banda Sinfónica Municipal de Madrid* (www.munimadrid.es/bandasinfonica, in Spanish) plays at the Teatro Monumental.

AUDITORIO NACIONAL DE MÚSICA

Map p123

☎ 91 337 01 40; www.auditorionacional.mcu.es; Calle del Príncipe de Vergara 146; **M** Cruz del Rayo When it's not playing the Teatro Real, Madrid's Orquesta Sinfónica plays at this modern venue, which also attracts conductors from all over the world. It's usually fairly easy to get your hands on tickets at the box office.

FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH

Map pp102–3
☎ 91 435 42 40; www.march.es; Calle de Castelló 77; **M** Núñez de Balboa

A foundation dedicated to promoting music and culture (as well as exhibitions; see p106), the Juan March Foundation stages free concerts throughout the year. Performances range from solo recitals to themed concerts dedicated to a single style or composer.

TEATRO MONUMENTAL

Map pp84–5
☎ 91 429 12 81, 91 429 81 19; Calle de Atocha 65; **M** Antón Martín

The main concert season runs from October to March, when concerts include those of Madrid's municipal orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica de RTVE, and occasional operas or *zarzuelas* show off this modern theatre's fabulous acoustics. Tickets are a bargain €3 to €10.

TEATRO REAL

Map pp64–5
☎ 902 244 848, 91 516 06 60; www.teatro-real.com; Plaza de Oriente; **M** Ópera

After spending €100 million-plus on a long rebuilding project, the Teatro Real is as technologically advanced as any venue in Europe, and is the city's grandest stage for elaborate operas, ballets and classical music. You'll pay as little as €15 for a spot so far away you will need a telescope, although the sound quality is consistent throughout. For the best seats, don't expect change from €100.

DANCE

Spain's lively *Compañía Nacional de Danza* (☎ 91 354 50 53; <http://cndanza.mcu.es/>), under director Nacho Duato, performs worldwide and has won ac-

colades for its marvellous technicality and original choreography. The company, made up mostly of international dancers, performs contemporary pieces and is considered a main player on the international contemporary dance scene. When in town, which is not often, it performs at various venues, including the Teatro de la Zarzuela (p215).

Madrid is also home to the *Ballet Nacional de España* (☎ 91 517 99 99; <http://balletnacional.mcu.es/>), a classical company known for its unique mix of ballet and traditional Spanish styles, such as flamenco and *zarzuela*. When in Madrid, it's usually on stage at the Teatro Real (left) or the Teatro de la Zarzuela (p215).

FILM

Madrileños are among Europe's most devoted movie-goers and on Sunday evenings just about every *sala* (venue) in town is packed and queues stretch down the street. Most people buy tickets at the door, but turning up a couple of hours early or ringing the cinema to make a booking can be a good idea. Regular tickets cost about €6, rising to €7 on weekends, though there's a discount on Wednesdays, the *día de espectador* (spectator's day). There are further discounts one day a week (also usually Wednesday) for seniors.

ORIGINAL-VERSION CINEMAS

Plenty of cinemas offer *versión original* (VO; original version) films, which are shown in the original language with Spanish subtitles; otherwise foreign-language films are dubbed in mainstream cinemas. The epicentre of original-version cinemas is around Plaza de Emilio Jiménez Millas (known locally as Plaza de los Cubos), just north of Plaza de España. The major Spanish newspapers have full film listings. The following are the best original-version cinemas:

Princesa (Map pp116–17; ☎ 91 541 41 00; Calle de Princesa 3; **M** Plaza de España) One of the larger original-version cinemas.

Renoir Plaza de España (Map pp116–17; ☎ 91 541 41 00; Calle de Martín de los Heros 12; **M** Plaza de España) Plenty of latest-release films but some interesting documentaries and Asian flicks as well.

Verdi (Map pp116–17; ☎ 91 447 39 30; www.cines-verdi.com, in Spanish; Calle de Bravo Murillo 28; **M** Canal or Quevedo) Neighbourhood cinema that cherry-picks the best, big-budget art-house movies.

BOOKING CONCERT & THEATRE TICKETS

Outlets selling tickets online for concerts, theatre and other live performances include the following:

Caixa Catalunya's Tel-Entrada (☎ 902 101 212; www.telentrada.com)

El Corte Inglés (☎ 902 400 222; www.elcorteingles.es, in Spanish) Click on 'Entradas' on its website.

Entradas.com (☎ 902 221 622; www.entradas.com, in Spanish)

Fnac (☎ 91 595 62 00; www.fnac.es) Click on 'Venta de Entradas', though it's mostly modern, big-name music groups.

Localidades Galicia (Map pp64–5; ☎ 91 531 27 32, 91 531 91 31; www.eol.es/lgalicia/, in Spanish; Plaza del Carmen 1; ☎ 9.30am–1pm & 4.30–7pm Tue–Sat; **M** Sol)

Servicaixa (www.servicaixa.com) You can also get tickets in Servicaixa ATMs.

Tick Tack Ticket (☎ 902 150 025; www.ticktackticket.com)

Yelmo Cineplex Ideal (Map pp76–7; ☎ 902 220 922; Calle del Doctor Cortezo 6; 📍 Sol or Tirso de Molina) Close to Plaza Mayor, with a wide selection of films.

SPANISH-LANGUAGE CINEMAS

The highest concentration of Spanish-language cinemas is on Gran Vía and Calle Fuencarral. Watch in particular for the massive painted billboards outside, although this traditional form of advertising is a dying art. Those looking for cult movies in Spanish also have a couple of options.

Cine Doré (Map pp76–7; ☎ 91 369 11 25; Calle de Santa Isabel 3; 🕒 Tue–Sun; 📍 Antón Martín) A wonderful old cinema that's home to the Filmoteca Nacional (national film library) and an excellent Spanish-language cinema bookshop. Best of all, it shows classics past and present for just €2 (a 10-session ticket costs €15). Four movies are shown nightly, the first at 5.30pm and the last around 10pm.

Cine Palafox (Map pp116–17; ☎ 91 446 18 87; Calle de Luchana 15; 📍 Bilbao)

Cinesa Capitol (Map pp64–5; ☎ 902 333 231; Gran Vía 41; 📍 Callao)

Cinesa Príncipe Pío (Map pp126–7; ☎ 902 333 231; Estación de Príncipe Pío, Paseo de la Florida; 📍 Príncipe Pío)

Cinesa Proyecciones (Map pp116–17; ☎ 902 333 231; Calle de Fuencarral 136; 📍 Bilbao or Quevedo) Wonderful Art Deco exterior, wonderful modern cinema within.

La Enana Marrón (Map pp110–11; ☎ 91 308 14 97; www.laenamarron.org; Travesía de San Mateo 8; admission €4; 📍 Alonso Martínez) Artsy, alternative and independent (mostly Spanish) films that don't get a run elsewhere, from documentaries to animated films, international flicks and oldies. A great little cinema.

GALLERIES

For those with an interest in contemporary art that extends beyond what you'll find at the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (p82) or the Museo Municipal de Arte Contemporáneo (p108), central Madrid is studded with small galleries showcasing up-and-coming and longer established painters, sculptors and photographers. For a near-complete list check out **Arte Madrid** (www.artemadrid.com); its brochure of the same name, available from most galleries, contains a map and programme of upcoming exhibitions. Many of these galleries are regulars at Madrid's Arco fair (p17).

ANNTA GALLERY

☎ 91 521 23 53; www.anntagallery.com, in Spanish; Calle del Almirante 1; 🕒 10.30am–2pm Mon, 10.30am–2pm & 5.30–8.30pm Tue–Sat; 📍 Chueca

Spread over two levels, this gallery has painting, sculpture and photography exhibitions, although recent offerings have tended towards the latter.

CRISTÓBAL BENITEZ ARTE AFRICANO

Map pp110–11
☎ 91 521 53 54; www.angelmartin.es, in Spanish; Calle de Piamonte 21; 🕒 11am–2.30pm & 5–8.30pm Mon–Sat; 📍 Chueca

For something a little different and anything but contemporary, this gallery of antique African art is quite extraordinary and a must for anyone with a love of Africa.

GALERÍA ANTONIO MACHÓN

Map pp110–11
☎ 91 532 40 93; www.antoniomachon.com, in Spanish; Calle del Conde de Xiquena 8; 🕒 11am–2pm & 5–9pm Tue–Fri, 11am–2pm Sat; 📍 Chueca or Colón

A delightful gallery dedicated primarily to painters with the occasional sculpture, the Galería Antonio Machón has hosted names as varied as Chema Chobo, Laura Lio and Gerardo Delgado.

GALERÍA MORIARTY

Map pp110–11
☎ 91 531 43 65; www.galeriamoriarty.com; Calle de la Libertad 22; 🕒 11am–2pm & 5–8.30pm Tue–Sat; 📍 Chueca

During *la movida madrileña* in the 1980s, Galería Moriarty (then in Calle del Almirante) was one of Madrid's most important meeting places of culture and counter-culture, drawing the iconic Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, film-maker Pedro Almodóvar and the photographer García Alix among others to attend its exhibitions and parties. It may have moved, but it remains one of the most important small galleries in Madrid.

GALERÍA MULTIPLE

Map pp110–11
☎ 91 319 98 69; www.galeriamultiple.com, in Spanish; Calle de Santa Teresa 10; 🕒 10.30am–2pm & 4.30–8.30pm Tue–Fri, 10.30am–2pm Sat; 📍 Alonso Martínez

Showcasing painters and photographers of the highest standing (Pablo Palazuelo, Eduardo Arroyo and Eduardo Chillida have

LA ZARZUELA

What began in the late 17th century as a way to amuse King Felipe IV and his court has become Spain's own unique theatre style. With a light-hearted combination of music and dance, and a focus on everyday people's problems, *zarzuelas* quickly became popular in Madrid, which remains the genre's undoubted capital. Although you're likely to have trouble following the storyline (*zarzuelas* are notoriously full of local references and jokes), seeing a *zarzuela* gives an entertaining look into local culture. The best place to catch a show is the **Teatro de la Zarzuela** (below), while for a history of *zarzuela* in English, translations of *zarzuela* songs and storylines, CD and DVD reviews, and a critical look at current *zarzuela* shows, check out the terrific website zarzuela.net (www.zarzuela.net).

recently held exhibitions here and their work is available for viewing upon request), Galería Multiple is one of our favourite contemporary Madrid galleries.

THEATRE

Madrid's theatre scene is a year-round affair, but it really gets going in autumn. Most shows are in Spanish, but those who don't speak the language may still enjoy musicals or *zarzuela*, Spain's own singing-and-dancing version of musical theatre. Tickets start at around €10 and run up to €50. Mostly you can buy tickets at the box office on the day of the performance, but for new, popular or weekend shows you should book ahead. Note that box offices are usually closed on Mondays and sometimes Tuesdays, when there are no shows. On other days they're generally open from about 10am until 1pm and again from 5pm until the start of the evening's show.

CENTRO CULTURAL DE LA VILLA

Map pp102–3
☎ 91 480 03 00; www.esmadrid.com/ccvilla; Plaza de Colón; 📍 Colón or Serrano
Located under the waterfall at Plaza de Colón, the Centro Cultural has exhibition and performance spaces where it stages everything from classical concerts to comic theatre, opera and flamenco.

TEATRO ALBÉNIZ

Map pp64–5
☎ 91 531 83 11, 902 488 488; Calle de la Paz 11; 📍 Sol

One of the premier venues for popular Spanish dramas with well-known casts, the Albéniz also hosts the Caja Madrid flamenco festival (see p16) in late winter and concerts during the Festival de Otoño.

TEATRO ALFIL

Map pp110–11
☎ 91 521 45 41; www.teatroalfil.com, in Spanish; Calle del Pez 10; 📍 Noviciado

Staging a broad range of alternative and experimental Spanish-language theatre, Teatro Alfil is a good place to catch up-and-coming Spanish actors and comedians, and mingle with an eclectic crowd.

TEATRO COLISEUM

Map pp110–11
☎ 91 547 66 12; Gran Vía 78; 📍 Plaza de España
One of the larger theatres in the city, here you can expect to see major musicals, often Broadway or West End hits, but usually with an all-Spanish cast and in Spanish, such as *La Bella y La Bestia* (Beauty and the Beast).

TEATRO DE LA ZARZUELA

Map pp84–5
☎ 91 524 54 00; http://teatrodelazarzuela.mcu.es; Calle de Jovellanos 4; 📍 Banco de España
This theatre, built in 1856, is the premier place to see *zarzuela* (see the boxed text, above). It also hosts a smattering of classical music and opera, as well as the cutting edge Compañía Nacional de Danza.

TEATRO ESPAÑOL

Map pp84–5
☎ 91 360 14 84; www.esmadrid.com/teatro-espanol; Calle del Príncipe 25; 📍 Sevilla, Sol or Antón Martín

This theatre has been here since the 16th century and is still one of the best places to catch mainstream Spanish drama from the works of Lope de Vega to more recent playwrights.

TEATRO HAAGEN DAZS

Map pp76–7
☎ 91 420 37 97; www.teatrohaagen-dazs.es, in Spanish; Calle de Atocha 18; 📍 Tirso de Molina
Big budget musicals take the stage in this grand old theatre (formerly Teatro Calderón) and stay for months. Recent shows include *Queen* and *Fame*.

TEATRO PAVÓN

Map pp76–7
☎ 91 528 28 19; teatroclasico.mcu.es; Calle de los Embajadores 9; 📍 La Latina or Tirso de Molina

The home of the National Classical Theatre Company, this theatre has a regular calendar of classical shows by Spanish and European playwrights.

TEATRO VALLE-INCLÁN Map pp76–7

☎ 91 505 88 00; <http://cdn.mcu.es>; tickets €15-18; Plaza de Lavapiés; 📍 Lavapiés

The stunning refurbishment of this theatre has brought new life (and quality plays) to this once run-down corner of Lavapiés. Located on the southern end of the Plaza de Lavapiés, it is now the headquarters for the Centro Dramático Nacional (National Drama Centre) and puts on landmark plays by (mostly) Spanish playwrights.

SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

top picks

- **Hammam Medina Mayrit** (p218)
Wonderful day spa with Arab-style ambience.
- **City Yoga** (p218)
The best place in town for yoga.
- **Estadio Santiago Bernabéu** (p221)
Home of Real Madrid where you can take a tour or watch a game.
- **Plaza de Toros Monumental de Las Ventas** (p222)
The most prestigious bullring in Spain.

SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

It doesn't come much more Spanish than Real Madrid or bullfighting. Watching a live game involving Real Madrid is an unforgettable experience. Attending a *corrida* (bullfight) at the Plaza de Toros Monumental de Las Ventas is a very local thing to do – love it or loathe it, you won't leave indifferent. Basketball is another spectator sport option.

For those who prefer getting all sweaty and making their own sport, there are gyms, health centres, swimming pools and tennis courts scattered throughout the city. Excellent spas and massage centres represent the height of pampering for those keen not to get too active.

HEALTH & FITNESS

HEALTH & DAY SPAS

CHI SPA Map pp102–3

☎ 91 578 13 40; www.thechispa.com; Calle del Conde de Aranda 6; ☎ 10am–9pm Mon–Fri, to 6pm Sat; **M** Retiro

Wrap up in a robe and slippers and prepare to be pampered in one of Spain's best day spas. There are separate areas for men and women, and services include massage (from €65 per hour), facials (€65 to €125), manicures (€25) and pedicures (€35). Now, what was it you were stressed about?

HAMMAM MEDINA MAYRIT Map pp64–5

☎ 902 333 334; www.medinamayrit.com; Calle de Atocha 14; ☎ 10am–midnight; **M** Loll

Medina Mayrit is both an architectural jewel and a sensory indulgence that takes your senses back in time. Housed in the excavated cellars of old Madrid, this imitation traditional Arab bath offers massages and aromatherapy beneath graceful arches and accompanied by the sound of tinkling water. Prices are at their cheapest from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday (from €24); otherwise, you'll pay from €36. Reservations are required. There's also a Moroccan-style tearoom and restaurant upstairs.

SPA RELAJARSE Map pp110–11

☎ 91 308 61 48; www.sparelajarse.com, in Spanish; Calle de Barquillo 43; ☎ 11am–11pm Mon–Sat, 1–9pm Sun; **M** Chueca

Step inside this intimate little spa and you can't help but feel relaxed. With a range of options (the Especial Spa includes a hydro-massage pool with strawberries and Mötet Chandon for €140, while the Especial Spa with a 'romantic dinner' costs €220), this may be one for a special occasion. Discre-

tion and privacy are its trademarks, with most sessions popular with couples.

ZENSEI Map pp116–17

☎ 91 549 60 49; www.zensei.net, in Spanish; Calle de Blasco de Garay 64; ☎ 10am–10pm Mon–Sat; **M** Moncloa or Quevedo

Hidden away on a suburban Argüelles street, this Japanese relaxation centre is an oasis of civility and promises the ultimate in Zen massage, acupuncture, reiki, shiatsu and yoga, not to mention origami or Japanese tea-ceremony classes. The two-hour relaxation or beauty programmes are also highly recommended. Prices start at €30 for a massage, and you'll come out floating on air.

YOGA & PILATES

In addition to the places listed here, many private gyms, such as Gimnasio Chamberí (opposite), also offer yoga and Pilates.

CITY PILATES Map pp116–17

☎ 91 445 13 03; www.city-pilates.com, in Spanish; Calle de Ruiz 27; classes from €15; ☎ 10am–10pm Mon–Fri, to 2pm Sat; **M** San Bernardo or Bilbao

Opened in January 2008, this state-of-the-art Pilates centre has classes across all styles of the genre and, like its sister centre City Yoga (see below), it offers programmes for soon-to-be and recovering mums.

CITY YOGA Map p123

☎ 91 553 47 51; www.city-yoga.com, in Spanish; Calle de los Artistas 43; classes from €15; ☎ 10am–10pm Mon–Fri; **M** Cuatro Caminos or Nuevos Ministerios

Don't be put off by the somewhat gritty barrio because this yoga and Pilates centre is one of the most popular in the city, with classes suiting all styles and ability levels. It also offers massages, Pilates and pre- and

post-natal activities. There's a one-off joining fee of €30.

GYMS

Public gyms and indoor pools (normally for lap swimming only) are scattered throughout Madrid. They generally charge a modest €3.50 to €7 for one-day admission and can get pretty crowded at weekends and after work hours. More expensive (€10 to €15 per one-day admission), privately owned health centres usually have less crowded workout rooms.

GIMNASIO CHAMBERÍ Map pp116–17

☎ 91 448 0460; Calle de Raimundo Lulio 18; admission around €10; ☎ 7.45am–11pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat & Sun; **M** Iglesia

This privately run suburban gym doesn't have a pool, but it does offer yoga, Pilates, aerobics of most descriptions and a well-equipped workout room. Monthly memberships start from around €40.

POLIDEPORTIVO LA CHOPERA Map pp92–3

☎ 91 420 11 54; Parque del Buen Retiro; admission €5; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Fri; **M** Atocha

With a fine workout centre, several football fields and a few tennis courts, this *polideportivo* (sports centre and gym) in the southwestern corner of El Retiro is one of Madrid's most attractive and central.

POLIDEPORTIVO LA LATINA Map pp76–7

☎ 91 365 80 31; Plaza de la Cebada; pool adult/child €4/2.35; ☎ 8.15am–7pm Mon–Thu, to 6pm Fri, 10am–8.30pm Sat & Sun; **M** La Latina

This centrally located municipal gym (and one of few that has a pool) is busy day and night. While not all that new or clean, it offers decent weight and workout rooms. This whole complex is slated for renovation.

ACTIVITIES

SWIMMING

If you'd rather splash around than labour over laps, the following public pools are worth trying, although they can be completely overwhelmed in summer.

CANAL DE ISABEL II Map p123

☎ 91 533 17 91; Avenida de Filipinas 54; admission €4; ☎ 11am–8pm Jun–early Sep; **M** Ríos Rosas or Canal

Open only in summer, this large outdoor pool is easily accessible by metro from the city centre. It also has a football field, a basketball court and a weights room, and across the road there's a running track and a golf driving range.

CASA DEL CAMPO

☎ 91 463 00 50; Avenida Ángel; pool €4.50; ☎ 11.30am–9pm summer, 9am–noon, 3–7pm & 9–10pm winter; **M** Lago

The outdoor pools at this sprawling park are overrun in summer. The rest of the year (October to April) swimming is indoors.

PISCINA MUNICIPAL PEÑUELAS

off Map pp126–7

☎ 91 474 28 08; Calle de Arganda; admission €4; ☎ 11am–9pm Jun–Aug; **M** Acacias, Pirámides or Embajadores

With two gloriously cool pools and another smaller one for infants, this outdoor complex south of the city centre is a popular place for a summer dip, but like any place where there's water in Madrid, it gets excessively crowded on summer weekends.

TENNIS

If you fancy a game of tennis surrounded by the greenery of the Parque del Buen Retiro, consider the Polideportivo La Chopera (left).

POLIDEPORTIVO VIRGEN DEL PUERTO Map pp126–7

☎ 91 366 28 40; Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto; court hire from €6.50; ☎ 8.30am–8.30pm; **M** Príncipe Pío

Run by the municipal government, this modern sports centre near the Puente de Segovia has eight regulation-size tennis courts, eight paddle-ball courts and 12 table-tennis tables.

SKIING

MADRID XANADÚ Map pp126–7

☎ 902 361309; www.madridsnowzone.com; Calle Puerto de Navacerrada, Arroyomolinos; 1hr adult/child €19/16; ☎ 10am–10pm Sun–Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat

Far out to the east of Madrid, in the massive Xanadú shopping centre, you'll find the largest covered ski centre in Europe. Open 365 days a year, it's kept at a decidedly cool -2°C, so rug up before hitting

the surprisingly good slopes. To get here, take bus 529, 531 or 536 from the Méndez Álvaro transportation hub.

SPECTATOR SPORT

Watching Real Madrid play at its glorious Estadio de Santiago Bernabéu or taking in a bullfight at the Plaza de Toros Monumental de Las Ventas are high on the list of must-sees for a number of visitors to Madrid. There's also high-quality basketball if that's your thing.

SEASONS

The Spanish football season runs from September (or the last weekend in August) until May, with a two-week break just before Christmas until early in the New Year. Spain's top toreros (bullfighters) do their thing at Las Ventas bullring from early to mid-May to coincide with the Fiestas de San Isidro Labrador (see p16), continuing daily for a month, with further weekend fights until October. The basketball season shadows the football season, from September through to the second half of May.

Sports-only dailies such as *Marca* (www.marca.com, in Spanish) and *AS* (www.as.com, in Spanish) are wildly popular and will give you the inside scoop on upcoming matches and events, provided you read basic Spanish. They're available from any newspaper kiosk.

PRICES & RESERVATIONS

Football

Tickets for football matches in Madrid start at around €15 and run up to the rafters for major matches; you pay in inverse proportion to your distance from the pitch. For bigger games, such as Real Madrid against Barcelona or Atlético de Madrid, or a Champions League game, *entradas* (tickets) are high-on impossible to find unless you're willing to take the risk with scalpers. For less important matches, you shouldn't have too many problems.

Unless you book your Real Madrid ticket through a ticket agency, turn up at the Estadio Santiago Bernabéu ticket office (Map p123) at Gate 42 on Calle de Concha de Espina early in the week before a scheduled game (eg a Tuesday morning for a Sunday game). The all-important telephone number for booking tickets (which you later pick up at Gate 42) is ☎ 902 324 324, which only works if you're calling from within Spain. To see an Atlético de Madrid game, try

calling ☎ 91 366 47 07, but you're most likely to manage a ticket if you turn up at the ground a few days before the match.

If you're booking from abroad, try **Localidades Galicia** (Map pp64–5; ☎ 91 531 27 32, 91 531 91 31; www.eol.es/lgalicia; Plaza del Carmen 1; ☎ 9.30am–1pm & 4.30–7pm Tue–Sat; ☑ Sol). Numerous websites also sell tickets to Real Madrid games, including www.madrid-tickets.net, www.madrid-tickets.com and www.ticket-finders.com.

Bullfighting

Tickets for *corridos* (bullfights) are divided into *sol* (sun) and *sombra* (shade) seating, the former cheaper than the latter. Ticket sales begin a few days before the fight, at **Plaza de Toros Monumental de Las Ventas ticket office** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 91 356 22 00; www.las-ventas.com, in Spanish; Calle de Alcalá 237; ☎ 10am–2pm & 5–8pm; ☑ Ventas). A few agencies sell before then, adding an extra 20% for their trouble; one of the best is **Localidades Galicia** (Map pp64–5; ☎ 91 531 27 32, 91 531 91 31; www.eol.es/lgalicia; Plaza del Carmen 1; ☎ 9.30am–1pm & 4.30–7pm Tue–Sat; ☑ Sol). You can also get tickets at **La Central Bullfight Ticket Office** (Map pp84–5; Calle de la Victoria). Mostly, you'll have no problem getting a ticket at the gate, but during the Fiestas de San Isidro, or when a popular torero comes to town, book ahead.

The cheapest tickets (around €5) are for standing-room *sol*, though on a hot summer day you might want to pay the extra €4 for *sombra* tickets. The premium seats – on the front row in the shade – are the preserve of celebrities and cost more than €100.

For information on who'll be in the ring, check out the colourful posters tacked around town or the daily newspapers.

Basketball

Tickets range from about €15 to €50 for regular season games. You can buy MMT Estudiantes tickets through **El Corte Inglés** (☎ 902 400 222; www.elcorteingles.es, in Spanish) or at the **Polideportivo Magariños** (Map p123; ☎ 91 562 40 22; Calle de Serrano 127; ☎ 10am–2pm & 4–8pm). Real Madrid tickets go on sale two hours before the game, and you can buy them directly at the stadium box office.

FOOTBALL

Depending on your perspective, **Real Madrid** (www.realmadrid.com) is either the best football club in the world (in 1998, FIFA declared it the greatest club of all time) or the symbol of a game gone mad with money.

RIGHT ROYAL FOOTBALLERS

Few football teams arouse such contradictory passions as Real Madrid – *los blancos* (whites), *merengues* (meringues), *los galacticos* or simply *El Madrid*, as the team is variously known – and a quick look at its history shows why.

In 1920, King Alfonso XIII bestowed the *real* (royal) title upon the club. Fans of arch rival FC Barcelona will tell you that in the years of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1920s), and later under Franco, their team was frequently the victim of dodgy decisions. It's certainly true that Real Madrid dominated Spanish and European football throughout the Franco period and the little dictator frequently basked in Real Madrid's successes as if they were his own. Most famously, Barcelona won the first leg of its 1943 Spanish Cup semi-final against Real Madrid 3–0. Legend has it that before the return leg in Madrid, Franco's Director of State Security visited the Barcelona changing room and issued thinly veiled threats and berated the Catalans for their lack of patriotism. Madrid defeated a clearly frightened Barcelona 11–1 in the second leg.

When it comes to history, no-one can match Real Madrid's record at home or abroad: 31 Spanish *liga* (league) titles, the last in 2008; 17 Copas del Rey; nine European Cups (now known as the Champions League), including 1998, 2000 and 2002; two Uefa Cups; and the Spanish Supercopa a mere seven times.

Even against such a backdrop, however, the recent headlines surrounding the club have been extraordinary. After construction magnate Florentino Perez became club president in 2000, the club spent hundreds of millions of euros buying the best players in the world, in the process building a team known as *los galacticos*. There was just one problem: while these superstars of the world game shone as individuals, they never really gelled as a team. In the three seasons following its Spanish league title in 2003, Real Madrid won nothing (the longest drought in the club's history) as the team went through four coaches and reports began to emerge of a changing room divided into camps of overswelled egos. In March 2006, Florentino Perez resigned, blaming the prima donnas whom he himself had brought to the club. Against all the odds and after a stuttering season, Real Madrid won the 2007 *la liga* title, and followed it up with another in 2008, although success still eludes them on the European stage, and the club's embarrassed administration have pronounced an end to the *galactico* era.

Even amid all the tarnished glamour, El Estadio Santiago Bernabéu is one of the world's great football arenas; watching a game here is akin to a pilgrimage for sports fans and doing so alongside 80,000 passionate Madridistas (Real Madrid supporters) in attendance will send chills down your spine. If you're lucky enough to be in town when Real Madrid wins a major trophy, head to Plaza de la Cibeles and wait for the all-night party to begin.

It surprises many visitors that a significant proportion of the population can't stand Real

Madrid and actually support the capital's other team, **Atlético de Madrid** (www.clubatleticodemadrid.com). Though existing in the shadow of its more illustrious city rivals, Atlético have won nine *liga* titles (a feat bettered only by Real Madrid and FC Barcelona), the latest in 1996, and nine Copas del Rey. Atlético, which has a cult following, attracts passionate support and fans of the *rojiblancos* (red-and-whites) declare theirs to be the *real* Madrid team, unlike the reviled and aristocratic 'Madridistas' up the road.

For details on how to see a Real Madrid or Atlético game, turn to **opposite**.

ESTADIO SANTIAGO BERNABÉU Map p123

☎ 91 398 43 00, 902 324 324; www.realmadrid.com; Calle de Concha Espina 1; ☎ 10.30am–6.30pm except day of or after game; ☑ Santiago Bernabéu

Holding 80,000 delirious fans, the Santiago Bernabéu (named after the long-time club president) is a mecca for Real Madrid football fans worldwide. Those who can't come to a game can at least stop by for a tour (p122), a peek at the trophies or to buy Real Madrid memorabilia in the club shop.

ESTADIO VICENTE CALDERÓN Map pp126–7

☎ 91 366 47 07; www.clubatleticodemadrid.com; Calle de la Virgen del Puerto 1; ☑ Pirámides

The home of Atlético de Madrid isn't as large as Real Madrid's (the Vicente Calderón seats fewer than 60,000), but what it lacks in size it makes up for in raw energy. A game at the Estadio Vicente Calderón has a passionate, more carnivalesque feel to it than most Real Madrid games.

BULLFIGHTING

An epic drama of blood and sand or a cruel blood 'sport' that has no place in modern Europe? This most enduring and controversial

of Spanish traditions is all this and more, at once picturesque, compelling theatre and an ancient ritual that sees 40,000 bulls killed in around 17,000 bullfights every year in Spain. Perhaps it was best summed up by Ernest Hemingway – a bullfighting aficionado – who described it as ‘a wonderful nightmare’.

Whatever your viewpoint, an afternoon of *la corrida* is an essential part of Madrid life, particularly during the month-long season beginning with the Fiestas de San Isidro Labrador. This is Spain’s premier bullfighting season and its most prestigious venue – when toreros put in a starring performance at Las Ventas, their career is made.

On an afternoon ticket there are generally six bulls and three star toreros dressed in the dazzling *traje de luces* (suit of lights). The torero leads a *cuadrilla* (team) of fighters who make up the rest of the colourful band in the ring. It’s a complex business, but in essence the toreros aim to impress the crowd and jury with daring and graceful moves as close to an aggressive bull as possible. It’s a one-sided event – the death of the bull is close to inevitable – but it’s still a dangerous business. Despite the spectre of death that pervades *la corrida*, a day out at the bullring is a festive occasion for aficionados, dressed to the nines and wine flowing freely.

Still, there are signs that bullfighting’s popularity may be waning, especially among younger Spaniards. A recent poll found that just 17% of Spaniards under 25 had any interest in bullfighting, compared with 41% of those aged over 64. Similar polls show that three-quarters of Spaniards have no interest in the sport.

While few modern fighters match the courage and skill of former greats, such as Juan Belmonte (1892–1962), Manuel ‘Manolete’ Rodríguez Sánchez (1917–47), Antonio Ordoñez (1932–98) and Luis Miguel Dominguín (1926–96), there are some names to look out for. Juan Antonio Ruiz (Espartaco) was unbeatable in the early 1990s, while current toreros include Jesulín de Ulbrique, Julián ‘El Juli’ López, José Miguel Arroyo (Joselito), Enrique Ponce and Manuel Díaz (El Cordobés).

For advice on how to see a bullfight in Madrid, see [p220](#).

PLAZA DE TOROS MONUMENTAL DE LAS VENTAS Map pp102–3

☎ 91 356 22 00; www.las-ventas.com, in Spanish; Calle de Alcalá 237; 📍 Ventas

One of the largest rings in the bullfighting world, Las Ventas has a grand *mudéjar* (a Moorish architectural style) exterior and a

suitably coliseum-like arena surrounding the broad sandy ring. For more information, see [p101](#).

BASKETBALL

Although they don’t get the same publicity, Real Madrid’s basketball players are as much champions as their footballing counterparts and their rivalry with Barcelona is equally fierce. The team has won 30 Spanish league titles, 22 Copas del Rey and eight European championships. Also popular is the less successful MMT Estudiantes side. Real Madrid plays at the recently rebuilt and state-of-the-art Palacio de los Deportes, while MMT Estudiantes plays at the Telefónica Madrid Arena in Casa del Campo.

For match information, see [p220](#).

MMT ESTUDIANTES

☎ 902 400 002; www.clubestudiantes.com, in Spanish; Telefónica Madrid Arena, Calle de las Aves; 📍 Lago or Alto de Extremadura

MMT Estudiantes are the Atlético de Madrid of the city’s basketball scene and Madrid’s most popular team. Games in the excellent Telefónica Madrid Arena are usually played in front of a packed house.

REAL MADRID

☎ 91 258 60 16, 91 523 09 51; www.realmadrid.com; Palacio de los Deportes, Calle de Jorge Juan 99; 📍 Goya or O’Donnell

The Real Madrid basketball team, Madrid’s most glamorous, is a great team to watch live. See a game at the state-of-the-art Palacio de los Deportes ([Map pp126–7](#)).

MARATHONS

In late April, the [Maratón de Madrid](#) (www.maratonmadrid.org) cuts a swathe through the city and attracts athletes from all over the world.

Less serious athletes may find the wonderfully festive [San Silvestre Vallecana](#) (www.sansilvestrevallecana.com) more to their liking. Staged on 31 December at 6pm, the 10km course leads from Plaza de Castilla all the way down Paseo de la Castellana to Vallecana, to the south. Although the professional section of the race attracts leading runners, the amateur section is one of the more unusual races in Europe. Many athletes wear fancy dress; musicians line the route and runners, who must pass through streets warming up for New Year’s Eve, are pelted with eggs and tomatoes.

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