

BACKGROUND

HISTORY

Founded as a Muslim garrison town in the 9th century and a squalid settlement for centuries thereafter, Madrid suddenly took centre stage in 1561 when it was unexpectedly chosen as Spain's capital. As the centre of a global empire on which the sun never set and as the seat of the Spanish royal court, Madrid was, at a stroke of the royal pen, transformed from a cultural backwater into the most important city in Spain. In the centuries that followed, the city grew into its role as capital, accumulating prestige, people from all across Spain and beyond, and the trappings of power and wealth. The end result is the most Spanish of all Spain's major cities.

ROMAN MADRID?

Amid the bustle of modern Madrid it can be difficult to imagine the scene that must have greeted the nomads who gathered along the banks of the Río Manzanares in Mesolithic and Neolithic times. If they came from the desolate plains that lie to the south or east, even Madrid's less-than-mighty river must have seemed like paradise. The rocky bluff where Madrid would later be founded, and where the Palacio Real (p67) now stands, must have offered welcome shelter amid a landscape of unrelenting monotony. If they came from the mountains in the north or west, this combination of river and rocky perch must have felt like the last place of safety before crossing the vast plateau, the *meseta* of central Iberia.

Thousands of years later the hagiographers of imperial Spain would, in an attempt to give Madrid an historical prestige it never truly had, argue that Madrid was later the site of a Roman city called Mantua Carpetana. Yes, the remains of Roman villas and inns have been found in the Madrid region, which fell under Roman control as they subdued the Celtiberian tribes between the 1st and 5th centuries AD. But the small Roman outpost known as Miacum, close to modern Madrid, was merely an obscure waystation on the important Roman road that criss-crossed the Iberian Peninsula.

MUSLIM MAYRIT

When the Muslim army of Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the Straits of Gibraltar in the 8th century, it sparked an upheaval that would convulse the Iberian Peninsula for more than 700 years. In 756 the emirate of Córdoba was established in the south in what the Muslims called Al-Andalus. The soldiers and administrators of Córdoba, which became a beacon of religious tolerance and enlightened civilisation, would cover much of the peninsula until the beginning of the 9th century.

As Iberia's Christians began the Reconquista (Reconquest) – the centuries-long campaign by Christian forces to reclaim the peninsula – the Muslims of Al-Andalus constructed a chain of fortified positions through the heart of Iberia. One of these forts was built by Muhammad I, emir of Córdoba, in 854, on the site of what would become Madrid. They called the new

TIMELINE

1st–5th centuries AD	854	End 9th century	Around 1070	1083	1110
The Roman Empire subduces the Celtiberian tribes. The Roman road that connects Mérida with the Toledo (Toletum), Segovia, Alcalá de Henares and Zaragoza (Cesaraugusta) runs close to Madrid.	Muhammad I, emir of Córdoba, establishes the fortress of Mayrit (Magerit), one of many across the so-called Middle March, a frontier land connecting Al-Andalus with the small Christian kingdoms of the north.	Muhammad I orders the construction of a wall that ran along the ridgeline, enclosed the current Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Almudena and what is now the Plaza de Oriente.	Madrid's patron saint, San Isidro Labrador, is born among the small community of Christians clustered around the Iglesia de San Andrés (where he was buried after his death in 1130) in Muslim Mayrit.	Mayrit passes into the hands of King Alfonso VI of Castile without a fight, ending Muslim rule over Mayrit, in return for the king's assistance in capturing Valencia.	Almoravid Muslims attack Madrid in an attempt to wrest the city back from Christian rule. They succeed in destroying Madrid's walls, but are unable to seize the Alcázar before being driven back.

top picks

MADRID HISTORY BOOKS

- **Madrid** (Elizabeth Nash; 2001) An informative, entertaining and joyfully written account of various aspects of the city's past and present.
- **A Traveller's Companion to Madrid** (Hugh Thomas; 2005) A fascinating compendium of extracts about Madrid from the great and good.
- **The New Spaniards** (John Hooper; 2nd edition 2006) A highly readable account of the Franco years and the country's transition to democracy with Madrid taking centre stage.
- **Hidden Madrid: A Walking Guide** (Mark and Peter Besas; 2007) A quirky collection of anecdotes and curiosities about historical Madrid.
- **Historia de la Villa de Madrid** (José Antonio Vizcaino; 2000) You'll need decent Spanish to enjoy this one, but there's no more comprehensive history of Spain's capital.
- **Atlas Ilustrado de la Historia de Madrid** (Pedro López Carcelén; 2004) Charts Madrid's growth into a modern metropolis using historical maps and clear, Spanish text.

settlement Mayrit (or Magerit), which comes from the Arabic word *majira*, meaning water channel. At first, Mayrit was merely one of a string of such forts across the so-called Middle March, a frontier land between Al-Andalus in the south and small Christian kingdoms of the north. As the Reconquista gathered strength, forts such as Mayrit grew in significance as part of a defensive line against Christian incursion.

With Christian forces massing to the north, Mayrit was small and vulnerable. Its hilltop location made it virtually impregnable from the north, west and south, but Mayrit lacked natural fortifications to the east. Recognising this, Muhammad I constructed a defensive wall within whose boundaries only Muslims could live; Mayrit's small Christian community lived outside, near what is now the Iglesia de San Andrés (p75). Wander down to the last remaining fragment of the Muralla Árabe (Arab Wall; p68), below the modern Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Almudena (p68), and you can still get a sense of this isolated settlement surrounded by sweeping plains.

Above the more than 190 turrets, the imposing towers of the fort or *alcázar* (from the Arabic *al-qasr*) were visible where the Palacio Real now stands. Crouching beneath the

walls was a tangle of lanes known as the *al-mudayna* (hence Almudena) in which soldiers lived with their families. It was a pattern that would be repeated over the centuries, with Madrid dominated by two mutually dependent communities who lived alongside but world's apart – the rulers in their castle and the ordinary people in small, squalid houses nearby.

Mayrit's strategic location in the centre of the peninsula drew an increasing number of soldiers and traders. To accommodate the many newcomers, Mayrit grew into a town. The main mosque was built on what is now the corner of Calle Mayor and Calle de Bailén, although only the smallest fragment remains (see p68). Muslim Mayrit survived through agriculture (irrigated by water) and produced its own pottery and ceramics.

For all its growth and attempts at fortifications, Mayrit was dispensable to its far-off Muslim rulers. When the emirate of Córdoba broke up into a series of smaller Muslim kingdoms called *taifas* in 1008, Mayrit was attached to Toledo. As the armies of Muslim and Christian Spain battled for supremacy elsewhere, Mayrit was not considered one of the great prizes and ultimately passed into Christian hands without a fight. In 1083 Toledo's ruler gave Mayrit to King Alfonso VI of Castile during a period of rare Muslim-Christian entente.

BEAR NECESSITIES

Madrid's emblem – a bear nuzzling a *madroño*, or strawberry tree (so named because its fruit looks like strawberries), framed by seven five-point stars and topped by a crown – may be one of the most photographed corners of the Plaza de la Puerta del Sol (p68). But its origins remain something of a mystery, even to most madrileños.

When Alfonso VI accepted Mayrit from the Muslims in 1085, it was seen as an example of things to come for Christian forces hoping to sweep across Spain from the north. Taking the theme further, a group of seven stars that lies close to the North Star in the northern hemisphere forms a shape known as the *Ursa Minor*, or small she-bear. Thus the bear (once a common sight in the El Pardo area north of the city) and seven stars came to symbolise Madrid. The five points of the stars later came to represent the five provinces that surround Madrid (Segovia, Ávila, Toledo, Cuenca and Guadalajara).

The crown above the frame dates from the 16th century when Carlos I allowed Madrid to use the symbol of the imperial crown in its coat of arms after he cured a fever using *madroño* leaves (a popular medicinal herb).

This coat of arms appears on a deep-violet background to form the city's flag and adorns such important Madrid icons as the shirts of Atlético de Madrid football club (but not Real Madrid's).

A MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN OUTPOST

Madrid never again passed into Muslim hands, although the city was often besieged by Muslim forces. As the frontline gradually pushed south, Christian veterans from the Reconquista and clerics and their orders flooded into Madrid and forever changed the city's character. A small Muslim community remained and south of what is now Calle de Segovia (then a stream), in the Vistillas area, emerged the busiest of the *arrabales* (suburbs beyond the city walls). To this day the warren of streets around Vistillas (p75) is known as the *morería* – the Moorish quarter. Nearby, the Plaza de la Paja was the site of the city's main market. By the end of the 13th century, a new city wall, bordered by what are now Calle Arenal, Cava de San Miguel, Calle de la Cava Baja, Plaza de la Puerta de Moros and Calle de Bailén, was built. To give you some idea of the scale of Madrid at this time, remember that where the Plaza Mayor (p61), Plaza de España (p70) and the Plaza de la Puerta del Sol (p68) all stand then lay beyond the walls.

Madrid may have been growing, but its power was negligible. Ruled by less-than-interested and usually distant rulers, the city existed in the shadow of the more established cities of Segovia and Toledo. Whereas other Castilian cities received generous *fueros* (self-rule ordinances), Madrid had to content itself with occasional, offhand royal decrees. Left largely to their own devices, a small number of local families set about governing themselves, forming Madrid's first town council, the Consejo de Madrid. The travelling Cortes (royal court and parliament) sat in Madrid for the first time in 1309. This first sign of royal favour was followed by others – Madrid (or rather the *alcázar*) was an increasingly popular residence with the Castilian monarchs, particularly Enrique IV. They found it a relaxing base from which to set off on hunting expeditions, especially for bears in the El Pardo district.

Whereas Madrid had once been susceptible to military conquest, it now succumbed to an altogether different threat, this time from poverty, isolation from power and terrible living conditions. In 1348 the horrors of the Black Death struck, devastating the population. In the same year the Castilian king began to tire of Madrid's growing independence and appointed *regidores* (governors) of Madrid and other cities in an attempt to tighten central control. Allying themselves with the royal family, a handful of families began to monopolise local power, ruling

as petty oligarchs through a feudal system of government, the Comunidad de Villa y Tierra, in which the *villa* (town) lorded it over the peasants who worked the surrounding *tierra* (land).

Despite growing evidence of royal attention, medieval Madrid remained dirt-poor and small-scale. As one 15th-century writer observed, 'in Madrid there is nothing except what you bring with you'. It simply bore no comparison with other major Spanish, let alone European, cities.

Beyond the small-world confines of Madrid, however, Spain was being convulsed by great events that would ultimately transform Madrid's fortunes. The marriage of Isabel and Fernando united Christian Spain for the first time. Together they expelled the last of the Muslim rulers from Granada, financed Christopher Columbus' voyages of American discovery and ordered the expulsion of Jews who would not convert to Christianity from Spain – all in 1492.

Carlos I, the grandson of Isabel and Fernando, became the King of Spain in 1516. Three years later he succeeded to the Habsburg throne and so became Carlos V, Holy Roman Emperor. His territories stretched from Austria to the Netherlands and from Spain to the American colonies, but with such a vast territory to administer, he spent only 16 years of his 40-year reign in Spain. The Spanish nobility were not amused and rose up in what came to be known as the rising of the *Comuneros*. In March 1520 Toledo rebelled and Madrid quickly followed suit. Carlos and his forces prevailed, whereupon he retaliated by concentrating ever-more power in his own hands.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

By the time that Carlos' son and successor, Felipe II, ascended the Spanish throne in 1556, Madrid was surrounded by walls that boasted 130 towers and six stone gates. Although it sounds impressive, these fortifications were largely built of mud and were designed more to impress than provide any meaningful defence of the city.

Such modest claims to significance notwithstanding, Madrid was chosen by Felipe II as the capital of Spain in 1561.

Suddenly thrust into the spotlight, Madrid took considerable time to grow into its new role. Felipe II was more concerned with the business of empire and building his monastic retreat at San Lorenzo de El Escorial (p252) than in developing Madrid. Despite a handful of elegant churches, the imposing *alcázar* and a smattering of noble residences, Madrid consisted, for the most part, of precarious, whitewashed houses that were little more than mud huts. They lined chaotic, ill-defined and largely unpaved lanes and alleys. The monumental Paseo del Prado, which now provides Madrid with so much of its grandeur, was nothing more than a small creek. Even so, Madrid went from having just 2000 homes in 1563 to more than 7000 just 40 years later as opportunists and impoverished rural migrants, would-be princes and fortune-seekers flocked to the city hoping for a share of the glamour and wealth that came from being close to royalty.

With more ostentatiousness than class, Madrid's indolent royal court retreated from reality and embarked on an era of decadence. Amid the squalor in which the bulk of Madrid's people toiled, royalty and the aristocracy gave themselves over to sickening displays of wealth and cavorted happily in their make-believe world of royal splendour. The sumptuous Palacio del Buen Retiro was completed in 1630 and replaced the *alcázar* as the prime royal residence (the former Museo del Ejército building and Casón del Buen Retiro (p99) are all that remain). Countless grand churches, convents and mansions were also built and, thanks to royal patronage,

1222

Madrid's emblem of seven stars and a bear nuzzling a *madroño* (strawberry tree) appears for the first time in historical records.

1309

The Cortes (royal court and parliament) sits for the first time in Madrid. During the sitting, the royals declare war on Granada; the demands of the Reconquista ensure that the royal court often travel throughout Spain.

1348

The Black Death sweeps across Spain, killing King Alfonso XI and countless numbers of his compatriots. Estimates suggest that the plague kills anywhere between 20% and 50% of Madrid's population.

1426

In the midst of a devastating drought, devout madrileños take the body of San Isidro, Madrid's patron saint, out onto the streets, whereupon it begins to rain.

1479–81

Isabel, Queen of Castile, marries Fernando, King of Aragón; the two become the Catholic monarchs of Spain. An edict by Madrid's authorities turns Muslims into second-class citizens, forcing them to wear signs identifying their religion alongside other indignities.

1492

The last Muslim rulers of Al-Andalus are defeated by Christian armies in Granada, uniting the peninsula for the first time in seven centuries.

A CAPITAL CHOICE

When Felipe II decided to make Madrid Spain's capital in 1561, you could almost hear the collective gasp of disbelief from Spain's great and good, few of whom lived in Madrid. Madrid was home to just 30,000 people, whereas Toledo and Seville each boasted more than 80,000. Even Valladolid, the capital of choice for Isabel and Fernando, had 50,000 inhabitants. What's more, in the 250 years since 1309, Madrid had hosted Spain's travelling road show of royalty just 10 times, far less than Spain's other large cities.

Madrid's apparent obscurity may, however, explain precisely why Felipe II chose it as the permanent seat of his court. Valladolid was considered to be of questionable loyalty. Toledo, which like Madrid stands close to the geographical heart of Spain, was known for its opinionated nobles and powerful clergy who had shown an annoying tendency to oppose the king's whims and wishes. In contrast, more than one king had described Madrid as 'very noble and very loyal'. By choosing Madrid Felipe II was choosing the path of least resistance. Felipe II also wanted the capital to be 'a city fulfilling the function of a heart located in the middle of the body'.

The decision saved Madrid from a life of provincial obscurity. This was most evident in 1601 when Felipe III, tired of Madrid, moved the court to Valladolid. Within five years, the population of Madrid halved. The move was so unpopular that the king, realising the error of his ways, returned to Madrid. '*Sólo Madrid es corte*' (roughly, 'Only Madrid can be home to the court') became the catchcry and thus it has been ever since.

this was the golden age of art in Spain (see p38). Velázquez, El Greco, José de Ribera, Zurbarán, Murillo and Coello were all active in Madrid in the 17th century. For the first time, Madrid began to take on the aspect of a city.

But for all its newfound wealth and status, Madrid suffered several handicaps compared with more illustrious capitals elsewhere in Europe: it was bereft of a navigable river, port, decent road links or the slightest hint of entrepreneurial spirit; agricultural land around the town was poor; and the immense wealth from the Americas was squandered on wars and on indulging the court. Madrid was, in fact, little more than a large grubby leech, bleeding the surrounding provinces and colonies dry.

By the middle of the 17th century Madrid had completely outgrown its capacity to cope: it was home to 175,000 people, making it the fifth-largest city in Europe. But if you took away the court, the city amounted to nothing and when Pedro Texeiro drew the first map of the city in 1656, the place was still largely a cesspit of narrow, squalid lanes.

THE BOURBONS LEAVE THEIR MARK

Such was the extent of Spain's colonial reach that events in Madrid could still alter the course of European history. After King Carlos II died in 1700 without leaving an heir, the 12-year War of the Spanish Succession convulsed Europe. While Europe squabbled over the Spanish colonial carcass, Felipe V (grandson of Louis XIV of France and Maria Teresa, a daughter of Felipe IV) ascended the throne. He may have founded the Bourbon dynasty, which remains at the head of the Spanish state today, but he also presided over the loss of most of Spain's European territories and was left with just Spain and a handful of colonial territories over which to rule.

Thankfully Felipe proved more adept at nation-building than military strategy. His centralisation of state control and attempts at land reform are viewed by some historians as the first steps in making Spain a modern European nation, and the former clearly cemented Madrid's claims

MADRID BEYOND THE ROYAL COURT

Travellers to Madrid in the 16th and 17th century found occasional beauty in the brick buildings with balconies of wrought iron, but the lasting impression was of streets 'which would be beautiful if it were not for the mud and filth'. The houses, such chroniclers wrote, were 'bad and ugly and almost all made of mud'. In the absence of a functioning government that took the needs of its citizens seriously, rubbish and human excrement were thrown from the balconies, 'a thing which afterwards creates an insupportable odour'. Undaunted by the squalor of the streets, madrileños had already begun a tradition that endures to this day, as one British traveller observed: 'In the evening, the people of Madrid go out to stroll and promenade and you see nothing more than a series of carriages.' Largely abandoned to their fate by their rulers, madrileños learned how to circumvent the often onerous decrees emanating from the royal court. When, in the 17th century, all home owners were ordered to reserve the second-storey of their homes for government bureaucrats and clergy newly arrived in the city, madrileños instead built homes with just a single-storey façade at street level, building additional storeys out the back, away from prying government eyes.

to being Spain's pre-eminent city. He preferred to live outside the noisy and filthy capital, but when in 1734 the *alcázar* was destroyed in a fire, the king laid down plans for a magnificent new Palacio Real (Royal Palace) to take its place.

His immediate successors, especially Carlos III (r 1759–88), also gave Madrid and Spain a period of comparatively common-sense governance. Carlos (with the big nose – his equestrian statue dominates the Puerta del Sol) came to be known as the best 'mayor' Madrid had ever had. By introducing Madrid's first programme of sanitation and public hygiene, he cleaned up a city that was, by all accounts, the filthiest in Europe. He was so successful that, near the end of Carlos III's reign, France's ambassador in Madrid described the city as one of the cleanest capitals in Europe. Mindful of his legacy, Carlos III also completed the Palacio Real (p67), inaugurated the Real Jardín Botánico (Royal Botanical Gardens; p96) and carried out numerous other public works. His stamp upon Madrid's essential character was also evident in his sponsorship of local and foreign artists, among them Goya and Tiepolo. Carlos III also embarked on a major road-building programme.

By the time Carlos III died in 1788, Madrid was in better shape than ever, even if Spain remained, despite all the improvements, an essentially poor country with a big-spending royal court.

NAPOLEON & EL DOS DE MAYO

Within a year of Carlos III's death Europe was again in uproar, this time as the French Revolution threatened to sweep away the old order of privileged royals and inherited nobility. Through the machinations of Carlos IV, the successor to Carlos III, and his self-seeking minister, Manuel Godoy, Spain incurred the wrath of both the French and the British. The consequences were devastating. First, Nelson crushed the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Next, Napoleon convinced a gullible Godoy to let French troops enter Spain on the pretext of a joint attack on Portugal, whereby General Murat's French detachment took control of Madrid, easily defeating General Tomás de Morla's bands of hearty but unruly armed citizenry. By 1808 the French presence had become an occupation and Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte, was crowned king of Spain.

1520

Madrid joins Toledo in the rebellion of the Comuneros against Carlos I, a disastrous decision that prompts the victorious king to rein in Madrid's growing independence.

1561

Against all the odds, Felipe II establishes his permanent court at Madrid which was, in Felipe II's words, 'a city fulfilling the function of a heart located in the middle of the body'.

1601

Felipe III moves Spain's capital to Valladolid, but popular discontent convinces him of the error of his ways and the royal court returns to Madrid. It is the last serious challenge to Madrid's position as capital.

1622

Seville-born Diego Rodríguez de Silva Velázquez moves to Madrid, takes up a position as a painter in the royal court and becomes synonymous with the golden age of Spanish art.

Mid-17th century

Madrid's population swells to 175,000 people, up from just 30,000 a century before. Only London, Paris, Constantinople and Naples can boast larger populations in Europe.

1702

Felipe V is crowned king, beginning the Bourbon dynasty that still rules Spain and, save for four decades of the 20th century, has done so from Madrid.

Madrid did not take kindly to foreign rule and, on the morning of 2 May 1808 madrileños, showing more courage than their leaders, attacked French troops around the Palacio Real and what is now Plaza Dos de Mayo in Malasaña. Murat moved quickly and by the end of the day the rebels were defeated. Goya's masterpieces, *El Dos de Mayo* and *El Tres de Mayo*, on display in the Museo del Prado (p90), poignantly evoke the hope and anguish of the ill-fated rebellion.

Although reviled by much of Madrid's population, Joseph Bonaparte's contribution to Madrid in five short years should not be underestimated. Working hard to win popular support, Bonaparte staged numerous free *espectáculos* – bullfights, festivals of food and drink, and religious processions. He also transformed Madrid with a host of measures necessary in a city that had grown up without any discernible sense of town planning. These measures included the destruction of various churches and convents to create public squares (such as the Plaza de Oriente (p63), Plaza de Santa Ana (p86), Plaza de San Miguel, Plaza de Santa Bárbara, Plaza de Tirso de Molina and Plaza de Callao) and widening streets. He also conceived the viaduct that still spans Calle de Segovia (p75). Under Bonaparte sanitation was also improved and cemeteries were moved to the outskirts of the city.

But madrileños never forgave Bonaparte his foreign origins and the brutality with which he suppressed uprisings against his rule, mocking his yearning for legitimacy by calling him names that included the Cucumber King, Pepe Botella and King of the Small Squares. Perhaps their scepticism of foreign rule lay in the undeniable fact that life for madrileños was as difficult as ever.

The French were finally evicted from Spanish territory in 1813 as a result of the Guerra de la Independencia (War of Independence, or Peninsular War). But when the autocratic King Fernando VII returned in 1814, Spain was in disarray and, at one point, French troops even marched back into Spain to prop him up. Though Fernando was not given to frequent bouts of enlightenment, two of his projects would stand the test of time – he opened the renewed Parque del Buen Retiro (p98), which had been largely destroyed during the war, to the public and founded an art gallery in the Prado (p90). When he died in 1833 Fernando left Spain with little more than a three-year-old daughter to rule over them, a recipe for civil war, and an economy in tatters.

CAPITAL OF A COUNTRY DIVIDED

Isabel II, a toddler, was obviously not up to running the country, and power passed into the hands of her mother, María Cristina, who ruled as regent. Fernando's brother, Don Carlos, and his conservative supporters disputed Isabel's right to the throne, so María Cristina turned to the liberals for help, prompting what's known as the Carlist Wars. Throughout this period political upheaval remained part of Madrid's daily diet, characterised by alternating coups by conservative and liberal wings of the army. Madrileños must have rued the day their city became capital of this deeply fragmented country.

Apart from anything else, Madrid was incredibly backward. A discernible middle class only began to make a timid appearance from the 1830s. It was aided when the government ordered the *desamortización* (disentailment) of Church property in 1837. A speculative building boom ensued – if you've lived in Madrid since the late 1990s, you'll see that history has a habit of repeating itself – and its beneficiaries constituted the emerging entrepreneurial class. Indeed most historians agree that it was in the second half of the 19th century that Madrid's ordinary inhabitants finally began to emerge from the shadow of royalty and powerful clergy and play a defining role in the future of their city.

Nonetheless, for 25 years after Isabel began to rule in her own right in 1843, Madrid was awash with coups, riots and general discontent. It is therefore remarkable that amid the chaos the city's rulers laid the foundations for modern Madrid's infrastructure. In 1851 the city's first railway line, operating between Madrid and Aranjuez, opened. Seven years later the Canal de Isabel II, which still supplies the city with water from the Sierra de Guadarrama, was inaugurated. Street paving, the sewage system and rubbish collection were improved, and gas lighting was introduced. More importantly, foreign (mostly French) capital was beginning to fill the investment vacuum.

Signs that Madrid was finally becoming a national capital worthy of the name also began to appear. In the years that followed, a national road network radiating from the capital was built and public works, ranging from the reorganisation of the Puerta del Sol to the building of the Teatro Real (p213), Biblioteca Nacional (p105) and Congreso de los Diputados (lower house of parliament), were carried out.

In the 1860s the first timid moves to create an Ensanche, or extension of the city, were undertaken. The initial spurt of building took place around Calle de Serrano, where the enterprising Marqués de Salamanca bought up land and built high-class housing. Poor old Salamanca – it was only after he died that Salamanca became one of Madrid's most exclusive barrios (neighbourhoods); see the boxed text, p105.

In 1873 Spain was declared a republic, but the army soon intervened to restore the Bourbon monarchy. Alfonso XII, Isabel's son, assumed power. In the period of relative tranquillity that ensued, the expansion of the Ensanche gathered momentum, the city's big train stations were constructed and the foundation stones of a cathedral were laid. Another kind of 'cathedral', the Banco de España, was completed and opened its doors in 1891. By 1898 the first city tramlines were electrified and in 1910 work began on the Gran Vía. Nine years later the first metro line started operation.

The 1920s were a period of frenzied activity, not just in urban construction but in intellectual life. As many as 20 newspapers circulated on the streets of Madrid and writers and artists (including Lorca, Dalí and Buñuel) converged on the capital, which hopped to the sounds of American jazz and whose grand cafés resounded with the clamour of *tertulias* (literary discussions). The '20s roared as much in Madrid as elsewhere in Europe.

However, dark clouds were gathering against this backdrop of a culturally burgeoning city.

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

In 1923 the captain-general of Catalonia and soon-to-be dictator, General Miguel Primo de Rivera, seized power and held it until Alfonso XIII had him removed in 1930. Madrid erupted in joyful celebration, but it would prove to be a false dawn. By now, the Spanish capital, home to more than one million people, had become the seething centre of Spain's increasingly radical politics and the rise of the socialists in Madrid, and anarchists in Barcelona and Andalucía, sharpened tensions throughout the country.

Municipal elections in Madrid in April 1931 brought a coalition of republicans and socialists to power. Three days later a second republic was proclaimed and Alfonso XIII fled. The republican government opened up the Casa de Campo – until then a private royal playground – to the public and passed numerous reformist laws, but divisions within the government enabled a right-wing coalition to assume power in 1933. Again the pendulum swung and in

1734

The most enduring symbol of medieval Madrid, the *alcázar*, which had stood since the early days of the Muslim occupation, is destroyed by fire. Plans begin almost immediately for a lavish royal palace to take its place.

1759–88

Carlos III, King of Spain and patron of Madrid, cleans up the city, lays out the Parque del Buen Retiro and sponsors Goya, transforming Madrid from a squalid provincial city into a sophisticated European capital.

1808

Napoleon's troops under General Murat march into Madrid and Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother, is crowned King of Spain, but only after Madrid's citizen-defenders bravely rose up in vain to protest against foreign rule.

1812

Thirty thousand madrileños die from hunger caused by fighting against the French in the lead-up to the Guerra de la Independencia (War of Independence). The French were expelled from Spanish soil a year later.

1819

Fernando VII opens the Museo del Prado with 311 Spanish paintings.

1833

King Fernando VII dies, leaving three-year-old Isabel II as heir-apparent and Spain descends into the Carlist civil wars, devastating Madrid in the process.

February 1936 the left-wing Frente Popular (Popular Front) barely defeated the right's Frente Nacional (National Front) to power. General Francisco Franco was exiled, supposedly out of harm's way, to the Canary Islands, but with the army supporting the right-wing parties and the extreme left clamouring for revolution, the stage was set for a showdown. In July 1936 garrisons in North Africa revolted, quickly followed by others on the mainland. The Spanish Civil War had begun.

Having stopped Franco's nationalist troops advancing from the north, Madrid found itself in the sights of Franco's forces moving up from the south. Take Madrid, Franco reasoned, and Spain would be his. By early November 1936 Franco was in the Casa de Campo. The republican government escaped to Valencia, but the resolve of the city's defenders, a mix of hastily assembled and poorly trained recruits, sympathisers from the ranks of the army and air force, the International Brigades and Soviet advisers, held firm. Madrid became an international cause célèbre, drawing luminaries as diverse as Ernest Hemingway and Willy Brandt in defence of the city. For all the fame of the brigades, the fact remains, however, that of the 40,000 soldiers and irregulars defending Madrid, more than 90% were Spaniards.

Madrid's defenders held off a fierce nationalist assault in November 1936, with the fighting heaviest in the northwest of the city, around Argüelles and the Ciudad Universitaria. The Francoist general Emilio Mola assured a British journalist that he would soon take Madrid with his four columns of soldiers (20,000 in all) massed on the city's outskirts and with the help of his 'fifth column', a phrase that has since remained in the popular lexicon and referred to Franco's right-wing sympathisers in Madrid. But Mola's predictions came to nothing. Soldiers loyal to Franco inside Madrid were overpowered by local militias and 20,000 Franco supporters sought protection inside the walls of foreign embassies. Faced with republican intransigence – symbolised by the catchphrase 'No pasarán!' ('They shall not pass!') coined by the Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri – Franco besieged Madrid, bombarded the city from the air and waited for the capital to surrender. It didn't.

German bombers strafed Madrid, one of the first such campaigns of its kind in the history of warfare, although the Salamanca district was spared, allegedly because it was home to a high proportion of Franco supporters. The Museo del Prado was not so fortunate and most of its paintings were evacuated to Valencia. Hundreds of civilians were killed, although as many as 10,000 died in the Battle of Madrid, and Franco's approach was summed up by his promise that 'I will destroy Madrid rather than leave it to the Marxists'.

Encircled on all sides and with much of Spain falling to Franco's forces, madrileños lived a bizarre reality. People went about their daily business, caught the metro to work and got on with things as best they could. Like Londoners during the Blitz, madrileños who lived through the siege talk of the parallel realities of life in Madrid: the fear and the camaraderie of the bomb shelters, the mundane normalcy of daily life even as the bombs rained down. All the while, skirmishes continued around Argüelles and nationalist artillery intermittently shelled the city, particularly Gran Vía (nicknamed 'Howitzer Alley'), from the Casa de Campo. To maintain a minimum of functioning infrastructure, some of the city's vital industries were moved into disused metro tunnels.

By 1938 Madrid was in a state of near famine, with clothes and ammunition in equally short supply. As republican strongholds fell elsewhere across Spain, Madrid's republican defenders were divided over whether to continue the resistance. After a brief internal power struggle, those favouring negotiations won. On 28 March 1939 an exhausted Madrid finally surrendered.

FRANCO'S MADRID

A deathly silence fell over the city as the new dictator made himself at home. Mindful that he was occupying a city that had hardly welcomed him with open arms, Franco considered shifting the capital south to the more amenable Seville. As if to punish Madrid for its resistance, he opted instead to remake Madrid in his own image and transform the city into a capital worthy of its new master. Franco and his right-wing Falangist Party maintained a heavy-handed repression, and Madrid in the early 1940s was impoverished and battle scarred, a 'city of a million cadavers', according to one observer.

In the Francoist propaganda of the day, the 1940s and 1950s were the years of *autarquía* (economic self-reliance, largely induced by Spain's international isolation after the end of WWII). For most Spaniards, however, these were the *años de hambre* (the years of hunger). Only in 1955 did the average wage again reach the levels of 1934. Throughout the 1940s, tens of thousands of suspected republican sympathisers were harassed, imprisoned, tortured and shot. Thousands of political prisoners were shipped off to Nazi concentration camps. Many who remained were put to work in deplorable conditions, most notably to construct the grandiose folly of Franco's Valle de los Caídos (p253) monument northwest of Madrid.

The dire state of the Spanish economy forced hundreds of thousands of starving *campesinos* (peasants) to flock to Madrid, increasing the already enormous pressure for housing. Most contented themselves with erecting *chabolas* (shanty towns) in the increasingly ugly satellite suburbs that began to ring the city.

By the early 1960s the so-called *años de desarrollo* (years of development) industry was taking off in and around Madrid. Foreign investment poured in and the services and banking sector blossomed. Factories of the American Chrysler motor company were Madrid's single biggest employers in the 1960s. In 1960 fewer than 70,000 cars were on the road in Madrid. Ten years later more than half a million clogged the capital's streets.

For all the signs of development in Madrid, Franco was never popular in his own capital and an increased standard of living did little to diminish madrileños' disdain for a man who held the capital in an iron grip. From 1965 opposition to Franco's regime became steadily more vocal. The universities were repeatedly the scene of confrontation and clandestine trade unions, such as Comisiones Obreras (CCOO; Workers' Commissions) and the outlawed Union General de Trabajadores (UGT; General Workers' Union), also began to make themselves heard again.

The waves of protest were not restricted to Madrid. In the Basque Country the terrorist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA; Basque Homeland and Freedom) began to fight for Basque independence. Their first important action outside the Basque Country was the assassination in Madrid in 1973 of Admiral Carrero Blanco, Franco's prime minister and designated successor.

Franco fell ill in 1974 and died on 20 November 1975.

THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

After the initial shock caused by the death of Franco, who had cast a shadow over Spain for almost four decades, Spaniards began to reclaim their country and Madrid took centre stage.

The Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE; Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), Partido Comunista de España (PCE; Spanish Communist Party), trade unions and a wide range of opposition figures emerged from hiding and exile. Franco's trusted advisors remained in control

1846

The French writer Alexandre Dumas visits Madrid, which he describes as 'a city of miracles. I have a terrible desire to become a naturalised Spaniard and live in Madrid.'

1860

Even as Madrid's economy begins to shift away from the chasm that separated royalty and riff-raff, one-quarter of Madrid's working populace is still employed to serve in aristocratic households.

1873

Spain's first, short-lived republic is declared, although the Bourbon monarchy soon returns to power in Madrid's Palacio Real with help from the army.

1881

The Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE; Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) is founded in a back room of Casa Labra, still one of Madrid's most prestigious tapas bars.

1898

Spain loses its remaining colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines to the USA.

1919

Madrid's first metro line starts running, crossing the city from north to south, with eight stations and a total length of 3.5km.

of both parliament and the armed forces but had neither the authority nor charisma necessary to hold back the tide of liberal optimism sweeping the country.

King Juan Carlos I, of the Bourbon family that had left the Spanish political stage with the flight of Alfonso XIII in 1931, had been groomed as head of state by Franco. But the king founded the sceptics by entrusting Adolfo Suárez, a former moderate Francoist with whom he had long been in secret contact, with government in July 1976. With the king's approval Suárez quickly rammed a raft of changes through parliament while Franco loyalists and generals, suddenly rudderless without their leader, struggled to regroup.

Suárez and his centre-right coalition won elections in 1977 and set about writing a new constitution in collaboration with the now-legal opposition. It provided for a parliamentary monarchy with no state religion and guaranteed a large degree of devolution to the 17 regions (including the Comunidad de Madrid) into which the country was now divided.

Spaniards got the fright of their lives in February 1981 when a pistol-brandishing, low-ranking Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) officer, Antonio Tejero Molina, marched into the Cortes in Madrid with an armed detachment and held parliament captive for 24 hours. Throughout a day of high drama the country held its breath as Spaniards waited to see whether Spain would be thrust back into the dark days of dictatorship or whether the fledgling democracy would prevail. With the nation glued to their TV sets, King Juan Carlos I made a live broadcast denouncing Tejero and calling on the soldiers to return to their barracks. The coup fizzled out.

A year later Felipe González' PSOE won national elections. Spain's economic problems were legion – incomes were on a par with those of Iraq, ETA terrorism was claiming dozens of lives every year and unemployment was above 20%. But one thing that Spaniards had in abundance was optimism and when, in 1986, Spain joined the European Community (EC), as it was then called, the country had well and truly returned to the fold of modern European nations.

LA MOVIDA MADRILEÑA

Madrid's spirits could not be dampened and, with grand events taking place on the national stage, the city had become one of the most exciting places on earth. What London was to the swinging '60s and Paris to 1968, Madrid was to the 1980s. After the long, dark years of dictatorship and conservative Catholicism, Spaniards, especially madrileños, emerged onto the streets with all the zeal of ex-convent schoolgirls. Nothing was taboo in a phenomenon known as '*la movida madrileña*' (the Madrid scene) as young madrileños discovered the '60s, '70s and early '80s all at once. Drinking, drugs and sex suddenly were OK. All night partying was the norm, drug taking in public was not a criminal offence (that changed in 1992) and the city howled. All across the city, summer terraces roared to the chattering, drinking, carousing crowds and young people from all over Europe flocked here to take part in the revelry.

What was remarkable about *la movida* is that it was presided over by Enrique Tierno Galván, an ageing former university professor who had been a leading opposition figure under Franco and was affectionately known throughout Spain as 'the old teacher'. A Socialist, he became mayor in 1979 and, for many, launched *la movida* by telling a public gathering '*a colocarse y ponerse al loro*', which loosely translates as 'get stoned and do what's cool'. Unsurprisingly he was Madrid's most popular mayor ever and when he died in 1986 a million madrileños turned out for his funeral.

EYEWITNESS TO LA MOVIDA MADRILEÑA *Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, fashion designer*

Madrid during *la movida* was, for me, something marvellous because it coincided with my 20s and it was then that I started my first job. And so I arrived at work and thought, 'How much fun it is to work!' Imagine that you get to your first job and you are in the heart of *la movida*. At the time, I thought that was normal.

And the people who were very clever during *la movida* are still very clever, like Pedro Almodóvar and Alaska. Alaska was only 12 years old, but she was a spectacularly clever young woman. She was 12 years old but seemed like she was 40.

And then there was a time that was quite sad, at the end of *la movida*, when lots of people died from drugs. In the middle of the 1980s HIV was running wild and we were all very afraid. They were very black years, very sad, but I remember *la movida* as a wonderful thing, both for me and for Madrid. It was a moment during which there was so much freedom.

As told to Anthony Ham

But *la movida* was not just about rediscovering the Spanish art of *salir de copas* (going out for a drink). It was also accompanied by an explosion of creativity among the country's musicians, designers and film-makers keen to shake off the shackles of the repressive Franco years. The most famous of these was film director Pedro Almodóvar (see the boxed text, p42). Still one of Europe's most creative directors, his riotously colourful films captured the spirit of *la movida*, featuring larger-than-life characters who pushed the limits of sex and drugs. Although his later films became internationally renowned, his first film, *Pepi, Luci, Bom y Otras Chicas del Montón* (Pepi, Luci, Bom and the Other Girls), released in 1980, is where the spirit of the movement really comes alive. When he wasn't making films, Almodóvar immersed himself in the spirit of *la movida*, doing drag acts in smoky bars that people-in-the-know would frequent.

Among the other names from *la movida* that still resonate, the designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada (see the boxed text, above) stands out. Also, start playing anything by Alaska. Los Rebeldes, Radio Futura or Nacha Pop and watch madrileños' eyes glaze over with nostalgia.

What happened to *la movida*? Many say that it died in 1991 with the election of the conservative Popular Party's José María Álvarez del Manzano as mayor. In the following years rolling spliffs in public became increasingly dangerous and creeping clamps (ie closing hours) were imposed on the almost lawless bars. Pedro Almodóvar was even heard to say that Madrid had become 'as boring as Oslo'. Things have indeed quietened down a little, but you'll only notice if you were here during the 1980s. If only all cities were this 'boring'.

MADRID SOBERS UP

Madrid is not a city that shifts its loyalties easily. After 12 years of Socialist rule, Madrid's political landscape fundamentally changed in 1991 with the election of its first democratically elected conservative mayor, José María Álvarez del Manzano of the Popular Party (PP), who earned the dubious distinction of bringing an end to the hedonistic Madrid of the 1980s. Álvarez del Manzano, who remained in power until 2003, became known as 'The Tunnelator' for beginning the ongoing mania of Madrid governments for semipermanent roadworks and large-scale infrastructure projects. His party remains in power to this day.

1920s

Madrid enjoys a cultural revival with Salvador Dalí, Federico García Lorca and Luis Buñuel bringing both high culture and mayhem to a city in love with jazz and *tertulias* (literary discussions).

1931

After a period of right-wing dictatorship, Spain's Second Republic is proclaimed and King Alfonso XIII flees, leaving Spain in political turmoil and planting the seeds for civil war.

1936–39

The Spanish Civil War breaks out. Nationalist forces bombard Madrid from the air and with artillery from the Casa de Campo and besiege the city for three years, before the exhausted city surrenders on 28 March 1939.

1960s

After two decades of extreme economic hardship, the decade became known as the *años de desarrollo* (years of development) with investment and rural immigrants flooding into Madrid, even as opposition to Franco's rule begins to grow.

1973

Admiral Carrero Blanco, Franco's prime minister and designated successor, is assassinated by ETA in a car bomb attack in Madrid's Salamanca district after the admiral left Mass at the Iglesia de San Francisco de Borgia.

1975–78

Franco dies in Madrid in his bed on 20 November 1975 after 39 years in power and following a year-long illness. Without an obvious successor to Franco, Spain returns to democratic rule three years later.

González and the PSOE remained in power at a national level until 1996 when the right-wing PP, which had been created by former Franco loyalists, picked up the baton under José María Aznar.

From 1996 until 2004, the three levels of government in Madrid (local, regional and national) remained the preserve of the PP, a dominance that prompted observers from other regions to claim that the PP overtly favoured development of the capital at the expense of Spain's other regions. Whatever the truth of such accusations, the city has moved ahead in leaps and bounds, and as the national economy took off in the late 1990s, Madrid reaped the benefits. Extraordinary expansion programmes for the metro, highways, airport, outer suburbs and for innercity renewal are unmistakable signs of confidence. By one reckoning, up to 75% of inward foreign investment into Spain is directed at the capital.

11-M

On 11 March 2004, just three days before the country was due to vote in national elections, Madrid was rocked by 10 bombs on four rush-hour commuter trains heading into the capital's Atocha station. When the dust cleared, 191 people had died and 1755 were wounded, many of them seriously. It was the biggest such terror attack in the nation's history. Madrid was in shock and, for 24 hours at least, this most clamorous of cities fell silent. Then, some 36 hours after the attacks, more than three million madrileños streamed onto the streets to protest against the bombings, making it the largest demonstration in Madrid's history. A further eight million marched in solidarity in cities across Spain. Although deeply traumatised, the mass act of defiance and pride began the process of healing.

Visit Madrid today and you'll find a city that has resolutely returned to normal. Bars and restaurants overflow with happy crowds and people throng the streets as they always have. Yes, security is a little tighter than before, but it's no more than in most other European cities. The only reminders of the bombings is the poignant Bosque de los Ausentes (Forest of the Absent; p98) in the Parque del Buen Retiro, which was planted as a memorial to the victims, and the 11 March 2004 Memorial (p86) at Atocha station.

Given the history of ETA violence, it came as no surprise that the ruling right-wing PP government insisted that ETA was responsible. But as evidence mounted that the attack might have come from a radical Islamic group in reprisal for the government's unswerving support for the deeply unpopular invasion of Iraq, angry Spaniards turned against the government. In a stunning reversal of pre-poll predictions, the PP was defeated by the PSOE, whose leader, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, led the Socialists back to power after eight years in the wilderness.

In addition to withdrawing Spanish troops from Iraq, the new government introduced a raft of liberalising social reforms. Gay marriage was legalised, Spain's arcane divorce laws overhauled and, in 2005, almost a million illegal immigrants were granted residence. Although Spain's powerful Catholic Church has cried foul over many of the reforms, the changes played well with most Spaniards. As always, however, Madrid would become a battleground for the great issues of the day. It was here that the reforms were embraced with the greatest fervour, even as the streets filled with demonstrators (often bussed in from other Spanish regions).

In late 2007 21 people were convicted of involvement in the attacks, which were allegedly ordered by al-Qaeda.

A CITY OF IMMIGRANTS

In a country where regional nationalisms abound – even Barcelona, that most European of cities, is fiercely and parochially Catalan – Madrid is notable for its absence of regional sentiment. If you quiz madrileños as to why this is so, they most often look mystified and reply, 'but we're *all* from somewhere else'.

It has always been thus in Madrid. In the century after the city became the national capital in 1561, the population swelled by more than 500%, from 30,000 to 175,000. Most were Spaniards (peasants and would-be nobles) who left behind the impoverished countryside and were drawn by the opportunities that existed on the periphery of the royal court.

During the first three decades of the 20th century Madrid's population doubled from half a million to almost one million; in 1930 a study found that less than 40% of the capital's population was from Madrid. The process continued in the aftermath of the civil war and in the 1950s alone more than 600,000 arrived from elsewhere in Spain.

In the late 20th century the process of immigration began to take on a new form, as Spain became the EU's largest annual recipient of immigrants. By early 2006 more than 16.5% of Madrid's population were foreigners, some 536,000 out of 3.29 million inhabitants and more than double the national average.

Unsurprisingly, true madrileños are something of a rare breed. Those who can claim four grandparents born in the city are dignified with the name *gatos* (cats). Although you could be forgiven for thinking that it reflects their tendency to crawl around the city until all hours; the term actually dates from when one of Alfonso VI's soldiers artfully scaled Muslim Mayrit's formidable walls in 1083. 'Look,' cried his comrades, 'he moves like a cat!'

MADRID TODAY

It comes as a surprise to many visitors that free-swinging Madrid is ruled by a conservative right-wing government. The PP's Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, who was first elected mayor in 2003, increased the PP's stranglehold over the Ayuntamiento (town hall) with a landslide victory in 2007, winning 55% of the vote. His colleague, Esperanza Aguirre, became the country's first ever woman regional president in close-run elections for the Comunidad de Madrid in October 2003, but easily extended her majority in 2007. Madrid will, it seems, be ruled by conservatives for some time to come.

Despite belonging to the same party, the political marriage between Aguirre and Ruiz-Gallardón has not always been a happy one. Aguirre is a tough right-wing PP member who served as a senator and as national education and culture minister in José María Aznar's first PP government. Ruiz-Gallardón, on the other hand, comes unmistakably from the liberal wing of the party. Aguirre makes little attempt to mask her dislike of Ruiz-Gallardón. Their simmering rivalry spilled over into open conflict on the national stage in early 2008, when the PP's leader of the national opposition, Mariano Rajoy, bowed to Aguirre's demand that Ruiz-Gallardón not be chosen as Rajoy's running mate in the national elections in March 2008, elections which the Socialists narrowly won.

Ruiz-Gallardón has been largely credited with feeding Madrid's burgeoning confidence, in part thanks to his aim of making Spain 'the city of reference in Southern Europe' by encouraging international organisations (such as the World Tourism Organisation) to set up their headquarters here. It seems to be working. In the first annual survey in June 2007 of 'The Good Life – Where to Live It', Madrid came in 10th, the highest ranking of any Spanish city. Madrid also came in a creditable seventh in a survey of the top ten European cities for business start-ups.

Yes, Ruiz-Gallardón saw his poll numbers briefly plummet in 2005 due to the disruption caused by a staggering 67 major infrastructure projects underway at the same time. But Madrid's impressive (albeit unsuccessful) bid for the 2012 Olympic Games reflected a mayor at the top of his game and a city that rightfully belongs in the company of Europe's great capitals.

1981

Renegade Civil Guard officers march into the Spanish lower house of parliament (the Cortes) in Madrid in an attempted coup. After a day of high drama, the king orders a return to barracks and democracy survives.

1980s

La movida madrileña takes over the city, and becomes a byword for hedonism. The era produces such zany creative talents as Pedro Almodóvar, Agatha Ruiz de la Prada and Alaska.

1991

Madrid elects a conservative mayor, José María Álvarez del Manzano of the Partido Popular (PP; Popular Party), for the first time, bringing an official end to *la movida*. A year later Madrid is designated a European Capital of Culture.

11 March 2004

Terrorist bombings on four Madrid commuter trains kill 191 people and injure 1755. The next day three million madrileños take to the streets in protest, and the PSOE wins national elections on 14 March.

2005

Madrid comes third in the competition to host the 2012 Summer Olympic Games, losing narrowly to Paris and London in the penultimate knock-out round of voting.

2007

The PP's Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, who first won election in 2003, wins an absolute majority in municipal elections, cementing the conservatives hold over Madrid's Ayuntamiento (town hall).

ARTS

Madrid is the cultural capital of the Spanish-speaking world. Yes, many quintessentially Spanish art forms may have had their origins elsewhere – flamenco, for example, has its roots in Andalucía. But it is to Madrid that Spain's major artists have always flocked in order to make their name, from the grand masters of Spanish painting down through the centuries – Velázquez and Goya are two shining examples – to Spain's famous film stars, acclaimed directors such as Pedro Almodóvar and flamenco greats like El Camarón de la Isla. As such, Madrid is easily Spain's premier cultural stage. Beyond the names that have received international recognition, many of Spain's greatest celebrities and finest performers may be unfamiliar to you, but that owes more to the Anglocentric international arts scene and its media than to the quality of their work. Madrid is a wonderful place to rectify such gaps in your knowledge, should they exist. Add to these elements an exciting contemporary arts scene where so much that is innovative in Spanish culture finds a stage in the capital – if it's happening in Spain, it will be happening here. Whether you're new to the arts of Spain or an old hand, you're in for a treat.

LITERATURE

From the Siglo de Oro to Pérez Galdós

Spanish literature began to come of age in the late 16th century as writers gravitated to the new capital, drawn by promises of royal patronage and endless material for stories as Madrid attracted a fascinating cast of characters eager for the glamour and opportunities that surrounded the royal court. The *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age) of Spanish writing was very much Madrid's century and luminaries, such as Cervantes, Quevedo and Lope de Vega (p44), were all Madrid celebrities.

With the exception perhaps of the greatest of all Spanish poets, Seville-born Luis de Góngora (1561–1627), the greatest Spanish writers of the age were either born or spent much of their time in the young capital. Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645), whose parents served in the royal court, went in search of grittier vignettes of local life and spent much of his time in Madrid taverns scribbling some of the most biting, nasty and entertaining prose to come out of 17th-century Spain. His *La Historia de la Vida del Buscón Llamado Don Pablos* (The Swindler; 1626), tracing the none-too-uplifting life of antihero El Buscón, is laced with venom and is his most enduring work.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), regarded as the father of the novel, was born in Alcalá de Henares, lived in the Barrio de las Letras district in Huertas and ended his turbulent days in Madrid. He started writing *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Don Quijote) as a short story to earn a quick peseta. It turned instead into an epic tale in 1605 and is now widely considered the first and greatest novel of all time, charting the journey of the errant knight and his equally quixotic companion, Sancho Panza, through the foibles of his era.

Benito Pérez Galdós (1843–1920), alternately referred to as Spain's Balzac or the Iberian Tolstoy, spent virtually all his adult life in Madrid. His *Fortunata y Jacinta* recounts much more than a tormented love triangle, throwing light on the mores and social intrigues of late-19th-century Madrid.

FERIA DEL LIBRO

Bibliophiles will love being in Madrid around the last week of May and first two weeks of June for Madrid's Book Fair, the Feria del Libro de Madrid (www.ferialibromadrid.com), which has been running since 1933 and draws hundreds of booksellers from all over Spain, who set up stalls in the Parque del Buen Retiro. The Feria brings together some of the biggest names in Spanish literature for book signings and public events, although strolling amid the stalls in Madrid's most beautiful park on an early summer's day is reason enough to come. The books you'll come across are mostly in Spanish, but English-language titles are fairly widespread. For the duration of the Feria stalls open from 11am to 2pm and from 6pm to 9.30pm Monday to Friday, and from 10.30am to 2.30pm and from 5pm to 9.30pm Saturday and Sunday. Unless you like massive crowds, avoid Saturday and Sunday and come on a weekday.

top picks

GREAT MADRID READS

- *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Benito Pérez Galdós (1887)
- *La Colmena (The Beehive)*, Camilo José Cela (1957)
- *Capital de la Gloria*, Juan Eduardo Zúñiga (2003)
- *Un Corazon tan Blanco (A Heart So White)*, Javier Marías (2002)
- *Historias del Kronen*, José Ángel Mañas (1994)
- *Winter in Madrid*, CJ Sansom (2006)
- *A Load of Bull: An Englishman's Adventures in Madrid*, Tim Parfitt (2006)
- *The Bad Girl*, Mario Vargas Llosa (2007)

Cela's reputation has been tarnished by rumours of his closeness to Franco's regime. Cela was nonetheless a writer of the highest quality and took the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1989 and the most important Spanish literature prize, the Premio Cervantes, six years later.

Francisco Umbral (b 1935), a prestigious journalist and winner in 2000 of the Premio Cervantes, is yet another chronicler of the city. *Trilogía de Madrid* (Madrid Trilogy; 1984), which explores a whole range of different circles of Madrid life in the Franco years, is just one of several Madrid-centric novels to his credit. Some have praised Umbral as the greatest prose writer in Spanish of the 20th century; Cela would no doubt snort in disagreement, as was his wont.

Spain and Madrid's experience of the civil war is better known through the works of foreigners like Orwell and Hemingway, but Madrid's own Juan Eduardo Zúñiga (b 1929) has written one of the most moving portrayals of Madrid life during the resistance. *Capital de la Gloria* consists of 10 stories set during the last, desperate months before Madrid finally capitulated.

Murcia's Arturo Pérez-Reverte (b 1951), long-time war correspondent and general man's man, has latterly become one of the most internationally read Spanish novelists. In *El Capitán Alatriste* (Captain Alatriste) we are taken into the decadent hurly-burly of 18th-century Madrid. The captain in question has become the protagonist of several novels and a blockbuster movie.

The author of *the cult urban tribal novel* in Madrid is without doubt José Ángel Mañas (b 1971). In *Historias del Kronen* (Stories from the Kronen; 1994) a band of young disaffected madrileños hangs out in the Kronen bar and throws itself into a whirlwind of sex, drugs, violence and rock 'n' roll.

Madrileño Javier Marías (b 1951; www.javiermarias.es) is a prolific and critically acclaimed novelist and essayist whose exceptional breadth and quality of work has led many to tip him as Spain's next Nobel Prize winner. His *Un Corazon tan Blanco* (A Heart So White; 2002), set in Madrid and centring on a tale of subtle family intrigue, shows a miniaturist's eye for detail throughout this outstanding work of digressive and intimate storytelling.

Another emerging talent is José Machado (b 1974), whose *Grillo* (2003) is a heavily autobiographical look at a young madrileño lad of good family determined to be a writer. It's a little like looking into a mirror that looks into a mirror. Other writers either born in Madrid or with strong connections to the city include: Almudena Grandes (b 1960), whose two novels *The Ages of Lulu* (2005) and *The Wind from the East* (2007) are both available in English; and Elvira Lindo (b 1962), who is a witty newspaper columnist for *El País* on matters of Madrid and national life as well as having written numerous books for children and adults.

PAINTING

The pantheon of master painters who called Madrid home for critical periods during their working lives runs from the old masters Velázquez, El Greco and Goya to doyens of contemporary art such as Picasso and Juan Gris. In centuries past Madrid's undeniable attraction was the patronage of

Contemporary Literature

The censors of Francoist Spain ensured that literary growth in the country was somewhat stunted; some outstanding writers emerged, but freedom of expression was limited and much of what was good in Spanish writing was penned by writers in exile. Since Spain's return to democracy in 1978 there has been a flowering of Spanish letters, and Madrid is at the heart of it.

Although not a madrileño by birth, Camilo José Cela (1916–2002) wrote one of the most talked about novels on the city in the 1950s, *La Colmena* (The Beehive). This classic takes the reader into the heart of Madrid, the beehive of the title, in what is like a photo album filled with portraits of every kind of Madrid punter in those grey days. For some readers

Spanish kings who lavished money on the great painters of the day. Spain's kings, who began the tradition in the 16th century, were a pretty vain and decadent lot and liked nothing better than to pose for portraits and to compete with other European royals for the fleeting prestige that came from association with the great artists of the day. Perhaps they also appreciated fine art. Whatever their motives, royal money and personal patronage transformed Madrid into one of the richest producers and storehouses of paintings anywhere in the world. From the early 20th century onwards, Madrid's role as the seat of Spain's finest artistic academies has drawn Spain's most creative talents.

The Early Days

The first Spaniard to find royal favour was Logroño-born Juan Navarrete (1526–79), also known as El Mudo (the Mute), one of Spain's first practitioners of tenebrism, a style that largely aped Caravaggio's chiaroscuro style. But Navarrete was an exception and Felipe II – the monarch who made Madrid the permanent seat of the royal court – preferred the work of Italian artists such as Titian ahead of home-grown talent. Even some foreign artists who would later become masters were given short shrift, suggesting that the king's eye for quality was far from perfect. One of these was the Cretan-born Domenikos Theotokopoulos (1541–1614), known as El Greco (the Greek; see the boxed text, p244), who was perhaps the most extraordinary and temperamental 'Spanish' artist of the 16th century, but whom Felipe II rejected as a court artist.

Velázquez & the Golden Age

As Spain's monarchs sought refuge from the creeping national malaise of the 17th century by promoting the arts, they fostered an artist who would rise above all others: Diego Rodríguez de Silva Velázquez (1599–1660). Born in Seville, Velázquez later moved to Madrid as court painter and stayed to make the city his own. He composed scenes (landscapes, royal portraits, religious subjects, snapshots of everyday life) that owe their vitality not only to his photographic eye for light and contrast but also to a compulsive interest in the humanity of his subjects so that they seem to breathe on the canvas. His masterpieces include *Las Meninas* (The Maids of Honour) and *La Rendición de Breda* (The Surrender of Breda), both on view in the Museo del Prado (p90).

Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664), a friend and contemporary of Velázquez, ended his life in poverty in Madrid and it was only after his death that he received the acclaim that his masterpieces deserved. He is best remembered for the startling clarity and light in his portraits of monks, a series of which hangs in the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (p71).

Other masters of the era whose works hang in the Prado, though their connection to Madrid was limited, include José (Jusepe) de Ribera (1591–1652), who was influenced by Caravaggio and produced fine chiaroscuro works, and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1618–82).

The Madrid School, Goya & Beyond

While the stars were at work, a second tier of busy baroque artists beavered away in the capital and collectively they came to be known as the Madrid School.

Fray Juan Rizzi (1600–81) did most of his work for Benedictine monasteries across Castile; some hang in the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. Claudio Coello (1642–93) specialised in the big picture and some of his huge canvases adorn the complex at San Lorenzo de El Escorial (p252), including his magnum opus, *La Sagrada Forma* (The Holy Form).

But these were mere window dressing compared to Goya (see the boxed text, *opposite*), who cast such a long shadow that all other artists of the period have been largely obscured.

Although no-one of the stature of Goya followed in his wake, new trends were noticeable by the latter decades of the 19th century. Joaquín Sorolla (1863–1923) flew in the face of the French Impressionist style, preferring the blinding sunlight of the Valencian coast to the muted tones favoured in Paris. His work can be studied in Madrid's Museo Sorolla (p119).

Leading the way into the 20th century was Madrid-born José Gutiérrez Solana (1886–1945), whose disturbing, avant-garde approach to painting revels in low lighting, sombre colours and deathly pale figures. His work is emblematic of what historians now refer to as *España negra* (black Spain). A selection of his canvases is on display in the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (p82).

GOYA – A CLASS OF HIS OWN

There was nothing in the provincial upbringing of Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), who was born in the village of Fuendetodos in Aragón, to suggest that he would become one of the towering figures of European art.

Goya started his career as a cartoonist in the Real Fábrica de Tapices (Royal Tapestry Workshop) in Madrid. In 1776 Goya began designing for the tapestry factory, but illness in 1792 left him deaf; many critics speculate that his condition was largely responsible for his wild, often merciless style that would become increasingly unshackled from convention. By 1799 Goya was appointed Carlos IV's court painter.

Several distinct series and individual paintings mark his progress. In the last years of the 18th century he painted enigmatic masterpieces, such as *La Maja Vestida* (The Young Lady Dressed) and *La Maja Desnuda* (The Young Lady Undressed), identical portraits but for the lack of clothes in the latter. The rumour mill suggests the subject was none other than the Duchess of Alba, with whom he allegedly had an affair. Whatever the truth of Goya's sex life, the Inquisition was not amused by the artworks, which it covered up. Nowadays all is bared in the Prado.

At about the same time as his enigmatic *Majas*, the prolific Goya executed the playful frescoes in Madrid's Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida (p124), which have recently been restored to stunning effect. He also produced *Los Caprichos* (The Caprices), a biting series of 80 etchings lambasting the follies of court life and ignorant clergy.

The arrival of the French and war in 1808 had a profound impact on Goya. Unforgiving portrayals of the brutality of war are *El Dos de Mayo* (The Second of May) and, more dramatically, *El Tres de Mayo* (The Third of May). The latter depicts the execution of Madrid rebels by French troops.

After he retired to the Quinta del Sordo (Deaf Man's House) west of the Río Manzanares in Madrid, he created his nightmarish *Pinturas Negras* (Black Paintings). Executed on the walls of the house, they were later removed and now hang in the Prado. A scandal erupted recently when it was claimed that these chilling works were painted by the artist's son, Javier, and sold as genuine Goyas by his grandson. The Prado strenuously denies the claims.

Goya spent the last years of his life in voluntary exile in France, where he continued to paint until his death.

Picasso, Dalí & Juan Gris

The 17th century may have been Spain's golden age, but the 20th century was easily its rival.

The Málaga-born Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881–1973) is one of the greatest and most original Spanish painters of all time. Although he spent much of his working life in Paris, he arrived in Madrid from Barcelona in 1897 at the behest of his father for a year's study at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. Never one to allow himself to be confined within formal structures, the precocious Picasso instead took himself to the Prado to learn from the masters, and to the streets to depict life as he saw it. Picasso went on to become the master of cubism, which was inspired by his fascination with primitivism, primarily African masks and early Iberian sculpture. This highly complex form reached its high point in *Guernica* (see the boxed text, p83), which hangs in the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

Picasso was not the only artist who found the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando too traditional for his liking. In 1922 Salvador Dalí (1904–89) arrived in Madrid from Catalonia, but he decided that the eminent professors of the renowned fine-arts school were not fit to judge him. He spent four years living in the 'Resi', the renowned students' residence (which still functions today) where he met poet Federico García Lorca and future film director Luis Buñuel. The three self-styled anarchists and bohemians romped through the cafés and music halls of 1920s Madrid, frequenting brothels, engaging in pranks, immersing themselves in jazz and taking part in endless *tertulias* (literary discussions). Dalí, a true original and master of the surrealist form, was finally expelled from art school and left Madrid, never to return. The only remaining link with Madrid is a handful of his hallucinatory works in the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (p82).

In the same gallery is a fine selection of the cubist creations of Madrid's Juan Gris (1887–1927), who was turning out his best work in Paris while Dalí and his cohorts were up to no good in Madrid. Along with Picasso and Georges Braque, he was a principal exponent of the cubist style.

During the Franco years in Madrid, Antonio Saura (1930–98) was a shining light of surrealism and the dramatic brushstrokes of his portraits are sometimes seen as a reaction to the conventionality of public life under the dictator. In 1956 he publicly burned books of his paintings as a protest against Franco and the following year set up the El Paso group of artists whose aim was to provide a forum for contemporary art. Check out www.antoniosaura.org for more info.

Contemporary Art

The death of Franco in 1975 unleashed a frenzy of activity and artistic creativity was central to *la movida madrileña* (p32). The Galería Moriarty (p214) became a focal point of exuberantly artistic reference and is still going strong. A parade of artists marched through the gallery, including leading *movida* lights such as Ceesepe (b 1958), whose real name is Carlos Sánchez Pérez, and whose busy paintings full of people and activity (but recently veering towards surrealism), and eight short films capture the spirit of 1980s Madrid. Another Moriarty protégé was Ouka Lele (b 1957), a self-taught photographer whose sometimes weird works stand out for her tangy treatment of colour. Her photos can be seen at the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Museo Municipal (p108) and the Museo Municipal de Arte Contemporáneo (p108). Another *movida* photographer who still exhibits with Moriarty is Alberto García-Alix (b 1956).

The rebellious, effervescent activity in the 1980s tends to cloud the fact that the visual arts in the Franco years were far from dead, although many artists spent years in exile. The art of Eduardo Arroyo (b 1937) in particular is steeped in the radical spirit that kept him in exile for 15 years from 1962. His paintings tend in part towards pop art, brimming with ironic sociopolitical comment. Of the other exiles, one of Spain's greatest 20th-century sculptors, Toledo-born Alberto Sánchez (1895–1962), lived his last years in Moscow. He and Benjamín Palencia (1894–1980), an artist whose paintings occasionally show striking similarities with some of Sánchez' sculptures, were part of the so-called Escuela de Vallecas (Vallecas is now a working-class barrio in southern Madrid). The inheritors of their legacy, which is now more often called the Escuela de Madrid, include Francisco Arias, Gregorio del Olmo, Álvaro Delgado, Andrés Conejo and Agustín Redondela; all are on display at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo. Carlos Franco (b 1951) painted the frescoes on the Real Casa de la Panadería on Playa Mayor (p61).

Antonio López García (b 1936) takes a photographer's eye to his hyperrealistic paintings. Settings as simple as *Lavabo y Espejo* (Wash Basin and Mirror, 1967) convert the most banal everyday objects into scenes of extraordinary depth and the same applies to his Madrid street scenes, which are equally loaded with detail, light play and subtle colour, especially *La Granvía* (1981) and *Vallecas* (1980). He won the coveted Premio Príncipe de Asturias for art in 1985. His contemporary, Alfredo Alcain (b 1936), whose textured paintings could at times be mistaken for aerial shots of patchwork fields, won the Premio Príncipe de Asturias in 2004.

Many of the most prominent new abstract painters have a relatively small body of work, but Alejandro Corujeira, Alberto Reguera, Xavier Grau and Amaya Bozal are all names to watch. In the figurative tradition, the same could be said of Juan Carlos Savater, Sigfrido Martín Begué, Abraham La Calle and Fernando Bellver. All can be seen at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo.

The big event for contemporary art in Madrid is the annual midwinter Arco contemporary art fair (p16; www.arco.ifema.es), which goes from strength to strength as a showcase for both emerging and established Spanish talent, although as it gains in prestige, it's taking on a more international flavour.

MUSIC

Classical & Opera

Madrid has never been at the forefront of great classical music and opera, and the Spanish composers of note (Isaac Albéniz, Enrique Granados, Joaquín Rodrigo and Manuel de Falla) all came from elsewhere in Spain.

The single obvious exception to the general rule is Plácido Domingo (b 1934), the country's leading opera tenor and born *gato* (slang for madrileño, literally 'cat'). Early childhood was where the charming singer's relationship with Madrid more or less ended, as his parents, *zarzuela* (satirical dance and music) performers, moved to Mexico, where he made his singing debut years later. Along with the Catalan José Carreras, Spain contributed two of the Three Tenors.

Although not much of what you'll hear in Madrid originates here, you can still find a year-round programme of fine performances to choose from (see p212).

Contemporary Music

At the height of *la movida madrileña* in the 1980s Madrid's nights rocked to the sounds of more than 300 local rock bands. Most such groups fell by the wayside, but some have survived. Seguridad Social is a good old-fashioned hard-rock group that has remained a surprisingly constant force since it first started in 1982. Another legend is rock poet Rosendo Mercado, who started off with the group Leño in the late 1970s, later went solo and hasn't stopped since. Others that defined 1980s Madrid – Radio Futura, El Último de la Fila and Nacha Pop (and punkier ensembles such as Alaska and Kaka de Luxe) – came and went, but their music still holds a special place in the hearts of madrileños of a certain age.

One enduring group from *la movida*, Mecano, is now the subject of a blockbuster musical *Hoy No Me Puedo Levantar* (I Can't Get Out of Bed Today), named after its debut single; the musical ran in Madrid for three years from 2005 to sell-out crowds. The musical was written by Madrid-born Nacho Cano, former band member and now one of Madrid's most creative musical producers. At its peak Mecano sang many of the theme songs for the grittier side of *la movida*, dealing with teenage boredom, drugs and experimental love. Although the group went its separate ways in 1998, Mecano still provides the soundtrack for many a Madrid night.

Although born in Panama, Miguel Bosé was another *la movida* identity to make Madrid his own. Since the craziness of his early years, Bosé has mellowed into one of Spanish music's elder statesmen and most respected musicians with a base in pop but with inflections from myriad music genres.

Other echoes of *la movida* can be heard elsewhere. Three years after his band Nacha Pop split, Madrid-born Antonio Vega put out his first solo disc in 1991 and became one of the sensations of the mid-1990s with his soft pop-rock.

Madrid's rock scene is not what it once was but nonetheless continues to churn out class acts. Dover is one such group, a Madrid quartet that belts out energetic indie rock in English. Another pop-rock group to watch is La Quinta Estación, three Madrid-born musicians who left Spain to find success in Mexico before returning with a string of big hits.

Recently emerged from the rock bar scene in Malasaña is the pop quartet Balboa. Led by guitarist Carlos del Amo and his singer girlfriend, Lua Ríos, they've combined the energy of rock with a strong guitar lead and a soft-pop touch in Lua's voice and lyrics.

Another big star to recently emerge from the Madrid bar scene is Nieves Rebolledo, who goes by the stage name of Bebe. Her 2004 *Pafuera Telarañas* became one of the biggest albums of recent years and the signature track 'Malo' (Bad) managed that rare combination of becoming a dance-floor anthem while making serious social commentary (the song is an impassioned denunciation of domestic violence).

Other names enjoying huge popularity on the Spanish music scene include Estopa, La Oreja de Van Gogh, Amaral and the enduring Alejandro Sanz.

CINEMA & TELEVISION

The Spanish film industry, with Madrid as its uncontested capital, exists on two radically different levels. First there are the exceptional individual talents, such as Pedro Almodóvar (see the boxed text, p42), Penélope Cruz, Antonio Banderas and Javier Bardem, who have become international (and Hollywood) stars. At the same time the local film-making industry turns

top picks

MUSIC CDS

- **Lo Mejor de Miguel Bosé** (Miguel Bosé) Greatest hits of this veteran of the Madrid music scene.
- **La Movida de los 80** All the biggies of *la movida*, including Alaska y Los Pegamoides, Radio Futura and Nacha Pop.
- **Mecanografía** (Mecano) All the hit singles from one of *la movida*'s iconic bands.
- **Canciones Hondas** (Ketama) One of Ketama's best-ever CDs of rocky flamenco fusion; it's miles better than the Gypsy Kings!
- **Pafuera Telarañas** (Bebe) You can hear the smoky Madrid bar scene in every chord.
- **Chicote Red Lounge – Cocktail** (Sandro Bianchi) Downtempo rhythms mixed by DJs at Madrid's legendary Museo Chicote.
- **Follow the City Lights** (Dover) Catchy indie rock from Madrid's English-language sensations.
- **El Mundo Se Equivoca** (La Quinta Estación) Latin Grammy award-winning album in 2007.
- **Con Otro Aire** (Chambao) The latest flamenco fusion from Spain's hottest group of the moment.

PEDRO ALMODÓVAR'S MADRID

Plaza Mayor (p61) *La Flor de mi Secreto*
(The Flower of my Secret; 1995)

El Rastro (p74) *Laberinto de Pasiones* (Labyrinth of Passion; 1982)

Villa Rosa (p204) *Tacones Lejanos* (High Heels; 1991)

Café del Círculo de Bellas Artes (p189) *Kika* (1993)

Acueducto de Segovia (p75) *Matador* (1986)

Museo del Jamón (p161) *Carne Trémula* (Live Flesh; 1997)

out work of real quality but struggles for both funding and international success, too often drowned out by the glamour and big budgets of that same Hollywood. Public funding for local film-making has consistently fallen over the past decade or so and, although audience numbers remain quite steady, less than 20% of Spanish box office takings are for Spanish films. These two strands come together for the annual Goya awards (Spain's Oscars), which are held in Madrid in February – it's the perfect stage for taking the pulse of the industry.

Pedro Almodóvar is not the only Spanish director to have earned critical international acclaim. The still-young Alejandro Amenábar (b 1973) is already one of Spain's most respected directors. He was born in Chile but his family moved to Madrid when he was a child. He announced his arrival with *Tesis* (1996), but it was with *Abre Los Ojos* (Open Your Eyes; 1997), which was later adapted for Hollywood as *Vanilla Sky*, that his name became known internationally. His first English-language film was *The Others* (2001), which received plaudits from critics, but nothing like the clamour that surrounded *Mar Adentro* (The Sea Inside; 2004), his stunning portrayal of a Galician fisherman's desire to die with dignity, which starred Javier Bardem. Not content with directing, Amenábar also writes his own films.

Madrid-born Fernando Trueba (b 1955) has created some fine Spanish films, the best of which was his 1992 release *Belle Époque*. It portrays gentle romps and bed-hopping on a country estate in Spain in 1931 as four sisters pursue a slightly ingenuous young chap against a background of growing political turbulence. Behind the scenes on this and many Spanish movies is the publicity-shy, Madrid-based Rafael Azcona, surely one of the cinema's most prolific screenplay writers. *Belle Époque* took an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 1993. Truly versatile, Trueba is equally well known for his documentary *Calle 54* (2000), which did for Latin jazz

A DIRECTOR LIKE NO OTHER

When Pedro Almodóvar (b 1951) won an Oscar in 2000 for his 1999 hit, *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* (All About My Mother), the world suddenly discovered what Spaniards had known for decades – that Almodóvar was one of world cinema's most creative directors.

Born in a small, impoverished village in Castilla La Mancha, Almodóvar once remarked that in such conservative rural surrounds, 'I felt as if I'd fallen from another planet'. After he moved to Madrid in 1969 he found his spiritual home and began his career making underground Super-8 movies and making a living by selling second-hand goods at El Rastro flea market. He soon became a symbol of Madrid's counter-culture, but it was after Franco's death in 1975 that Almodóvar became a nationally renowned cult figure. His early films *Pepi, Luci, Bom y Otras Chicas del Montón* (Pepi, Luci, Bom and the Other Girls; 1980) and *Laberinto de Pasiones* (Labyrinth of Passion; 1982) – the film that brought a young Antonio Banderas to attention – announced him as the icon of *la movida madrileña* (p32), the explosion of hedonism and creativity in the early years of post-Franco Spain. Almodóvar had both in bucketloads; he peppered his films with candy-bright colours and characters leading lives where sex and drugs are the norm. By night Almodóvar performed in Madrid's most famous *movida* bars as part of a drag act called 'Almodóvar & McNamara'. He even appears in this latter role in *Laberinto de Pasiones*.

By the mid-1980s *madrileños* had adopted him as one of the city's most famous sons and he went on to broaden his fan base with such quirkily comic looks at modern Spain, generally set in the capital, as *Mujeres al Borde de un Ataque de Nervios* (Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown; 1988) and *Átame* (Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down; 1990). *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* (All About My Mother; 1999) is also notable for the coming of age of the Madrid-born actress Penélope Cruz, who had starred in a number of Almodóvar films and was considered part of a select group of the director's leading ladies long before she became a Hollywood star. Other outstanding movies in a formidable portfolio include *Hable Con Ella* (Talk to Her; 2002), for which he won a Best Original Screenplay Oscar, *La Mala Educación* (Bad Education; 2004), a twisted story of a drag queen, his brother, an abusive priest and a school-friend-turned-filmmaker, and *Volver* (2006), which reunited Almodóvar with Penélope Cruz to popular and critical acclaim.

top picks

FILMS SET IN MADRID

Many famous movies have been filmed at least partly in Madrid, among them *Doctor Zhivago*, *El Cid* and *The Fall of the Roman Empire*. But the following are where Madrid really plays a starring role:

- **Pepi, Luci, Bom y Otras Chicas del Montón** (Pepi, Luci, Bom and the Other Girls; 1980) If you always wondered what Madrid was like during *la movida madrileña*, this early Almodóvar feature film takes you there in all its madness.
- **La Colmena** (The Beehive; 1982) Based on the classic novel by Camilo José Cela, this is a faithful rendition of Cela's portrait of Madrid during the grey years of the 1950s.
- **Historias del Kronen** (Stories from the Kronen; 1994) In Montxo Armendariz's film, a slightly depressing story of alienated urban youth emerges from the heart of Madrid.
- **Carne Trémula** (Live Flesh; 1997) This typically kaleidoscopic love thriller by Pedro Almodóvar contains the usual tortured themes of sex, violence and love, and stars Javier Bardem.
- **La Comunidad** (The Community; 2000) Directed by the generally wacky Alex de la Iglesia, this cheerful off-the-wall tale of greed in a Madrid apartment block stars Carmen Maura.
- **Los Fantasma de Goya** (Goya's Ghosts; 2006) Set in 1792 Madrid, this recent offering from Milos Forman tells the story of Goya, the Spanish Inquisition and the painter's many scandals; Javier Bardem and Natalie Portman play the lead roles.
- **Volver** (2006) This heartwarming Almodóvar film starring Penélope Cruz is set partly in the outer suburbs of Madrid.

what the *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) did for ageing Cuban musicians. Trueba was a leading personality in the craziness that was *la movida madrileña* (see p32) in the 1980s.

Going back further, Luis Buñuel (1900–83) was another film identity obliquely associated with Madrid. He spent part of his formative professional years in Madrid, raising hell with his fellow surrealist Salvador Dalí, although he later spent much of his life in Paris and Mexico. Buñuel became something of a surrealist icon with his 1929 classic *Un Chien Andalou*, on which he collaborated with Dalí. His often-shocking films included *Los Olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones; 1950) and *Viridiana* (1961) – both won prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, although the latter was banned in Francoist Spain on the grounds of blasphemy.

Of Spain's best-loved actors, few are enjoying international popularity quite like the Oscar-winning heart-throb Javier Bardem, one of the best-known faces in Spanish cinema. Having made his name alongside Penélope Cruz in *Jamón Jamón* (1992), his best-loved roles include in *Before Night Falls* (2000), *Mar Adentro* (The Sea Inside; 2004), *Love in the Time of Cholera* (2007) and *No Country for Old Men* (2007); remarkably his Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in 2008 was a first for Spanish actors. Like so many of Spain's best actors, Bardem has passed through the finishing school that are Pedro Almodóvar's movies, appearing in *Carne Trémula* (Live Flesh; 1997). Javier Bardem also comes from one of Spain's most distinguished film-making families and his uncle, Juan Antonio Bardem (1922–2002), is often considered Madrid's senior cinematic bard; Bardem Sr wrote the script for Luis García Berlanga's 1952 classic, *Bienvenido Mr Marshall* (Welcome Mr Marshall), and followed in 1955 with *Muerte de un Ciclista* (Death of a Cyclist). Although

from Spain's Canary Islands, the Bardems are Madrid identities and run a trendy tapas bar, La Bardemcilla (see p192), in the inner-city barrio of Chueca.

Penélope Cruz is another Hollywood actress with strong roots in Madrid (where she was born in 1974) and with an enduring love affair with Almodóvar. In the late 1990s Penélope Cruz took a leap of faith and headed for Hollywood where she has had success in such films as *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2001) and *Vanilla Sky* (2001), but recognition of her acting abilities has come most powerfully for her roles in the Almodóvar classics, *Carne Trémula* (Live Flesh; 1997), *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* (All About My Mother; 1999) and *Volver* (2006); the latter was described by one critic as 'a raging love letter' to Cruz and earned her a Best Actress Oscar nomination, a remarkable achievement for a foreign-language film. Her conversion into one of Almodóvar's muses seems confirmed by news that she has agreed to appear in Almodóvar's next two movies.

Although not born in Madrid, Málaga-born Antonio Banderas moved to Madrid in 1981, at the age of 19, to launch his career and soon became caught up in the maelstrom of *la movida madrileña*, where he made the acquaintance of Almodóvar. After an early role in *Laberinto de*

Pasiones (Labyrinth of Passion; 1982), Banderas would return to the Almodóvar stable with *Mujeres al Borde de un Ataque de Nervios* (Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown; 1988) as his glittering Hollywood career was taking off.

An eminent line-up of some of Spain's best actresses also come from Madrid, among them Victoria Abril (b 1959), Ana Belén (b 1950), Carmen Maura (b 1945), Belén Rueda (1965) and Maribel Verdú (b 1970).

Although existing in the shadow of Hollywood and its Spanish stars, *Alatriste* (2006) and *El Orfanato* (The Orphanage; 2007) are among the Spanish movies to have made an international splash in recent years.

At first glance, Spanish TV may seem to be dominated by clones of international reality TV – especially *Gran Hermano* (Big Brother) and *Operación Triunfo* (which propels singing unknowns to stardom) – or endless gossip programmes (known by critics as *telebasura*, or TV rubbish) dissecting the lives of current celebrities.

That's true to a certain extent, but there are some excellent TV series to look out for. An outstanding series is *Cuéntame Cómo Pasó* (www.cuentamecomopaso.net), which is set in 1970s' Madrid. Telecinco's *Los Serrano* (www.losserrano.telecinco.es) is a mostly-comic, sometimes-serious family drama set in a Madrid chalet and featuring well-known movie actors. Anyone who has spent any time living in a Madrid apartment building will groan with recognition at *Aquí No Hay Quien Viva* (www.antena3.com/aquinohayquienviva/), a funny, fast-paced story of neighbours who know everyone else's business.

Most TVs receive six or seven channels – two from Spain's state-run Televisión Española (TVE1 and La 2), four independent (Antena 3, El Cuatro, Tele 5 and La Sexta) and the regional Telemadrid station – and a host of other local channels of varying quality.

News programmes are generally decent (especially on TVE1 at 3pm and 9pm) and you can often catch an interesting documentary (especially on La 2) or film. Some TVs allow you to switch from the dubbed version to the original on some channels. Otherwise the main fare is a rather nauseating diet of soaps (many from Latin America), endless talk shows and almost vaudevillian variety shows (with plenty of glitz and tits).

Many private homes and better hotels have satellite TV. Foreign channels include BBC World, CNN, Eurosport, Sky News and the German SAT 1, while places with digital decoders offer endless choices.

THEATRE

The literary *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age) that characterised 17th-century Madrid also filled the sails of theatrical creation with the winds of genius. Some of the country's all-time greatest playwrights were at work in much the same period. One of Madrid's towering literary figures, Lope de Vega (1562–1635), also an exceptional lyric poet, was perhaps the most prolific: more than 300 of the 800 plays and poems attributed to him remain. He explored the falseness of court life and canvassed political subjects with his imaginary historical plays. You can still visit his house (p87) in the Barrio de las Letras. The work of Tirso de Molina (1581–1648) includes *El Burlador de Sevilla* (The Seducer of Seville), a play in which we encounter the immortal Don Juan, a likable seducer who meets an unhappy end.

A particularly Spanish genre that originated in Madrid is the *zarzuela*, light-hearted musical comedy in which the actors occasionally burst into song. Although it spread throughout the country in the 19th century it remains very much a Madrid phenomenon. The Teatro de la Zarzuela keeps busy with a year-round programme of these melodic social dramas. For more information on this uniquely Spanish drama form, see the boxed text on p215; for advice on where to see the best in Spanish theatre, turn to p215.

DANCE

Nacho Duato, head and principal dancer of the Madrid-based *Compañía Nacional de Baile* (<http://cndanza.mcu.es/>) since 1990, has transformed it from a low-profile classical company into one of the world's most dazzling and technically accomplished contemporary dance groups. Founded in 1978, the *Ballet Nacional de España* (<http://balletnacional.mcu.es/>) mixes classical ballet with Spanish dance. Both perform regularly in Madrid and around the country.

One performer that you absolutely must see if your visit coincides with her arrival in town is *Sara Baras* (www.sarabaras.com), a Cádiz-born performer whose flamenco ballet is unique and soul-stirring.

FLAMENCO

The musical and dance form most readily identified with Spain is rooted in the *cante jondo* (deep song) of the *gitanos* (Roma people) of Andalucía, and probably influenced by North African rhythms. The melancholy *cante jondo* is performed by a singer, who may be *cantaor* (male) or *cantaora* (female), to the accompaniment of a blood-rush of guitar from the *tocaor* (guitar player). The accompanying dance (not always present) is performed by one or more *bailaores* (flamenco dancers).

The genre flourished in the 1920s, but with the civil war things went downhill. Not until the 1950s did flamenco come to life again. In those dark years of austere dictatorship, even fun was considered suspect and so the hidden world of smoky cabarets and *tablaos* (small restaurants where flamenco is performed) was born.

Flamenco in Madrid

Although flamenco emerged in southern Spain, since the mid-19th century the best performers of flamenco have turned up at one time or another in Madrid. This statement distils in an essence the contribution Madrid has made to the development of flamenco: it has always been a stage, often a prestigious one, that has brought flamenco to a wider audience, but the roots of flamenco have always grown first elsewhere and the greatest proponents of the art have learned their craft in the south.

At first the *gitanos* and Andalusians were concentrated in the area around Calle de Toledo. The novelist Benito Pérez Galdós found no fewer than 88 Andalusian taverns along that street towards the end of the 19th century. The scene shifted in the early 20th century to the streets around Plaza de Santa Ana. Huertas is again the centre for some of the best flamenco venues and bars dedicated to all things flamenco, although *tablaos* are found across the capital.

As flamenco's appeal widened and became a tourist attraction, more *tablaos* sprang up throughout Madrid. For advice on Madrid's best flamenco venues, turn to p204, while a good website for all things flamenco is www.deflamenco.com. To learn more you could also pass by El Flamenco Vive (p132), Flamenco World (p136) or Espacio Flamenco (p135), all of which have a wide range of flamenco books and CDs. For flamenco courses see p269, while Madrid's excellent flamenco festivals are covered on p16.

Flamenco Stars

Two names loom large over the world of flamenco – Paco de Lucía and El Camarón de la Isla – who were responsible for flamenco's revival in the second half of the 20th century. Such is (or, in the case of El Camarón de la Isla, was) their dominance that theirs is the standard by which all other flamenco artists are measured.

Paco de Lucía (b 1947) is the doyen of flamenco guitarists with a virtuosity few can match. For many in the flamenco world, he is the personification of *duende*, that indefinable capacity to transmit the power and passion of flamenco. If he's playing in Madrid when you're there, don't miss it. Although existing somewhat in Paco de Lucía's shadow, other guitar maestros include members of the Montoya family (some of whom are better known by the sobriquet of Los Habichuela), especially Juan (b 1933) and Pepe (b 1944).

From 1964 Paco de Lucía teamed up with madrileño guitarist Ricardo Modrego, but began, in 1968, flamenco's most exciting partnership with his friend El Camarón de la Isla (1950–92); together they recorded nine classic albums. Until his premature death, El Camarón was the leading light of contemporary *cante jondo* and it's impossible to overstate his influence over the art; his introduction of electric bass into his songs, for example, paved the way for a generation of artists to take flamenco in hitherto unimagined directions. Although born in San Fernando in Andalucía's far south, El Camarón was the artist in residence at Madrid's San Pablo Torres Bermejás for 12 years and it was during this period that his collaboration with Paco de Lucía was at its best. In his later years El Camarón teamed up with Tomatito, one of Paco de Lucía's

protégés, and the results were similarly ground-breaking. The story of El Camarón's life (his real name was the far less evocative José Monje Cruz) has been made into an excellent movie (*Camarón*, 2005), directed by Jaime Chávarri. When El Camarón died in 1992 an estimated 100,000 people attended his funeral.

Another artist who has reached the level of cult figure is Enrique Morente (b 1942), referred to by one Madrid paper as 'the last bohemian'. While careful not to alienate flamenco purists, Morente, through his numerous collaborations across genres, helped lay the foundations for Nuevo Flamenco and Fusión. One of the most venerable *cantaoras* is Carmen Linares (b 1951), who has spent much of her working life in Madrid. Leading contemporary figures include the flighty, adventurous Joaquín Cortés (b 1969), and Antonio Canales (b 1962), who is more of a flamenco purist.

Nuevo Flamenco & Fusión

Possibly the most exciting recent developments in flamenco have occurred in its fusion with other musical forms. The purists loathe these changes – in the proud *gitano* world, innovation has often met with abrasive scorn – but a wider Spanish audience has enthusiastically embraced this innovative musical experimentation.

Two of the earliest groups to fuse flamenco with rock back in the 1980s were Ketama and Pata Negra, whose music is labelled by some as Gypsy rock. Ketama, in particular, have been wide-ranging in their search for complementary sounds and rhythms, and their collaborations with Malian kora (harp) player, Toumani Diabaté (*Songhai I and Songhai II*) are underrated works of rare beauty. In the early 1990s, Radio Tarifa emerged with a mesmerising mix of flamenco, North African and medieval sounds. A more traditional flamenco performer, Juan Peña Lebrijano, better known as El Lebrijano, has created some equally appealing combinations with classical Moroccan music. Diego Cigala, one of modern flamenco's finest voices, relaunched his career with an exceptional collaboration with Cuban virtuoso Bebo Valdés (*Lágrimas Negras*, 2004).

Chambao is the most popular of the *nuevo flamenco* bands doing the rounds at the moment. They first captured attention with their *Endorfinas a la Menta* (2003) and the excellent *Pokito a Poko* (2005). Also popular is Diego Amador (b 1973), a self-taught pianist. The piano is not a classic instrument of flamenco but Amador makes it work.

ARCHITECTURE

Madrid has long been defined by the grandeur of its public buildings. From the stately Palacio Real and *barroco madrileño* (Madrid baroque), the Spanish capital's muted contribution to world architectural textbooks, to the flights of fancy erected during the *belle époque* (beautiful time) period at the beginning of the 20th century, this is a city of exceptional beauty and variety. What has added depth to the visitor's architectural experience are two relatively recent phenomenon: innovative, eye-catching new structures (eg Caixa Forum Madrid and Terminal 4 at Barajas Airport) that were once the preserve of Barcelona, and iconic edifices (eg Museo del Prado, Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Antigua Estación de Atocha) transformed by extensions that take them to a whole new level. The overall effect is the unmistakable feel of a capital that other Spanish cities, however replete with history, could never exude.

MADRID TO THE 16TH CENTURY

Madrid's origins as a Muslim garrison town yielded few architectural treasures, or at least few that remain. The only reminder of the Muslim presence is a modest stretch of the town wall, known as the Muralla Árabe (Arab Wall; p68) below the Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Almudena. Few examples of the rich *mudéjar* style (developed by the Moors who remained behind in reconquered Christian territory) that once adorned Madrid are the bell towers of the Iglesia de San Pedro El Viejo (p78) and Iglesia de San Nicolás de los Servitas (p63).

When Felipe II decided in 1561 to establish Madrid as the capital of Imperial Spain the city's architecture was unworthy of such grand aspirations with little more to distinguish

top picks

NOTABLE OLD BUILDINGS

- Palacio Real (p67)
- Plaza de la Villa (p62)
- Real Casa de la Panadería (p61)
- Palacio de Comunicaciones (p97)
- Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (p108)
- Plaza de Toros Monumental de Las Ventas (p101)
- Edificio Metrópolis (p70)

it than the odd grand church or palace; the elaborate edifices of Gothic architecture that prompted the erection of great soaring churches across medieval Europe largely passed Madrid by. After making Madrid his capital Felipe II became preoccupied with building his monumental mausoleum/palace/summer getaway at El Escorial and Madrid's architecture continued much as it had before. Unless you're content with the much interfered with, late-Gothic Casa de los Lujanes (p62) or the beautiful Capilla del Obispo (p75), you'll need to head for Toledo (p242), Segovia (p245) or Ávila (p249) for a greater appreciation of the genre.

MADRID BAROQUE & BEYOND

Juan de Herrera (1530–97) was perhaps the greatest figure of the Spanish Renaissance and his style, which was unlike anything else seen during the period, influenced a generation of Madrid architects and bequeathed to the city an architectural style all of its own. Herrera's austere masterpiece was the palace-monastery complex of San Lorenzo de El Escorial (p252), although the nine-arched Puente de Segovia (p75) is among the few buildings he left behind in Madrid.

But after his death Herrera's style would give Madrid some of its most distinguished buildings. The sternness of his Renaissance style fused with a timid approach to its successor, the more voluptuous, ornamental baroque, to create an architectural style known as *barroco madrileño* (Madrid baroque). The most successful proponent of this style was Juan Gómez de Mora (1586–1648), who was responsible for laying out the Plaza Mayor (p61), as well as the Ayuntamiento (p62), the Convento de la Encarnación (p70) and the Palacio de Santa Cruz (p62). Gómez de Mora's uncle, Francisco de Mora (1560–1610), added to an impressive family portfolio with the Palacio del Duque de Uceda (p62). Other exceptional examples of the style are the Real Casa de la Panadería (p61) and the main entrance of what is now the Museo Municipal (p108).

Ventura Rodríguez (1717–85) dominated the architectural scene in 18th-century Madrid much as Goya lorded it over the world of art. He redesigned the interior of the Convento de la Encarnación and conceived the Palacio de Liria (p109). He also sidelined in spectacular fountains, and it is Rodríguez whom we have to thank for the goddess Cybele in the Plaza de la Cibeles (p97) and the Fuente de las Conchas (p124) in the Campo del Moro.

Where Ventura Rodríguez leaned towards a neo-Classical style, Juan de Villanueva (1739–1811) embraced it wholeheartedly, most notably in the Palacio de Villanueva that would eventually house the Museo del Prado (p90). Villanueva also oversaw the rebuilding of the Plaza Mayor after it was destroyed by fire in 1790 and designed numerous outbuildings of the royal residences, such as San Lorenzo de El Escorial.

BELLE ÉPOQUE

As Madrid emerged from the chaos of the first half of the 19th century, a building boom began. The use of iron and glass, a revolution in building aesthetics that symbolised the embracing of modernity, became all the rage. The Palacio de Cristal (p98) in the Parque del Buen Retiro was built at this time.

By the dawn of the 20th century, known to many as the *belle époque*, Madrid was abuzz with construction. Headed by the prolific Antonio Palacios (1874–1945), architects from all over Spain began to transform Madrid into the airy city you see today. Many looked to the past for their inspiration. Neo-*mudéjar* was especially favoured for bullrings. The ring at Las Ventas (p101), finished in 1934, is a classic example. A more bombastic (and perhaps the most spectacular) interpretation of the Belle Époque style is Palacios' Palacio de Comunicaciones (p97) with its plethora of pinnacles and prancing ornaments, which was finished in 1917.

By the early 20th century architecture in Madrid had come to be known as the ‘eclectic’ style, a hybrid form of competing influences as architects mixed and matched. Among the joyous and eye-catching examples – Gran Vía (p70) is jammed with them – are the 1916 Edificio Grassy and the 1905 Edificio Metrópolis.

By the 1930s public architecture had taken on a more austere style with pretensions to grandeur. The signature building of this period was Nuevos Ministerios (1934–40; Map p123), whose architect, Segundino Zuazo, was said to have taken inspiration from San Lorenzo de El Escorial (p252), although the resemblance is more about scale than charm and which served as a precursor to the charmless style that would dominate the Franco years.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DICTATORSHIP

After pounding Madrid into submission and seizing control of the country in 1939, General Francisco Franco was eager to leave behind an architectural legacy that would consist of enduring monuments to his rule. The results were either self-glorifying or grand structures of little discernible beauty.

Belonging to the former category were the Valle de los Caídos (p253) and the triumphal Arco de Victoria (Arch of Victory; Map pp116–17), which stands immediately northwest of the Plaza de la Moncloa. Now known more prosaically as the Puerta de Moncloa (Moncloa Gate), the arch was built in 1956 to commemorate his victorious troops’ entry into Madrid and was adorned with references to his triumphs. After Spain’s return to democracy all references to Franco were removed from the gate and only the *quadriga* (a chariot drawn by four horses) on the summit remains.

Skyscrapers were a Franco trademark. Given Franco’s paranoia when it came to communism, the echoes in the Edificio España (1953) of a Soviet Monumentalist style are somewhat ironic. More in keeping with Franco’s self-image was the Torre de Madrid (1957), which was for a time the tallest building in Europe. Both buildings overlook Plaza de España (p70). Far more striking and in keeping with the architecture of old Madrid was the Ministerio del Aire (Air Force Ministry; 1951) on the Plaza de la Moncloa.

Franco’s impact on Madrid can also be seen along the grand, tree-lined Paseo de la Castellana, which took on much of its present aspect during Franco’s rule. Sadly many fine old palaces that once lined the roadside were demolished in the process. These were replaced by such buildings as the none-too-elegant Torres de Colón, which was finished in 1976 after Franco’s death.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

International experts are buzzing with the energy and creativity surrounding Spanish architecture. At one level Spanish architects such as Santiago Calatrava (who transformed Valencia and built the Olympic stadium in Athens among other signature projects) are taking the world by storm. At the same time architects from all over the world are clamouring for Spanish contracts, in part because the projects for urban renewal currently underway in Spain are some of the most innovative in Europe and municipal governments are funding this extraordinary explosion of architectural ambition.

Madrid has been slow in coming to the party, but things are changing rapidly, a fact that will become immediately obvious if you’re arriving in town at Terminal Four (T4) of Madrid’s Barajas International Airport. Designed by Richard Rogers, it’s a stunning, curvaceous work of art, which deservedly won Rogers the prestigious Stirling Prize in October 2006; Spanish architect Carlos Lamela also worked with Rogers on the project.

Another significant transformation on a grand scale is to Madrid’s once-low-rise skyline, with four skyscrapers rising up above the Paseo de la Castellana in northern Madrid. Of these, the Torre Caja Madrid (250m, designed

top picks NOTABLE NEW OR FUSION BUILDINGS

- Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (p82)
- Caixa Forum (p96)
- Museo del Prado (p90)
- Antigua Estación de Atocha (p86)
- Teatro Valle-Inclán (p79)
- Terminal 4, Barajas International Airport (p260)

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE – FIND OUT MORE

Those keen to see beyond the major architectural landmarks of Madrid should pick up a copy of the *Plano de Arquitectura* (Architecture Map), which has photos of 258 distinguished Madrid buildings and a map of where to find them; it’s usually available from the Centro de Turismo de Madrid (p276). Architecture buffs will also want to be in Madrid in late September or early October for the *Semana de la Arquitectura* (Architecture Week), with exhibitions, conferences and guided visits to signature architectural projects in Madrid; it’s organised by the *Fundación Arquitectura COAM* (☎ 91 319 16 83; www.fucoam.es, in Spanish; Calle de Piamonte 23; M Chueca or Colón). To find out more about Madrid’s architectural direction, the June–July 2005, issue No 478, of *Techniques & Architecture* is entitled ‘Madrid: A Challenge’ and devoted solely to the Spanish capital. In early 2006 New York’s Museum of Modern Art recognised the growing importance of Spanish architecture by launching an exhibition called ‘On Site: New Architecture in Spain’. For these and other architectural publications, try *Naos Libros* (Map pp116–17; ☎ 91 547 39 16; www.naoslibros.es, in Spanish; Calle de Quintana 12).

by Sir Norman Foster) is Spain’s tallest building, just surpassing its neighbour, the Torre de Cristal (249.5m, designed by César Pelli). The Torre de Espacio (236m, designed by Henry Cobb) has also won plaudits for its abundant use of glass.

Among the architectural innovations that travellers to Madrid are more likely to experience up close and at greater depth, the most exciting is perhaps the extension of the Museo del Prado, which opened in October 2007. The work of one of Spain’s premier architects, the Madrid-based, Pritzker-prize-winning Rafael Moneo, the extension links the main gallery with what remains of the cloisters of the Iglesia de San Jerónimo el Real.

Tinkering with the 18th-century Palacio de Villanueva that houses the Prado was always going to be controversial and the appropriation of the cloisters to form part of the Prado’s ever-growing empire was widely condemned when the plans were announced. The verdict, however, seems to be that Moneo has pulled it off with considerable aplomb. Much of the praise has centred around the use of traditional building materials like granite, red brick and oak, while the director of the Museo del Prado, Miguel Zugzaga, lauded the final effect as being ‘like placing a still life by Juan Gris next to one by Zurbarán...discreet, elegant and profoundly modern’. Moneo is no stranger to urban challenges. One of his first major tasks was the construction of the Bankinter building in Madrid in 1976. After the mania of the 1960s for destroying 19th-century mansions and replacing them with bland blocks, Moneo demonstrated another way and thus may have saved old Madrid from disappearing under the crushing weight of a lack of imagination. Moneo met two other major Madrid challenges with his acclaimed remodelling of the Antigua Estación de Atocha and his conversion of the Palacio de Villahermosa into the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, both in the early 1990s.

Another landmark project in recent years has been the extension of the Centro de Arte de Reina Sofía by the French architect Jean Nouvel. It’s a stunning red glass-and-steel complement to the old-world Antigua Estación de Atocha across the Plaza del Emperador Carlos V and the austerity of the remainder of the museum’s 18th-century structure.

Between the Reina Sofía and the Prado and opposite the Real Jardín Botánico, the Caixa Forum Madrid (p96), completed in 2008, is one of Madrid’s most striking buildings. Designed by the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, its aesthetic seems to owe more to the world of sculpture than of architecture with its unusual iron-and-brick form. It’s a worthy, surprising addition to the Paseo del Prado’s grandeur.

One truly madrileño architectural team is the couple Ignacio García Pedrosa and Ángela García de Paredes, whose modern redesign of the Teatro Valle-Inclán (formerly the Teatro Olímpico) on the Plaza de Lavapiés has won much admiration. Emilio Tuñón and Luis Mansilla have joined forces to undertake the delicate work-in-progress of building the Museum of Royal Collections, close to the Palacio Real.

Other urban renewal projects are regenerating some of Madrid’s satellite suburbs, such as Carabanchel to the south and Sanchinarro to the north, with innovative approaches to the city’s urban sprawl.

And one final thing for those who love architecture: while in Madrid you really must stay at the Hotel Puerta América (p238), where each floor has been custom designed by a world-renowned architect.

ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING

Madrid is already feeling the effects of climate change, and although Spain and Madrid are not entirely to blame, the country's lamentable environmental record is nonetheless a major factor. At a city level some positive steps are being taken, but these pale in comparison to the problems the city itself seems to be creating, particularly when it comes to pollution. On a planning front Madrid is, depending on your perspective, a massive building site or an exciting work-in-progress.

THE LAND

At 650m above sea level on a high continental plateau, Madrid is the highest capital city in Europe. The Comunidad de Madrid – in the centre of which lies Madrid in a rough triangle – covers 7995 sq km, less than 2% of Spain's territory.

Madrid's northwest boundary consists of a series of mountain ranges that run from the northeast to the southwest for 140km as part of the longer chain known as the Cordillera Central. Known by madrileños simply as the Sierra, they encompass the Somosierra, Sierra de Guadarrama and Sierra de Gredos. However, as the foothills of the Sierra lie a considerable distance from the city centre, little stands in the way of Madrid's relentless sprawl.

Within Madrid itself there are plenty of gentle rises and falls to test weary legs, the most significant surrounding the ridge along which the original Islamic fortress town (the *alcázar*) was raised. From the Palacio Real, the Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Almudena and Vistillas, the land falls away into parks towards the Río Manzanares.

To the east, old Madrid rises almost imperceptibly, drops down again to the great north-south boulevard, the Paseo de la Castellana, before climbing again towards Salamanca and the Parque del Buen Retiro.

GREEN MADRID

Downtown Madrid has an abundance of parks and gardens. The most central and attractive is the Parque del Buen Retiro, an expansive manicured stretch of greenery that once constituted the eastern boundary of the city and was also the preserve of royalty and nobles. With its sculpted gardens, artificial lakes and roaming paths, it's a wonderful escape from the din of central Madrid. Just down the hill from the Retiro is the charming little Real Jardín Botánico, a botanical garden packed with all sorts of exotic species.

Equally green and enticing for a romantic stroll is the Campo del Moro, which slopes away west of the Palacio Real, while the nearby Parque del Oeste is similarly hilly and delightfully green. Altogether wilder is the Casa de Campo, west of the Manzanares and often called 'the lungs of Madrid'.

However, it must be acknowledged that this region's environmental problems are legion – the worst drought since records began, greenhouse gas emissions more than three times the level agreed to under the Kyoto Protocol – and the consequences for Madrid are potentially devastating. In the last 30 years Madrid has seen a rise of 2.2°C in its average temperature, a greater increase than for any other European capital. The Madrid authorities have begun campaigns to encourage sensible water use among the city's residents, but water restrictions are not yet in place and the government's strategy seems to rely more on hoping for rain than on serious water conservation. (In late 2005 the 5200 inhabitants of Miraflores de la Sierra, a village 50km north of the capital in the Sierra, woke up to find that the village had simply run out of water.) The rains may have stayed away, but there is also a man-made dimension to the problem – Madrid's 29 golf courses use as much water in a day as a city of 100,000 inhabitants and half remain under investigation for not using recycled water.

If Madrid never seems to have enough water, it has the reverse problem with pollution. Some four million car journeys are made in the capital every day, with one million vehicles entering and leaving the city. The resulting cloud of pollution that settles over Madrid on windless days – known locally as 'the grey beret' – means that breathing Madrid's air is equivalent to smoking 11 cigarettes a day. Spain's obsession with diesel-fuelled cars (which produce seven times more pollution than cars running on unleaded petrol) only exacerbates the problem.

Madrid's city authorities have considered introducing a London-style congestion charge in order to reduce pollution, but the plan remains nothing more than that. That's not to say that some concrete steps haven't been taken. One obvious measure has been the pedestrianisation of many inner-city streets, among them Calle de Arenal and some 40 hectares of streets in the barrio of Huertas, which have been closed to all but local traffic. The unsuccessful Socialist candidate for mayor in 2007 even proposed closing off Gran Vía to traffic.

The constant investment in Madrid's already impressive underground metro system – one of the 10 longest in the world and the third longest in Europe – ensures that Madrid's high pollution levels can in no way be blamed on inadequate public transport. Since 2000 more than 100km have been added to the network, drawing an ever-growing number of satellite towns into the system.

While rubbish is collected every night, recycling is optional and largely ignored. Noise pollution is another massive problem throughout the city. Residents in some Madrid barrios regularly suffer noise levels above 71 decibels; the World Health Organisation warns that anything above 65 decibels poses a health risk and a recent investigation found that a dozen sites consistently exceed such levels. Madrid's first noise survey found that the streets around Calle de O'Donnell, the Paseo de los Recoletos and Calle de Santa Engracia are among Madrid's noisiest. But at many points across the city, rowdy revellers, heavy traffic, late-night rubbish collection, all-night roadworks, the incessant sirens of emergency vehicles and horn-happy drivers all help to keep madrileños' nerves well jangled. Long live double glazing.

Beyond the city, the planned upgrading of the M-501 through the west of the Comunidad de Madrid has been hugely controversial. Environmentalists argue that the road expansion threatens 13 nesting pairs of the endangered Iberian Imperial Eagle, as well as destroying woodlands that shelter 10% of Spain's endangered species and possibly the world's most endangered cat species, the Iberian lynx. When environmentalists announced in 2007 that they had found droppings from a lynx, a species that was long thought to have died out in the Madrid region, the regional premier Esperanza Aguirre refused to conduct an investigation and accused them of faking the findings in order to halt the road's construction.

Madrid may also be endlessly expanding to swallow up previously nonurban areas, but some small steps are being taken in compensation. Among these are ambitious plans to reforest 15,000 hectares of land around the Comunidad de Madrid. Within metropolitan Madrid, 6km of the M-30 beltway has recently been driven underground, to be replaced by the Parque de Manzanares, 500,000 sq metres of landscaped greenery in southwestern Madrid that the mayor calls 'a giant green carpet'; local residents are still waiting to see whether the dust stirred up by three years of massive road works will prove to be worth it.

URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Madrid's mayors are nothing if not ambitious. Madrid's mayor from 1991 to 2003, José María Álvarez del Manzano, became known as 'The Tunnelator' because of his passion for building tunnels and rerouting the course of the city's traffic. But he was nothing compared to his successor, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, who has become known as 'The Pharaoh' (see the boxed text, p52) for the sheer scale of his infrastructure projects. Scarcely surprising, therefore, that Danny De Vito, when asked for his opinion of Madrid during a visit some years back, replied 'Tell the mayor to tell me when he's dug up the treasure'.

Madrid can seem to be perennially awash with *obras* (road or infrastructure works). At one level such major works are necessary in a city for whom urban planning was, for centuries, somewhat chaotic and rarely part of an overall plan to make the city more livable. As such some major infrastructure projects have been long overdue, from the extraordinary upgrading of the city's metro system (see *opposite*) to the proposed Parque de Manzanares (*opposite*). The shift towards massive skyscrapers in northern Madrid (see p48) has also been sold as a solution to Madrid's critical shortage of office and residential space. Although often heard complaining about the significant disruptions caused by the works, madrileños are generally quite proud that they live in a city that is constantly being improved.

But not all 'improvements' to the city have been welcomed. In 2006 the Baroness Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza, who was responsible for convincing her husband to bequeath his unrivalled art collection to the Spanish capital (see p95), locked horns with Madrid's mayor Alberto

Ruiz-Gallardón. The reason? The mayor planned to divert traffic away from the Museo del Prado and create a pedestrian precinct outside the Prado. Although the idea sounds good in principle, the problem is that much of the traffic would move across the boulevard to run past the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. The proposed works would also have seen more than 700 trees removed, among them 95 trees that date back to the 18th century when Carlos III ruled Spain; Ruiz-Gallardón claimed that all would be replanted, the baroness threatened to chain herself to a tree. At the time of writing, the spat between two of Madrid's most powerful personalities was still to be resolved, although popular opinion seemed to be siding with the baroness.

For all the attempts to address the problems caused by a lack of historical planning, Madrid may already have reached the point of no return. Surrounded by ever-growing concentric ring roads, Madrid just can't stop growing. Whole new suburbs are under construction and will swallow up pretty much all that remains of the available land in the Madrid municipal area by around 2020. Such an approach (with its inevitably speculative side) is fairly typical of the PP, and opposition parties and environmentalists alike have slammed the programme. Whoever's to blame, it's already too late to stop Madrid's transformation from a compact, manageable and high-density city into one that sprawls endlessly to the horizon.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Madrid's, like many Spaniards, have always had a fairly wary approach to the authorities who would try to rule over them. This is perhaps best summed up by the tale oft-told by straight-faced locals that every one of his compatriots carries a letter from the king that reads 'This Spaniard is entitled to do whatever he feels like doing'. Madrileños are nonetheless presided over by three layers of government.

At the national level, the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE; Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, has held power since March 2004, winning re-election in 2008. The national Cortes (parliament) is divided into two houses, the Congreso de los Diputados (lower house) on Carrera de San Jerónimo, and the Senado (senate), off Plaza de España.

The Comunidad de Madrid, one of 17 Spanish autonomous regions, is led by Esperanza Aguirre of the conservative Partido Popular (PP; Popular Party), who is the country's first female president of a Spanish region. After a close-run election in 2003 Aguirre won an absolute majority of seats with 53.3% of the vote to the PSOE's 33.4% (the left-wing Izquierda Unida won 8.8%) in May 2007.

At a city level the government has been the preserve of the PP since 1991 and is led by the *alcalde* (mayor), currently Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón. Ruiz-Gallardón easily won the May 2007 election, winning 34 out of the 57 seats, and is one of Madrid's most popular politicians of recent times. Among his councillors (and a right-wing politician to watch) is Ana Botella, wife of José María

THE PHAROAH OF MADRID

Madrid's mayor, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, must be one of few mayors around the world to have been re-elected (in 2007) on a promise that he begin no new major infrastructure projects during his next term in office. It was a shrewd political move by a man dubbed by his subjects as 'The Pharaoh'.

Behind the nickname was a city thoroughly exhausted by the endless road works and infrastructure projects that had made Madrid Europe's largest building site. At the height of Ruiz-Gallardón's mania for tearing down, digging up and generally recasting the city in his own image, there were, in 2005, more than 900 holes officially open across Madrid, not to mention 75 large infrastructure projects underway. Within this context of perennial noise and stirred-up dust, it was more than a little galling for madrileños to find that they could be charged with a local law prohibiting 'the abusive use of the public street', when most such abuse was the work of lawmakers themselves.

Of equal concern to madrileños is the financial cost involved. The Parque de Manzanares project alone will end up costing local taxpayers almost €4 billion, while the city's annual budget has a gaping €5 billion hole in its centre.

Thus it is that when the dust settles and the city finally falls quiet, Madrid will be vastly improved, but very much in the red.

Aznar, the former PP Spanish president. The city council has operated for decades out of the Ayuntamiento on Plaza de la Villa in the heart of the old city, although many officials (including the mayor) have since moved to the Palacio de Comunicaciones on Plaza de la Cibeles.

The next city and regional elections are set for 2011, with national elections a year later. For more information on the machinations of political life Madrid style, see [p35](#).

FASHION

In the 18th century madrileños rioted when told by the king that they could no longer wear the sweeping capes that so distinguished them. The days of Spanish capes may be long gone, but they still take their fashion seriously in Madrid.

The current buzz surrounding Spanish fashion began in the 1980s when Spain in general, and Madrid in particular, embraced all that was new and experimental after the fascist austerity of the Franco years; during *la movida madrileña* Madrid was said to be home to 1500 fashion designers. What has changed recently is that Madrid has come to surpass Barcelona as Spain's fashion capital; while Madrid may not yet rival Milan or Paris, Madrid's Pasarela Cibeles ([p17](#)) runway fashion shows have become increasingly important, especially for spring and autumn collections. As a result Madrid is considered by many in-the-know to rank among the five most important fashion cities in the world (along with New York and London).

One of the success stories of Spanish cultural life, the Spanish fashion industry now employs more than 500,000 people (more than three times the number employed by bullfighting and up from 180,000 in 1995). This is an industry that is aiming high and industry insiders admit that Spain's *fashionistas* won't be satisfied until Madrid has been elevated to the top tier of European fashion capitals. On current trends, they may not have that long to wait.

Colour is the key to Spanish fashion's individuality. The psychedelic colours of *la movida madrileña* ([p32](#)) in the 1980s have never really gone away and the candy-bright colours of Agatha Ruiz de la Prada ([p137](#); Andy Warhol was a fan of this icon of modern Madrid) have now acquired something of a middle-class respectability; her work, widely available, encompasses everything from children's clothes to outrageous evening wear for adults. This stylish-but-anything-goes approach has morphed into a fashion scene dominated by bold colours equally well suited to the casual as to a more tailored look.

Classic and more conservative lines are the preserve of Loewe (see the boxed text, [p139](#)), Sybilla (see the boxed text, [p140](#)) and the madrileña Alma Aguilar (see the boxed text, [p140](#)). A more formal/casual mix is favoured by designers like Amaya Arzuaga ([p137](#)), Purificación García (see the boxed text, [p139](#)), Roberto Torretta (see the boxed text, [p140](#)) and Roberto Verino (see the boxed text, [p139](#)). Apart from the names already mentioned, others to watch out for on the catwalk include the madrileño Javier Larraínzar (one of the city's top haute couture icons), Pedro del Hierro, Kina Fernández, Nacho Ruiz and Montesinos Alama. More clean lined and casual is Armand Basi ([p137](#)), while the clothes of Davidelfin ([p137](#)) span the divide between edgy and exclusive.

Spain is also famous for the quality of its shoes and the designers once known only to Spaniards and madrileñas are fast becoming fixtures on the international scene. Manolo Blahnik (see the boxed text, [p139](#)) is perhaps the best known and beloved by red-carpet Hollywood stars. Many designers also do great lines in handbags and other accessories (they wouldn't maintain the loyalty of Madrileñas if they didn't) and there's no finer exponent of the art than the hand-painted sophisticated but fun masterpieces of Iñaki Sampedro (see the boxed text, [p151](#)).

The shopping explosion that began in the 1990s in Madrid shows no sign of abating and it's unlikely to end any time soon. It's not only upmarket designer wear that is dominating the madrileño wardrobe and capturing international headlines. A host of more affordable high-street fashions is also leading the way. Just about every Madrid barrio has at least one outlet for names like Zara (with 2244 shops in 56 countries), Adolfo Domínguez and Mango, which have in turn become some of Spain's leading exports. And where would you be without the cool and casual shoes of Camper ([p137](#))? If these names have been your introduction to the world of Spanish fashion, you'll very much enjoy Madrid, but don't forget that these are merely an introduction to a far more sophisticated look.

Madrid has numerous places to shop. For Spanish designers, Salamanca in general is Madrid's and Spain's fashion capital, with exclusive Chueca outposts along Calle de Piamonte,

STORM IN A D-CUP

In recent years Madrid's annual Pasarela Cibeles international fashion week has been steadily growing in importance to the extent that it has surpassed Barcelona's fashion week and taken its place in the second tier of European fashion shows. In 2006, however, the Pasarela Cibeles shot to international attention when the Spanish Association of Fashion Designers announced that excessively thin models would be banned from the city's catwalk. The new policy, which fuelled an international debate on the image presented by catwalk models, was adopted after protests by doctors and women's rights groups who argued that the models at the previous year's fashion show were unhealthily thin and set a bad example for young girls and women. The organisers of the Pasarela Cibeles proved true to their word in February 2007 when five out of the 69 female models were disqualified for having a body mass-to-height ratio, or Body Mass Index (BMI), of less than 18, a benchmark set by UN health experts. One of the rejected models had a BMI of just 16 – the equivalent of being 175cm tall and weighing just 50kg. Apart from some fashion shows in New York, no other fashion show has yet followed Madrid's lead. The French Couture Federation dismissed the new rules, saying that 'everyone would laugh' if Paris were to adopt the change. Organisers of Milan fashion week, however, promised to release a new code of conduct and has begun to hold plus-size shows to show its support for Madrid's new policy.

Calle de Almirante and Calle del Conde Xiquena ([Map pp110–11](#)). Malasaña is the place for an altogether different fashion aesthetic with quirky, imaginative shops where the line between designer fashions and urban streetwear is decidedly blurred. Calle de Fuencarral (see the boxed text, [p150](#)) is Madrid's spiritual home for edgy urban fashion. For classy shoes and accessories at discounted prices, Chueca's Calle de Augusto Figueroa ([Map pp110–11](#)) is the stuff of shopping legend. For more details on shopping in Madrid, turn to [p132](#).

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