

MADRID

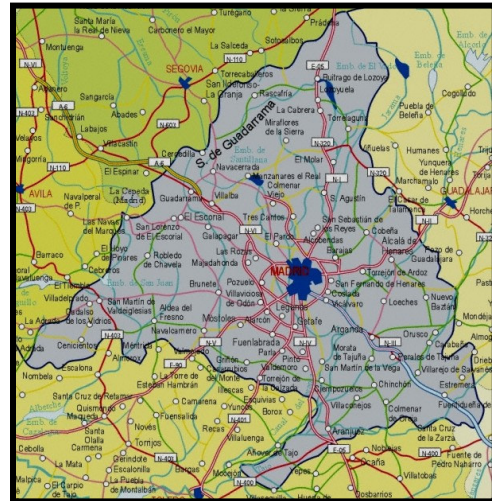
Madrid, the Spanish capital, bursts with activity. It is easy to fill one's days visiting some of the most famous works of art in the world, touring the various plazas, relaxing in a park or café, and sampling all kinds of Spanish cuisine. The excitement increases after dark, when Madrid's famous bars and discos provide endless options to party until (or past) dawn.

Location: Madrid is located in the *Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid* (Autonomous Community of Madrid) in between the provinces of Castilla y León and Castilla la Mancha.

Population: 3.1 million

Area: 607 km² (377 miles)

History: The first veritable references to Madrid go back to the 10th century AD, when it was a Muslim village. In 1085, Alfonso VI took control and incorporated Madrid (then known as Magerit) into the Spanish empire. In 1561 Felipe II designated the city as the permanent capital.



Climate: Madrid has four distinct seasons. The summers are hot and dry, although temperatures do not usually reach the sweltering levels of Andalucía. Spring and Fall are the most pleasant times to visit Madrid, although they are also the seasons with the most rain. Winters are quite cold but dry.

Geography: Madrid and its surrounding areas are very flat and dry, although there are mountains to the north of the city.



Local Industries: Government, University, Private businesses.

Famous Monuments: Madrid is teeming with things to see: the Prado museum, Plaza Mayor, Retiro park, the Reina Sofía museum, and the Puerta del Sol are the must-sees.

Local Highlights: Fiestas de San Isidro in mid-May, Gay Pride parade in June, and the New Year's countdown in Puerta del Sol.

Cultural Insight: In Madrid, *Museos de Jamón* (Ham Museums) are very popular places to eat dinner. Sample a few things standing up at the bar, or sit down for a more relaxed meal of Spain's best ham and sausages.

More Information:

- <http://www.aboutmadrid.com/>
- <http://www.munimadrid.es/Principal/ingles/portada.html>