

Madrid Cool & Cultural

TOUR 1 Essential Madrid

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In the footsteps of the Habsburgs

LONG DESCRIPTION:

During the Habsburg Tour we will give you a very accurate idea of the old city. The tour encompasses 16th- and 17th-century Madrid, including the grand plazas and traffic arteries that the Habsburg families built to transform a quiet town into a world-class capital.

TIME:

Duration: 3hours

Length: 4,7Km

HIGHLIGHTS:

Puerta del Sol, Royal Post Office, Santa Cruz Palace ,Plaza Mayor, Casa de la Panaderia,Casa de la Carniceria,Casa Botin,Luis Candelas Caves, Conde de Barajas Square, Cinearte, Carboneras Convent, Corpus Christy Church, San Miguel Market, Codo Street, Villa Square, Casa de la Villa, Casa de Cisneros, Torre de los Lujanes, ,Houses of Malice,Cruz Verde Square, Uceda Palace,The viaducto, De la Vega Hill, Almudena Crypt and Cathedral, Oriente Square, Royal Opera Theatre, Royal Palace, Gardens Campo Moro and Sabatini, Encarnacion Monastery, Royal Barefood Sisters Convent, Sala de Alhajas, San Ginés Church.

STARTING POINT:

Puerta del Sol (Tube station: Sol)

ENDING POINT:

Calle Mayor corner with Puerta del Sol (Tube station: Sol)

BEST TIME TO GO:

Before 10am to enjoy a full day tour or after 5pm (in summer)

WORST TIME TO GO:

After 12pm, because these are the peak hours of visitors

Where to refuel:

"San Ginés" to take hot chocolate with churros, "Mercado de San Miguel" for sweet or savory tapas, "Casa Botin" for a memorable lunch, "Café de Oriente " for an elegant coffee or tea .

City Info:

The open nature of the people, the different languages you can hear on the streets, the life full of energy and happiness 24 hours per day. These things don't appear overnight. These things appear after years of history:

There is no much to say about Madrid before the arrival of Muslims. It was 865, when Muhammad I, son of Abderraman II, ordered to fortify the small village of what was then called Magerit.

Christians had to wait more than 200 years, until in 1083, king Alfonso VI of Castile, known as "The Brave", conquered the small village. Crucial help was provided by a teenager who climbed the city walls and opened the doors. This boy was nicknamed Gato ('cat') and this explains why the people from Madrid are known in the local argot as Gatos ('cats')

In (sup)1202, the first Code of Laws, which regulated the city's municipal life, was given to Madrid by the king. In the year 1309, under the king Ferdinand IV, the Castilian Court was summoned up in Madrid for the first time. The nobility, the members of the councils of the different cities, the royal princes and the Archbishop of Toledo, the first ecclesiastical authority of the kingdom attended the meeting. From that year on, Madrid was the meeting point of the Castilian Court on several occasions. The Kings from the different dynasties were attracted by Madrid and they spent long periods in the city. In this way, Madrid began to grow.

Pedro I and Enrique III, kings of Castilla, were the first to arrive. In 1477, the Catholic (sup) Kings arrived in Madrid. Some very important works of art belong to their reign, such as the bishop's chapel in the church of Saint Andrew, the house of the Lujanes or the house of Cisneros in the Villa Square. During their reign Madrid experienced a great growth. At the end of the 15th century, the city had 3,400 inhabitants

Carlos I chose Madrid for short stays and, in the year **1561, Felipe II established his residence in the city of Madrid**. Moreover, on 13th September 1584, Felipe II saw his greatest dream fulfilled: the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. At the end of the 16th century, the city had 40,000 inhabitants.

START:

Welcome to the tour! This is the perfect starting point to explore the heart of Madrid. Centrally located, it is one of the city's most lively places, a meeting point for locals and visitors.

The square has an oval shape and is the departing point of 9 streets all very representative of the history of Madrid and nowadays bustling shopping and leisure venues. And for the locals, popularly known as cats, Puerta del Sol meets some of the most beloved symbols of the city.

The neon light Tio Pepe is considered artistic heritage and is the only survivor among all the signs in the square since 1930

1. **Puerta del Sol.** (The Sun Gate)

Five hundred years ago it was just other city gate with an image of the sun carved on it. Many historic events that have marked the Spanish social and political life, have taken place here. On May 2, 1808, this was the place where the people of Madrid started the uprising against the French Napoleon invaders, starting what in Spain is known as the Independence War. And on April 14, 1931, the Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed here to a huge multitude filling the square. Madrilians also congregate here to celebrate the New Year arrival. The clock at the top of the Royal Post Office announces with twelve chimes, the last twelve seconds of the ending year, while people eat one grape per chime. The rest of

Spaniards sit in front of their TV sets, listening to the chimes and taking their grapes too.

2. **Royal Post Office**

The most remarkable building of the square was built in the late 18th century as the head office of the Spanish post. During Franco dictatorship, the building was the headquarter of the fearsome Francoist police, a detention and torture center of political activists. In 1985 the new-born Government of the Region of Madrid acquired the building and after a major reform, in 1998 it became the seat of the Presidency of the Region of Madrid officially known as Madrid Autonomous Community.

INFO: Clock Tower

The building features the famous clock tower on its main facade. The first clock came from the ancient Hospital of Good Success. The present one was laid out 1866 and it is carefully maintained for the New Year celebration.

3. **KM 0**

If you take a look on the pavement in front of the Post Office's main door, you will see the 'kilometer 0' plaque. This is the official starting point of the radial network of the country main roads. The numbering of Madrid streets is also determined by the proximity to 'kilometer 0'.

4. **Statue of Charles III.**

The equestrian bronze statue of king Charles III (1716–1788) was made by Miguel Ángel Rodríguez and Eduardo Zancada in 1994. In fact, it is a replica of a smaller statue sculpted by Juan Pascual de Mena in the 18th century. The statue, located in such an emblematic place, pays tribute to the most enlightened of the Borbons kings, also nicknamed as 'the best Major of Madrid', due to the extensive public works programmed he began. Charles III is responsible of some of the town finest monuments.

5. **Statue of 'The bear and the bush' (The Strawberry Tree).**

You are facing the most famous symbol of Madrid: a 20 ton statue of a bear eating fruits from a bush, a kind of strawberry tree. The female bear symbolizes the fertile soil of Madrid and the tree symbolizes the city nobility. The tree is named 'Madroño' in Spanish and was chosen as a city symbol because it was common in the area and because both the tree and the city names sound alike.

6. **Casa Labra**

One of the most traditional Madrid bars, opened since 1860. It is famous for being the birthplace of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in 1879. It's also famous for serving delicious deep-fried battered cod along with fresh draught beer. You can take your drinks and tapas standing at the bar amongst the good-humored crowd, or you can sit down for a full meal in the restaurant.

7. **Casa de Diego.**

This is the most famous atelier and shop for fans, walking sticks and umbrellas. It opened at Puerta del Sol in 1858. Since then, the successors of the founder - Manuel de Diego – have continued to manage this business dedicated to manufacturing, selling and repairing fans, umbrellas and parasols. All the items are first-quality and hand-made and some are real works of art, like the fan used by Princess Leticia at her wedding. At Casa de Diego fans are real handicraft, engraved or not, open work, simple, wood, ebony and bone.

8. **La Mallorquina Pastry shop**

Founded in 1894 by Juan Ripio from Majorca, the largest of the Baleares islands, La Mallorquina is found in a privileged spot. Its specialties are napolitanas (flaky buns filled with custard or chocolate), rosquillas (small ring-shaped sweet buns) and truffles, which can be eaten at the counter or in the tea room. Every day there are crowds of people at the counters, just buying or actually eating the excellent products offered!

NAVI: Walk along Mayor St. Turn left into San Cristobal St. to Santa Cruz Square

9. **Santa Cruz Palace**

You can admire one of the best examples of Habsburg architecture in Madrid. The red brick, twin-towered building was built between 1629 and 1643 by Juan Bautista Crescendi. The palace originally served as the royal prison. Many waited here for the verdict of the infamous Spanish Inquisition. For most of them the next step was execution at the Plaza Mayor.

10. **Statue of Orpheus**

Orpheus was a mythological character of Greek culture that inherited from his parents, Apollo and Calliope, the gifts of poetry and music. This hero is involved in many myths. The most famous of them is about his voyage to the Inferno to rescue his beloved Eurydice, enchanting the underworld gods with his music. The sculptor was Juan Gomez de Mora. In its pedestal, you will find the evolution of Madrid coat of arms throughout the history.

NAVI: Turn left onto Gerona St. and walk into the Mayor Sq.

11. **Plaza Mayor**

Since its inauguration in 1620 Plaza Mayor has been the architectural symbol of Hapsburg Madrid. During the middle ages the site was just a market place outside the city walls. But King Philip II turned it into a large, 120m long, beautiful square, surrounded by wooden buildings. The square burnt down three times and the last reconstruction is what we can see today. Since its creation, Plaza Mayor has been the center of festivities, bull fights, royal coronations and executions and is still used today for public celebrations.

INFO

The square was the scene of “acts of faith”. the ritual of public penance of condemned heretics and apostates that took place when the Spanish Inquisition had

decided their punishment after the trial. These would be attended by as many as 50,000 spectators.

12. Casa de la Panadería

Now a Touristic Information Point, which is part of the city hall, the Casa de la Panadería was originally a wooden construction designed by Juan Gomez de Mora and completed in 1619. Claudio Coello and Jose Jimenez Donoso were responsible for the façade frescoes and interior decoration. In 1914 Enrique Guijo was commissioned to do decorative paintings on the façade. By 1988 the decoration had deteriorated so much that Madrid City Council held a competition to find an artist to restore the façade. A number of artists were invited and Carlos Franco was chosen for the task. The work was completed in 1992.

13. Casa de la Carnicería

This house was formerly a butcher's shop, it used to house the general reservoir that supplied meat to markets in the Village. Later it was a Public Clinic, Third Town Hall, the headquarters of the Municipal Board of the Central District and is currently under construction to become a tourist hotel.

14. Equestrian Statue of Philip III.

The statue was made by sculptors Juan de Bolonia and Pietro Tacca in 1616, and it has been in the center of the square since 1848. Philip III succeeded his father in 1598 as King of Spain and Portugal. An aficionado of theater, painting and, above all, hunting, he was not interested in government affairs. He delegated them completely in the hands of his prime minister, the Duke of Lerma. Influenced by him, he moved the Spanish court to Valladolid temporarily. In 1606, the Court returned to Madrid.

NAVI: Walk through Toledo St. The street is located beside the Casa de la Carnicería.

15. Calle Toledo

Madrid developed in the 16th century . Before that Toledo had been the traditional capital of Spain but King Philip II. Moved the capital to Madrid in 1561. The street went straight to Toledo, crossing Toledo Door and Toledo Bridge. In those days the farms and the vegetable gardens were in Toledo, so all the food came along this street directly to the Fresh Market of Mayor Square.

16. Hernanz Shop

This shop is certainly the most known of all the factories of espadrilles in Spain. Everything has been handmade since its foundation 167 years ago and it is owned by the same family for five generations. Observe the long wooden counter that dates back to the 19th century. The espadrilles were traditional footwear for peasants, but in 1960 Yves Saint Laurent's top models wore them at a fashion show. Since that the espadrilles have become very famous. .

NAVI: Take the first street on your right and soon you will reach La Provincia square.

17. **Puerta Cerrada**

This is formally the edge of an old ravine along which Segovia Street now runs. It once marked the boundary of medieval Madrid.

You can read at the wall: "I come from a city built over water and its walls are of fire. Furthermore, people go in and out through closed gates".

When the Arabs attacked Magerit and the ammunition collided against the wall, sparks popped out because the wall was made with flint stone. Puerta Cerrada was located in a square named after it nowadays. It was closed down because thieves used its turns to rob people there.

NAVI: Walk along Cuchilleros Street and take the first street on your left to Conde de Barajas Sq.

18. **Cuchilleros Street**

Traditionally in Spain many streets used to be grouped by unions, a Jewish heritage in our country. In the 1700's it was a place where swords and knives were sharpened since it was close to the butcher's area in the Plaza.

19. **Casa Botin**

According to the Guinness Book of Records, it is the oldest restaurant in the world, founded in 1725. It has four floors including the cellar and its vaults give it a very peculiar style. The restaurant is also mentioned in the book *Fortunata y Jacinta* by Benito Pérez Galdós (published 1886-1887) and Goya supposedly worked here before becoming a painter. Hemingway was a frequent visitor and pronounced it one of his favourite restaurants.

20. **Las cuevas de Luis Candelas**

Conjure up the romantic atmosphere of 18-19th century Madrid, when royalty easily crossed their way with tough bandits. Legend has it that this Spanish version of Robin Hood stored his treasures in these cellars under the walls of the south-west corner of Plaza Mayor called Cuchilleros.

21. **Plaza Conde Barajas**

The square is one of the largest in the Habsburgs neighborhood. Situated here the Zapatas Palace where the general Espartero lived, winner of the popular revolution in 1854 Espartero wanted the abolition of the moderate Constitution approved in 1845. The worsening situation prompted the Queen Elizabeth II to appoint Espartero president of the Council Minister. In this square artists attempt to sell their paintings. Full of character and real life, Madrid's busy markets are an integral part of local life. They provide a great place to find bargains or just browse around the wide variety of stalls and enjoy the exciting atmosphere and local market banter.

22. **CINEARTE**

These are the studios of Pedro Almodóvar, nowadays the most successful and internationally acclaimed Spanish filmmaker. Almodovar won in 1999 the Best Foreign Movie Oscar for his moving film 'All about my mother' a melodrama about a single mother and in 2002 won the Best Original Screenplay for 'Talk to her'. In most of his movies you will recognize scenes shot in locations of the historical Madrid.

NAVI: Turn right into Calle de la Pasa (a little later in the same street, you will find Mercado de San Miguel) on your left, before the Market, turn into Conde de Miranda St. Then take Elbow Street.

23. Conde de Miranda Sq.

The buildings belong to the Nunciatura. Is currently the Archbishop's Palace. Including San Miguel Church on the back. This remarkable building is unusual in Spanish baroque architecture for its Italian influence and its convex facade. Officially known as the Basílica Pontificia de San Miguel, it was built between 1739 and 1745 under the instructions of Luis Antonio de Borbón & Farnesio, Archbishop of Toledo. In the 20th century, the Opus Dei took charge of the basilica, and added a crypt.

24. Carboneras Convent

The site is the Hieronymie nuns cloister, better known as Las Carboneras because of the donation of an altarpiece devoted to the Virgin, which was found in a coal warehouse. The Hieronymus nuns make sweets such as almond biscuits, *almendrados*, and the *tocinillo del cielo*, an egg yolk and sugar confection topped with caramel and orange sweets. To the right of the entrance, there's a small door with a doorbell. Ring and the door will open, go inside and order pastries at the turn table.

25. Corpus Christi Church

The church was founded in 1607 by Beatriz Ramirez de Mendoza, one of Queen Ana de Austria's ladies. In those days, convents and churches were built by kings and the nobility not only because of their religious feelings, but also in order to demonstrate their wealth. It was a very expensive undertaking as, apart from the church, they also had to build the residence for the monks or nuns and the cloister. They usually provided them with an annuity, which was foreseen in the founder's testament. Many times the natural heirs did not follow their ancestor's will. The architect was Miguel de Soria and the building has not been restored. Over the entrance door there is a relief of Saint Jerome and Saint Paula. Inside the church there is a very original painting by Vicente Carducho. It represents The Last Supper vertically, with a strong foreshortened, instead of the usual horizontal arrangement of table and guests.

26. San Miguel Market

This Mercado is the last iron market hall in Madrid since other older iron covered markets have all been demolished. At the end of the 20th century the future of the Mercado de San Miguel was also uncertain due to the growing competition of modern supermarkets which led to a declining number of visitors and vendors. It started its new life in 2009 when it reopened with 33 vendors selling fresh products, fish, pasta, meat and even cookbooks in a beautiful and pleasant atmosphere. There are also a number of cafés and mini-restaurants which offer specialties, from tapas to foreign food. For the thirsty visitors there are several bars offering everything from coffee or beer to wine and champagne.

27. Calle del Codo

This narrow street of ancient Madrid bends like an elbow, as we suspect from the beginning. A labyrinth street, it was an ideal place for brawls, robberies, ambushes, sword fighting and curious anecdotes.

28. Plaza de la Villa

This name commemorates the granting of the title of villa to Madrid by King Alfonso VIII in the 13th century. King Henry IV increased its honor by extending the title with the epithets of very Noble and very Loyal. The distinction between towns and cities was only relevant under the Ancient Regime, when cities had a broader range of privileges and more autonomy to rule their own affairs. Villas, however, were still in a higher category than villages and hamlets. It is obvious that today, although it is still being called villa, Madrid is not only the largest city in Spain, but also the fourth largest in Western Europe.

29. Casa de la Villa

The largest building in the square is the former Town Hall or Casa de la Villa. The construction was started in 1644 by Juan Gómez de Mora, the architect of the Plaza Mayor. Over time a number of architects were in charge of the construction of the Town Hall until it was finished in 1696 by Teodoro Adremans. The building served both as town hall and prison, hence the two symmetrical doors. The left one gave entrance to the prison, the other one to the town hall. In 2007 the grander Telecommunications Palace took over the role of Madrid's town hall.

30. Casa de Cisneros

An arch connects Casa de la Villa with Casa de Cisneros, a castle built in 1537 by Benito Jimenez de Cisneros, a nephew of Cardinal Cisneros. The castle was built in the plateresque style, a Spanish version of early Renaissance style.

31. Lujanes Tower

The oldest building at Plaza de la Villa, Torre de los Lujanes, is also one of the oldest buildings in Madrid. The tower was constructed in the 15th century in Mudejar style. The structure features a gothic porch decorated with three coats of arms.

32. The Statue of Don Alvaro de Bazán

This is the statue of Alvaro de Bazán, the Spanish Admiral who planned the Armada, the fleet that attempted to invade England. A great storm off the coast of Scotland and Irish led some of the ships sent to unload the Thirds of Flanders in the English coast were wrecked. Then the king said: "I sent my ships to fight the elements." The statue designed by Mariano Benlliure was added to the square in 1980.

NAVI: Walk along the narrow Calle del Cordón, cross the street and take the stairs into Calle del Conde, first right corner with Calle del Rollo.

33. Houses to the Malice.

When Philip II moved the court to Madrid he had to face a problem: to host nobles, ambassadors. So he created a law that obliged all citizens who had more than one

floor in their houses to lodge a member of the court, and he could stay for months. People started to build their houses with two floors but in a way that they seemed to have just one from the outside in order to avoid the tax.

NAVI: Continue down the stairs to reach the Square of the Green Cross

34. Plaza de la Cruz Verde, Square of the Green Cross

The Square of the Green Cross, gathering place of the sufferings that used to enter Madrid through the Moors Gateway. A green cross was the sign that the Saint Inquisition left in those places where criminals were executed.

NAVI: Walk up Calle de la Villa and turn left through the Palacio de Uceda car park to see the views below the viaduct. Continue under the viaduct to see the walls of the city and border around Cuesta de la Vega to Almudena Cathedral.

35. Palacio de Uceda

This baroque style palace is an excellent example of palace architecture of the 17th century in Madrid. The palace displays the arms of the Sandoval family, which are flanked by rampant lions. It was Don Cristobal Gomez Sandoval, son of the Duke of Lerma, who was Duke of Uceda. The building was considered quite ostentatious at the time. Palacio de Uceda stands just above the old Moorish quarter of the city, the Morería. Felipe V who gained the throne in 1701 decided to move all the offices from Alcazar Palace to Palacio de Uceda. As a result, today it still houses the Capitanía General and the Council of State (Consejo de Estado)

36. The viaduct

One of the city's most recognisable landmarks, built over Calle Segovia, between 1872 and 1874. It was designed by Eugenio Barrón who had been charged with remodelling all of Calle Bailén, which runs along the Royal Palace. It offers great views over Madrid's rooftops from its deck; unfortunately it is one of the most frequently chosen places to commit suicide (It is a tradition whose sordid power of attraction, as old as the viaduct itself, has been dampened by the raising of security screen) and by the homeless.

37. De la Vega Hill

These are the remains of the former city walls. Madrid original arab city walls can still be seen in the Emir Mohamed I Park, next to Cuesta de la Vega. Dating from the 9th century, these elaborate fortifications were built to protect the Moorish settlement of Magerit or Mayrit that moved to the left bank of the Manzanares River. They stand today as reminders of the first city limits. They originally surrounded an area of about 4 hectares, around a small castle or fort located where today's Royal Palace stands.

NAVI: Go to Calle Bailén, you are at the top of the viaduct. Turn left into Bailén Street

38. Almudena Crypt and Cathedral

Madrid cathedral was designed in 1879 by the Marquis of Cubas in neo-gothic style and has a Romanesque crypt. The construction work was delayed until renewed in 1946 by the architects Carlos Sidro and Fernando Chueca Goitia in a

neo-baroque style that covered the already built neo-gothic part. The work was finally terminated in 1993 and the Cathedral was consecrated by Pope John Paul II on the 15th June, 1993.

39. Orient Square

The plans of Juan Bautista Sachetti for the Palacio Real included only the square between the Palace and the Almudena Cathedral. The Plaza de Oriente is owed to King Joseph I, brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, who ruled Spain from 1808 to 1813. Joseph I had ambitious plans to reform Madrid and to build many squares and open spaces (less subject to skirmishes). Tens of houses and several convents were demolished to clear the square.

40. Statues of Spanish Monarchs

There are 44 statues of Spanish monarchs lining the square. They range from the Gothic period up to the time when the country was reunified after the defeat of the Moors in 15th century and the peninsula was unified by the Catholic Kings. They also seem a little out of proportion, but this is simply because the statues were originally designed to be installed on top of the palace. However, the architects felt that the statues were too heavy and they were left at ground level.

41. Statue of Felipe IV

The Statue of Felipe IV astride a horse that was modelled from an art piece by Velázquez. It stands on a large pedestal and is indeed a striking sculpture. Its designer, Pietro Tacca, was afraid that the rearing horse could not be balanced properly, and that it would fall forward under its own weight. The famous Italian astronomer, Galileo Galilee, came to his rescue by suggesting that the front rearing part of the sculpture should be hollow, and therefore relatively light, with the back part solid to anchor the weight.

42. Royal Opera Theatre

Queen Isabel II who was an opera lover took an interest in the construction of the opera house, and in 1848 work restarted in earnest. It was officially inaugurated on the Queen's birthday, on November 19th, 1850, with a performance of "The Favourite" by Gaetano Donizetti. In 1925 the building's foundations were suffering from damage caused by underground water flow. Due to funding problems it wasn't until 1965 that the Royal Theatre finally reopened.

43. Royal Palace

The Royal Palace is the largest and certainly one of the most impressive palaces in Europe. It has more than 2000 luxuriously decorated rooms, 50 of which can be visited. Soon after the Royal Fortress burnt down on Christmas Eve of 1734, King Philip V wanted to replace the fortress by a palace. The construction of the new palace started in 1738 based on a design by the Italian architect Juan Bautista Sachetti. Its completion took 26 years. The Royal Palace would be the main residence of the Spanish kings until 1831, when King Alfonso XIII went into exile. Today the Royal Family lives in the small Zarzuela Palace, a former hunting lodge outside Madrid. The Royal Palace is still used for official ceremonies and receptions.

INFO Changing of the Guards

Every first Wednesday of each month at noon, the Solemn Changing of the Royal Guard is celebrated. It's a colourful ceremony consisting of a group of 429 guardsmen, 105 horses, marching bands and carriages. It begins with the setting of the Guard Posts in Armería Square, followed by the inspection of the new guard in Oriente Square. The old guard marches into Armería Square, after which the new guard parades. Finally, the old guard marches back to the barracks. This spectacle lasts for approximately 40 minutes, and bleachers are erected for only 600 spectators.

44. Campo del Moro

The Palace is bordered on the east by the Campo del Moro, a large park that goes uphill from the River Manzanares. The 1,722 hectares ground was created by Philip II in 1560 as a Royal hunting place.

45. Sabatini Gardens

The Sabatini Gardens stretch along the northern facade of the Royal Palace. These enclosed gardens are entered from Calle de Bailén --down its elegant stairs- or from Cuesta de la Vega. Inside its 2,54 hectares there are magnificent specimens of pines, firs, magnolia trees and cedars. The gardens get their name from the 18th century architect Sabatini, who designed many emblematic monuments in town. The Sabatini gardens were created in the 1930s but followed a design of Sabatini himself. There are fountains, hedges and benches organized in a symmetrical layout in the classic French garden style

NAVI: Walk towards the park parallel to San Quintin Street

46. Plaza de la Encarnación. Monastery of the Incarnation

The Monastery of the Incarnation was founded by Queen Margaret of Austria, Philip III's wife, in 1611. After a destructive fire, it was rebuilt by Ventura Rodriguez in 1767. The monastery is still active today, but the nuns stay out of sight during visiting hours. The convent includes a nice cloister, a fine Baroque church with a frescoed ceiling (by Francisco Bayeu), and a large collection of 17th-century art. For many visitors, the highlight of the monastery is the relic's room, where a variety of relics of saints contained in gold and silver reliquaries are displayed. The most important and interesting of these is the blood of Saint Pantaleon, which is kept in a glass orb. Every year on July 26 at midnight, the blood is said to miraculously liquefy on the day of his martyrdom, July 2.

NAVI: Walk along Calle Arrieta

47. Isabel II Square .

This square was a disorganized place strongly conditioned by its rugged soil. In the middle ages, it had a very good defensive function. This is because very big ravines made up by the channel of the Arenal River, that worked as a natural moat for the Christian wall. The door of Valdanu, one of the entrances of this wall, was located here. Near this wall, some towers helped its defence. In 1567 King Philip the II ordered its demolition.

In the square's underground, some military constructions are preserved, such as the medieval arc, which is in the basement of a restaurant. There are also adjacent tracks, such as canvas and Street Escalinata. The Plaza de Isabel II, also known as Madrid Opera Sq., is the place of the Royal Theatre or the Opera House, where some of the most important culture performances are held

48. **Statue Isabel II**

A statue dedicated to the Queen Elizabeth the II Queen of Spain between 1833 and 1868, she was the daughter of King Fernando VII, she was married at age 16 with his cousin Francisco de Asis, according to legend he was unfit to have children and the queen had many lovers and 11 children, so it is thought that she was renewed the blood of the Bourbons. She spoiled her kids and she was not interested in affairs of state and his reign was a period of great instability which resulted in the economy and social unrest.

NAVI: Continue across the square into Calle Flora

49. **Descalzas Reales**

Convent of the Royal Barefoot Sisters .The monastery is housed in a palace which was a former residence of Emperor Charles V and his wife Isabel of Portugal and where their daughter, Juana was born in 1535. She is buried in the chapel. When she was widowed in 1557, Juana founded a convent of Franciscan "blue blooded" nuns as a retreat for noblewomen. The Convent is still a functioning convent today. It's a superb example of 16th- to 17th-century baroque architecture, it contains a magpie's hoard of artistic treasures: Splendid Grand Staircase, Flemish tapestries and works by Titian, Bruegel and Zurbarán.

50. **Sala de Alhajas**

The building which once housed the Savings Bank and Mont de Piété is now used by the Caja de Madrid foundation to stage numerous exhibitions, often in collaboration with the Museo Thyssen Bornemisza. The building is constructed of glass and steel, as the market of San Miguel, both inspired by the architecture of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France.

NAVI: Walk Hilanderas St and turn left in Calle Arenal, then take the narrow passage on the left to San Ginés Chocolateria.

51. **San Ginés Church,**

This is one of the oldest in Madrid. References to a church on the site appear as early as the ninth century, and there seems to have been a hermitage sited here in the 13th century, but it was rebuilt in its current form in 1645. The Church contains paintings by Alonso Cano and El Greco. El Greco's "Jesus expels the merchants from the temple", also known as "The Purification" is thought to be one of his best paintings, only on display on Saturdays morning.

NAVI: Go to Calle Mayor and on your left we have the end point Puerta del Sol

END Please do write an ending.

Madrid Cool & Cultural

At this point we finish our journey. From here you can go back to Plaza Mayor or Santiago Street, where you can enjoy some tapas or refreshments in one of the many establishments settled there. Weather permitting, seat yourself in a terrace and relax watching the bustling ambiance. Alternatively, you can wander for some shopping on the streets out of the Puerta del Sol, mainly in Preciados St. Enjoy the rest of the day.