

# The area

The district **Retiro** is named after the **Parque del Buen Retiro** ("park of the good retreat"), a more than 350 acres large public park that has been developed since the 16th century. The landscape gardens were essentially shaped in the 1630s during the reign of Philip IV and were considered to be a "world art wonder" of their time. Buen Retiro park and palace served as the Spanish kings' court, especially during Lent and hot periods. An astronomical observatory and a museum of natural history (today's Prado) were situated within the extensive grounds. The attached palace was ruined during the Napoleonic Wars and the remaining park was re-assigned to the public in 1868.



# Paseo del Arte

This area, known in English as the Art Walk, boasts art and beauty as you'll see nowhere else in the world. Along a stretch of just over one kilometre, you'll find the Prado Museum, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and the Reina Sofía Museum, as well as a number of other institutions and buildings well worth visiting. In July 2021, the area known as the Landscape of Light, which encompasses the Paseo del Prado and El Retiro Park, was [declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site](#).



Madrid's three world-class art museums, the Prado, Thyssen-Bornemisza and Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, are all along or close to the Paseo del Prado within a kilometre of each other in what is commonly known as the Paseo del Arte. The most famous of the three galleries is the Prado, which houses an unequalled display of Spanish art, an outstanding Flemish collection and an impressive assemblage of Italian work. The Thyssen-Bornemisza provides an unprecedented excursion through Western art from the fourteenth to the late twentieth centuries. The final member of the trio, the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, is home to the Spanish collection of contemporary art, including the Miró and Picasso legacies and the jewel in the crown – Guernica.

### *Museo del Prado*

The Museo del Prado is Madrid's premier attraction – well over two million visitors enter its doors each year – and one of the oldest and greatest collections of art in the world. Built as a natural science museum in 1775, the Prado opened to the public in 1819, and houses the finest works collected by Spanish royalty – for the most part, avid, discerning and wealthy buyers – as well as Spanish paintings gathered from other sources over the past two centuries. Finding enough space for displaying the works has always been a problem, but after fourteen years of arguments, delays and controversy, the €152 million Rafael Moneo-designed extension, which includes a stylish glass-fronted building incorporating the eighteenth-century cloisters of the San Jerónimo church, was finally opened in 2007. The new wing houses the restaurant and café areas, an expanded shop, an auditorium, temporary exhibition spaces, restoration and conservation workshops and a new sculpture gallery.

### *Centro de Arte Reina Sofía*

It is fortunate that the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, facing Estación de Atocha at the end of Paseo del Prado, keeps slightly different opening hours and days to its neighbours. For this leading exhibition space and permanent gallery of modern Spanish art – its centrepiece is Picasso's greatest picture, Guernica – is another essential stop on the Madrid art circuit, and one that really mustn't be seen after a Prado–Thyssen overdose.

The museum, a vast former hospital, is a kind of Madrid response to the Pompidou Centre in Paris, with transparent lifts shuttling visitors up the outside of the Sabatini building to the permanent collection. Like the other two great art museums, it has also undergone a major extension programme – the French architect Jean Nouvel has added a massive state-of-the-art metal-and-glass wing behind the main block. If the queues at the main entrance are too long, try the alternative one in the new extension on the Ronda de Atocha. You can also buy tickets in advance via the website.

### *Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza*

The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza occupies the old Palacio de Villahermosa, diagonally opposite the Prado, at the end of Plaza de las Cortes. This prestigious site played a large part in Spain's acquisition – for a knock-down \$350 million in June 1993 – of what many argue was the world's greatest private art trove after that of the British royals: seven-hundred-odd paintings accumulated by father-and-son German–Hungarian industrial magnates. The son, Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen, died in April 2002 aged 81. Another trump card was the late baron's fifth wife, Carmen Cervera (aka "Tita" Cervera), a former Miss Spain, who steered the works to

Spain against the efforts of Britain's Prince Charles, the Swiss and German governments, the Getty foundation and other suitors.

## **Hotels in the venue area:**

- **Radisson Blu Hotel Madrid Prado**

<https://goo.gl/maps/AKnGMJzWHAFiSHMT8>

- **Mercure Madrid Centro**

<https://goo.gl/maps/skJndtrKAzEf2VSH9>

- **Hotel NH Collection Madrid Paseo del Prado**

<https://g.page/NHCollectionMadridPaseodelPrado?share>

- **Hotel Mora By Mij**

<https://g.page/Hotelmorabymij?share>

- **Hotel NH Madrid Nacional**

<https://g.page/NHMadridNacional?share>

- **Hotel Mediodía**

<https://goo.gl/maps/iMoLZR6mAxj1kzM6>

- **numa | Script**

<https://g.page/script-madrid?share>

- **Only YOU Hotel Atocha**

<https://goo.gl/maps/J6QgorvVv2yapW9V9>

- **Hotel NH Madrid Atocha**

<https://g.page/NHMadridAtocha?share>