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Madridâ€™s exquisite Paseo del Prado by Jesse Wallace

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If you are visiting the cosmopolitan and cultural city of Madrid, then be sure to spend a day discovering the Paseo del Prado and its surrounding area. The Paseo del Prado is one of the capital cities main boulevards, running through the heart of the cityâ€™s aristocratic and institutional centre. The picturesque, tree lined avenue is a landmark on itâ€™s own and also boasts a selection of Madridâ€™ most important cultural and tourist attractions.

The boulevard encompasses the Golden Triangle of Art, which refers to three of Madridâ€™s most famous museums. The exquisite Museo del Prado is the National art museum, housing one of the worldâ€™s finest collections of European art from the 12th to the early 19th century. Easily the number one cultural sight in Madrid, this stunning 18th century building boasts masterpieces by Velazquez, Goya, Raphael, Rubens and Bosc, amongst others. The sight of the museum is historically significant too, being built on what was formerly an area of market gardens where the name Prado comes from, meaning meadow.

The Renia Sofia is Spainâ€™s national museum of 20th century art, dedicated mainly to Spanish artists. Its most prized possession is Pablo Picassoâ€™s Guernica but the Renia Sofia also boasts such maestros as Salvador Dali, Julio Gonzalez, Eduardo Chillida, Antoni Tapies and Pablo Gargallo to name just a few.

The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum fills the historical gaps of the other two venues, but is just as enthralling, with Italian primitives and works from Dutch, English and German artists, as well as Impressionists, Expressionists and late 20th century works by European and American artists amongst its collections.

Just beside the Museo del Prado is the beautiful Royal Botanical Gardens. Spread over 20 acres, boasting 30,000 plants and flower species and over 1,500 trees, and straddling the banks of the River Manzanares, the gardens are truly stunning. If you are after some respite in the middle of this very busy capital city, then the gardens provide the perfect peace and seclusion. Do as the locals to and pack a picnic, to relax and rejuvenate in between tourist attractions.

Also by the Paseo del Prado, you will find several significant administration buildings, including the Spanish Parliament, the Bank of Spain, the headquarters of the Real Academia Espanola (the Spanish language academy) and the Bolsa de Madrid (the cityâ€™s stock exchange).

There are also several historic and artistic monuments on the Paseo del Prado boulevard itself, many of which where constructed in the eighteenth century for the Hall of Prado urban project. Some of the highlights include the Villanueva Building and the sculptural water fountains of Neptune, Cibeles and Apollo.

If you are visiting Madrid, book yourself into a city-centre Madrid hotel within walking distance of the Paseo del Prado. With its surrounding greenery and park life, alongside striking monuments and interesting museums you will be in for an incredibly enjoyable discovery just a stones throw from your hotel.

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