

Welcome to Madrid



Welcome to Spain

A guide for newcomers

A Publication of the U.S. Embassy, Madrid

Index

[Allowances](#)

[APO](#)

[Lloyds Bank Services](#)

[Bullfighting](#)

[Bringing a Car](#)

[Check-In](#)

[Children and Schools info](#)

[Cost of Living](#)

[Dress Code](#)

[Electricity](#)

[Electronic Equipment](#)

[Employment for Family Members](#)

[Food In Spain](#)

[Health Unit](#)

[Holidays](#)

[Household Staff](#)

[Housing 1 and 2](#)

[In Madrid](#)

[NEX](#)

[Parking](#)

[Importing a Pet](#)

[Reading about Spain](#)

[Security](#)

[Shopping in Madrid](#)

[Sports](#)

[Telephone services](#)

[Vehicles information](#)

[Wine in Spain](#)

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The U.S. Embassy in Madrid: A Newcomers Guide to Who's Who and Who Does What

The **Embassy of the United States** in Madrid occupies a seven-story office building situated on the northern edge of *Barrio de Salamanca*, the city's most fashionable shopping and residential area. The Embassy is located at *Calle Serrano 75*, one block east of the *Paseo de la Castellana*, the busy main traffic artery that bisects Madrid from north to south. The Embassy Chancery houses most Mission sections (the United States Commercial Service, is located nearby) and all Embassy services. The Residence of the U.S. Ambassador, facing *Paseo de la Castellana*, adjoins the Chancery.

The following is a list of key sections that newly arrived staff will encounter during check-in. Welcome kits contain the **Embassy Ready Reference Telephone List** with a complete name list of staff. Additional copies are available from the Office of Human Resources

The Office of the Ambassador
(91) 587-2201

GSO Housing
ext. 2297

Office of the Deputy Chief of Mission
ext. 2205

Office of Security
ext. 2550

Office of Administrative Affairs
ext. 2208

Budget & Fiscal Office
ext. 2334

Office of Human Resources
ext. 2321

Consular Section
ext. 2236

General Services
ext. 2214

Community Liaison Office
ext. 2213

GSO Shipping and Receiving
ext. 2221

Health Unit
ext. 2225

Other U.S. Mission Elements

In addition to the Department of State, the U.S. Mission to Spain consists of several other federal agencies including the United States Commercial Service (**USCS**), the Department of Agriculture (**FAS**), the Office of the Defense Attaché (**DAO**), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (**LEGATT**), the Drug Enforcement Administration (**DEA**), the (**INS**), the Office of Defense Cooperation (**ODC**), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (**NASA**), the Department of Homeland Security (**DHS**) and the Office of Regional Affairs (**ORA**).

The **U.S. Consulate General in Barcelona** is located at Paseo Reina Elisenda de Montcada 23 (international tel. 34-93-280-2227, fax: 34-93-280-6175). Consular agencies offering U.S. citizen services are located in several principal cities throughout Spain. These include Seville, Valencia, Las Palmas, La Coruña, Málaga and Palma de Mallorca.

Part 1

Working in the Embassy



Information and Tips for Newcomers

ON ARRIVAL The Embassy has an active sponsorship program in which most Mission sections participate.

New staff arriving at Barajas Airport are usually met by sponsors and representatives of their sections. It's helpful to know in advance who will meet you. Don't forget that travelers arriving with U.S. diplomatic or official passports must obtain Spanish visas before arrival. Check with the visa information desk in the Department of State's employee service center for details. Visas may be obtained at Spanish embassies and consulates abroad.

EMBASSY CHECK-IN If you're arriving at the Embassy for the first time, you'll need to present your passport to the local guard force at the entrance and a photo ID (passport, driver's license, government ID) to obtain a visitor's badge from the Marine Guard in the foyer. You'll need to be escorted within the building. The first stop for most new staff and TDYers is the Office of Human Resources where a check-in sheet can be obtained.

THE CLO OFFICE The Community Liaison Office is an important center of information for employees prior to arrival at post, during Embassy check-in and throughout their entire tour in Madrid. All family members should be sure to stop by the CLO soon after arrival for an introduction to the Mission Community. Many aspects of community life come together in the CLO office and the experienced CLO staff can provide newcomers with advice about where to turn to get things done within the Embassy, about available educational and

recreational opportunities and about life in Madrid in general.

¿Qué Pasa? The Embassy's newsletter, *¿Qué Pasa?*, is published every Thursday. It provides news of general interest to the Embassy community, a variety of articles about life in Madrid and an active "swap 'n shop" of goods and services for members of the Mission community. New staff often check the *¿Qué Pasa?* classifieds even before arriving at Post, especially to look for vehicles and used appliances as well as to get a sense of Embassy life. The editor of *¿Qué Pasa?* may be contacted through the CLO. Be sure to view past issues of *¿Qué Pasa?* on the Embassy's Intranet site.

MANAGING YOUR MONEY AT POST Lloyds Bank Ltd. maintains an Embassy branch office which operates three days a week and offers a variety of retail banking services including



THE METROPOLIS BUILDING, MADRID

accommodation exchange for eligible staff, TDYers and visitors. The dollar/EURO rate floats daily. Lloyds accepts cash, traveler's checks and dollar checks for exchange and sells U.S. dollars, traveler's checks and other European currencies. Of course, *CIRRUS* and *PLUS*-compatible cash machines dispensing EUROS are located throughout Madrid. Lloyds also offers EURO checking accounts—required to obtain some local services (through automatic direct debits)—although the use of cash and credit cards is usually

sufficient for settling most local accounts. (See the section entitled *Duty Free Gasoline* ahead.)

ROTA NAVAL BASE Embassy American staff have access to services and facilities at Rota Naval Base in southern Spain, near the city of Cádiz, about six or seven hours from Madrid by car.

THE NAVY EXCHANGE (NEX) The Navy Exchange (NEX) Madrid is a small shop with American products located within the Embassy. The store also operates a video rental service and handles dry cleaning. New merchandise is received on a biweekly basis and the store places special orders with the PX and Commissary at Rota Naval Base. The use of the store is limited to uniformed members of the U.S. Armed Forces, civilian employees of the military, qualified NATO staff, direct-hire Americans and other U.S. government employees enjoying duty free privileges.

A PO MAIL SERVICE

U.S. Embassy Madrid is APO AE 09642. Due to the limited size of the APO facility there are no individual/personal mail-boxes. All mail (personal and official) sent via the APO destined for the Embassy will be addressed to a unit mailbox. Each unit mailbox represents different Embassy sections. Use the following example when addressing items to be sent and/or received through the APO

First Name Last Name

PSC 61 Box 0000

APO AE 09642

NOTE: Please do not add anything else to the format

The Embassy APO offers most “normal” postal services with the exception of registered mail, and Cash on Delivery (COD) for both inbound and outbound mail.

Additionally three-day Express Mail service to the U.S. is available at an additional charge. At present, outgoing mail departs four days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Incoming mail arrives five days a week (Monday through Friday). After departing Spain, delivery time varies depending on the class of mail and the time of year as well as the U.S. address. First-class letters usually reach recipients in the U.S. within five to seven working days

Incoming APO mail is somewhat slower. Madrid is one of a few European APO addresses receiving fourth class and parcel post APO mail via surface, on U.S. commercial container ships. As a consequence, mail sent at less than Priority rates is often shipped by sea and may take up to eight weeks to arrive. We recommend parcels be sent via Priority to ensure airmail handling. Embassy staff can often request mailers to send purchases by first-class/priority mail and elect to pay the additional mailing charges to expedite the delivery of the items.

With respect to publications, weekly magazines and newspapers are deemed “time value publications” (TVPs) and should be handled as airmail. Other publications travel by sea, meaning that delays of up to two months are not uncommon, especially during periods when mail volume is heavy. Unfortunately it is not uncommon for APO users at Embassy Madrid to receive publications late and out of sequence, even so-called TVPs.

Additionally, outgoing international mail can also be sent through the Embassy APO with normal U.S. postage for international mail. Items mailed to European international addresses enter the system through the U.S. Air Mail Terminal (AMT) in Frankfurt Germany. International mail for the Americas and the Pacific is sent via JFK Airport in New York.

HOUSING AND FURNISHINGS

For most Americans assigned to Madrid, the Embassy provides unfurnished government-leased quarters through a Mission Interagency Housing Board. Exceptions exist for military personnel who operate under the Military Overseas Housing Program. Housing assignments adhere strictly to the Department's worldwide space, grade and family size guidelines in 6 FAM 720. Maximum allowable rents are set locally according to prevailing rates. To the extent possible, housing assignments are made prior to arrival. Some flexibility does exist regarding the location of housing within Madrid and its suburbs. Newly assigned staff is encouraged to make known as early as possible their preferences for housing as well as any factors that may limit or otherwise circumscribe a housing assignment.



ATOCHA RAILWAY STATION, MADRID

Basic furnishings include sheer curtains, stove, refrigerator, dishwasher, washer and dryer. Appliances may not always be U.S.-sized. Although some housing may already

include central or window air-conditioning, the Embassy provides air-conditioning equipment for living room and occupied bedrooms if authorized by the landlord. Rents and the cost of utilities (with the exception of telephone service) are paid directly by the Embassy for government-leased quarters. For additional details about Madrid housing, see the welcome book section "Living in Madrid." Questions about Post housing and furnishings should be addressed to the Embassy's General Services Officer or to whomever at post handles administrative affairs for the employee's agency.

In most cases, new employees will go directly into their assigned housing on arrival at post. The Embassy has a limited amount of basic "loaner" furniture and "welcome kits" with the usual eating and cooking utensils, bedding and towels. Requests for cribs should be made in advance to GSO. Welcome kits are intended for use only prior to the arrival of airfreight. Given the limitations on temporary furniture and welcome kits and the time required for the arrival of effects, employees are urged to "pack smart" when planning their air freight shipments.

ARRIVAL OF EFFECTS The Post does not control the arrival of air freight or household effects from the U.S. or from previous posts. Employees are urged to consult closely with responsible offices to track the airfreight and other shipments. Airfreight usually requires three business days to clear customs and other formalities ***after arrival in Madrid*** and another two days before delivery. In most cases, surface effects arrive in Madrid six to eight weeks after departing the U.S.

I**MPORTING VEHICLES** Vehicles imported into Spain by U.S. Mission staff are for the personal use of the employee and the employee's family members. Vehicles may not be imported for the purpose of sale, transfer or use by non-Mission personnel. Spanish law controlling the importation of vehicles is complicated. In brief, diplomatic and consular staff may import or locally purchase and register up to three vehicles. For Chiefs of Mission, the limit is four vehicles. Non-diplomatic staff and adult family members of diplomats are permitted to import or locally purchase and register one vehicle, on the condition that the vehicle have been previously registered abroad in the name of the owner. The vehicle may be used or new but the requirement for previous registration abroad remains the same.

Full information concerning the *Importation and Disposition of Privately Owned Automobiles of U.S. Government Employees in Spain* is contained in an Embassy Instruction. Copies may be obtained from the General Services Officer.

Requests for additional information on the importation of automobiles by Embassy staff should also be addressed to the GSO.

T**RANSPORTATION AT POST** With the exception of a few spaces for **short-term** visitor parking, all parking spaces within the Chancery compound are assigned to official vehicles. No other parking is permitted within the compound during Embassy business hours. Staff may use the parking lot outside of duty hours when conducting official business. Many employees who drive to work rent parking spaces at nearby office buildings. Post policy on the use of Government-owned vehicles follows Department of State guidelines. Details of the post's Local Transportation Policy are contained in Embassy Instruction available from the General Services Office.

D**UTY-FREE GASOLINE OR DIESEL** Under current Spanish law, only diplomatic and consular personnel (eligible for a red diplomatic carnet and green consular officer carnet) are authorized to purchase duty-free gasoline for their personal vehicles. According to the regulations, each eligible vehicle must have a special purchase card issued by a company authorized by the Tax Agency (not retail gasoline companies). Up to 400 liters (105.7 U.S. gallons) of duty free fuel may be purchased monthly according to regulations.

To use the purchase card system, eligible personnel must have a *Número de Identificación Fiscal* (a NIF number--a tax identification card issued by the Spanish Ministry of Finance) and a Euro bank account.

The system works as follows: consumers pay the pump price (including tax) at gas stations for purchases with the use of an H-24 purchase card. The card is a gasoline credit card. At the end of the month, the cost of all purchases is deducted from the purchaser's local bank account. The consumer receives a monthly statement. Meanwhile, the H-24 company submits a quarterly statement to the Ministry to Finance showing the amount of taxes paid by the purchaser at the pump. The Finance Ministry reviews the statement and approves a refund of taxes. The purchase card company then credits the consumer's bank account in the amount approved for refund. Obviously, there is a lag of some months between purchase and refund so customers are advised to check their pump receipts and monthly statements carefully and monitor the appearance of VAT reimbursements in their bank accounts.

PAYING CALLS Newly-arrived staff members are expected to make appointments to introduce themselves to the Ambassador and to meet with the Deputy Chief of Mission. These appointments are normally coordinated with heads of section. Social calls by family members are increasingly an anomaly but attendance of employees and family members at CLO events is a useful and pleasant way to learn about Madrid and meet the Mission community.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES A bilateral agreement in effect between the United States and Spain allows "the free pursuit of gainful employment" by family members of employees of diplomatic missions, consular posts or missions to international organizations. Under these terms, work permits are extended to eligible family members of the U.S. Mission who find employment in Madrid outside the Embassy. See *Embassy Instruction 196/047 (01/29/96) Bilateral Work Agreement*.

Within the Mission, a concerted effort is made to identify and expand employment opportunities for family members and to use available skills and capabilities. All employment opportunities within the Mission are advertised as far in advance as possible. Eligible family members interested in working during an assignment to Madrid should contact the Family Liaison Office in the Department of State (M/FLO) to obtain information about available positions prior to coming to post. The Family Employment Report for Madrid lists positions at post currently held by family members and any open positions. Queries about employment for family members should be addressed to the Embassy's CLO office or to the Human Resources office. It is important to remember that a working knowledge of Spanish is usually a

requirement for Embassy jobs and full bilingual fluency is expected for most positions on the Spanish economy.

ALLOWANCES The Embassy's Financial Management Office is responsible for pay and allowances, travel vouchers, leave balances, representation claims, the payment of living quarters allowances and rents and other official financial matters. It is, however, the responsibility of eligible employees to ensure that they are receiving the pay and allowances to which they are entitled and that other aspects of their salary and benefits are correctly recorded and administered. Similarly, employees are responsible for knowing, understanding and abiding by all regulations concerning the use of U.S. Government funds.

Depending on the value of the dollar against the Euro and the cost of living in Washington D.C., American employees may receive a cost of living allowance intended to partially offset the differences between the cost of living in Madrid and Washington. This allowance changes periodically. Most allowances (including cost of living and education allowances) require the proper completion of Form SF-1190. Questions should be addressed to the appropriate staff member in the FMO Office. (The Embassy's Office of Human Resources handles some allowances, such as the Separate Maintenance Allowance, Educational Travel, and arrangements for the Travel of Children of Separated Parents.)

Lloyds TSB provides accommodation exchange for employees, family members, TDY staff and official visitors. To access this service, a direct-hire employee must have a Lloyds' bank account with a minimum balance of €100. TDY staff and official visitors are not required to open a

Lloyds' bank account. Returned checks result in a handling fee and the temporary suspension of privileges. In addition, as noted above, cash machines dispensing local currency are located throughout Madrid, often several on a corner.

VAT REFUNDS As most persons who have served in Europe and elsewhere are already aware, the Value Added Tax (VAT) in many European countries amounts to a sizable sales tax on retail purchases. In Spain procedures exist whereby officers on the Diplomatic List may claim, through the Embassy, exemptions from or a refund of certain (*but not all*) VAT taxes paid at the point of sale. For example, VAT exemptions are available to all American employees when automobiles are purchased for personal use. (To take advantage of this benefit, ***all purchases of personal vehicles must be coordinated with the General Services Office.***) On the other hand, VAT refunds are *not* available on services, such as health club memberships or auto repairs.

Claims for VAT refunds in connection with personal purchases of household goods during an individual's tour of duty require the submission of specific forms and documentation and are submitted through the Financial Management Office. Refunds apply to all tangible goods bought in Spain, including furniture, food, clothing, etc. In order to qualify, purchases must total at least 240.40 Euros per invoice, and cannot exceed a total maximum of 9,015.18 Euros per quarter.

To become familiar with VAT reimbursement procedures and the specific Euro limits, employees are urged to contact FMO at the beginning of their tours for a briefing on the VAT reimbursement process.

HOUSEHOLD HELP Most Embassy families enjoy the services, usually part-time, of household help at home (see *Living in Madrid* for additional information). Obtaining domestic help in Madrid is a private matter in which the Embassy has no official role. The Embassy's Office of Human Resources will provide general advice and guidance regarding Spanish law and prevailing customs. Meanwhile, the Community Liaison Office can offer the experiences of other Mission families and give you an idea of how to search for household help.

BRINGING A DOMESTIC EMPLOYEE TO SPAIN Persons contemplating bringing a domestic employee to Spain should make the Consulate of the nearest Spanish Embassy their first stop. (Please note that Spain will grant courtesy visas for household employees of Diplomatic and Consular Officers. This does not include A&T staff members.) The Spanish Embassy will explain how to obtain a Spanish courtesy visa for accreditation before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allow the employee to enter Spain. The Embassy's Human Resources Office is available to advise on this matter. Employees who are accompanied by domestic employees are responsible for knowing and abiding by the requirements of Spanish law, observing various Spanish legal procedures and maintaining the status (and limitations) that a third country domestic employee of a U.S. Embassy staff member will enjoy in Spain.

IMPORTING A PET. Importing a pet into Spain is fairly straightforward and simple. (We're talking cats and dogs here; if your taste runs to more exotic companions, check with the GSO.) The web site, www.mapausa.org will walk you through the process. In general, Spain requires all shots to be up-to-date, that the

pet be vaccinated for rabies at least thirty days before and less than one year prior to travel, and that the pet be accompanied by a bilingual veterinary certificate and a bilingual owner's certificate. It is no longer necessary to process a veterinary certificate in the Consulates of Spain or at USDA, but the forms accompanying the animal must be the easily downloadable bilingual forms on the Embassy of Spain's website or the certificate will have to be translated into Spanish and the translation certified by the nearest Consulate of Spain. Though some newcomers have found that no official bothers to examine their pet's papers on arrival, it would be a mistake not to follow the official procedures.



IMPORTANT: To protect pets against the dangers of overexposure to heat during flight delays, airlines in recent years have sometimes limited the availability of animal transport in warm weather. Be sure also to consult with your airline of choice regarding any special requirements for cages and their rules for carrying animals in the cabin. Spain does not have a mandatory

quarantine period for pets that arrive with proper documentation.

EMBASSY HEALTH SERVICES The Embassy Health Unit is staffed by registered nurses. A U.S.-trained Spanish physician has regular office hours in the Health Unit four times a week and is available by appointment for consultation by Embassy staff and family members. The Department of State's Regional Medical Officer (based in London) and the Regional Psychiatrist (based in Paris) make periodic visits to the post.

Most commonly prescribed medications are available in Spain, often at lower cost. Similarly, most familiar U.S.-brand non-prescription cold remedies are also available through Spanish pharmacies or the Embassy NEX store. Employees who belong to medical plans that include mail-order prescription services or who require specific U.S.-brand drugs should make necessary arrangements prior to their departure from the U.S. Questions in this regard can be addressed to the Embassy Health Unit.

The Embassy has established a health care relationship with a major university-teaching medical center in Madrid. All Embassy American staff whose agencies participate in the Department of State's Health Program are issued medical ID cards for use at the facility in case of a medical emergency. New Embassy employees should be sure to obtain a copy of the Embassy Instruction that provides details about how to handle a medical emergency and includes the location of the recommended emergency care facility.

NO SMOKING The U.S. Embassy in Madrid is a smoke-free workplace and a rigorous no smoking policy for staff and guests is in effect throughout the Chancery.

S **PANISH HOLIDAYS** The U.S. Embassy in Spain observes all U.S. federal holidays. In addition, the Embassy is closed on Spanish and Madrid holidays.

(The Consulate General in Barcelona will celebrate other local holidays.) Spanish national holidays and local Madrid holidays vary annually according to agreements negotiated with labor organizations but usually include most of the following national and religious dates:

January 1 (New Year's Day)
January 6 (Epiphany)
March 19 (San José)
Thursday and **Friday** preceding Easter
May 1 (Labor Day)
May 2 (Madrid Festival Day)
May 15 (Madrid, Feast of San Isidro)
August 15 (Feast of the Assumption)
October 12 (Spanish National Day)
November 1 (All Saints Day)
November 9 (Madrid, Feast of *La Almudena*)
December 6 (Constitution Day)
December 8 (Immaculate Conception)
December 25 (Christmas Day)

Part 2

Living in Madrid



Information and Tips for Newcomers

Madrid is a grand stage and the almost five million “*Madrileños*” are the principal players in a vibrant and colorful pageant of urban life that only they completely understand. “*La movida*” (Spain’s post-Franco renaissance and high-stepping boom times of the eighties) may be only a distant memory in the new millennium but wonderful Madrid is still part celebration, part construction zone and all dynamo. Living in the sometimes noisy, always-vibrant Spanish capital requires the sure survival skills of a New Yorker, the *joie de vivre* of a New Orleanian, and the cool satisfaction of a San Franciscan.

King Philip II started all this in the sixteenth century when he decided to move the peripatetic Spanish court down market to the quiet riverside village of Madrid. Poor Philip never reckoned with the depredations of the

automobile or the jackhammer, not to mention Spanish individualism and its unremitting tolerance for almost everything that makes life in the city today such a delightful exercise in spontaneous enjoyment. Located nearly exactly in the center of the Hispanic peninsula (highway distances in Spain are measured from

Madrid’s *Puerta del Sol*), much has changed since Philip’s time, including the fact that the Manzanares River, which provided an original excuse for sitting the capital, has almost disappeared—like most of the surrounding countryside—under the weight of rampant urbanization.

Leave your stereotypes of Spain at home before you arrive in Madrid. (Most of them are *Andalusian* anyway.) *Paella*, for example, is not the national dish and not all *Madrileños* stay up all night partying (only some). It’s not the most expensive city in Europe, but certainly more than the U.S. But lots else you’ve heard is true: flamenco, opera, soccer and bullfighting are serious pursuits that stir the Spanish soul; there’s a tapas bar or restaurant for nearly every inhabitant but no parking spaces anywhere (except in August); there are more varieties of ham on the haunch than you can count; hardly anyone eats dinner before 10:00 p.m. and the art museums of Madrid are among the most celebrated in Europe.

Like all great cities, Madrid has a special rhythm and the beat goes on

for 24 hours. Except at mid-day when almost everything closes and the entire month of August when nearly all *Madrileños* disappear somewhere together, Madrid’s pulse is cacophonous and truly spectacular. It’s been said that, to survive here, hay que tener sangre fría. Cold-blooded or not, Madrid is an adventure and a pleasure. Get ready. Enjoy!

BEFORE YOU COME Buy a good guide book (heck, buy several). Book store shelves groan under the weight of guides to Spain and everyone has their favorite. The *Michelin Green Guide to Spain*, for



PLAZA OF COLON, MADRID

example, is a solid reference work, an unsurpassed source of general intelligence and background information on Spanish history, art and architecture and guide to Spain's principal cities and their treasures. The handsome, lavishly-illustrated ***Eyewitness Travel Guides*** include first-class, splendid volumes on **Spain**, the city of **Madrid** and, in a single book, **Barcelona & Catalonia**. Also, the **Insight** guide to Madrid has wonderful short, historical essays to go along with its fine, colorful photographs. But, when coming to Spain to reside for a few years, you may want even something deeper and more substantial. ***Discovering Spain: The Complete Guide*** (2000) by Penelope Casas is a superb, overall guide to Spain, in-depth. Her asides from Spanish history, her "off-the-beaten-track" recommendations and her tips on where to eat and sleep are excellent, informative and unusually reliable.

By the way, the website www.europe-travel-guide.com has a handy list of links to most guidebooks to Spain on the market today. While you're on line, there are sites galore for Madrid and Spain (a *Google* search returns more 1.5 million hits on the word "Madrid"). The *Comunidad de Madrid* has an excellent Spanish-language site at www.comadrid.es packed with information about the city, its past and

present. Other fine English-language sites include <http://www.guiadelocio.com/English> <http://www.softguides.com/madrid> (with an excellent search engine), <http://www.gomadrid.com/> www.timeout.com/madrid

and <http://www.madaboutmadrid.com/> For something different and off-beat, try <http://madrid.lanetro.com>

GETTING HERE At present, several U.S. airlines (and all major European airlines) serve Madrid's Barajas airport with daily flights from various U.S. cities. It's about 15 kilometers from the airport to central Madrid and travel time will depend on traffic conditions. Metered taxis are plentiful outside the arrivals terminal. Depending on the time of day (and the number of bags you're hauling), the fare to downtown is usually about 22 Euros. An airport bus departs Barajas every 15 minutes and delivers passengers to the *Plaza de Colón*, about seven blocks south of the U.S. Embassy.

WHERE'S HERE? Madrid is at once a city, a true province, one of Spain's 17 *Comunidades* (autonomous regions), a state of mind and a world unto itself. Located southeast of the *Sierra de Guadarrama*, Madrid is geographically part of the region of *Castilla-La Mancha* but, by history and tradition, more tied to the *Comunidad de Castilla-León*, beyond the mountains. Don't



PLAZA CIBELES, MADRID

be deceived by modern Madrid's urban sprawl, however. Within a few kilometers of

the city are historic castles, remarkable palaces, vineyards, sheep pastures, country restaurants, ski areas, mountain hikes and villages still relatively untouched by megalopolis Madrid.

THE WEATHER Madrid folklore is full of pithy sayings about the weather. Some decry the cold; others tout the heat. One thing is sure, Madrid is hot in summer—and summer begins in May or June and lasts until the end of October! In the dog days of July and August, temperatures often pass 100°F and stay up there for a few weeks. But, as the saying goes, “it’s a dry heat.” (Now you know why *Madrileños* eat after 10:00 p.m.) Autumn means rain, sometimes lots of it. Winters are usually quite mild, with low temperatures between 30° and 45°. It snows rarely. Even when it does, the snow lasts only long enough to be the topic of a day’s conversation. The leaves sprout in March and there’s a brief spring in April

Córdoba or Granada, you’ll come to appreciate the wisdom of Moorish architecture and city planning with preference for narrow, shaded streets and fountains.

MADRID'S COST OF LIVING There are few simple statements about the cost of living anywhere that will satisfy everyone. Much depends on income, personal preferences, your last residence, spending habits and, when living abroad, the exchange rate. Let’s begin at the beginning. Madrid is a large, cosmopolitan Western European capital. Lots of things are more expensive here, especially manufactured goods, than in, say, Washington or New York. In addition,



before summer returns. Altitude conditions Spanish weather. A sparkling, sunny spring day in Madrid can be bitterly cold and gray just over the mountains in higher Segovia or Ávila and northern Spain enjoys real winter. On a burning summer’s day, in Seville,

significantly higher prices are charged for telephone service, gasoline, electronic goods, foreign language books, automobile service, compact discs and most clothing. On the other hand, movie tickets, public transportation, a bottle of excellent wine, all

tend to be priced lower than in the U.S. The use of U.S. mail order ameliorates the cost of living for many Americans as does ordering goods from Rota through the Embassy NEX shop. Prices, costs and the exchange rate are continually monitored to ensure that Washington and Madrid costs remain in balance.

DRESSING IN MADRID Daily professional attire for men and women in the U.S. Embassy in Madrid is no different than normal daily professional dress for persons working in government offices in Washington, D.C. Casual wear on the streets of Madrid is as varied as it is in large cities anywhere. It is important to remember, however, that Madrid is the capital of Spain and the style of dress here--especially among men and women of a certain age--is often sophisticated and closer to what one would see in downtown San Francisco, New York or Chicago than in a suburban American mall. There are few



H black-tie functions in Madrid. For evenings out, Spaniards are more informal than most Europeans and the casual restaurants are often filled with tie-less, short-sleeved or sweater-wearing *Madrileños*. Some nightclubs will not allow

entry to people wearing sneakers, but Jeans are common gear on Spaniards and skirt lengths follow the latest fashion. There are large department stores and fine specialty clothing shops for men and women throughout Madrid featuring international designer labels and familiar mass-market apparel, but prices tend to be higher than in the U.S. Quality alterations are available in shops throughout the city.

THE SPANISH DAY A day in Madrid (and almost everywhere else in Spain) has a different pace than the day in northern Europe or in the United States. Rooted in the pre-airconditioning past, the Spanish life rhythm makes perfect sense on a summer's hot day. Today, the average *Madrileño* (or *Madrileña*) grabs a quick cup of coffee before entering the office. "Breakfast" comes at 10:00 a.m. or so when the streets of Madrid fill with groups of workers leaving banks and high-rise offices for the nearest *bar* for coffee and *churros*, the ubiquitous fritters of Spain. The principal meal is eaten around 2:00 p.m. and lunchtime lasts until 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. when offices and shops reopen. (Alas, the U.S. Embassy enjoys a standard U.S. lunch *hour*.) There's another rush at the bars and cafes when businesses shut down sometime between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. Dinner is seldom eaten before 10:00 p.m. and the bars and discos open late and jump 'til dawn, and the after-hours keep on going until about 10 the next morning!. (The pre-dawn social scene has become another of Madrid's distinguishing features.) Trust us, it's surprisingly easy to get with Madrid's tempo.

HOUSING IN MADRID As explained earlier, most Embassy American staff in Madrid occupies Government Leased Quarters (GLQ). The Embassy maintains an inventory of houses, townhouses and apartments that are assigned to employees depending on position grade and family size

according to the precepts in 6 FAM 720. Embassy staff tends to live in most parts of Madrid, with the exception of the city's older historic districts where up-to-standard housing is scarce and street security can be a problem. Families with children and some other employees live in the city's western suburbs where detached houses and townhouses are available in newer subdivisions (called *urbanizaciones*) nearer

THE PORTERO Madrid apartment dwellers soon come to know and rely on the services of the ubiquitous *portero*, the resident "super" who provides, in all Madrid apartment buildings, a variety of services ranging from door security to mail sorting. A good *portero* can be your best friend and invaluable guide to neighborhood services and eccentricities. *Porteros* usually know how to get things done and, while they don't often do the fixings themselves, they always have a friend who does (**for a fee**). Residents "tip" their *portero* for extra services such as garbage pick-up. A suitable gift at Christmas is expected and appreciated.

the American schools. Although the commute from the suburbs can be onerous, it must be weighed against the advantages of a shorter commute to school and the green space.

Most Mission employees live within Madrid in apartments or *pisos* (larger apartments occupying an entire floor). Madrid apartments come in all sizes and shapes, naturally, and generalizations are difficult. Older Spanish apartments tend to have parquet floors, long central corridors and many rooms with doors. Kitchens often consist of several small rooms (reflecting

the time when live-in help was common) with smaller European appliances. Small-sized bedrooms *can present a problem for king-sized beds*. Newer Madrid apartments are more modern, spacious, light and airy, and more of these units are being added to the Embassy's housing inventory *as they become available*. Most Madrid apartments have a central television antenna and satellite TV service, usually including CNN International, exists in many buildings. Except in newer buildings, central air-conditioning is not common and even heating can be limited to certain hours.

Spanish apartment buildings (and nearly all apartments leased by the Embassy) often include small indoor parking spaces. The key word here is "small". *Large American cars and most sport utility vehicles would not fit into such parking areas*. The city is dotted, however, with parking garages, usually larger, where spaces can be rented on a long-term basis.

ELECTRICITY AND PLUGS Electricity can be a problem for Americans in Madrid since Americans expect (and use) more power than most Madrid apartments or houses provide. Spanish electricity is 220v not common. The voltage can be slightly, 50-cycle. Outages are irregular and surges and spikes do occur occasionally. Of course, transformers are required for 110v appliances. For 110v lamps, only a 220v bulb and a plug adapter are required. Plugs are mostly the standard European round two-prong type. Good electrical supply and service shops exist around the city that can do most simple conversions, like changing plugs. It is difficult to buy transformers locally, however.

S HOPPING IN MADRID For your Madrid assignment the odds are excellent that you will find anything you need at some price on the local market. Obviously, the Embassy NEX and Rota are excellent non-mail order sources for products available only in the U.S.

Spain—and Madrid—is known for leather goods (excellent and expensive), shoes (excellent quality), ceramics (including Lladró figurines), Majorca pearls and antiques. New Embassy arrivals are typically interested in home furnishings, 220v appliances, electronics and some gadget left behind. First stop for everyone is usually a branch of Spain's biggest department store chain, *El Corte Inglés* (the store at *Nuevos Ministerios* is the largest) for buying or browsing. *El Corte Inglés* is a good starting point for almost any buying expedition, if only for the purpose of price comparisons before moving on to other stores. For example, *El Corte Inglés* has an excellent selection of European kitchen appliances, bed linens, glass and dishware, hardware and gadgets, in addition to a fairly sizeable furniture department. Best of all, Madrid enjoys the presence of two large IKEA stores in the near suburbs offering the usual selection of home furnishings and everything else at prices comparable to their U.S. branches.

Madrid is dotted with shopping neighborhoods. *Barrio de Salamanca*, where the Embassy is located, is Madrid's most swishy, upscale shopping area, with shops such as Gucci, Loewe (fashion leather goods), Armani, Hermès, Cartier, Prada along with hundreds of fine local boutiques and a local branch of *El Corte Ingles*. Art galleries, furniture and tapestry shops and fine antique stores complete the Salamanca picture. At the opposite pole is Madrid's famous Sunday *Rastro*, a huge open-air market in one of the city's oldest neighborhoods. Once known for genuine bargains on quality antiques, art and other items, the Sunday market is now an outpost

for pick-pockets and itinerant peddlers hawking designer rip-offs, seedy plastic junk and shoddy tourist wares. For serious purchases, it's a good idea to stick to the reputable stores. In Madrid, as everywhere, you get exactly what you pay for.

CREDIT CARDS Department stores, restaurants and most other stores—including some large grocery stores—accept the usual credit cards, preferably VISA or MasterCard. In the mom and pop shops, it's usually cash or local checks only.

SPEAKING SPANISH Millions of foreigners visit Madrid and other parts of Spain annually, enjoy wonderful vacations and return with warm memories of Spain, all without speaking a word of Spanish. Unquestionably, however, your time in Spain will be immeasurably enriched by the ability to speak Spanish. The people with whom you'll come into daily contact (taxi drivers, store clerks, waiters) generally speak only very limited English if any at all. Clearly, English is not as prevalent in Spain as it has become in northern Europe. Spanish lessons are offered in various formats and combinations by several commercial language schools and colleges throughout Madrid and private tutors are available. The embassy also has an excellent in-house program of Spanish study for qualified employees and family members.

FOOD SHOPPING IN MADRID Rumor has it that, in long-ago America, there were once fresh vegetable and fruit markets, bread stores, butchers, fish-mongers and small corner grocery stores where customers were greeted by name, neighbors socialized and a few extra strawberries in the bag were the

shopkeeper's way of saying "come again." Well, get set for some time travel because, in addition to being a cultural experience, food-shopping in Madrid is old-fashioned, time-consuming and lots of fun. Oh yes, and the food is fresh, plentiful, healthy and wonderful. Sure, Madrid has its supermarkets—some suburban stores are as big as the biggest Giants or Safeways. Well, wheeling about among the packaged wares may be convenient, but it isn't quite the same thing.

Madrid is a cornucopia. There are all kinds of food and wine shops everywhere. For example, in Madrid you'll still find the small family-operated neighborhood foodstore where goods are shelved behind the counter and, as you read your list, gathered by the clerk and stacked in front of you (the experience usually requires native Spanish). Elsewhere, there are tiny supermarkets, often with meat and deli departments, as well as fresh fruit and produce markets, filled with stalls of various vendors selling meat, fish and shellfish, poultry, olives, flowers, game, fresh frozen foods and other specialties. Less intimidating for the newly arrived are the large self-serve supermarkets inside department stores (*El Corte Inglés* has impressive food sections at several locations) that feature familiarly packaged foods, meats, fruits and vegetables as well as scanners at check-out. Such stores also

accept credit cards (but bag your own groceries European-style, please). There are warehouse stores (*Al Campo, Carrefour, Continente, Mercadona*), which feature an enormous variety of food and beverage items often at prices significantly lower. Finally, everywhere are specialty food shops (like *Mallorca*) selling varieties of bread, wine, prepared foods and some imported foods.

If you're serious about cooking and food, you will feel right at home in Madrid. Where else do food stores, big and small, still deliver your groceries? Mind your manners, however. There's often a carefully choreographed etiquette at work in the marketplace (quickly being rendered obsolete, alas, by the growing prevalence of number-dispensing machines) whereby order is maintained. That seemingly unruly crowd of eager shoppers in front of the chicken vendor's stand is really a queue and you're expected to ask "who's last?" when you arrive, thus assuming your proper turn. Similarly, you'll be expected to announce yourself as "the last" to the next person who turns up. And never, never touch the bread, fruit or vegetables. Usually, only the shop-keepers or vendors do that. They'll pick out your tomatoes and strawberries, ensuring that everyone gets a fair share of good and bad and, if you're a regular (very important), that you get a few extra.

BRINGING OR BUYING, HAVING A CAR IN MADRID (OR NOT!) If you're a stay-at-home or have no plans to leave Madrid during your assignment, chances are you won't need a car. After all, city distances aren't great, local driving habits do make the strong tremble, public transportation is good, and taxis are plentiful and inexpensive. For the occasional jaunt in the countryside, you'll be able to rent a car or take a train or bus. On the other hand, having your own car will allow more choice in the location of your housing, free you to flee the urban madness more spontaneously and, most importantly, enable you to explore the wonders of the back roads and byways of Spain.

Spain's roads are crowded with virtually every make and model. Local mechanics are professional and inventive when it comes to keeping a vehicle roadworthy. Lead-free gasoline and diesel fuel are available at all filling stations. If you own a recent model automobile with U.S. or European specifications, you will probably

be able to ship your car to Madrid without problems. Many U.S. models (including "foreign" cars specifically manufactured for the U.S. market) can be serviced by dealers in Madrid. Occasionally parts may need to be imported for some "American" makes. (Parts for most U.S. automobiles can be ordered through the NEX at Rota Naval Base.) Embassy employees often import parts from Ford, GM or Chrysler distributors elsewhere in Europe or from the U.S. If you do decide to import a presently-owned American car, it's probably a good idea to bring the address, phone and fax number for a dealer in the U.S. who handles your make and will ship parts via U.S. Mail.

Japanese cars are common here. There are Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Suzuki, Subaru and Mitsubishi dealers in Madrid. However, some models sold in the U.S. are unavailable in Spain and elsewhere in Europe. If you bring a Japanese car, be sure to check that your model is sold and serviced in Spain to eliminate hassles with parts. Jeep Cherokees and other four-wheel drive vehicles are not so popular in

MADRID MISCELLANEOUS: For many Americans, especially for those born and bred in the big city, speaking to strangers in elevators can be a faintly unsettling experience. Not so in Spain where "hello" and "good-bye" on entering and exiting an elevator, a waiting room or other confined public space is an exercise in simple everyday courtesy. Lighten up, and let the *buenos días* and *adiós* flow. You'll feel better about it and be right at home. . . . and speaking of greetings, *Buenos días* works fine until after lunch (that's 3:00 p.m., don't forget) when *buenas tardes* takes hold which will do just fine for the rest of the day while the sun's up. Then, in the gathering dark, it's *buenas noches*. . . . Movie buff? Not to worry about missing the latest flicks. Although all films shown in Spain (and on Spanish television) are dubbed, most important films play here and there around town in "version original." That means, if necessary, you'll enjoy most Hollywood and British productions in English (with Spanish subtitles) within a few weeks of their U.S. release. Other European films also play in original versions with Spanish subtitles. Video rental stores are everywhere offering mainly Spanish-dubbed versions. English-language DVDs are available in the embassy's NEX store. Joining the British Council library will gain access to their fine collection of British movies and TV programs. . . . final word department: remember, in Spain, men and women greet women with kisses on both cheeks (take note, *both cheeks*). Don't leave that lady's other cheek stranded in mid-air.

Madrid because parking them can be a challenge. If you have been assigned to Spain and you are planning to import a vehicle, be sure to read and follow the instructions in the section of this briefing book entitled *Importing Vehicles* under **Post Policies** in Part I. Questions in this regard should be addressed to the Embassy's GSO.



It is possible to buy a used car after your arrival in Madrid. There is, of course, a resale market among departing personnel from all embassies. *¿Qué Pasa?* the Embassy's newsletter, is filled with classified advertisements of cars for sale by Americans and other diplomats and Embassy staff throughout the summer transfer period. In addition, there is an active used car market in Madrid. Spanish tax laws usually make the purchase of a used car from a Spanish owner financially unattractive for persons with tax-free privileges, however.

D RIVING IN MADRID Many persons are confused by driving in Madrid (or in Paris or Rome, for that matter), principally because they believe (silly people) that the white lines painted in the streets and those traffic lights at the corner are intended to control the speed and movement of automobiles and restrict them to certain locations on the roadway. Not so. Behind the wheel, in town and country, Spanish drivers tend to be concerned only

with getting there and every lane is the fast lane. Yes, there are rules, but the rules differ in important respects from the tidy, slow moving rules that you were probably taught in Driver's Ed at school. The most important rule for driving in Madrid, of course, is to watch out for the other driver. He or she is about to turn left (or right) from two lanes over (or about to hop into your lane to avoid a double or triple-parked car up ahead) or about to pull some other surprise maneuver that will shred your nerves. Never mind. You'll get used to it and soon begin holding your own. One important tip, keep your eyes on the traffic light on your side of the intersection. Never mind the light on the other side; until you get through the intersection. That light tells them when to proceed through the crosswalk. And remember the importance of pedestrian and jogger's rights: pedestrians and joggers (the mad few that exist) have absolutely *no rights at all* in auto-mad Madrid (as you'll quickly discover when you're out for stroll or a run).

PARKING is a major Madrid obsession. Unlike most U.S. cities, Madrid is a labyrinth of underground public parking

GOING TO CHURCH Religious denominations of many persuasions exist in Madrid and several offer services in English. There are, not surprisingly, Catholic churches in most neighborhoods. Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church has an American pastor and offers Sunday School for children and other activities for the multi-national congregation. The Anglican Episcopal Church of St. George, affiliated with the British Embassy, is a Madrid institution with a wide range of religious and social activities. In addition, there are other Protestant Churches throughout the city. A Synagogue serves Madrid's growing Jewish population and the city is home to one of Europe's largest mosques. The Embassy CLO can provide detailed information about the location of various church services in Madrid.

DRY CLEANING

Many Americans have a well-justified phobia about dry cleaners abroad. You know, those quaint little shops that charge an arm and a leg to get last night's pasta sauce out of your favorite tie or blouse, want you to remove the buttons before you leave the garment behind and then say "come back in two weeks" and whose clerks, when the designated time finally arrives, greet you with a puzzled look and ask "what color was it?" while your heart begins to sink. Well, perk up, times are changing, in Europe too. Dry cleaning shops (*tintorerías*) are a common sight in every neighborhood in Madrid and a few even have express service. Prices are still quite high compared to the U.S. but the work is good and the service reliable (and you don't have to remove the buttons). In the embassy, the NEX store also offers a four-day turnaround for items dropped off and collected on premises.

garages where parking is available at hourly rates. Never mind. Madrid drivers apparently enjoy an unalienable right to park, double park and triple park on streets, crosswalks, sidewalks and wherever else (and at whatever angle) empty space exists. Even though Parking meters have been placed in the streets of central Madrid, the music of blocked drivers leaning on their horns until the double-parker emerges on the run from the store or restaurant to move the blocking car is a familiar Madrid tune. Parking tickets are issued, great numbers of them but, lacking an effective enforcement mechanism, few seem to be paid. (U.S. Embassy staff members, of course, are expected to pay promptly all parking and other traffic tickets.) Towing is the greatest disincentive to illegal parking but is typically exercised only reluctantly and then only under the most extreme provocation, such as creating a major nuisance to traffic flow. But it is best not to tempt fate. Finding your car gone can be a most unpleasant surprise. By the way, you'll need a Spanish

or other EU driver's license to drive in Spain. Stop by the Embassy's Human Resources office for instructions on how to obtain your license.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN MADRID Taxi, subway and bus services in Madrid are excellent and inexpensive. Taxis (white sedans with a red stripe) are metered and driven by knowledgeable, friendly, honest drivers—with the possible exception of a few who work the airports or train stations. Look for the green light on the rooftop "taxi" sign or the windshield "libre" sign to indicate availability. Rates vary depending on the time of day and the amount of baggage handled. There can be various surcharges, including for the airport, but the cost of a Madrid taxi ride will be usually significantly cheaper than in U.S. cities. Metro (subway) and bus routes crisscross Madrid. Buses and commuter trains provide access to the distant suburbs as well. Madrid's subway system is deep underground on many levels with long walks common at connecting stations. Fare combinations range from single fare tickets, purchased aboard the bus or at the ticket window in the metro, to reduced rate ten-trip tickets and monthly and annual passes offering greater savings.

THE SPANISH NEWS MEDIA The typical Madrid news kiosk overflows with newspapers and magazines, mostly in Spanish, of course, but with a healthy selection of publications in other European languages, including English. Madrid's principal daily newspapers are the tabloids *El País* and *El Mundo* and magazine-sized *ABC*. All are excellent with a variety of well-written features, nifty graphics, plenty of foreign news and superb weekend editions. There are, of course, other important daily newspapers as well as business and sports papers. The huge number of magazines includes the weekly *People*-like *¡Hola!* and Spain's news magazine *Cambio 16*. This morning's

International Herald Tribune (now with a daily English-language *El Pais* supplement), the European *Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times* and yesterday's London newspapers are on sale just about everywhere along with *The Economist* and international editions of *Time* and *Newsweek*.

Chatter, clatter and clutter describe the AM and FM radio dial in Madrid which has over 50 stations, many broadcasting in stereo. As elsewhere, news, talk and top-40 featuring rap and pop, often American, are programming staples. Spanish National Radio has an excellent classical station. Not to worry about being radio-deprived in Madrid, there's a station for every taste and life style.

Madrid receives six broadcast television stations, including *Digital Plus*, a mostly-encoded pay-TV movie channel. Channels One and Two are the two stations of Spanish National Television (RTVE). Other television channels are *Telecinco*, *Antenna 3* and *TeleMadrid*. All broadcast a mix of news and special events, movies (dubbed), sometimes torturous or hysterically silly game and variety shows, excellent cultural programming, soaps and familiar sitcoms from the U.S. (dubbed). Many apartment houses have central satellite television receivers through which residents receive a mix of Spanish and international television including CNN International, BBC World Service and a EuroSport station or two. Personal satellite dishes that receive a huge range of programming can also be installed where the correct line-of-sight is available and permission has been obtained from building management committees called *comunidades*. AFRTS is viewable in Madrid although a satellite dish and a digital receiver are required. Receivers and decoders are available by special order through the NEX for about \$500. The purchase and installation of the dish

antenna from a local vendor runs about another \$500.

There are two or three bookstores in Madrid which specialize in English-language books, mostly from Britain. Prices tend to be high when compared to U.S. prices. In addition, such large bookstores as *Crisol*, and *Casa del Libro*, *El Corte Ingles* and *FNAC*, carry a limited selection of English and American paperbacks. The Embassy NEX has a selection of U.S.-priced paperbacks and some hardcover books including the most popular guidebooks. Usually, however, books can be purchased on-line at prices lower than local purchase, even when shipping and handling costs are added. *The Broadsheet* is a glossy English-language monthly magazine aimed chiefly at the vast British expatriate community.

The magazine is distributed throughout the Embassy as well as *In Madrid* another English-language city-based periodical.

BRINGING YOUR ELECTRONIC GEAR There you sit, in Washington, Wellington or Walla-Walla, surrounded by the accouterments of the 21st century's wired world: computer, modem, mobile phone, laptop, fax machine, game boy, home entertainment center, *ad infinitum*, and you're about to pack up and move to Madrid. What to do? Well, first, remember that all U.S.-standard 120v, 60-cycle equipment requires a step-down transformer to be used with Spain's 220v, 50-cycle current. The following general guidance may also be helpful. Contact the Embassy's GSO section or check the Internet for more specific information.

TELEVISION Given the range of video hardware and software on the market today, there are few simple questions and even fewer simple answers that respond to the range of possible situations. Here are a few basics. Broadcast television in Spain operates on the PAL-G system. U.S. NTSC television sets will not receive

broadcasts in Spain (although your American TV may be used passively to receive U.S. standard videotape or DVC discs). To receive Spanish television, a PAL-G or multi-system television receiver is required. You'll also need a multi-system DVD to play what is available on the market. Multi-system equipment can be difficult to find these days in retail outlets in the U.S. (in European department stores as well) although it is available in U.S. military *Power Zone* stores in Europe. (This includes the store at Rota Naval Base in Spain. The Embassy NEX store can assist with ordering video and audio equipment from the AAFES mail order service.) Remember, if you plan to watch broadcast or satellite television in Spain, you will need a television set capable of receiving PAL-G broadcasts. If you plan to record off-air or to play NTSC and PAL-standard DVDs, you will need a multi-system DVD player. If you plan to use only U.S. standard video software, your U.S. TV receiver will work just fine.

TELEPHONE SERVICE IN MADRID

Not surprisingly, touch-tone telephone service is available throughout Madrid these days as is direct-dial service to domestic and international locations. Still, hiring technicians to relocate or to increase the number of telephone jacks in a first-Embassy-use house or apartment is common. U.S. telephones may be installed with no problem into plug-in jacks (cordless phones should be purchased locally as U.S. models do not always work here). U.S. telephone answering machines, computer modems and personal fax machines (remember those transformers) operate in Madrid with no special installation requirements (although your 60-cycle clock will run slowly on 50-cycle power). All manner of telephone equipment including cordless phones is available at phone stores in Madrid although costs are significantly higher than in the U.S. It's usually best to buy and bring telephone and

fax equipment although there may be, occasionally, unexpected (and unexplainable) compatibility problems. In Spain, as in most European countries, telephone rates have plummeted with the on-set of deregulation. Most phone service now includes automatic message service as a standard feature. The cost of installation and local phone rates now compare favorably with the U.S. and itemized telephone bills showing the details of each call are now routine (who says nothing ever changes?). Even international calling rates are much lower. Although many Americans abroad still use U.S. call-back services or U.S. calling cards to minimize the cost of their calls to the U.S., plain vanilla "pick up the phone and dial" rates are no longer significantly more expensive, especially in off-peak hours. It is important to remember, however, that phone calls in Spain and elsewhere in Europe are still metered—billed by units of time per call—in addition to fixed monthly rates. The longer you chat, the more you pay.

Mobile phone service is widespread in Spain. Half the population has a phone stuck in their ear half the time. The cost of telephone instruments and service is reasonable and coverage throughout the country (with roaming service throughout Europe available) is also reliable. Most likely, you and your family members will want to have mobile phones. There are 3 main cell phone providers, Amena, Vodafone and the most used by Embassy folks (for convenience, not necessarily for better quality) *Telefónica*

COMPUTERS Spain is part of the wired world in a big way. Suddenly, more and more Spanish homes now have PCs and are connected. Computer hardware and software stores are located throughout the city. Most software on sale or serviced in Spain, of course, is the Spanish-language version of popular applications so, if you need English, bring

your own, download it or order on-line using APO service. Configured to compensate for 220v current, there's no reason not to bring your computer, printer and other hardware to Madrid. Investing in a surge protector might be a good idea, however. A move to Madrid will not deprive you of e-mail either. There are several service providers available at excellent rates including *Bitmailer* and *Wanadoo* if you don't use an Internet mail service. Fast ADSL broadband service is available for home users through old pal www.Telefónica.es and many other companies that have entered a fierce competition for a share of this profitable market. Ask our computer experts for advise, or check the providers directly. (Providers include www.ya.com, www.Tiscali.es, www.jazztel.com, www.wanadoo.es, etc)

STEREO EQUIPMENT If you've been hauling your beloved audio components around the world, you're probably an old hand at the varieties and idiosyncrasies of the world's electrical supply. Don't forget that you'll probably require a transformer and that, unless adjusted for 50-cycles, your CD may run a bit slower in Spain.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN MADRID AND OTHER CITIES Madrid is a large city of five million inhabitants, and greater Madrid contains nearly six million people. Like big cities everywhere, Madrid attracts a significant number of criminals, creeps and scam artists who are adept at separating the unwary from their belongings. On the other hand, the chances of retrieving a credit card or wallet accidentally left behind in a taxi or in a restaurant or bar are far greater in Madrid than in most other large European cities. Still, Madrid and other Spanish cities suffer from a plague of petty street crime with tourists and other foreigners as primary targets. In general, the well-lit streets of

Madrid are alive with people at all hours (some of whom may be working boys and girls) and late-night strollers feel no insecurity in most sections of the city. Still, without question, Madrid has neighborhoods which are best avoided.



PALACIO REAL, MADRID

Residential burglaries do occur occasionally and have affected U.S. Embassy staff. All Embassy residences now have alarms, motion detectors and automatic call systems. The most typical complaint is petty street crime: snatching and grabbing purses or bags; cell phones or obvious jewelry being ripped away; or wallets and cards taken from pockets, especially in tightly-packed buses or subways. The problem is especially acute in tourist-active areas near the major museums or in the Plaza Mayor or the Puerta del Sol. Madrid pedestrians, even in up-scale shopping areas near the Embassy, are often accosted by practiced panhandlers and street people, who may attempt to divert attention and steal unprotected valuables. Beware of strangers who approach you on the street. Also, beware of the "fake Police scam", where men in suits and ties showing badges ask to see your cash and credit cards to make sure they are not counterfeit. Their scams are clever and carefully crafted to exploit your native trust and friendliness. Other unsavory types prey on car rental agencies and scam visitors under the guise of various forms of "assistance". Residents and visitors can protect themselves from crime in Madrid and other Spanish cities (and elsewhere too) by being street-smart

and alert, lowering your profile (nix the fanny-pack, Bermuda shorts and white sneakers) and by adopting the “big-city” precautions that most Americans have by now learned.

The Embassy’s Regional Security Office provides all new American employees, their family members and TDYers with an introductory security briefing that covers aspects of safety and security in Madrid and elsewhere in Spain. Specifics on high-alert areas and risk reduction procedures are discussed. The RSO staff also survey residences to identify and correct residential security problems. As pointed out above, residential alarm systems are standard. Spanish police and other emergency services are responsive and well trained, and experienced in dealing with foreigners. Any security incident should, of course, be immediately reported to the RSO.

In its struggle with ETA (the Basque terrorist group), Spain and Madrid have had a long history of deadly incidents of terrorism and threats. This is a political and criminal problem with deep historical and emotional roots in Spain. Although car bombings with fatalities and injuries have occurred in Madrid, Americans have not been a specific target for ETA violence. At the same time, other foreign terrorist groups are known to be active in Spain, as in the March 2004 Al-Qaida train bombings in Madrid. Like other U.S. embassies in Europe, the U.S. Embassy in Madrid continues to be in an alert posture and to work closely with Spanish authorities to protect our employees and our property. The current

state of terrorist and other threats against the U.S. is discussed in the security briefing given to all new arrivals.

DINING IN MADRID The adage that there is no other city in the world with as many bars and restaurants as Madrid is probably true. *Madriileños* have made eating out a colorful, exciting, delicious exercise in performance art and, unless your tastes run to the far corners of the culinary exotic, there's a favorite restaurant in Madrid for you too.

Let's start with *tapas*, those little plates of things served up with a drink in most every bar from Oviedo to Málaga and beyond (how do you think hungry Spaniards make it to dinnertime?). Madrid overflows with *tapas* bars (sometimes called *tasca*s) where *tapas* range from simple chunks of *chorizo* (sausage), *tortilla* (potato omelet), cheese and slices of Spain's *jamón serrano* to more extravagant fish and meat dishes. Every bar has a specialty of the house and the cost of drinks and *tapas* at the bar (hey, you only get a tiny plate of olives for free) is usually less than sitting down for dinner.

For an introduction to the Spanish custom of *tasca*-hopping, try the bars and restaurants nearby Madrid's *Plaza Santa Ana*, including the famed *La Trucha* (you'll need to get there early and squeeze in). For something a bit different, try the several kinds of *pinchos* (*tapas* on bread) offered at the bar at *Cervecería José Luis* (there are several, including one conveniently located near the Embassy at *Calle Serrano, 89*).

Looking for something a bit more substantial? Madrid has a restaurant for all pocketbooks from Michelin-starred establishments like *El Amparo* or *Zalacaín* down to the most pedestrian neighborhood bistro. But, let's get serious. How much does it cost to eat out in Madrid? Well, the answer is probably somewhere between 20 and 200 Euros. Obviously, lots depends on your personal style and taste in restaurants.

A perfectly wonderful three-course dinner with wine and coffee in a fairly upscale Madrid restaurant with linen tablecloths ought not to cost more than what a similar meal would cost in Washington. Equally



wonderful meals are available in fine restaurants for less (and more). At mid-day, every Spanish restaurant offers a *prix fixe menú del día* at prices lower than *à la carte* service in the evening.

What's on the menu? First off, there's lots of fish and shellfish. Land-locked Madrid is one of Europe's great seafood-eating cities and most Spaniards will pay anything for a plate of fresh shellfish flown or trucked south overnight from northern Spain's fishing coasts (beware, restaurants charge by weight). Then there's the roasted meat specialties of Castile: *cordero lechal* (roast lamb) and *cochinillo asado* (roasted

suckling pig). Some restaurants specialize in the rice dishes of Valencia (*paella* at last!) and others in succulent steaks still grilling on the plate. There are restaurants specializing in foods of the regions of Spain where you'll find mellow Asturians, Gallegos and Andalusians gathered around for a taste of home. On the other hand, if your idea of a great meal out runs to the ethnic cuisine of the world, Madrid may disappoint. Although times are changing, there are still relatively few really good Thai, Japanese, Latin American or even Italian restaurants (although lots of pizza pubs).

TIPPING IN RESTAURANTS especially when traveling abroad, is a subject that bedevils most of us. In Spain (and elsewhere in Europe), it is customary to include the cost of tax and service in the total price. In addition, Spaniards leave a few coins, around one Euro, or sometimes more depending on the "ambiance" of the restaurant. Spaniards familiar with American tipping habits are quick to note that, in Spain "unlike in the United States," waiters are well paid and do not depend on tips for their income.

TIPPING ELSEWHERE varies. The taxi driver gets a few coins, for example, and it is customary to tip the person who does your hair. Believe it or not, tipping the fellow who pumps gas at the gas station is common. Your best guide is the advice of Spanish friends.

SEEING AND DOING IN MODERN MADRID CULTURAL EVENTS IN MADRID Madrid has a hugely vibrant cultural life. The city's concert hall complex is filled throughout the year as audiences enjoy an array of concerts with visiting musicians, soloists and orchestras from around the world. Tickets are usually available by subscription in various combinations and occasionally on a single concert basis. Opera, a Spanish tradition, is enormously popular (except for the

priciest seats, tickets are often hard to come by) and the city offers a grand renovated nineteenth century Opera House. Theaters are everywhere, both mainstream and experimental, showcasing classical and contemporary Spanish playwrights, young talents and foreign drama in translation. U.S. plays are staged often and Spanish-language versions of well-known musicals such as “Mame”, “My Fair Lady,” “Hello Dolly,” and, inevitably, “Man of La Mancha” have been staged in Madrid and elsewhere in Spain. Summer evenings are filled with the sounds of *flamenco* performances and *zarzuela*, Spanish folk opera. Madrid's **Autumn Festival** annually brings the finest foreign actors and companies to the city.

El Corte Ingles is your best bet to find tickets to most shows and concerts, and they are also available online. See Venta de entradas at www.elcorteingles.es. Other department stores such as the French FNAC have a ticket service as well www.fnac.es Other websites where you can purchase tickets for opera, theatre and other cultural events are <http://www.ticktackticket.com>, www.servicaixa.es, www.atrapalo.com, and <http://www.ticketspain.com/es>. Click on www.sportsemotions.com for real Madrid games and other sports events For online movie tickets, you can get seats for any show, in English or Spanish at www.cinentradas.com.

MADRID'S MANY MUSEUMS Madrid is one of Europe's greatest cities for art. With the famed Thyssen-Bornemisza painting collection now at home in the refurbished *Palacio Villahermosa* just across from the Prado Museum on the *Paseo del Prado* and a few blocks north of the Reina Sofía Contemporary Arts Center, the city boasts an authentic "masterpiece mile." The Prado remains, of course, Madrid's signature museum. Here, in great galleries and exhibition halls, are the collections of the



MUSEO DEL PRADO, MADRID

Hapsburg Kings reflecting Spain's empire of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Spanish masters like Zurbarán, Murillo and Velázquez; foreigners like Hieronymus Bosch, El Greco and Rubens. The Prado is home also to the works of the Spanish master Francisco Goya. Across the street is the 800-work collection of the Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza and his family—the entire history of western painting arranged chronologically in a single glorious setting (including one of Europe's finest samplings of 19th and 20th century American art). Nearby, Madrid's museum for contemporary art, named for Spain's Queen Sofia, is home to the Spanish modernists—Picasso (the master's **Guernica** is here), Miró, Grís, Dalí—as well as Spanish and foreign modern artists. Among Madrid's other museums are:

The Archeology Museum (*Calle Serrano 13*). The history of Spain from prehistory to the Middle Ages, all told in digestible bites, look for the model of the *Altamira Caves* outside. A good starting point for identifying the periods of Spanish art history and lots of fun.

Convento de las Descalzas Reales (*Plaza de las Descalzas*). Stunning Hapsburg paintings, religious statuary (Pedro de la Mena) and amazing vibrant tapestries by

Rubens in a living 16th century cloister and museum just off the Puerta del Sol. Visitors escorted in small groups, Spanish-language only. Don't miss it.

The Municipal Museum (*Calle Fuencarral 78*). The history of Madrid and other glimpses of the city's past told through exhibits, maps and art. Special exhibitions too. Great gift shop with books, guides, Madrid tee-shirts and other one-of-a-kind memorabilia.

The San Fernando Royal Academy of Art (*Calle Alcalá 13*). All the giants of Spanish art are here, Italian artists too, a wonderful supplement to the Prado and never crowded.

The Romantic Museum (*Calle San Mateo 13*). One of Madrid's most captivating and out-of-the-way museums. There's usually no one there but you, the creaking floors and the ghosts. The mid-nineteenth century still alive in a charming private home of art and curios.

Museo Sorolla (*Calle Martínez Campos 37*). Now undergoing renovation, the sumptuous home and studio of Spain's master painter of the early 20th century, Joaquín Sorolla, with a superb collection of Sorolla's masterpieces.

The Naval Museum (*Paseo del Prado 5*). Spain's history and the exploration of America (Juan de la Cosa's first map is here), a jewel of a museum and recently redecorated! Take the children.

Museo Cerralbo (*Calle Ventura Rodriguez 17*). This 19th century mansion near the Plaza de España contains the exotic collection of art and artifacts of the 17th Marquis of Cerralbo. The collection ranges from Iberian pottery to El Greco's *The Ecstasy of St. Francis de Assisi*. The house itself and the 19th century ballroom are the real stars of the show.

Museo Lázaro Galdiano (*Calle Serrano 122*). The Embassy's neighbor museum is one of the best in the city with a fine collection of Spanish and English masters. There's also a portrait attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, a claim that alone is worth the price of admission.

There's plenty more to see, including an eighteenth century tapestry factory that still weaves royal carpets, a unique bull-fighting museum and a superb museum of the decorative arts. Most museums in Spain are open on Sundays but closed on Mondays.

SPORTS AND THE OUT-OF-DOORS
 Madrid, although filled with truly sports-mad residents who can be roused to peaks of ecstasy or pits of depression by the fortunes of the city's various teams, is not yet a great center of physical activity. Top spectator sports in Spain are soccer and basketball, followed closely by cycling and motor sports. Joggers who venture out wisely refuse to brave the traffic and obstacle courses created by the helter-skelter of parked cars. Instead, runners crowd parks like *Buen Retiro*, *Casa de Campo*, *Parque del Oeste* and other places in the city set up with running tracks and paths. In summer, several outdoor public swimming pools operate. There are Cycling paths marked at several places throughout the city and in the suburbs. On Sundays, many roads are closed to give way to bikers, and the train system even allows you to carry your bikes if you decide to explore this way the wonderful towns located around Madrid. There are a few public tennis courts scattered about the city and a few private clubs that welcome swimmers or tennis buffs. Scattered throughout Madrid and the suburbs the "Polideportivos" are the places to look for affordable sports facilities. To become a member, usually it is required to show proof of residence in the respective

community and to pay a modest, depending on availability. Private golf courses abound nearby Madrid and, especially, at resorts along Spain's coasts, but they are expensive and waiting lists are long. Most require sponsors.

Indoor health clubs are the best (but not the cheapest) solution for the exercise-deprived. There are several within a few blocks of the U.S. Embassy. Clubs are well-equipped and require a hefty membership fee in addition to monthly charges. Outside of town, the Guadarrama and Gredos mountain ranges beckon hikers and nature-walkers. Fishing spots abound although locations tend to be tightly held secrets.

Downhill skiing is a popular winter sport. Truly serious skiers will need to travel north to the Spanish Pyrenees or south to the Sierra Nevada to find sufficient snow and altitude for meaningful skiing. Beginners and tentative intermediates, however, can enjoy the crowded slopes only about an hour's drive from the Embassy in the Guadarrama range. Snow depths vary annually (and attract sizeable crowds, especially on weekends) but it is a special bonus to find such reasonably priced and decent day skiing so convenient to Madrid.

Urban green space is at a premium. Madrid's famed Retiro Park is criss-crossed with walking paths and paved roadways that wander through tall trees and richly landscaped grounds featuring monuments, meandering streams, lakes and waterfalls. The *Casa de Campo*, located on the western edge of the city, is a huge parkland with several attractions. Elsewhere there are corner parks where neighbors gather to catch the sun and walk their dogs but generally little of the foliage and none of the green grass that American city-dwellers value and Londoners enjoy.

BULLFIGHTING in Spain is neither purely sport, nor simply art, nor only culture. It is instead all of the above—a highly ritualized reenactment of life and death deeply-rooted in Spanish history, life, self-conception and character. The cathedral of Spanish bullfighting is Madrid's magnificent *neo-Mudéjar* bullring, *La Plaza de Toros de las Ventas*. There *corridos* are held on Sundays from March through fall (and daily during the Festival of *San Isidro* in May). Bullfighting can be neither loved nor abhorred in the abstract. There are plenty of Spaniards who oppose bullfighting as a needlessly cruel and senseless



spectacle. Still, better judgments can be made when it is understood and the elements of the ritual comprehended. An afternoon at the bullring can be, one way or the other, an unforgettable experience. Visitors and new residents can also begin to make their decisions about bullfighting by turning on their television sets. Many Spanish bullfights are televised nationally. James Michener discusses his love for bullfighting at length in *Iberia* and, of course, there's the classic, Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*.

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION There is a vast range of educational choices at all levels in Madrid and elsewhere in Spain. Primary and secondary schooling is available in many foreign languages in addition to Spanish, including French, German, Italian and English. Many Embassy American staff chose to enroll their children at **The American School of Madrid (ASM)**. The American School of Madrid is a private, non-profit, American college-preparatory day school providing

instruction in English at preschool, kindergarten, primary and secondary levels. Spanish-language classes are offered starting in kindergarten through grade 12. ASM offers Advanced Placement courses and is fully affiliated with the International Baccalaureate program for a Junior/Senior year IB program. ASM is located in Aravaca, a residential suburb on the west side of Madrid. Morning and afternoon buses transport students and after school activity buses are also provided. Curriculum and teaching methods follow the American pattern; the school is accredited by the Middle States Association and transfer credits are readily accepted by U.S. schools.

Many of the approximately 700 plus students at ASM are children of American business people in Madrid. About 40 Mission dependents attend as well as many from the U.S. contingent of NATO. Spanish students and students of 50 other nationalities also attend. The numbers of Americans, Spaniards and other nationalities tend to remain constant as the school strives for a “magic mix” of 33 percent American, 33 percent Spanish and 33 percent other. Boarding facilities are not provided. Annual tuition and bus transportation fees normally are covered by educational allowances.

Although ASM follows an American school curriculum, it does not attempt to adjust to every student’s level of instruction. **ASM does not guarantee placement nor the ability to school special needs children.** Though ASM would like to accept all Embassy children, the school will not lower standards or accept a child for whom the program might not be the best choice. Given this, if considering ASM, the first step is to contact the Admissions Office as soon as possible.

Furthermore, **if one of the primary educational goals is to become bilingual**

in Spanish then ASM may not be the best choice. Though their curriculum is very good, the school does not attempt to have full bilingual education. Most schools do not. If this is your goal, please contact the Community Liaison Office immediately.

For further information about ASM, contact the **Office of Admissions, American School of Madrid tel. (34) 91-740-1904, fax (34) 91-357-2678.** The American School of Madrid's mailing address is Apartado 80, 28020 Madrid, Spain. Mail may also be sent to the school using the Embassy's APO address. ASM has an informative web site at www.amerschmad.org. The school's e-mail address is asmadm@amerschmad.org.

The International College of Spain (ICS) is boarding and day school offering primary and secondary education to students of all nationalities, from ages 3 to 18. Courses lead to the International Baccalaureate and I.C.S. Diplomas in grade 12 and Middle Years Program of the International Baccalaureate Certificates in grade 10. They also offer the PYP (Primary Years Program) which is a curriculum designed by the International Baccalaureate Organization. ICS is located in La Moraleja, a residential suburb in northern Madrid. Bus transportation is provided. They do not have late buses for those interested in after school activities and ICS may have difficulty transporting your child/ren if you live too far out into the suburbs. If you are seriously considering ICS, please choose your housing location with this in mind.

ICS is a Member of the European Council of International Schools, and the Mediterranean Association of International Schools. It is accredited by the Spanish Ministry of Education and by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. ICS is one of only a handful of schools in the world fully authorized to offer

the IBO curriculum from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The school has about 550 students. About 10 Mission dependents attend as well as Spanish students and students of 45 other countries. Annual tuition and bus transportation fees are covered by educational allowances.

Preliminary application materials may be obtained by contacting the school's website. ASM and ICS require copies of a prospective student's academic record from the past three school years as well as reports of recent standardized test scores. Once these are received by the school, the final application process can begin. For further information about ICS, contact the Office of Admissions, International College of Spain tel. (34) 91-625-2303, fax (34) 91-650-1035. ICS's address is Apartado Postal 271, 28100 Alcobendas, Madrid, Spain. ICS has a web site at www.icsmadrid.com and you will find a direct link to their admissions office.

Other schools that dependents have attended or are currently attending:

Kings College is a co-educational day and boarding school, which offers a British education to over 1200 pupils of many different nationalities. The main school site for pupils from 18 months to 18 years is located in Soto Viñuelas, a residential development situated just north of Madrid. There is bus service for day pupils. Their Internet site is at www.kingscollege.es

The **International School of Madrid** The school follows the English National Curriculum. The school is an official examination centre for the University of Cambridge Examination Board (UCLES). IGCSE, AS and A level examinations are taken in academic subjects. Students may also sit Spanish university entrance examinations (Selectividad). From 2004

official examinations of the 'Alliance Francaise' will also be offered. French is studied from Year Five and other languages by arrangement. ISM is regularly inspected by the British Council approved inspectors. Entrance examinations are administered.

An interview prior to acceptance is mandatory and reports from previous schools (if any) are required. To enter any class it is asked that at least one parent be fluent in English, the language of instruction throughout the school.

More information available at <http://www.nabss.org/ismadrid.htm>

The **Study Center Foundation** provides an education for students with *slight learning disabilities*, focused on **dyslexia**, grades four through 12. More information at <http://www.dislexia.org/> or emailing directly studycenter@retemail.es.

Colegio BRAINS is a co-educational day school in the Northern part of Madrid offering a truly bilingual education. The web site is www.colegioBRAINS.com. This school is an option for parents and students whose aim is bilingual Spanish and English ability.

Runnymede College is located in La Moraleja, a residential suburb in northern Madrid. It is a British school with a British teaching staff, educating children from the age of 3 to 18. The largest national group is the British, followed by the Spanish, American and Indian. See their Internet site at <http://www.runnymede-college.com/>

The **Institución Educativa SEK** has facilities at Villanueva de la Cañada (El Castillo) and San Sebastián de los Reyes (Ciudadcampo). They accept students from age 1 until grade 12. Students at SEK can follow the International Baccalaureat IB Program) as well as the Spanish Curriculum. The school has a bus service that picks up students in west and North Madrid most suburban areas around Madrid

with Embassy housing. More information available at www.sek.es

Embassy parents with bilingual children, who want to school them in a Spanish-speaking facility, have chosen the Catholic **Colegio Everest**. The school is located in Pozuelo de Alarcón and part of their curriculum is taught in English as well, mainly in primary school. Other than nursery classes, girls and boys are schooled separately. More information (in Spanish of course) is available at www.colegioeverest.net.

Parents whose aim is to keep their children in a fully French-speaking school have opted for **Lycee Francais Madrid**. This is a large school of about 4000 students and follows the Spanish curriculum, although the sports activities are not their forte. Information about facilities and admissions is available at <http://www.lycee-francais-madrid.net>

Further information on this particular aspect of education in Madrid as well as other general information about schools and education for your children in Spain can be obtained from the Embassy's CLO office or appropriate school principal. The Office of Overseas Schools at the Department of State is an additional source of information at Internet site or <http://aopros.a.state.gov/> on the Department of State Intranet.

For information regarding the IB (International Baccalaureat) and AP (Advanced Placement) Program, as well as the Virginia Standards of Learning, Special Needs education, home schooling, etc, is available at the FLO Internet webpage and will be extremely useful to make the best choice for your child's schooling options. <http://www.state.gov/m/dqhr/flo/rsracs/pubs/c1978.htm>

MADRID FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS Definitive guidance about life in Madrid for school-age kids up to late teens is best offered by knowledgeable parents or teens themselves. If possible, ask the CLO for the name of an Embassy family with whom you or your teens might communicate to find out authoritative answers to the concerns of your younger family members. In the meantime, here's some general guidance to allay fears that leaving the U.S. for a new home in Madrid is banishment to the far side of the moon. Not surprisingly, much of the social life and after-school activities including sports for kids and teens revolves around school.

In addition to the fine art museums mentioned earlier, Madrid offers lots of museum opportunities of special interest to younger persons including a Planetarium, an Aquarium, a Natural Science Museum, a Military Museum and a new superb "hands-on" Interactive Science Museum ("Acciona"). Professional music instruction at home is easily obtainable and dance studios exists almost everywhere with special programs for young children. In addition, there are several riding schools nearby. An English-speaking theater workshop with training and performing programs for teens and adults exists. On stage, the city has a well-developed program of cultural activities and theater (in Spanish, of course) specifically aimed at young people, including a good puppet theater.

Elsewhere, there are plenty of familiar faces around town. McDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, Dunkin Donuts, Starbucks, Hard Rock Café, Pizza Hut, Domino's, Planet Hollywood, TGIFriday's and American-style chain restaurants like Foster's Hollywood help keep burger-attacks and other pangs under control. Madrid is a great disco town and dancing the night away is a favorite pastime of many young *Madriileños*. Early

evening discos (closing at midnight) that do not serve alcohol can be found everywhere. Not to be over-looked or minimized are the dangers that exist on the streets of Madrid, not only for young people. Spanish attitudes to public drinking and drugs are remarkably lax and accepting compared to North American ideas and visitors can be easily shocked by scenes that can be encountered on a late night stroll through popular gathering areas like the *Plaza Santa Ana*.

As mentioned earlier, most of the principal American films play in Madrid about two months after their U.S. opening, many in English. DVD rental stores are everywhere and two English-language bookstores offer English-language films on video for rent.

Madrid's radio is saturated with American Top 40 hits and Madrid is a regular stop on the tour itineraries of nearly all the top U.S. and European rock groups.

And, if exploration of castles from the thirteenth century still commanding distant hill tops appeals to your family, you and your children will find that much more to enjoy in Spain.

An ability to speak Spanish is one of the great treasures that young people who spend their school years in Madrid gain by residence here. Foreign children of all ages in Spain study Spanish and use it in their everyday lives. In many Embassy families, teens are apt to be the most fluent (and most critical) speakers of Spanish in the household. It's a joy to witness their fluency and ease with the language whenever American young people in Madrid gather with their Spanish friends. Speaking Spanish is a lifetime gift that living in Madrid bestows.

C **CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES** Persons looking for social activities outside the home and the workplace in Madrid will have far more to choose from than can be listed here. The Embassy CLO is a good central point to explore special interests and to find a contact for particular fields. Community organizations include **The American Club** and **The Navy League**, excellent settings to meet and socialize with Madrid's multinational English-speaking business community. In addition, there are groups like **The American Legion**, the **Lions Club**, the **Yale Club of Madrid** and chapters of **Democrats Abroad** and **Republicans Abroad**, although the two latter tend to be active only during U.S. Presidential elections. Other organizations exist that limit membership on the basis of gender. Not to be overlooked are the **Madrid Hash House Harriers** who can always be counted on, if you're so inclined, for a good run and a good time. Another great way to socialize and improve your skills is attending the **Toastmasters** meetings weekly in several locations throughout Madrid.

For Spanish speakers, Madrid is fortunate to have several well-established lecture series in Spanish sponsored by museums (both at the **Prado** and the **Thyssen**) and foundations that bring leading Spanish and foreign experts together for lectures and discussions of interest to both scholars and to the intellectually curious general public. Costs are usually minimal. Madrid universities offer general education courses (in Spanish). Madrid's largest university, the state-run *Complutense*, offers an excellent *Spanish for Foreigners* program at all ability levels that includes language instruction as well as lectures by university faculty members in the art, history and culture of Spain. The CLO has further information.

Part 3

Traveling in Spain

Reading about Spain

Food and wine in Spain



Information and Tips for Newcomers

If Madrid is a pageant, Spain is a

kaleidoscope, a patch quilt of designs and shapes all stitched together to make a coherent national whole. From afar, Spain is a single entity, best represented in the travel literature by the sound of guitars, a blur of flamenco dancers and images of bullfighters, impossibly macho in their suits of light. Up close, Spain is much more interesting and modern, dynamic and complicated. Spain today is a nation rooted in diversity—an assembly of regions and cultures, united under a democratic government and a progressive monarchy. The ingredients in this Spanish tossed salad are distinct and different and sometimes antagonistic to any central government which seeks to mix, match or merge them. Yet Spain thrives, and celebrates the exercise of regional traditions, the persistence of different languages and the vigor of the nation's distinctive cultures. Discovering Spain means discovering Spain's variety and that is one of the world's most exciting, pleasurable and rewarding journeys.

Galicia, far to the northwest, where the Atlantic meets the land along rocky coasts, has more in common with Celtic Britain than the Moorish south. Green **Asturias** and the northern coast, hidden behind mountains, was the cradle of Spain's Christian civilization and, still today, enjoys a unique culture and lifestyle unlike any other. The hill, farmlands and spectacular beaches of autonomous **Euskadi**, home to the Basques and their impenetrable language, remains troubled by the seemingly intractable problem of a violent nationalist struggle. **Catalonia**, nestled against France and spilling down Spain's eastern seacoast, speaks a separate language and enjoys a long

history, with **Aragón**, as a separate Mediterranean kingdom. To the south is desert-dry **Castilla**, Spain's center, battleground over which two great cultures fought for centuries, dotted with fortresses and historic churches and the wellspring of one of the world's most important languages. Beyond Castile, hard against Portugal, lies barren **Extremadura**, home of the *Conquistadores*. Further south, at Africa's edge, is **Andalucía**, home to all the stereotypes of Spain, and repository of a glorious Islamic past known to have been, in its time, Europe's greatest civilization and center of learning.

Once a huge empire, now a great nation, modern Spain knits together remarkable differences into an amazing tapestry. No short essay can do justice to Spain's variety and attractions. Libraries are built from the volumes on the history of the place, its art, its culture and the delights that await the visitor. There are snow-capped mountains, among Europe's highest, some within sight of the African coast. There are long, glorious beaches, some sinking under the weight of over-development to accommodate Europe's sun-starved masses, and rocky shores and quiet coves at the foot of isolated villages. In the center, the Spanish *meseta* is home to more than 2,000 years of still-visible history. *El Cid*, great hero of medieval Castile, walked here and still his footsteps can be traced on the face of the land. To the south, the "white villages" of Andalucía bake in the summer's sun. And what cities Spain has:

Barcelona, Euro-city, modern to a fault, home to artists, designers, gourmands and nationalists; **Bilbao**, site of Frank Gehry's famed Guggenheim Museum and renowned center of Basque cuisine; **Sevilla**, gateway to the New World, city of religious traditions, orange trees, tinkling fountains and the sun; **Santiago de Compostela**, pilgrim destination for 1,000

years and site of one of Spain's greatest cathedrals; **Valencia**, Mediterranean port, and city of a million rice dishes.

Coming to Spain? What luck! Be prepared to be overwhelmed. Watch your heart too. Yours won't be the first to be lost here forever.



READING ABOUT SPAIN There's no shortage of books about Spain and everyone has their list of favorites that illuminate and elucidate. Reading about Spain is a special pleasure. The nation's recorded history is a grand adventure story reaching to the Roman Empire and beyond. It's important to realize that history is alive in Spain. Where else can a visitor see 10,000 year old paintings or visit buildings still standing after 1,000 years? Best of all is that Spaniards can still be exercised about events that took place 500 years ago. History and the historical record often shape contemporary Spanish thought and discussion in ways that rarely occur elsewhere. Spain is best appreciated and understood with a basic knowledge of the periods, events and personalities of Spanish history. The following briefly annotated bibliography is a suggested starting point for reading about Spain.

Spain: A History (Oxford University Press, August 2000) Edited by Raymond Carr. A well-illustrated collection of essays by the most prominent historians and Hispanists on the periods of Spain's past and present.

Roads to Santiago (Harcourt Brace & Co. 1997) Cees Nooteboom. Translated from Dutch and sub-titled *Detours and Riddles in the Lands and History of Spain*, Nooteboom's is an exemplary travel book that records his pilgrimage throughout Spain a decade ago. One of the best, most enjoyable and most insightful books available.

Isabella, Queen of Castile (St. Martin's Press, 1991) by Nancy Rubin is an easy reading biography of an extraordinary woman and a good introduction to the Catholic Kings, their times and the twisted, tortured roots of the Spanish Hapsburgs. If you're a serious history buff, turn to **Isabel**,

The Queen by Peggy Liss (Oxford University Press, 1992).

The Basque History of the World by Mark Kurlansky (Walker & Co., 1999) is an entertaining and informative book on the history, culture and unique perspectives of the Basque Lands and the Basques.

If you can find it, British travel writer H.V. Morton's delightful **A Stranger in Spain** (Methuen & Co. London 1983) may be the single most insightful book ever written by a visitor about Spain, its history and its culture.

Iberia (Random House, 1968) by James Michener is by now seriously outdated but the book remains useful for Michener's anecdotal portraits of Spain during the late Franco era as well as for some insights into various aspects of Spanish culture.

Other basic history texts include Richard Fletcher's **The Quest for El Cid** (Oxford University Press, 1989) a remarkable overview of 11th c. Spain, and the same author's **Moorish Spain** (Henry Holt & Co., 1992), a basic text on Islamic Spain and its culture.

For the Spanish Civil War, Hugh Thomas's **The Spanish Civil War** remains the acknowledged basic work. Try also Paul Preston's biography of Francisco **Franco** (Basic Books, 1994). George Orwell's **Homage to Catalonia** is, of course, a classic on Spain's civil war and a classic of English literature as well.

Barcelona (Vintage, 1993) by art historian and author Robert Hughes is a typically exuberant piece of writing by an enthusiast eager to share his comprehensive knowledge about Barcelona's history and culture. Unequaled on the topic.



And don't forget **Don Quixote**, often considered the greatest book in the Western canon. If you didn't do the assigned reading in college, now might be the time to try again. All kinds of editions of Spain's best known masterpiece are available and, whether you're coming to Spain or not, the adventures of the noble knight from La Mancha and his trusty Sancho Panza and the rest of the cast illuminate and elucidate his time, our time, all times.

GETTING AROUND SPAIN Spain's overall highway system is very good. There are perfectly fine, driveable roads going almost everywhere in the country. Its inter-city system of superhighways is quite new and extensive, with the special bonus of being relatively free of traffic—except, of course, during major holiday migrations to key destinations—and passing through some of Europe's most dramatic landscape. Excellent bus service (comfortable and air-conditioned) connects all major cities and most towns. The high-speed *AVE* train serves Madrid, Córdoba and Sevilla with departures almost every hour (travel time Madrid-Seville is about two and one-half hours via *AVE* vs. about five hours by car). Rates depend on time of day and class of service. Express *TALGO* and other trains travel almost everywhere else in the country. Travel time by rail to Barcelona is about six hours, just about the time

required to drive at the speed limit. *Iberia* and other Spanish airlines provide air service from Madrid to more distant cities. The busy Madrid-Barcelona air corridor is served by shuttle flights departing from both cities almost continuously during the business day.

D RIVING IN SPAIN

Another joy of living in Madrid, the center of Spain, is that few parts of the country are more than a day's drive away. Indeed, many of the most important sights in Castile, for instance, are only a couple of hours or less from the capital. But, let the truth be known, driving in Spain can be hazardous. **Spain has one of the highest accident rates in the EU.** The problems are several: faulty highway design, few inhibitions about drinking and driving, inexperienced drivers and excessive—very excessive—speed. Defensive driving is a must. **Keep a steady eye on your rear view mirror and leave the left lane clear for passing cars.** Although the top speed limit on the superhighways is 75 mph, speeds in excess of 100 mph are common. It is common practice for cars on Spanish highways to barrel down the passing lane at high rates of speed with every expectation that slower-moving traffic will give way. Do it. A BMW, Audi or Mercedes five feet behind your rear bumper at 90 miles an hour is a fearsome thing to behold.

Does that mean there's no traffic enforcement on Spanish roads? No, The *Guardia Civil* is responsible for enforcing traffic laws including speed limits and their presence is everywhere on Spanish highways and roads with cars, motorcycles, speed traps and document checks. Also common is the silent speed trap consisting of a high-speed camera that records auto speeds in excess of the limit and the license number of offending vehicles. A few weeks later, a traffic

citation may arrive in the mail accompanied by a photo. Spanish highway fines are steep, with some costing more than \$300 depending on the offense.

The most notorious hazards on Spanish highways are the "good Samaritan" thieves who, under the guise of assisting motorists (usually gullible foreign tourists driving rental cars), steal valuables from the car. Typically, the scam works with the thieves urgently pointing out some imaginary car problem and stealing while the concerned motorists are distracted with checking out the problem. Your Embassy security briefing will offer advice on proper measures to take.

DAY TRIPS FROM MADRID

The following are common day trips from Madrid. Most are about an hour away from the city (Ávila and Segovia are only a bit further). There are tour buses traveling to each of the places mentioned here and passenger pick-ups can be arranged at all major hotels in Madrid. Because of their proximity to Madrid, each tends to be crowded with visitors, especially on weekends and especially in summer.

Toledo The great cultural potpourri of Spain; capital of the Visigoths; Taifa kingdom; home to medieval Jews and Moslems; city of *El Greco* and still the repository of some of his finest paintings; site of one of Spain's most stunning cathedrals and other Gothic and Romanesque churches and monuments; crafts abound, especially swords and knives of Toledo steel and damascene jewelry.

El Escorial great austere palace and treasure house of King Philip II; sadly, most of the treasures are gone now to museums but Philip's vision still astonishes; the burial place of the Spain's Bourbon kings and

their spouses is here; see it from "*Philip's chair*" on a surrounding hill to appreciate its perfection and true magnificence; en route to El Escorial, pass by *Valle de los Caídos*, Franco's gigantic stone mausoleum to the fallen *nacionalistas* of the Civil War and site of the Generalissimo's burial place.

Segovia City of Castilian history (Isabel was crowned here); site of one of Europe's best preserved Roman aqueducts; home to 700 years of monasteries and churches including Segovia's cathedral and the renovated Alcázar (royal citadel), one of Spain's signature sights. *La Granja*, the



CATEDRAL DE SEGOVIA

country palace of the Bourbon kings with its spectacular grounds, is near Segovia. If you're driving, go by way of the medieval walled village of **Pedraza**, have a coffee and browse the shops including one selling exquisite pewter.

Aranjuez Just south of Madrid, on the edge of La Mancha, the great Bourbon palace of the eighteenth century; if it's summer, consider taking "the strawberry train," a touristy ride to the palace aboard a nineteenth century train; or enjoy a side trip to **Chinchón**, one of the most picturesque villages in central Spain.

Ávila Walled city of the 11th century; home to St. Teresa of Ávila, one of the great figures in Spanish Church history; burial place of Prince Juan, Isabel's

deeply mourned son and heir; historic monasteries and Romanesque churches.

That's just a sampling of "nearby Madrid." With more experience, you'll be ready to investigate Roman bridges, medieval universities and Arab fortresses, all within an hour of the city and to travel further to the great cities of Central Spain including: Salamanca, León, Burgos, Valladolid, Zaragoza and Soria.

THE SPANISH PARADORS Spain's national chain of hotels, Paradors are one of the joys of Spanish travel. Most (but not all) are located in imaginatively renovated castles or monasteries, some are modern luxury inns, some are perfectly routine roadside hotels. The locations are often dramatic and convenient to the towns they serve. Paradors offer some of Spain's most reliable dining, including excellent specialties of the region where the hotel is located. The quality of the Paradors may vary (especially with respect to furnishings), but in the four star category they represent excellent value for the money in fascinating settings. For further information: www.parador.es Click on or www.hotelesconencanto.org if you want to venture to some charming little places of the same kind.

. . . AND OTHER HOTELS As in many European countries, Spanish hotels are categorized according to the amenities which they offer. Categories are identified by "stars." A five-star hotel--Madrid's Ritz Hotel or the Parador in Santiago de Compostela or León, for example--is top of the line with prices to match. Four-star hotels can be almost as expensive, especially in the larger cities. The country is dotted, however, with modest three-star hotels, many in small towns, where a wonderful double room and local hospitality can be had around €75 a night. *Casas Rurales* are a type of country bed-

and-breakfast inns springing up across the country, many of which are housed in distinguished residences or set in fabulous locales and feature the finest in country dining. A good investment for every resident is the annual *Guía Oficial de Hoteles* which lists all the hotels in Spain, their addresses, phone and fax numbers, their facilities and their prices. Other specialized guides list places to stay by charm or ambiance. Little attention is paid to the rating system (using forks instead of stars) that exists for restaurants. Restaurant ratings can tell a traveler something about the price but very little about the quality of food.

THE FOODS OF SPAIN The definitive book on Spanish cooking may be Penelope Casas' *La Cocina de Mama : The Great Home Cooking of Spain* (Broadway, 2005)



She has also written *Delicioso* and *Tapas*, as well as *Foods and Wines of Spain* (Alfred Knopf 1988). Even prettier with color photographs is the similarly-titled *The Wine and Food of Spain* (Little, Brown & Co. 1987) by Jan Read, Maite Manjón and Hugh Johnson. In any case, the distinctive culinary traditions of Spain are the subject of many books, cookbooks and coffee-table volumes.

Travelers in Spain will have ample opportunity to enjoy the robust cuisine of Spain, which varies from region to region. Northern Spain, especially *País Vasco* and *Catalonia*, is home to some of Spain's

finest cooking and the country's most highly rated restaurants are there. To the west, Spain's northern fishing coast provides the seafood and shellfish which are standards on menus and in shops throughout the country. In the south, Andalusian cooking shows the footsteps of the cultures that have crossed the land: olives and olive oil, saffron, almonds and that most Andalusian of joys, *gazpacho*.

The food of Castile reflects its rugged mountainous terrain and is strong on game, river trout and the products of the great grazing ranges that cross the meseta: *cochinillo asado* (roast suckling pig) and *cordero lechal* (roast young lamb). The countryside is dotted with *asadores*, restaurants featuring ancient wood-burning *hornos* (ovens) and the roasted meats of the region. Other stand-bys to be found on most menus in Castile are *sopa de ajo* (garlic soup), *sopa castellana* (a hearty soup of bread, sausage and garlic) and *tortilla española* (a potato omelet). Madrid's contribution is *cocido madrileño*, a cold-weather stew of almost everything served in three courses.

A word of warning: if your food vocabulary is not fully developed, unpleasant surprises may be avoided by using one of the "Menu-Master" pocket dictionaries on sale in the NEX. Spaniards eat varieties of eels and organ meats not typically on American menus. And don't expect great European bread everywhere in Spain. Bread, at least away from the region bordering France, is not one of lauded food products of the country.

By the way, there is nothing "Latin American" about Spanish cooking--it is not hot and spicy. It owes more to the traditions of the Middle East than to the cultures of the New World. It is almost a cliché to say that the cooking of modern Spain, overshadowed as it is by the grand

cuisine of its nearest northern neighbor, is one of the truly undiscovered and under-appreciated cuisines of the world, but it is.

THE WINES OF SPAIN Spain is heaven for wine lovers. With traditions of wine-making reaching back to pre-Roman Phoenician settlers, Spain has more of its land devoted to viticulture than any other wine-producing nation. The "Wines of Spain" is a subject too extensive to be covered in much detail here. If learning more about the wines of Spain is among your primary interests, however, go to the Internet and start with www.jrnet.com, a site that contains information on Spanish wines and links to lots more. Meanwhile, Marc and Kim Millon's *The Wine Roads of Spain*



(HarperCollins, 1993), is a good primer and a book that ought to be a constant companion on drives through Spain's many wine-producing regions.

There are about 40 officially demarcated wine-producing regions in Spain, of which **Rioja** and **Jerez** are probably the best known internationally. The others range in size from the tiny **Alella** region in **Cataluña**

to the vast vineyards of **Castilla-La Mancha** south of Madrid. Each region produces wines which meet carefully calibrated national standards while retaining, in many cases, a regional uniqueness that is highly prized by serious students of Spanish wine.

Let's begin a short description of the wines of Spain with **sherry**. Many Americans think of sherry as a slightly-sweet affectation forced on the unsuspecting at faculty mixers or in up-scale settings where you can't get "a real drink." In Spain, sherry is produced in a variety of styles certain to please almost all palates, even inexperienced ones. Produced mainly--but not only--in the Jerez region of **Andalucía**, the principal types of sherry are *Fino*, a pale, dry, light sherry, among the western world's finest aperitifs; *Manzanilla*, a kind of fino with a characteristic salty hint produced in Sanlúcar de Barrameda near Jerez; *Amontillado*, a nutty, aged fino but now used for most brands of medium-dry or medium-sweet sherries; *Oloroso*, a dry, pungent wine that now usually is the base for cream sherries; *Cream sherry*, a rich mahogany, very sweet sherry familiar abroad made from oloroso and sweet wines; *Pale Cream*, a sweet sherry produced from a base of fino or amontillado.

Sherries served in Spain tend to be dry finos or manzanillas. In Madrid, there are well-known, traditional bars that serve only sherries to standing room only aficionados. Most newcomers to Spain begin their research into the white and red wines of Spain in the local grocery store where they are confronted by a bewildering array of names, labels and prices. In Spain, the

price of wine is right! Of course, as everywhere, one can spend astronomical prices for a single bottle of the finest wine. Most of us will be satisfied, however, to know that much of Spain's wonderful wine is available at common sense prices ranging from \$3.00 to \$10.00 a bottle. In restaurants, a mark-up of less than 100 percent is usual.

On most wines you will find the label of the region where the wine was produced and the year when the grapes were harvested. Generally there are four quality levels for Spanish wine: *gran reserva*, the very best aged wine from the very best years; *reserva*, aged at least four years; *vino de crianza*, at least three years old and *vino del año*, young wine often from the current year's harvest. Another popular young wine is *vino de cosechero*.

Cava, the only Spanish denomination that does not apply to a geographical area, refers instead to the process of producing and aging Spain's fine sparkling wines. Today, nearly 90 percent of *cava* comes from the **Penedés** region in Catalonia south of Barcelona. Cava comes in a bone dry *brut natural*, a slightly sweetened *extra brut* and an even sweeter *semi-seco*.

The best way to become an educated consumer of Spanish wines is to select and patronize one of Madrid's many *bodegas* or shops that specialize in wine. Spanish shopkeepers are invariably friendly to regular customers and delight in explaining their wares, especially to interested foreigners. Spain's wine is a delightful avocation.

Further Information on Spain and all things Spanish

A few years ago, when the first edition of this welcome book was published, the authors almost always pointed readers to books and bookstores. Now, not long after, all of us are overwhelmed with information on our computer screens, available with just the flick of a finger. There's hardly a subject Spanish for which multiple web sites are not available on the Internet. Type the name of your destination or your interest into your favorite search engine and a host of links appear. We've tried, here and there in the book, to mention sites that may be particularly useful but there are, of course, thousands of others. (A Google search on "the wines of Spain" returns 938,000 hits.) If you're the old-fashioned type who finds it difficult to curl up with your laptop on a cold winter's evening (yes, we have a few in Spain) and still thrill to turning a paper page, most of the guidebooks and other reference works about Spain mentioned here can be ordered new or used from Internet booksellers. If you're in Washington, *Travel Books and Language Center* on Wisconsin Avenue at the Tenley/AU metro stop on the Red Line is a good place for one-stop shopping. In addition to travel guides and language books, the store carries maps, street guides and other paraphernalia for those about to pack and go. Giant booksellers like the suburban *Borders* stores are also stuffed with books about Spain and all things Spanish. But, you know, with all this, Spain still harbors a few surprises for visitors and residents alike. That's what makes it such a special place. Come safe. Good trip!