



AN AMERICAN'S GUIDE TO MADRID

JOE'S TIPS FOR PLANNING THE PERFECT GETAWAY!

Welcome!

Fran and I are beyond thrilled that you are traveling near and far to celebrate this incredibly special moment with us in Madrid, Spain! Your love and support mean the world to us, and having you here to share in the laughter, joy, and magic of this weekend is the greatest gift we could ask for.

Whether it's your first visit to Spain or one of many, we recognize that traveling to a foreign country can be challenging. You may be wondering how to navigate language barriers, how to pack lightly, or most importantly, how to make the most of your time here. That's where I come in! In this brochure, I've compiled all my tips and recommendations to help you plan the Spanish vacation of a lifetime!

My number one piece of advice? Be open to new experiences. You never know what you may discover about the world (and yourself) just by seeing a new place. Get curious, get excited, and get ready. Adventure awaits!

With love,

Jae

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Know Before You Go



PASSPORT & VISAS

Make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months beyond your trip. In 2026, U.S. Citizens may need an ETIAS Travel Authorization to enter the Schengen Area. Apply well in advance to avoid delays to your travel. More information [here](#).



TRAVEL INSURANCE

Anything can happen while you're on vacation. Consider a plan that will cover medical emergencies, lost luggage, and trip delays.



MONEY

If possible, bring a credit card with no foreign transaction fees. ATMs are the best way to get local currencies. Avoid currency exchanges in airports or city centers, which charge significant conversion fees.



POWER ADAPTERS

Aside from the UK and Ireland, most European countries use the type C, 220V power outlet. Bring a universal adapter (with a surge protector!) and check if your devices handle dual voltage.



Avoid using hair dryers or curlers with power adapters! Check if your hotel has them and only use local devices.

Getting Around



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Trains, trams, buses, and metros are excellent in most European cities. Research payment methods in advance (transit cards, contactless, etc.) and use apps like CityMapper to help you get around.



PLANES VS. TRAINS

Budget airlines are cheap, but don't forget to factor in baggage fees and far away airports. High-speed trains are scenic and eco-friendly, but they can take much longer to get places.



Our general rule of thumb is if a train ride will take more than 5 hours, take a plane instead.



WALKING

Most cities are very walkable, so pack a comfortable pair of shoes! Some older streets can be uneven or cobblestoned, so watch your step. Check in advance if your destination is flat or hilly.



WEAR A BACKPACK

Bringing a backpack for “daypacking” is extremely useful for city exploring. That said, beware of pickpockets! Never leave your backpack unattended, and keep one arm or leg on a shoulder strap when sitting or dining out.

Food & Dining



EATING OUT

Dinner times may vary from the U.S. (8/9 PM in Southern Europe; 6/7 PM in Northern Europe). Portions are typically smaller than American restaurants, and refills are not free.



WATER

Tap water is safe almost everywhere. At restaurants, you must ask specifically for “tap water” or you’ll receive a bottle of still or sparkling water (which costs extra). Also, consider bringing a water bottle to stay hydrated throughout the day.



TIPPING & PAYING

Common practice is to round up the total, or leave up to a 10% gratuity if the food and service were excellent. A service charge is sometimes included in the bill in some parts of Europe, but it is uncommon in Spain. If you split the bill, waiters will expect you to do the math, not the other way around!



DINING ETIQUETTE

Oh boy... how can I say this...? Americans have a reputation among Europeans of being... a bit noisy in restaurants. Enjoy dining with family and friends, but also please be mindful of your fellow restaurant-goers if you want to avoid uncomfortable staring.

Other Travel Tips



LEARN A FEW PHRASES

Not everyone you meet will speak English. Learning just a few “survival” words and phrases can go a long way in making your trip smoother.

English	Español
Hello!	¡Hola!
What is your name?	¿Cómo se llama usted?
My name is...	Me llamo...
Please	Por favor
Thank you!	¡Gracias!
Do you speak English?	¿Habla inglés?
Where is...? 1. the bathroom 2. the museum 3. the restaurant 4. the hotel 5. the park 6. the hospital 7. the wedding venue	¿Dónde está...? 1. el baño 2. el museo 3. el restaurante 4. el hotel 5. el parque 6. el hospital 7. el lugar/sitio de la boda
Goodbye!	¡Adiós!



SIM CARDS/E-SIMS

Check before your departure if your phone plan allows for international calls, texts, and data roaming. If not, you may want to buy a European SIM or eSIM for cheap data.



SEE YOU IN
MADRID!