



VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Prado Museum

Madrid · From 18€

<https://museodelprado.visit-tickets.com/en/> · Skip-the-line tickets & rates



ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Royal Vision to Global Icon

GOOGLE **4.7** ★★★★★ 156 933 reviewsTIQETS **4.7** ★★★★★ 7 157 reviews

The story of the Prado begins in the late 18th century, when King Charles III envisioned a grand cultural complex along the Paseo del Prado. The project was entrusted to **Juan de Villanueva**, one of Spain's most brilliant architects, who designed the building as a museum of natural history and art. Approved in 1786, this neoclassical masterpiece was intended to be a beacon of Enlightenment, reflecting the intellectual ambitions of the Spanish court. Construction continued under Charles IV, but the arrival of French troops during the Peninsular War disrupted the timeline.

During the conflict, the unfinished building was used as a military barracks, and its lead roof sheets were melted down to manufacture bullets. This period left the structure in a state of near ruin, delaying its opening for decades. It was not until 1819 that the museum finally opened its doors, initially named the Royal Museum of Painting. The inauguration was modest, with only 311 paintings displayed in three rooms, all from the Spanish school. However, this humble beginning marked the start of a legacy that would grow into one of the world's greatest collections.

Over the following centuries, the Habsburgs and Bourbons enriched the collection with works from royal palaces and monasteries. Artists like Velázquez, Goya, and Bosch became central to the museum's identity. In the modern era, architect Rafael Moneo led a major expansion, allowing 1,300 works to be permanently displayed. This renovation improved gallery access and highlighted the museum's status as a global pinacothèque. Today, the Prado stands as a testament to Spain's artistic heritage, housing European paintings from the 14th to the early 19th century.

In 2021, the Prado joined the Thyssen-Bornemisza and Reina Sofía museums on the UNESCO World Heritage List, forming the 'Golden Triangle' of Madrid. This recognition underscores the uniqueness of this dense museum ensemble. With over 2.4 million annual visitors, the Prado continues to attract art lovers from around the world. Its collections, including 6,400 drawings and 3,000 prints, offer a comprehensive view of European art history, making it an indispensable destination for any cultural traveler.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping into the Prado, you are immediately struck by the grandeur of Villanueva's neoclassical architecture. The high ceilings and symmetrical halls create a sense of calm and order, contrasting with the vibrant chaos of Madrid outside. Natural light floods through the windows, illuminating the masterpieces and enhancing their colors. As you walk through the corridors, the atmosphere is one of reverence and discovery. Each room holds a new surprise, from the intricate details of Flemish portraits to the dramatic intensity of Goya's war scenes.

The experience is both intellectual and emotional. You find yourself pausing before *Las Meninas*, captivated by Velázquez's mastery of perspective and light. The silence of the galleries allows you to connect deeply with the artists' visions. Whether you are an art historian or a casual visitor, the Prado offers a journey through time, inviting you to explore the soul of Spanish and European art. The promise of the visit is fulfilled with every step, as you uncover layers of history and beauty.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

Madrid centro · Metro: Buenavista (L1, L10) 3 min away, or Calle de Alcalá (L5) 5 min walk from the exit.

OPENING HOURS

Hours vary by season and public holidays; check the exact time slot on your ticket before traveling.

FARES

Free child entry depending on age (check variants). {promo}.

VISIT DURATION

Plan for 3 to 4 hours to see the masterpieces by Velázquez, Goya and Bosch without rushing. A half-day also allows you to follow up with the Thyssen or Reina So

PHOTOS

Flash-free photography is allowed in the halls. Tripods and monopods are limited; avoid blocking other visitors and follow posted instructions.

AUDIENCE

The Prado suits families as well as art lovers. For children, focus on the visual scenes by Bosch and Goya. Teens often enjoy El Greco and Rubens.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

**Metro**

: Atocha impares — 6 min à pied

Madrid-Atocha Station (8 min) · Museo del Prado - Jardín Botánico (6 min)

**Bus**

: Estación del Arte — 7 min à pied

Madrid-Atocha Station (11 min) · Museo del Prado - Jardín Botánico (8 min)

**Car**

Madrid-Atocha Station (6 min) · Museo del Prado - Jardín Botánico (3 min)

**BiciMAD / Bike**

Madrid-Atocha Station (6 min) · Museo del Prado - Jardín Botánico (2 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Prado Museum ?



 Calle de Ruiz de Alarcón, 23 – 28014 Madrid

 40°24.827' N, 3°41.528' O



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Labyrinthine Galleries

Ground Floor (Main Gallery)

This level houses the core of the collection, featuring the most famous works by Velázquez, Goya, and Bosch. The halls are spacious and well-lit, allowing for a comfortable viewing experience. Key rooms include those dedicated to the Spanish school, where you can admire *Las Meninas* and *The Third of May 1808*. The layout is logical, guiding visitors chronologically through the centuries.

Upper Floor (Flemish and Italian Art)

The upper floor showcases the rich collections of Flemish and Italian paintings. Here, you will find masterpieces by Rubens, Van Dyck, Raphael, and Titian. The rooms are slightly smaller but equally impressive, with detailed portraits and religious scenes. This level offers a deeper dive into the international influences on Spanish art, highlighting the connections between different European schools.

Moneo Wing (Modern Expansion)

The Moneo wing, added in the 1990s, expands the museum's capacity and improves accessibility. This section features additional galleries and exhibition spaces, often hosting temporary exhibitions. The architecture is modern yet harmonious with the original building, providing a fresh perspective on the collection. It also includes facilities for visitors, such as rest areas and information points.

ACCESSIBILITY



Disabled Access

Adapted access and elevators available in the main building; check specific details on the official



Families

Family-friendly museum with free entry for children depending on age; target the visual works by Bos



Audio guide

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Masterpieces Not to Be Missed

01 DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ Room 36

Las Meninas

Considered the icon of Spanish Baroque art, Las Meninas is a complex portrait that challenges the viewer's perception. Velázquez's use of light and perspective creates a sense of depth and realism. Observe the reflection in the mirror and the interaction between the figures. This painting is a masterclass in composition and technique.

💡 Velázquez painted himself in the background, asserting his status as a court artist. The **mirror** reflects the king and queen, adding a layer of narrative complexity.

02 FRANCISCO GOYA Room 81

The Third of May 1808

This powerful anti-war painting depicts the execution of Spanish civilians by French soldiers. Goya's use of stark contrasts and emotional intensity makes it a haunting reminder of the horrors of war. Focus on the central figure, illuminated against the dark background. The painting is a symbol of resistance and tragedy.

💡 Goya originally titled the work 'Execution of the Defenders of Madrid.' The **light** on the central figure emphasizes his humanity and sacrifice.

03 HIERONYMUS BOSCH Room 10

The Garden of Earthly Delights

Bosch's triptych is a surreal exploration of human desire and sin. The central panel depicts a lush, idyllic landscape filled with fantastical creatures and activities. The side panels show the fall from grace and hell. This work is a visual feast, full of detail and symbolism. Spend time examining the intricate scenes.

💡 The exact meaning of the painting remains debated. Some interpret it as a warning against **lust** and moral decay, while others see it as a celebration of earthly pleasures.

04

EL GRECO Room 14

The Burial of the Count of Orgaz

El Greco's monumental work combines reality and spirituality. The lower half depicts the burial scene, while the upper half shows saints ascending to heaven. The elongated figures and vibrant colors are characteristic of El Greco's style. This painting is a testament to his unique vision and technical skill.

💡 The painting was commissioned by the parish church of Santo Tomé. El Greco's **elongation** of the figures adds a sense of divine presence and movement.

05

DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ Room 35

Portrait of Philip IV

This portrait captures the majesty and authority of King Philip IV. Velázquez's brushwork is loose yet precise, conveying the king's character with subtlety. The dark background and simple composition focus attention on the subject. This work exemplifies Velázquez's ability to portray power and dignity.

💡 Philip IV was known for his love of art and hunting. Velázquez's **restraint** in the portrait reflects the king's reserved nature.

06

FRANCISCO GOYA Room 84

Saturn Devouring His Son

One of Goya's Black Paintings, this work is a disturbing depiction of mythological horror. Saturn's twisted form and intense expression convey a sense of madness and despair. The dark palette and rough texture add to the unsettling effect. This painting is a glimpse into Goya's inner turmoil.

💡 Goya painted these works directly on the walls of his house. The **darkness** of the canvas mirrors the artist's mental state during his final years.

07

RAPHAEL Room 20

The Adoration of the Magi

Raphael's serene and balanced composition highlights the harmony of the Holy Family. The soft lighting and gentle expressions create a peaceful atmosphere. The architectural setting adds depth and context to the scene. This work is a prime example of High Renaissance art.

💡 Raphael was highly regarded for his ability to combine beauty and spirituality. The **harmony** of the figures reflects his mastery of classical ideals.

08

TITIAN Room 22

Venus of Urbino

Titian's iconic nude is a celebration of female beauty and sensuality. The relaxed pose and direct gaze challenge the viewer. The rich colors and detailed drapery showcase Titian's technical prowess. This painting has influenced countless artists over the centuries.

💡 The model is believed to be a courtesan. Titian's **confidence** in portraying the nude sets a standard for future generations.

TIPS

Tips for a Perfect Visit

TIMING

Arrive at opening time to avoid crowds, especially in the Velázquez and Goya rooms. The first hour offers calm access and ideal natural light under the dome.

BILLET

Book in advance during peak season (July-August) and weekends. Compare ticket options with or without an audioguide to avoid unnecessary costs.

PARCOURS

Follow the Golden Triangle itinerary, connecting the Prado with the Thyssen and Reina Sofía. Use the museum map to target key works and avoid getting lost in secondary corridors.

PHOTO

Flash-free photography is allowed in the halls. Avoid using tripods and monopods, and follow posted instructions to prevent blocking other visitors.

PAUSE

Take a break in the Parc du Retiro or at a terrace in the Cibeles District. These locations offer a pleasant change of pace and beautiful views.

ENFANTS

Focus on the visual scenes by Bosch and Goya for children. These striking images hold their attention better than classic portraits. Teens may enjoy El Greco and Rubens.

AUDIOGUIDE

An audioguide is available in French, English, and Spanish. It is worth the cost for a deeper understanding of the works, especially in the main galleries.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable shoes, as the museum is vast. Check the cloakroom for small bags and umbrellas. Large bags may need to be stored elsewhere.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I really need to book in advance?

Yes, booking is strongly recommended during peak season (July-August, school holidays) and weekends. On weekdays outside holidays you can try the box office, but expect an average wait of 30 to 45 min. Book as soon as yo

How far in advance can I cancel?

Conditions vary by the package purchased; some allow free cancellation up to 24 h before the visit. Check the details on your purchase confirmation. If your dates change, contact customer service promptly to avoid any lo

Is there a current promo?

Occasional discounts sometimes exist for groups, students or Madrid residents. The displayed price at purchase is final; no permanent promotion is guaranteed. Compare packages before confirming to take advantage of any p

Can I change my time slot after booking?

Changes depend on the type of ticket and availability of the new slot. Some flexible tickets allow simple changes, others do not. Consult your confirmation email and the official site for the exact procedure applicable t

How long does the visit take?

Allow at least 3 to 4 hours to see the major works without rushing. A half-day is enough for a focused route through Velázquez, Goya and Bosch. Plan more if you want to deeply explore the Italian or Flemish rooms.

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

UNESCO Recognition

In 2021, the Prado, Thyssen-Bornemisza, and Reina Sofía were jointly inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. This recognition highlights the uniqueness of this dense museum ensemble. The **Golden Triangle** is now a global cultural landmark.

Royal Origins

The Prado's collections were assembled by the Habsburgs and Bourbons over several centuries. Each dynasty left its mark, creating a faithful reflection of Spanish history. The **royal** provenance adds prestige to the works.

Moneo Expansion

Architect Rafael Moneo led the museum's expansion works, allowing 1,300 works to be permanently displayed. This improvement enhanced gallery access and visibility. The **modern** wing complements the original architecture.

Graphic Collections

Beyond paintings, the Prado holds 6,400 drawings and 3,000 prints, as well as about a thousand sculptures. These less visible collections offer a broader view of the artists' processes. The **drawings** provide insight into the creative journey.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

The Prado is located in the heart of Madrid, surrounded by other cultural gems. Just a few minutes away, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum offers a private collection spanning five centuries of European art, perfect for extending your morning. The Reina Sofía Museum, home to Picasso's *Guernica*, completes the Golden Triangle, providing a contrast with 20th-century works. For lunch, head to the Cibeles District, where terraces and restaurants offer views of the monuments and the Cibeles statue. Afterward, take a shaded break in the Parc du Retiro, a large green space close to the Paseo del Prado. The Almudena Cathedral, a modern landmark, is also reachable in under five minutes on foot, offering a spiritual pause before heading to Puerta del Sol.



Leaving the Prado, you carry with you more than memories; you hold a piece of history. The emotion of standing before these masterpieces is unique, a connection across centuries that lingers long after you exit the doors. This is not just a museum visit; it is an encounter with the heart of Spain's artistic legacy. Come, let the Prado inspire you, and discover the timeless beauty that awaits within its walls.