

# Lavapiés, Madrid

This month we make for a truly multicultural Spanish 'hood that's brimming with hip art, fine Galician fare and one of Madrid's best markets

Words / Agnish Ray → Photography / Ben Roberts

the neighbourhood

**F**oot-washer: that's the curious translation of this central Madrid district's name. It's supposedly drawn from a time when Jews and Muslims would hose off their feet together in these streets, before entering their respective synagogues and mosques to pray.

Origin myths aside, what's certain is that multiculturalism is at the heart of this formerly unprepossessing little barrio. Today, Lavapiés is diverse Madrid in a nutshell, with tapas bars, curry houses and Afro hair salons sitting side-by-side throughout the neighbourhood.

This is a district in transition, though. As young creatives are increasingly drawn here by its off-beat and arty spirit, rents and gentrification levels are soaring. Its current location is somewhere between edgy and rarefied, so the advice for Lavapiés is to get in quick, while it's still hip.

[esmadrid.com/en/madrid-neighbourhoods/lavapiés](http://esmadrid.com/en/madrid-neighbourhoods/lavapiés)





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#### MUNCHING

> Fifty-year-old tavern **La Lorenza (1)** recently had a makeover and is now an elegant food bar serving contemporary, home-made dishes inspired by the cuisine of Galicia: from mussels in sea urchin sauce to octopus gyozas. Don't leave without trying the Gorgonzola cheesecake. [instagram.com/lalorenzataberna](https://www.instagram.com/lalorenzataberna)

> Poke around the stalls at the **Mercado de San Fernando (2)** – they dish up everything from Japanese to Mexican food. If your head starts spinning from the expansive global offering then just head outside: the market is on Calle Embajadores, where there's no shortage of tapas bars. [mercadodesanfernando.es](https://www.mercadodesanfernando.es)



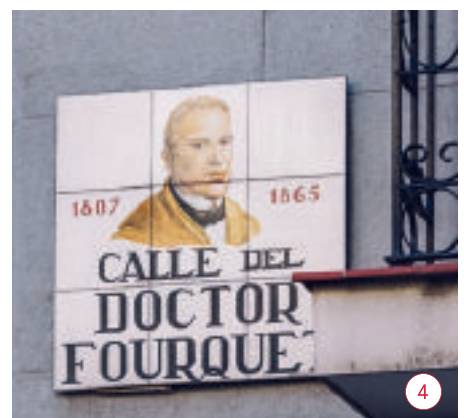
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#### BROWSING

> Get your fill of interior design in the stores around Calle Ribera de Curtidores, which also hosts **El Rastro (3)** market each week. There are various furniture emporiums, stocking everything from antique and vintage treasures to the latest designs; while the Sunday flea market is packed with clothes, jewellery and bric-a-brac.

[esmadrid.com/en/shopping/el-rastro](https://www.esmadrid.com/en/shopping/el-rastro)

> Fancy an investment? Those with an eye for the art market should head to **Calle del Doctor Fourquet (4)** to snoop around commercial galleries like Silvestre, Maisterravalbuena and Helga de Alvear, which all deal in works by some of the bestselling contemporary artists on the Spanish scene.



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**DOING**

> Pedro Almodóvar fans will have spotted the **Cine Doré (5)** in films like *Pain and Glory* and *Talk to Her*. This art-house cinema, which dates back to the 1920s, is worth popping into, even if it's just for a drink in the bar or to admire the building's distinctive Art Nouveau design. [culturaydeporte.gob.es](http://culturaydeporte.gob.es)

> **La Tabacalera (6)** is a community space for concerts, workshops and other creative activities, housed in a former tobacco factory. The Promoción del Arte section of the building runs a neat exhibition programme; catch a group show of nine female Spanish photographers here until mid-April. [latabacalera.net](http://latabacalera.net)

**PARTYING**

> A solid Lavapiés institution, **Sala Juglar (7)** is the place for eclectic beats and those who love them. Events and shows take place throughout the week, and you'll find everything from soul and disco to jazz and flamenco.

[salajuglar.com](http://salajuglar.com)

> A new kid on the block, **Ciriaco Brown** has quickly become one of the latest *madrileño* faves. Drink and mingle at this speakeasy-style cocktail bar, where the gloriously chintzy, marble-clad interiors are inspired by 1980s Italian design.

[ciriacobrown.com](http://ciriacobrown.com)



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**Lavapiés in a nutshell**

**In three words**

Foodie, arty, multicultural.

**Beer, wine, cocktails?**

Do like a local and go for a *vermút* – best as a pre-lunch aperitif.

**Best dish?**

The *croquetas* at Melo's are among the city's treasures.

**Dress code**

Think comfy, colourful and characterful.

**Smiling, friendly locals?**

They're all highly genial, so it's impossible not to brush up your Spanish (plus your Bengali, Arabic, French and more...)

**Claim to fame**

It's the place to find spices, herbs and other exotic goods usually absent from Spanish supermarkets.

**Budget**

€€

**SLEEPING**

> Lavapiés is largely Airbnb territory, but there are some intriguing hotels around, too. Take **CoolRooms Atocha (8)**: housed in a former 19th-century palace and convent, its high ceilings, cast-iron pillars and granite ornaments are testament to the building's majestic past. [coolrooms.com/atocha](http://coolrooms.com/atocha)

> On a slightly tighter budget, **Artrip** is a smart, 17-bedroom boutique with an arty vibe, popular with culture vultures – not least because museums like the Reina Sofía and CaixaForum are conveniently accessible from this end of the district. [artriphotel.com](http://artriphotel.com)