

DEMOGRAPHIA



MADRID: BELTWAYS EVERYWHERE

FAST FACTS		Similar To
Metropolitan (Labor Market) Population	5,000,000	Caracas, Toronto, Milan, Ho Chi Minh City
Urbanized Area* Population	4,500,000	
Urbanized Land Area: Square Miles	233	Salt Lake City, Berlin, Delhi, Naples, Quebec
Urbanized Land Area: Square Kilometers	603	
Population per Square Mile	19,300	Manila, Brussels, Sao Paulo, Vienna
Population per Square Kilometer	7,500	
Largest urbanized area in Spain		
*Continuously built up area		

No city seems better served by motorway beltways than Madrid. There is the inner beltway, the M-30, which is never very far from the historic core of the city. Then there is what used to be the outer beltway, the M-40, which meets the M-30 on the north side of the city, but elsewhere is to be found on the fringe of the urbanized area. Finally, there is the M-50, still under construction, which will be as far from Madrid as the M-25 London Orbital is from its namesake. And these are not the skimpy two lane in each direction roadways found in so many European cities. These are six, eight and more lane motorways, sometimes with two separate roadway sections in each direction. Los Angeles would be proud of these freeways. Portland would pretend that they don't exist.

Spain, like Portugal, has blossomed economically since integration with the European Union. It is thus not surprising that the overwhelming majority of Madrid residents (unlike Parisians and Londoners) still live in multi-unit apartment or condominium buildings. But this is changing. Especially on the western side of the urban area will be found new single-family residential neighborhoods, testimony to the new prosperity.

The core is one of Europe's most vibrant. The central business district, which contains the national capital complex, is very large. With nearly 700,000 jobs, Madrid's downtown is probably the third largest in Europe, following London and Paris. This is larger than the downtown in the United States, Canada or Australasia other than New York's Manhattan.

The core is also somewhat spread out. Large buildings will be found over a comparatively broad expanse of territory, suggesting a commercial density more akin to that of central London or Tokyo more than that of New York or Hong Kong. Here also is to be found the predictable symbol of architectural manhood, in this case a couple of twin leaning towers that demonstrate their designer was more interested in demonstrating the weakness of gravity than in showing a modicum of taste.

The city is also well served by a system of broad boulevards. In the core, there are double deck arterial streets, with express roadways on the second level. This is similar to the practice in Milan, Sao Paulo, Tokyo and Osaka.

Here also is a very extensive urban metro system. At an urban area density of nearly 20,000 per square mile and a strong core, this system certainly makes a lot more sense than its imitators in the much more sprawling urban areas of North America and Australasia. Nonetheless, despite its late-occurring prosperity and still low income relative to much of the rest of Western Europe, Madrid's public transport market share is only 23 percent, less than Paris and similar to that of more affluent Stockholm or Milan. This is evident in the heavy traffic, so typical of the dense urban areas of Western Europe.

But Madrid is well on its way to the future. In addition to the new single-family residential developments outside the historic city, there is even more sprawling commercial development. This is most obvious along the E-90 motorway leading east from the city, beyond the international airport toward Zaragoza. Here, on both sides of the highway will be found the sprawling "tilt-up" buildings that define so much of modern commercial real estate. There are few corridors in the world so long. For at least 30 miles beyond the airport this type of development continues virtually non-stop. It is similar to the development that skirts the E-6 on the south side of Goteborg, but much longer. Places such as these illustrate the internationalism of modern urban development. Here, will not be found the local or national treatments that make a suburban house in Tokyo or Nagoya appear different from one in Boston --- or for that matter that make one in Los Angeles look different than in Chicago or New York. The efficiencies and economies of commercial enterprise require that these buildings be no more ornate than necessary to the task --- which means not ornate at all. And, thus, at least from the parking lots that always front them, they all look the same.

And, to conclude, a note for those who take up the challenge to see Europe by rental car. European road map makers are not at all fair to Spain. Most European road maps appear to suggest that getting to Madrid from the north or east is little easier than traveling from Mumbai to Delhi by car. There is every indication that motorways stop at least 100 miles from the city. They do not. The Spanish roads numbered by Roman numerals, I, II, III and IV are motorway standard and it would do well for the mapmakers to visit Spain to see for themselves. These roads are somewhat older and fall short of English hard shoulder requirements, but so do U.S. interstates. No one should fear the long delays and heavy traffic that would be associated with pre-motorway two lane roads.

Madrid is a great and fascinating urban area and can be reached by car very easily from anywhere in Europe.



Core: Architectural Gymnastics



Core: Paseo de la Castellana



Core with Elevated Street

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