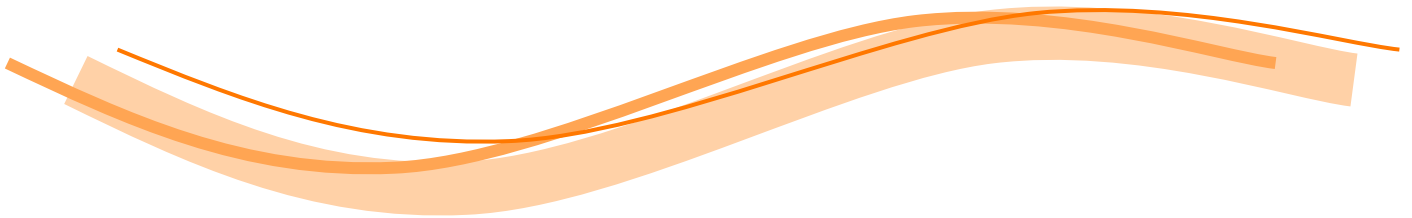




SPAIN – MADRID & THE PARADORES





MADRID

If you are planning your next trip to Europe, don't think twice. Start your European adventure in Madrid. Right in the heart of Spain, Madrid combines tradition with the latest trends. Its history, museums, food and people make it a unique destination. Europe begins in Madrid - and now you can fly direct to Madrid with Air Transat and enjoy their new, enhanced onboard service.

A cosmopolitan European centre with a unique culture, Madrid has distinctive, succulent gastronomy - and great nightlife. The Region blends history with modern innovation, a relaxed pace of life, warm people and several nearby UNESCO World Heritage sites including the University at Cervantes home town and the Gardens of the Summer Royal Palace at Aranjuez.

The City of Madrid is the capital of Spain (one of the two most popular vacation countries in the world). Founded in 1202 it was in 1561 that Philip II changed the Imperial Court from Toledo to Madrid, creating it as the capital city of Spain. Phillip II ruled over an empire "where the sun never set" - and in honour of the glory of God and the dynasty of the Habsburgs, Phillip commenced the construction of the monastery of El Escorial.

On the 13th of September 1584, Philip II saw his greatest dream fulfilled - a building that, besides being a monastery, was a church, a royal palace, a library, a pantheon for the kings of Spain and a seminary. A world renowned architectural and cultural wonder, the Escorial is a must see on your visit to Madrid.

Madrid today is a vibrant European centre with fascinating history blended with the most modern amenities. Its great transportation network makes getting around quick and easy. There is also an excellent range of hotel accommodation. And now you can fly direct to Madrid from Toronto with Air Transat.

Experience Spain in a very special way by staying at the **Paradores**. These luxury state-run hotels are not conventional hotels. The Paradores are in old castles, palaces and buildings with centuries of history...but with all the comforts of the twenty-first century. They are the ideal base to get to know Spain.

Our lucky Prizewinner on the radio shows this week will get a taste of the Paradores as part of their fabulous prize. They will enjoy one night at the Parador de Chinchon and one night at the Parador de Alcalá.

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	<p>Parador de Chinchón</p> <p>Founded by the Lords of Chinchón in the 17th century, this former Augustinian convent exudes character. It is set in Chinchón old town, with its distinctive main square - Plaza Mayor. Cypress trees, roses and wild privets in the garden give the Parador a beautiful appearance, finished by the marvelous cloister and softened by the blue water in the pool. Large windows and vaults, classical Castilian furnishing and the pretty, spacious rooms make up the hotel interior, which has a peaceful serene atmosphere. The dining rooms offer garlic soup, suckling pig, roast lamb and typical Madrid stew.</p> <p>Parador de Alcalá</p> <p>The Parador de Alcalá de Henares is housed in a magnificent seventeenth-century building, the former Santo Tomás Dominican Convent and School. It is one of the city's landmarks that together were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. Around the cloisters at the Santo Tomás School-Convent are the restaurant, the bar, the breakfast room, the guests' lounge, and the night bar. The Parador also has a swimming pool, which is open in the summer. The restaurant in the Hostería del Estudiante serves Cervantine food and the well-known traditional "costradas".</p>
Location	Madrid lies in the centre of Spain in southwestern Europe, and is surrounded by other Spanish regions.
Geography	<p>Despite the existence of a large city of 5 million people, the Community of Madrid still retains some remarkably unspoiled and diverse habitats and landscapes. Madrid is home to mountain peaks rising above 2,000m, holm oak dehesas and low lying plains. The slopes of Guadarrama are cloaked in dense forests of Scots Pine and Pyrenean oak. The Lozoya Valley supports a large black (monk) vulture colony, and one of the last bastions of the Spanish Imperial Eagle in the world is found in the Park Regional del Suroeste in hills between the Gredos and Guadarrama ranges.</p> <p>The Province of Madrid occupies a surface area of approximately 8,028 km² (1.6% of all Spanish territory). Practically all of the Province is located between 600 and 1,000 m above sea level, with the highest point being Peñalara at 2,430 m and the lowest Alberche river in Villa del Prado at 430m.</p>
Name	<p>Spain: There is still much debate on the origin of the name Spain, but most theories centre around Roman, Punic and Basque words for "edge", signifying that Spain was at the western edge of the known world for most early civilizations.</p> <p>Madrid: In the 7th century the Islamic conquest of the Iberian Peninsula</p>

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	the name of the existing village became "Mayrit", from the Arabic term "Mayra" (referencing water as a "trees" or "giver of life") and the Ibero-Roman suffix "it" that means "place". The modern name "Madrid" evolved from the Mozarabic "Matrit"
Population	3.2 million in the city and 5.5 million in the metro region. Spain's total population is 46 million
Language	Spanish – but English is understood by many. A Spanish phrase book and the confidence to try out some Spanish will be richly rewarded.
Currency	The euro (€), the new single European currency, became the official currency in Spain and 11 other participating countries on January 1, 1999. After an overlapping period of just over 3 years, the old currency, the Spanish peseta, disappeared into history on March 1, 2002, and the euro became the sole currency in use. 1 Euro = 1.37 Canadian Dollars (16 April 2010) The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine), sometimes referred to as a "cash machine," or a "cashpoint." In Spain only four-digit numbers are valid so be sure to change any five- or six-digit PINs you may have to a four-digit number before you go.
Tipping	More expensive restaurants add a 7% tax to the bill and cheaper ones incorporate it into their prices. This is not a service charge, and a tip of 5% to 10% is expected in these establishments. For coffees and snacks most people just leave a few coins or round up to the nearest euro. Taxis do not expect tips. Although tipping is not mandatory for hotel staff, you should be aware that wages in the hospitality industry are extremely low so any supplement will be more than welcome. Tip hotel porters and doorman between \$1 and \$1.25, and maids about the same amount per day.
Government	In the process whereby democracy was restored in Spain between 1975–1978, the nationalist and regionalist parties pressed to grant home rule to certain territories in Spain. Even though the province of Madrid belonged to the historical region of Castile, it was granted autonomy and the Community of Madrid was created in 1982.
Documentation	Canadian passports are required, but no visa is necessary
Time zone	Spain is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time
Health	Spain does not pose any major health hazards. The rich cuisine - garlic, olive oil, and wine - may give some travelers mild stomach upset. The water is safe to drink throughout Spain
Safety tips	Normal traveller precautions apply. The risk of any terrorist activity affecting tourists is minimal.

CLIMATE	
General climate	The region of Madrid has a temperate Mediterranean climate with cool winters with temperatures that sometimes drop below 0 °C. There are

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	about 2 to 3 snowfalls each year. Summer tends to be hot with temperatures that consistently surpass 30 °C in July and that can often reach 40 °C. Due to Madrid's high altitude and dry climate, nightly temperatures tend to be cooler, leading to a lower average in the summer months. Precipitation levels are low.
Today's weather	19 degrees Centigrade and sunny (16 April 2010)
Best time to visit	Spring and fall are ideal times to visit, especially May to June and September to October.

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	From Toronto to Madrid with Air Transat is 7 hours 25 minutes
Cities	Madrid is in the heart of the Madrid region, rather as Quebec City is in the heart of Quebec Province
Distances	Madrid to Barcelona is 621 km Valencia 349km Cádiz 625km Badajoz 409km Galicia 602km
Buses	Buses run from several bus stations to towns of interest in Madrid province such as Chinchón and Torrelaguna. Outside of the Community of Madrid, two main bus stations, Méndez Alvaro and Avenida de America, operate economical but rapid coach services to most Spanish cities.
Trains	Spain's railway system, the Red Nacional de Ferrocarriles Españoles (Renfe) operates the vast majority of Spain's railways. In Madrid, the main rail terminals are Atocha in the south and Chamartín in the north. The crown jewel of Spain's next decade of infrastructure construction is the Spanish high speed rail network , Alta Velocidad Española AVE. Currently, an ambitious plan includes the construction of a 7,000 kilometre network, centered on Madrid. The overall goal is to have all important provincial cities be no more than 4 hours away from Madrid. As of 2008, AVE high-speed trains link Atocha station to Seville, Málaga and Toledo in the south and to Zaragoza, Lleida, Tarragona and Barcelona in the east.
Car Rental	All major international car rental companies operate in Madrid including the international airport. Driving is on the right in Spain.
Metro	Serving a population of some four million, the Madrid Metro is one of the most extensive and fastest-growing metro networks in the world. With the addition of a loop serving suburbs to Madrid's south-west "Metrosur", it is now the second largest metro system in Western Europe, second only to London's Underground. In 2007 Madrid's metro system was expanded and it currently runs over 322 kilometers of line. The province of Madrid is also served by an extensive commuter rail network called Cercanías.
Passes	The Madrid Card: Get a Madrid Card for free entry to over forty museums! For more information on the benefits of the Madrid Card check out www.madridcard.com . The cost is 75 Euros for 72 hours.

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	<p>It will help you discover the city and enjoy your stay and save money. You will be able to benefit from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the entire cultural offer in and around Madrid. Free entry to more than 40 of the major museums. • As many journeys as you wish on the Madrid Visión tour bus. • All visits which are part of the Discover Madrid programme. • Madrid Fun Fair, Madrid Zoo and Aquarium, Cable Railway, Faunia, Imax. • Take a casual stroll wherever you want in the Santiago Bernabéu stadium, thanks to the new Bernabéu Tour. <p>You will also be able to enjoy considerable discounts in shops, restaurants, shows and leisure centres for adults and children. With the Madrid Card you will also obtain a guide with information on the museums and establishments associated with the programme, as well as a city map.</p> <p>The ideal complement to the Madrid Card is the Tourist Travel Pass (not included in the price of the card). This allows you to make the most of the Madrid public transport system, with unlimited use of the underground, bus and the Cercanías lines (the suburban train network).</p>
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<p>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</p>	<p>Today more than 65,000 hotel rooms blanket the city - from grand luxe bedchambers fit for a prince to bunker-style beds in the hundreds of neighborhood hostales and pensiones.</p> <p>The Paradores of Spain are a very special way of savouring the Spanish experience – see the special section in this guide below.</p>
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<p>TARGET GROUPS</p> <p>Kids</p>	<p>The little ones can learn with fun ideas that combine education and entertainment. There are experts in charge of children’s activities at museums, cultural centres, parks like El Capricho and El Retiro, and leisure attractions from the Faunia wildlife park to the Madrid Planetarium and Zoo/Aquarium.</p> <p>Try the Parque de Atracciones at Casa de Campo: The park was created in 1969 to amuse the young at heart with an array of rides and concessions. The former include a toboggan slide, a carousel, pony rides, an adventure into outer space, a walk through a transparent maze, a visit to a jungle, a motor-propelled series of cars disguised as a</p>
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	tail-wagging dachshund puppy, and a gyrating whirligig clutched in the tentacles of an octopus named El Pulpo. The most popular rides are a pair of roller coasters named "7 Picos" and "Jet Star." Cost: \$31
Teens	<p>Warner Brothers Movie World: Newest addition to Madrid's great child attractions, this long-awaited movie theme park - Spain's answer to Disneyworld - opened in 2002. It's not cheap, but it's proved a smash for the family and is worth stretching the budget for a day. Its five themed areas cover Old West Territory, Hollywood, DC Super Heroes, Cartoon Village, and Warner Bros. Studios. Cost: 38 Euros (Kids: 29 Euros) for 2010 Website: http://english.parquewarner.com</p> <p>Aquasur in Aranjuez: this superb open-air pool with its five giant slides is an ideal fun location for the kids if you're visiting Madrid in the full heat of summer. Catch the regular cercanías train from Atocha for the 40-minute trip. Free buses run from Aranjuez town center (Calle Príncipe) to the pool.</p>
Romance	<p>For romance in the city, consider a stroll in the parks: Madrid's best central parques are particularly rewarding to explore, especially the Retiro, with its rose garden, fountains, statues (including the Angel Caído, or Fallen Angel), central lake, Casa de Vacas, and 19th-century Palacios de Cristal and Velazquez cultural showrooms. Below the Palacio Real, the Campo del Moro has a verdant neatness more associated with northern Europe, while on the edge of Argüelles the Parque del Oeste's marked nature trails wend their way down past an international selection of trees and plants to the River Manzanares (where you can view the Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida's Goyan frescoes).</p> <p>Best bet for a romantic dinner: El Amparo (tel. 91-431-64-56) sits in one of Madrid's most elegant enclaves, with cascading vines on its facade. You can dine grandly on nouveau Basque cuisine, enjoying not only the romantic ambience but also some of the finest food in the city. A sloping skylight bathes the interior with sunlight during the day, and at night lanterns cast soft, flattering glows, making you and your date look luscious.</p>
Seniors	Madrid is an excellent destination for the older traveler, combining high standards of accommodation and cuisine with easy transport and a wealth of cultural and scenic highlights.

UNIQUES	
Surprising	Teleferico: Strung high above several of Madrid's verdant parks, this cable car was originally built in 1969 as part of a public fairgrounds (Parque de Atracciones) modeled vaguely along the lines of Disneyland. Today, even for visitors not interested in visiting the park, the teleférico retains an allure of its own as a high-altitude method of

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	<p>admiring the cityscape of Madrid. The cable car departs from Paseo Pintor Rosales at the eastern edge of Parque del Oeste (at the corner of Calle Marqués de Urquijo) and carries you high above two parks, railway tracks, and over the Manzanares River to a spot near a picnic ground and restaurant in Casa de Campo. Weather permitting, there are good views of the Royal Palace along the way. The ride takes 11 minutes. At the Pintor Rosales entrance to the teleférico is the famed Bruin Ice Cream Parlour, which has been around for decades and offers a wide choice of helados (ice creams) and granizados (iced drinks). Cost: under \$5</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>Around 200 B.C. the Romans vanquished the Carthaginians and laid the foundations of the present Latin culture. Traces of Roman civilization can still be seen today. By the time of Julius Caesar, Spain (Hispania) was under Roman law and had begun a long period of peace and prosperity.</p> <p>When Rome fell in the 5th century, Spain was overrun, first by the Vandals and then by the Visigoths from eastern Europe. The chaotic rule of the Visigothic kings lasted about 300 years, but the barbarian invaders did adopt the language of their new country and tolerated Christianity as well.</p> <p>In A.D. 711, Moorish warriors led by Tarik crossed over into Spain and conquered the disunited country. By 714, they controlled most of it, except for a few mountain regions around Asturias. For 8 centuries the Moors occupied their new land, which they called al-Andalús, or Andalusia, with Córdoba as the capital.</p> <p>In A.D. 852, under Emir Mohamed I Córdoba, Moors constructed the wooden Alcázar (fortress) in Mayrit - subsequently named Magerit and later Madrid - on the site of the present Palacio Real (Royal Palace). Its strategic position deterred 11th-century Castilian invaders who mistook what was then little more than a rural village for the bigger city of Toledo.</p> <p>The Reconquest, the name given to the Christian efforts to rid the peninsula of the Moors, slowly reduced the size of the Muslim holdings, with Catholic monarchies forming in northern areas. The three powerful kingdoms of Aragón, Castile, and León were joined in 1469, when Ferdinand of Aragón married Isabella of Castile. Catholic kings, as they were called, launched the final attack on the Moors and completed the Reconquest in 1492 by capturing Granada.</p> <p>That same year Columbus, the Genoese sailor, landed in the West Indies, laying the foundations for a far-flung empire that brought wealth and power to Spain during the 16th and 17th centuries.</p> <p>Around this time, Madrid was chiefly of interest as a great hunting area, much favored by the monarchs of Castile, and today the El Prado Park north of the city still contains a host of protected wildlife.</p>

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In the first half of the 16th century, Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean, Cortés seized Mexico for Spain, Pizarro took Peru, and a Spanish ship (initially commanded by the Portuguese Magellan, who was killed during the voyage) circumnavigated the globe. The conquistadors took Catholicism to the New World and shipped cargoes of gold back to Spain. The Spanish Empire extended all the way to the Philippines. **Charles V**, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, was the most powerful prince in Europe - king of Spain and Naples, Holy Roman Emperor and lord of Germany, duke of Burgundy and the Netherlands, and ruler of the New World territories.

But much of Spain's wealth and human resources were wasted in religious and secular conflicts. First Jews, then Muslims, and finally Catholicized Moors were driven out - and with them much of the country's prosperity. When **Philip II** ascended the throne in 1556, Spain could indeed boast vast possessions: the New World colonies; Naples, Milan, Genoa, Sicily, and other portions of Italy; the Spanish Netherlands (modern Belgium and the Netherlands); and portions of Austria and Germany. But the seeds of decline had already been planted.

Philip II, a bureaucrat of the first order, made Madrid his capital in 1561 for the simple reason that it was the geographical center of the country, and apart from a temporary 6-year transfer to Valladolid in 1600, the city has occupied that position ever since. As a result of Phillip's decision, the population suddenly expanded fourfold to over 80,000 in barely 40 years, and some of the city's finest sights, from the Plaza Mayor to the Monastery of the Descalzas Reales, emerged in their full glory.

In 1700, a Bourbon prince, Philip V, raised at Versailles, became king, and the country fell under the influence of France. Many of the changes in Madrid around this time, such as the rebuilding of the Palacio Real and construction of La Granja near Segovia, demonstrate this "Europeanizing" effect.

During the 18th century, Spain's direction changed with each sovereign. The "enlightened" **Charles III** (1759-88) developed the country economically, culturally, and aesthetically. He cleaned up the by then "dark foul smelling" capital by building sewers, introducing street lights, constructing monuments, and creating the wide tree-lined Prado Avenue and incomparable Botanical Gardens. But his successor, Charles IV, became embroiled in wars with France, and the weakness of the Spanish monarchy allowed Napoleon to place his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the throne in 1808. The Madrileños put up a spirited but hopeless resistance against these superior odds and it was 4 more years before an allied force under the Duke of Wellington was able to drive out the French and restore Madrid and Spain to the Spaniards. In 1876, Spain became a **constitutional monarchy**. But labor unrest,

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disputes with the Catholic Church, and war in Morocco combined to create political chaos. Conditions eventually became so bad that the Cortés, or parliament, was dissolved in 1923, and Gen. Miguel Primo de Rivera formed a military directorate. Early in 1930, Primo de Rivera resigned, but unrest continued.

On April 14, 1931, a revolution occurred, a republic was proclaimed, and King Alfonso XIII and his family were forced to flee.

The extreme nature of these reforms fostered the growth of the conservative Falange party, modeled after Italy and Germany's fascist parties. By the 1936 elections, the country was divided equally between left and right, and political violence was common. On July 18, 1936, the army, supported by Mussolini and Hitler, tried to seize power, igniting the **Spanish Civil War**. Gen. Francisco Franco, coming from Morocco to Spain, led the Nationalist (rightist) forces in fighting that ravaged the country.

Madrid, controlled by the popular front, held out through a brutal siege that lasted for 28 months. Eventually, the government of the popular front moved to Valencia for greater safety in 1936. But in the winter of 1936-37, Franco's forces slowly began to establish power, capturing the Basque capital of Bilbao and eventually Santander.

By October 1, 1936, Franco was clearly in charge of the leadership of nationalist Spain, abolishing popular suffrage and regional autonomy -- in effect, launching a totalitarian rule for Spain.

The last great offensive of the war began on December 28, 1938, with an attack by Franco's forces on Barcelona, which fell on January 26 after a campaign of 34 days. Republican forces fled toward France, as a succession of presidents occurred. On March 28 some 200,000 nationalist troops marched into Madrid, meeting no resistance. The war was over the next day when the rest of republican Spain surrendered.

The war lasted 2 years and 254 days, costing some one million lives.

To get a sense of the Spanish Civil War, visitors can travel to El Valle de los Caídos (the Valley of the Fallen) outside El Escorial.

Although Franco adopted a neutral position during World War II, his sympathies obviously lay with Germany and Italy. Spain, although a nonbelligerent, assisted the Axis powers. This action intensified the diplomatic isolation into which the country was forced after the war's end - in fact, it was excluded from the United Nations until 1955.

Before his death, General Franco selected as his successor **Juan Carlos de Borbón y Borbón**, son of the pretender to the Spanish throne. After the 1977 elections, a new constitution was approved by the electorate and the king; it guaranteed human and civil rights, as well as free enterprise, and canceled the status of the Roman Catholic Church as the church of Spain.

In 1981 the fledgling democracy overcame its first test. A group of

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	right-wing military officers seized the Cortés (parliament building) in Madrid and called upon Juan Carlos to establish a Francoist state. The king, however, refused, and the conspirators were arrested. The government's second major accomplishment was to gain Spain's entry into the European Union in 1986.
Books	Frommer's Spain 2010 Spain: a Phaidon Cultural Guide James A. Michener's Iberia Madrid and Central Spain - Alastair Boyd
1000 Places to see before you die	Salamanca's Plaza Mayor Meson de Candido, Segovia Madrid: museum and sights
Must Sees	Wander around the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales – it's a haven of unexpected peace in the bustling heart of Madrid, barely a stone's throw from the Gran Vía. This charming former medieval palace was converted into a monastery in the 16th century by Philip II's sister Juana. Ornate frescoes, Flemish tapestries, and paintings by the likes of Titian and Zurbarán fill its chapel-lined interior. Only 20 visitors are allowed in at a time, so be prepared to wait.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	Madrid is home to Real Madrid , the world's most successful football club in the 20th Century (according to FIFA), which plays in the Estadio Santiago Bernabéu. Its supporters are referred to as vikingos, vikings, or, more commonly, merengues, meringues. Its hometown rival, Atlético Madrid, is also well supported in the city, and its supporters are called los sufridores, the sufferers. Madrid hosted the 1982 FIFA World Cup final. Along with Barcelona, Glasgow, Lisbon and Istanbul, Madrid is one of five cities in Europe to contain two UEFA 5-star stadia: Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabéu and Atlético Madrid's Vicente Calderón both meet the criteria. Tours of the Bernabeu Stadium are available for 15 Euros (Kids 10 Euros) throughout the year: go to http://www.realmadrid.com/cs/Satellite/en/Prehome_ES2.htm Visitors can purchase tickets for games on the Club's website from 48 to 180 Euros http://www.realmadrid.com
Golf	Around the city, the best golf is the Club de Campo Villa de Madrid (Madrid Country Club; tel. 91-550-08-40; http://clubdemadrid.com), which has a challenging par-71 course. This is a full-fledged sports center with tennis, squash, horseback-riding, pigeon shooting, and a swimming pool among its other facilities. Another topnotch venue, located on the eastern outskirts of Madrid between the Juan Carlos Exhibition Halls and Barajas airport, is the Club de Golf Olivar de la Hinojosa (tel. 91-721-18-89; http://golfolivar.com), which has one 9-hole course and one 18-hole course.

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Tennis	You'll find reasonably priced courts for hire (around \$5 per hour) at large polideportivos (multifacility sports centers) run by the Madrid municipality. Casa del Campo (tel. 91-464-91-67), Barrio del Pilar, Barrio de la Concepción, and La Elipa are among the main locales. Private courts with high membership fees and court fees are also available at the Club de Tenis de Chamartín (tel. 91-345-25-00; www.ctchamartin.es).
Horse riding	The closest place for taking to the saddle is the Club de Campo Villa de Madrid sports complex on the edge of the leafy Casa del Campo park. At the nearby upmarket suburb of Pozuelo, you can also hire horses by the hour or day at the Escuela de Equitación Pozuelo. Further countryside riding facilities are available at outlying towns such as Cercedilla and Manzanares el Real.
Hiking	The Guadarrama mountains are nearer than you think. Just 1 hour and 20 minutes by suburban train from Chamartín takes you to the town of Cercedilla, which has an information center and six graded trails in them thar hills. Another fine walking spot - reached by bus from Plaza de Castilla - is Manzanares el Real, with its beautiful and dramatic La Pedriza park, where many scenes from the Charlton Heston '60s epic El Cid were filmed.
Soccer	If you're a fan of English-style football, then the place to go is Santiago Bernabeu (Estadio Santiago Bernabeu, Paseo de la Castellana 144; tel. 91-229-17-09; www.realmadrid.es), Madrid's largest stadium: total capacity 75,000 spectators. This is the home of Spain's most successful team Real Madrid, regarded by diehard fanatics as even more important than the Prado or Palacio Real. And whose host of charismatic international stars ranges from Kaka to Ronaldo and Cristiano.
Bullfighting	Madrid hosts the largest Plaza de Toros (bullring) in Spain, Las Ventas , established in 1929. Las Ventas is considered by many to be the world center of bullfighting and has a seating capacity of almost 25,000. Madrid's bullfighting season begins in March and ends in October. Bullfights are held every day during the festivities of San Isidro (Madrid's patron saint) from the middle of March to the middle of June, and every Sunday, and public holiday, the rest of the season. Las Ventas also hosts music concerts and other events outside of the bullfighting season. Caution: the bullfighting spectacle is not for the faint of heart and may be seen as cruel to the bulls by many Canadians.

CULTURE	Madrid is one of the world's great cultural centres – the jewel in its crown being El Prado of course.
Arts	Known as the " Paseo del Arte " or Art Walk, this is unique in the world, and takes visitors on a path through paintings and sculptures, architecture and nature, in one of Madrid's most emblematic areas: the

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	<p>Paseo del Prado. The route can easily be done on foot, and leads to three major art galleries in succession: the Prado Museum, the Thyssen Bornemisza Museum and the Reina Sofía Museum and Art Centre. This first-rate location makes it possible to enjoy, within a few square metres, Velazquez's Meninas, Goya's Majas, Giovanna Tornabuoni by Ghirlandaio, as well as Les Vessenots en Auvers by Van Gogh and Picasso's Guernica, together with other masterpieces of world art.</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Check out some Flamenco! Visit the Corral de la Moreria. One of the most famous flamenco tablaos in the world. It's right in the heart of the city, and you can enjoy a full-fledged Spanish meal while you watch performances by renowned international flamenco music and dance artists.</p> <p>In the field of classical music, Spain has produced a number of noted composers such as Isaac Albéniz, Manuel de Falla and Enrique Granados and singers and performers such as José Carreras, Montserrat Caballé, Plácido Domingo, Alicia de Larrocha, Alfredo Kraus, Pau Casals, Ricardo Viñes, José Iturbi, Pablo de Sarasate, Jordi Savall and Teresa Berganza. In Spain there are over forty professional orchestras, including the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona, Orquesta Nacional de España and the Orquesta Sinfonica de Madrid. Major opera houses include the Teatro Real, the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Teatro Arriaga and the El Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>El Prado: One of the world's premier art museums, on a par with the Louvre, El Prado is home to some 4,000 masterpieces, many of them acquired by Spanish kings. The wealth of Spanish art is staggering - everything from Goya's Naked Maja to the celebrated Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor) by Velázquez and the dark vision of Goya's Disasters of War etchings. El Prado also boasts a number of Botticellis, Titians, and French Impressionists, but don't try to take it all in in one day: the museum's overall collection is simply too vast to absorb in a single visit.</p> <p>Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum: Madrid's acquisition of this treasure trove of art in the 1980s was one of the greatest coups in European art history. Amassed by a Central European collector beginning around 1920, and formerly displayed in Lugano, Switzerland, the 700 canvasses, with works by artists ranging from El Greco to Picasso, are arranged in chronological order. The collection rivals the legendary holdings of the queen of England herself.</p> <p>Reina Sofia: Spain's number-one modern art exhibition. Regulars on show include Dalí, Tàpies, and Klein, and an ever-interesting series of temporary exhibits ranges from the anarchic to mainstream. The outside glass-walled elevator is popular with kids.</p>

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Festivals: Fiestas	<p>The Madrileño calendar is a colorful kaleidoscope of saint's days, fiestas, and bullfights. Art exhibitions are perennial features and during the hot summers you can enjoy concerts in the Retiro Park as well as other open areas.</p> <p>The Big Three Fiestas</p> <p>Fiesta de San Isidro: Madrileños run wild during this 10-day celebration honoring their city's patron saint. Food fairs, Castilian folkloric events, street parades, parties, music, dances, bullfights, and other festivities mark the occasion. Local couples known as chulos and chulapas parade in castizo (traditional 19th-century) dress and enjoy feasts, romerías (festivals), and music acts in key spots like the Plaza Mayor. The largest number of consecutive daily bullfights are held during this fiesta. Make hotel reservations early. Second week in May.</p> <p>Virgen de la Paloma: This lively festival belies the midsummer image of Madrid as a temporarily lethargic ghost city with practically everyone out of town basking on the Levante and Cantabrian coasts. On August 15, the Latina quarter becomes a crowded riot of street bunting, drinking stalls, live music, and kids' events. The highlight is the procession. Early to mid-August.</p> <p>The Autumn Festival: The Festival de Otoño is the best music festival in Spain, with a lineup that attracts the cream of the European and South American musical communities. The usual roster of chamber music, symphonic pieces, and orchestral works is supplemented by a program of zarzuelas (operettas or musical reviews), as well as Arabic and Sephardic pieces composed during the Middle Ages. For tickets write to Festival de Otoño, Plaza de España 8, 28008 Madrid (tel. 91-580-25-75). October and November (dates vary year to year).</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	<p>There are six UNESCO World Heritage Sites within easy reach of Madrid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Toledo: Successively a Roman municipium, the capital of the Visigothic Kingdom, a fortress of the Emirate of Cordoba, an outpost of the Christian kingdoms fighting the Moors and, in the 16th century, the temporary seat of supreme power under Charles V, Toledo is the repository of more than 2,000 years of history. Its masterpieces are the product of heterogeneous civilizations in an environment where the existence of three major religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – was a major factor.- Aranjuez: The Aranjuez cultural landscape is an entity of complex
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	<p>relationships: between nature and human activity, between sinuous watercourses and geometric landscape design, between the rural and the urban, between forest landscape and the delicately modulated architecture of its palatial buildings. Three hundred years of royal attention to the development and care of this landscape have seen it express an evolution of concepts from humanism and political centralization, to characteristics such as those found in its 18th century French-style Baroque garden, to the urban lifestyle which developed alongside the sciences of plant acclimatization and stock-breeding during the Age of Enlightenment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alcala de Henares: Founded by Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros in the early 16th century, Alcalá de Henares was the world's first planned university city. It was the original model for the Civitas Dei (City of God), the ideal urban community which Spanish missionaries brought to the Americas. It also served as a model for universities in Europe and elsewhere. - El Escorial: Built at the end of the 16th century on a plan in the form of a grill, the instrument of the martyrdom of St Lawrence, the Escorial Monastery stands in an exceptionally beautiful site in Castile. Its austere architecture, a break with previous styles, had a considerable influence on Spanish architecture for more than half a century. It was the retreat of a mystic king and became, in the last years of Philip II's reign, the centre of the greatest political power of the time. - Segovia: The Roman aqueduct of Segovia, probably built c. A.D. 50, is remarkably well preserved. This impressive construction, with its two tiers of arches, forms part of the setting of the magnificent historic city of Segovia. Other important monuments include the Alcázar, begun around the 11th century, and the 16th-century Gothic cathedral. - Avila: Founded in the 11th century to protect the Spanish territories from the Moors, this 'City of Saints and Stones', the birthplace of St Teresa and the burial place of the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada, has kept its medieval austerity. This purity of form can still be seen in the Gothic cathedral and the fortifications which, with their 82 semicircular towers and nine gates, are the most complete in Spain.
<p>Royal Palace</p>	<p>Metro: Opera. Open: 9:00 - 17:00, Sundays and holidays: 9:00 - 13:00. Entry \$10; The Palacio Real (Royal Palace) is an enormous palace, with scorching plains of concrete around it and the Real Armorial (Royal Armory), a two-story collection of medieval weapons and armor. In spite of its name, it is not the residence of the current royal family. The Royal</p>

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	<p>Palace is considered to be one of the most emblematic and beautiful buildings in Madrid, not only for its location but also for its architecture and the artistic treasures to be found in its rooms. The façades of the palace measure 130 meters long and 33 meters high with 870 windows and 240 balconies opening on to the facades and courtyard. It has a surface area of 100,000 square meters with 44 stairways and more than 30 principal rooms. Also located within the palace is the Pharmacia, which contains hundreds of bottles of early medicines and a reconstructed laboratory.</p>
Wildlife	<p>Zoo Aquarium de la Casa de Campo: This modern, well-organized facility allows you to see about 3,000 animals from five continents. Most are in simulated natural habitats, with moats separating them from the public. There's a petting zoo for the kids and a show presented by the Chu-Lin band. The zoo/aquarium complex includes a 520,000-gallon tropical marine aquarium, a dolphinarium, and a parrot club. You can also take a camel, pony, or mini-train ride, and live your own Jaws experience in the walk-through shark tank. Cost: \$19</p>
Parks	<p>Madrid is full of green spaces and parkland, in central Madrid the largest park is Parque del Retiro, formerly the grounds of the palace built for Felipe IV, and Madrid's most popular park. Its large lake in the middle once staged mini naval battles to amuse royalty, these days the more tranquil pastime of pleasure boating is popular. Inspired by London's crystal palace, the palacio de cristal can be found at the south-eastern end of the park.</p>
Gardens	<p>Botanical Gardens: This garden is a short walk west of the Retiro, and adjacent to the Museo del Prado. Founded in the 18th century by Fernando VI at the Huerto de Migas Calientes and subsequently moved to its present location by Carlos III, the garden celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2005. Today it contains more than 104 species of trees and 30,000 types of plants. Also on the premises are an exhibition hall and a library specializing in botany.</p>
Historic Buildings	<p>Explore the Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial (49 km from Madrid): Philip II, who commissioned this monastery in the 1530s, envisioned it as a spiritual fortress against the distractions of the secular world. Today it remains the best living example of religious devotion in Renaissance Spain. Within its huge granite walls - more awesome than beautiful - are the tombs of Spanish kings and a priceless repository of ancient books, tapestries, and masterpieces by Goya, Velázquez, and other artistic giants.</p>

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>Madrid's teeming flea market represents a tradition that's 500 years old. The place really gets going from around 9am on, with shoulder-to-shoulder stalls stretching down Calle Ribera de Curtidores.</p>

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	Real or fake antiques, secondhand clothing, porn films, Franco-era furniture, paintings (endless copies of Velázquez), old books, religious relics, and plenty of just plain junk are for sale. These streets also contain some of the finest permanent antiques shops in Madrid.
Markets	El Rastro. Madrid's largest flea market, only open on Sunday mornings, featuring rows upon rows of private vendors selling a variety of homemade goods, and a wealth of live entertainment. Do watch your handbag closely and do not bring along valuables. The closest Metro station is La Latina
Nightlife	Madrid abounds in dance halls, tascas, cafes, theaters, movie houses, music halls, and nightclubs. Because dinner is served late in Spain, nightlife doesn't really get under way until after 11pm, and it generally lasts until around 3am - Madrileños are so fond of prowling about at night that they're known around Spain as gatos (cats). In fact, if you arrive at 9:30pm at a club, you'll have the place all to yourself, if it's even open. In most clubs a one-drink minimum is the rule: Feel free to nurse one drink through the entire evening's entertainment. In summer, Madrid sponsors a series of plays, concerts, and films, making the city a virtual free festival. Pick up a copy of the Guía del Ocio (available at most news-stands) for listings of these events. This guide also provides information about occasional discounts for commercial events, such as the concerts that are given in Madrid's parks
Casinos	Casino Gran Madrid is at Km 29 along the Carretera La Coruña (the A-6 highway running between Madrid and La Coruña), Apartado 62 (tel. 91-856-11-00). The largest place for gambling in Madrid, it appeals to non-gamblers to boot with a well-choreographed roster of dining and entertainment facilities, including two restaurants, four bars, and a nightclub. And if you happen to enjoy gambling, there are facilities for French and American roulette, blackjack, punto y banco, baccarat, and chemin de fer. Presentation of a passport at the door is required.

CUISINE	Madrid is located in the central region of Spain known as Castilla, which has a particular culinary tradition within Spain, largely meat based. Within this region, Madrid has a number of "typical" dishes, some of the most well known are the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Callos a la Madrileña - A hot pot of spicy beef tripe similar to those found in Turkey and the Balkans. - Cocido Madrileño - Chickpea stew with meat and vegetable products. The particularity of this stew is the way it is served. The soup, chickpeas and meats are served and eaten separately. - Oreja de Cerdo - Pigs ear, fried in Garlic. This popular dish is widely eaten throughout central Spain. - Sopa de Ajo - The Garlic soup is a rich and oily soup which generally
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	<p>includes paprika, grated Spanish ham, fried bread and a poached egg. A variation of this soup is known as Sopa Castellana.</p> <p>Don't forget that the Spanish don't eat lunch until 1:00 or 2:00 pm, and dinner doesn't start until 9:00 pm; many restaurants don't open until these times. As a rule of thumb, restaurants serve lunch from 1:00 (earlier in touristic zones) until 3:30, then close and re-open for dinner at 8:30 pm, serving until 11:00 pm</p>
<p>Food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tapas, those delicious bite-size portions washed down with wine, beer, or sherry, are reason enough to go to Madrid! Original favorites were cured ham or chorizo (spicy sausage). Today you might sample gambas (deep-fried shrimp), boquerones (anchovies marinated in vinegar), albóndigas (meatballs), tortillas (tiny omelets), or calamares (squid). Among the best areas for a tapeo (tapa "crawl") are bustling Plaza de Santa Ana and the labyrinthine Cava Baja. - Visiting Madrid or Spain in general without trying Jamon Iberico (ham) would be considered a crime by most Spaniards. Spaniards treat their ham very seriously and types and qualities of ham vary in a similar way to wine. - Seafood: It is ironic that Madrid, located right in the center of Spain is known in the country as the "Best port in Spain" having higher quality seafood than most coastal regions. This can be explained by Spaniard's obsession with seafood and the historical need to supply the capital's wealthy with a constant stream of fresh produce. You will be hard pressed to find better quality seafood in any city in Europe than in Madrid.
<p>Drinks</p>	<p>Beer - Madrid's favorite cerveza is the home-brewed Mahou, which comes in light and dark versions and is served draught or by the bottle. Also popular and widely available locally are Aguila from Valencia and Cruzcampo from Seville.</p> <p>Wine - Rioja from the province of La Rioja adjoining Navarra is by far the best and most popular quality vino tinto, followed by Ribera del Duero from nearby Valladolid. Rueda (Valladolid again), Penedès (Cataluña), and the expensive Albariño (Galicia) are the favorite whites. Though the capital has its own regional Vinos de Madrid - modest wines but admirable for quaffing - these are still sadly undervalued and struggling to find a niche. You may find them in the cave bars behind the Plaza Mayor.</p> <p>Cider - Still or fizzy sidra is the favorite drink in Asturian eating spots such as Casa Mingo and Casa Lastra. Warning: The still version is stronger than you'd think.</p>

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	<p>Spirits - Adventurous imbibers can try orujo, a fiery liquor or aguardiente (made from the stalks and skins of grapes) that tastes like a rough grappa and is sometimes offered free after a meal. Magno and Carlos 1, mellow coñacs from Cádiz, or Pacharán, a rose-purple anise-flavored sloe gin spirit from Navarra, are more conventional after-dinner tipples.</p> <p>Cava - Spain's answer to champagne is best from Cataluña (though recent political differences between the capital and Barcelona led to a not-too-successful boycott of the stuff). Look for Codorniu and Freixenet.</p>
<p>Restaurants</p>	<p>The Sobrino de Botín (tel. 91-366-30-26) may be touristy, but the setting and atmosphere of the city's oldest restaurant (some say the oldest eatery in the world) more than compensate. Rafters, beams, and nooks abound, and the effective service is accompanied by some first-rate Castilian specialties, such as lechón (suckling pig).</p> <p>Best Tapas: El Bocaíto (tel. 91-532-12-19). Cited as a favorite snack 'n' wine locale by Oscar-winning cineaste Pedro Almodóvar, the stylish little Bocaíto, set in the heart of bohemian Chueca, will usually serve a free miniportion of cecina (smoked beef) or something similar with your vino before offering a wealth of marine delights that ranges from salmonetes (red mullet) to pescaítos (small fried fish).</p> <p>Best for Kids: Foster's Hollywood (tel. 91-564-63-08) wins almost hands-down. Since 1971 it has lured kids with Tex-Mex selections, one of the juiciest hamburgers in town, and what a New York Times reporter found to be "probably the best onion rings in the world." The atmosphere is fun too, evoking a movie studio with props.</p> <p>Personally recommended: Restaurante Dassa Bassa. Villalar, 7 28001 Madrid (tel. 91-576-73-97) www.dassabassa.com One of Spain's great Chefs, with his own television cookery show, Darrio Barrio brings his own, unique take on 'nouvelle cuisine meets tapas' with amazing results. You will need to book in advance.</p>

<p>MORE INFO</p>	
<p>Brochures</p>	<p>Contact the Tourist Office of Spain, 2 Bloor St. W., Suite 3402, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1M9 (tel. 416-961-3131) for brochures on Spain</p>
<p>Websites</p>	<p>Madrid Tourism: www.turismomadrid.es Spanish Tourism Board: www.spain.info/ca Parador hotels: www.parador.es Transat Holidays: www.transatholidays.com</p>

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<p>PARADORES OF SPAIN</p>	<p>The Spanish Paradores are nearly 100 hotels of luxury accommodation in castles, palaces, fortresses, convents, monasteries and other historic buildings. There are also modern hotels, built in traditional style, in areas of outstanding beauty. These hotels can be found from Galicia in the North West through Catalunya to Andalusia in the south of Spain, the Canary Islands and in the Spanish cities in North Africa. Either the building or the location is spectacular and, if you have not already stayed at these hotels, you will find a very pleasant surprise waiting for you.</p> <p>The hotels in the Parador Group were set up by the state to use quality tourism to act as guardian of the national and artistic heritage of Spain and to assist regions with fewer economic resources.</p> <p>Guests of the Paradors receive the high standards for which the group is renowned at prices which are very reasonable by international standards.</p> <p>The Parador hotels website is: www.parador.es</p>
<p>Personal Recommendations</p>	<p>I have stayed in ten Paradors and recommend every one of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parador Casa del Corregidor at Arcos de la Frontera (a former Palace with panoramic views) - Parador Alcazar del Rey Don Pedro at Carmona near Seville (in a fourteenth century Arabic fortress) - Parador Nacional Sierra Nevada at Monachil near Grenada - Parador Castillo de Santa Catalina at Jaen in Andalusia (four star hotel in a thirteenth century Arab fortress) - Parador San Francisco at Granada (Spain's most popular Parador is a small four star hotel in a fifteenth century convent which is part of the famous Palace of Alhambra) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parador at Chinchon near Madrid (luxury four star hotel using the renovated buildings of a seventeenth century Augustinian convent) - Parador Castillo de Siguenza, northeast of Madrid (in a castle that was built in the fifth century and strengthened by the Moors in 712; in 1123 it was retaken by Fernando I and El Cid) - Parador Duques de Cardona at Cardona (four star luxury hotel in a ninth century castle with the tower dating from the second century) - Parador Raimundo de Borgona at Avila (in a sixteenth century palace site within the walls of Avila) - Parador Conde de Orgaz at Toledo (in an old Manor House sitting on the top of The Emperor's Hill with an excellent view over the city of Toledo)

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AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER	Air Transat flies direct to Madrid from both Montreal and Toronto
Flight details	Transat has many flights from Canada direct to Spain to three destinations: Madrid, Barcelona and Malaga (for the Costa del Sol) Flight times are around 7.5 hours.

CURRENT DEALS	You can get a 20% discount off the official half board rate when staying 2 or more consecutive nights, at the same Parador. Extra bed for children (Up to 12 years inclusive): - From 2 January to 16 July 2010, except in Easter week, and from 22 August to 29 December, the extra bed is free of charge - From 17 July to 21 August the extra bed cost is at the official rate.
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PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	I have travelled extensively throughout Spain to Madrid, Toledo, Catalonia, Barcelona, Granada, Cordoba, Seville, Andalucia, Pyrenees, Costa Brava, Costa Daurada, Costa Blanca, Costa Del Sol; Majorca, Ibiza, Menorca, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote.
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TRANSAT HOLIDAYS	
Transat Background	<p>Transat is now the largest tour operator in Canada, and is at the core of the vertical integration process developing and marketing vacation products as well as flights to destinations in the South and Europe. The company acts as a master craftsman in assembling different components of leisure travel: air transportation, passenger transfers from airport to hotel, accommodation, recreational and cultural activities, meals, cruises, and much more.</p> <p>As an industry leader, Transat Holidays offers departures from many Canadian cities including: St. John's, Halifax, Moncton, Fredericton, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto, Brandon, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, Comox, Abbotsford, Prince George and Kelowna.</p>
Mission	<p>Transat Holidays offers quality vacation packages to a wide variety of destinations. Each season, the company presents a wide selection of quality products, in order to meet the diversified needs of Canadian travellers. In keeping with their mission, their employees aim to exceed vacationers' expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader. They see their role, ultimately, to turn holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience one of the most memorable ever.</p>
Products	<p>Packages, Cruises, Hotels, Flights, Tours, Car Rentals & Train Travel. With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat Holidays are subject to a rigorous standard review.</p>
Wider Seats	<p>Air Transat has added more legroom on all their aircraft, making the journey to and from your destination even more comfortable.</p>
Air Transat Upgrades	<p>Air Transat have just introduced its new Economy Class meal service on sun destination flights, beginning December 1, 2009. As part of its ongoing efforts to provide clients with the best possible service, Air Transat has upgraded its onboard service. Passengers flying south will now be welcomed onboard with a glass of champagne, while early morning passengers will be greeted with a mimosa. The meal service has also been improved. The airline will now offer passengers a more complete meal tray, including a choice of two hot meals, a complimentary glass of wine and dessert.</p>
Awards	<p>2009 Agent's Choice Awards: Transat Holidays ranked number one for a third year in a row by Canada's travel agents according to the results of the Agents' Choice Awards, a survey carried out by Canadian Travel Press and Travel Courier.</p>
Current Brochure	<p>Transat Holidays Europe 2010-2011 brochure Features flights from Toronto and Montreal to Madrid, Barcelona and</p>

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	<p>Malaga, coach tours, cruises, twin centre vacations, excursions, Madrid hotel vacations</p> <p>Flights are on Air Transat and flight time is around 7.5 hrs.</p>
Air Transat Kids Club	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves while onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p>
Transat Club Class	<p>Enjoy exclusive privileges such as complimentary seat selection, wider, more comfortable leather seats, a choice of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding.</p>
Option Plus	<p>This Economy class option includes many priority privileges and services including priority check-in, priority baggage handling, an extra 10kg baggage allowance and even champagne.</p>
Transat and Sustainable Tourism	<p>Transat recognizes the prime importance of the environment, host communities, cultural diversity, and their relationships with their employees, customers and partners. Tourism has become one of the world's leading industries. Society and communities reap the benefits, and, each year, hundreds of millions of travellers discover new countries and cultures. Transat is firmly committed to the responsible development of the tourism industry, and has adopted the following definition of sustainable tourism:</p> <p>"Sustainable tourism entails respect for nature, as well as for host communities and their values; it combines positive socio-economic benefits for local populations with an enriching experience for travellers."</p> <p>Transat has embarked on a number of major projects under the auspices of its Sustainable Tourism Executive Committee, chaired by Lina De Cesare, Transat Co-founder and President, Tour Operators. All are connected in some way to the three pillars of sustainable tourism: the environment, respect for local communities and protection of their culture; and the economy, i.e., the potential and importance of tourism as a development factor.</p>

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	<p>The issue of the environment, as far as Transat's own facilities are concerned, is a clear and basic target. Their environment committees have implemented concrete initiatives with regard to recycling, conservation of resources, the disposal of obsolete electronic equipment, and raising employee awareness. Air Transat, which proved its forward-looking approach by adopting a strict fuel-management system in 2003, has since begun developing an environmental management system that could lead to an ISO 14001 certification in the future. To find out more, consult the Transat and the Environment sections at their website.</p>
Gift Certificates	<p>Here's your chance to make a loved one's dream come true. With Transat gift certificates you can offer the beauty, excitement, and wonders of the world: the South with its heavenly beaches and endless sunshine, or just a rental car.</p> <p>Travel gift certificates are always appreciated, and they are appropriate for all occasions, whether for a wedding, anniversary, graduation, or simply to show you care.</p> <p>Transat gift certificates are valid on all Air Transat, Nolitours, or Transat Holidays products in our brochures. They can be redeemed at a travel agent's office at the time of reservation.</p> <p>To order your gift certificates call 1-800-322-6649.</p>
Transat Holidays vacations to Madrid	<p>Transat's Europe 2010-2011 brochure has lots of options to choose from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flight only City Packages: 6 Hotels from 2 to 4 star Madrid A La Carte: a selection of 18 hotels Madrid Excursions (see below) Madrid & More: Package of Madrid hotel, excursions to Madrid, Toledo, Segovia and Avila plus Hop-on Hop-off Madrid bus
Transat Excursions in Madrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hop-on Hop-off Tour Panoramic City Tour & Real Madrid Football Club Stadium Flamenco & Spanish Dances Traditional Flamenco Avila and Segovia Toledo
Paradors featured by Transat Holidays	<p>Transat feature nine of the Paradors in their 2010 program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barcelona area: Parador de Vic-Sau; Parador de Tortosa Cordoba: Parador de Cordoba Costa del Sol: Parador de Malaga Gibralfaro; Parador de Ronda Grenada: Parador de Grenada Madrid: Parador de Alcala de Henares; Parador de la Granja; Parador de Salamanca
Special Deals	<p>Transat currently (April 2010) has some very special deals:</p>

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Save up to \$400 per couple on packages to Spain if booked before May 3rd 2010

Also: Buy two roundtrip air seats to Madrid and get a free 3-day Hertz car rental! For Sunday departures on June 6, 13, 20 2010

Madrid City Package

8 Days • 7 Nights
\$1049 Hotel Catalonia Gaudi
Sun, Jun 6, 13, 20 2010
Add taxes & fees \$305

Madrid & the Best of Castille

8 days • 7 nights
\$1249 • One-day Hop-On Hop-Off Madrid Vision
• Half-day panoramic tour of Madrid
• Half-day tour of Toledo
• Full-day tour of Avila and Segovia
Includes: Flight, accommodation, breakfasts, transfers and more
Sun, Jul 4 - Aug 22 2010
Add taxes & fees \$305

Madrid Barcelona duo

9 days • 8 nights \$1599 Add taxes & fees \$305 from Toronto
4 nights Madrid – Ganivet Hotel 3H
4 nights Barcelona – Hotel Astoria 3H
Sat, Jun 5th and 12th, 2010

Madrid airfare from Toronto just \$399 return
30th May, 7th June 2010

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