BABYCCINO KIDS blog
daily inspiration for the modern family

WEEKEND GET-AWAY: MADRID

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I love Spain - the culture, the cities, the people and the great, great food. I have not been to Madrid in years (actually decades) and had no idea if it is a good place to visit with kids. Luckily we got some local intel from the lovely Beatriz.

Beatriz, a Spanish native, lives in Madrid with her husband, her daughter Martina and her dog. During the day, she works in communications for a Spanish Luxury Brand. During the night, she runs her blog Con Botas de Agua about things that inspire her.

Here are Beatriz's recommendations if you happen to be in Madrid (or need an excuse to go!):

SEE

Because kids can appreciate culture too, I wanted to suggest some cultural things to for you to get to know more about Madrid and its culture.

Madrid?s most important art museums are the Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza, and the Reina Sofía They all offer special activities and guided visits for children. Your children will see art from a different point-of-view. In the Thyssen-Bornemisza they will be able to paint their first work of art.

The Royal Palace and surroundings are incredible places to visit, especially if you have girls that are crazy about the princesses. They will have fun thinking about how life would be like in a palace with rich interiors, long hallways, detailed ceilings and winding stairways. Boys will probably enjoy The Royal Armoury inside the Palace. It is considered one of the most significant collections of its kind. It houses a valuable collection of weapons and armors worn by the Kings of Spain and other members of the Royal Family.

In front of the Palace, there is a great playground which is very useful if there is a long line to enter the Palace - kids can play while one parent is waiting in line.

The Madrid Card gives you free access and avoid lines at the three museums, the Royal Palace and many other places, which is

very nice when you go with kids.

A bit further out:

If you do not mind leaving the centre of Madrid, there are three places that I highly recommend:

FAUNIA - It is a nature-themed park, where you can find animals in their natural habitat and experience different ecosystems. There are some wonderful exotic and incredible species in this park.

MICROPOLIX - This is an innovative idea where kids and parents can share fun and education. There is a kid-sized city with typical services that you can find in a city: grocery stores, banks, a hospital, police station, communication medias and the most fun of all? they even have their own money! Children will be the main characters of their own adventure in this little city!

COSMOCAIXA - It is a place to bring science closer to kids on a very fun way. Children will enjoy the 3D Planetarium and different exhibitions where they can explore, touch, and feel science.

PLAY

EL RETIRO PARK - (Metro Retiro. Line 2) One of the best places in Madrid to go with your kids.This great park is in center of the city, easy to get to by metro, bus, or even by walking. You will find a park full of playgrounds, walking paths, and wide open green spaces where you can play ball, soccer, or whatever you want. Your kids will love the puppet shows and performances that take place during the weekends near the main lake. Don?t miss them! They are free, but you should normally give a tip. There is also a Children?s Theatre which puts on one play per day. Normally it is a puppet show put on by a professional theatre companies. In the main lake you can rent a paddle boat and get a 45 minute ride for just 4,30?. Children will love to paddle themselves and look at the fish.

Another good idea is to rent a bike and ride through the park and even part of the city if you like. If you like picnics, pack everything you need and sit on the grass with your kids to have lunch or a snack. It is a a lot of fun when the weather is nice.

THE ZOO - (Metro: Casa de Campo, Line 5 and 10. Bus lines: 33) Don?t forget to ask at the entrance for the schedule of the shows (dolphins, seals and birds of pray). The three of them are worth seeing and are included in the entrance fee. At the aquarium and the ?Mysterious Nature? Pavilion, you can see insects and reptiles. The ?Small Farm? is also nice for younger children because they will be able to touch farm animals. And do you know what? We have two little pandas who were born in the zoo on September 2010! They are absolutely adorable!

THE AMUSEMENT PARK - (Metro: Batán, Line 10. Bus Lines: 33, 65) It is full of fun attractions with a special area for the little ones, adapted to their age. Don?t miss the water attractions, for example the rollercoaster? especially on hot days. You can eat here but do not expect too much of the food. It is just something simple and quick (hamburgers, hot dogs, sandwiches, etc).

EAT

BABY DELI This is a must. It is a store full of toys, books , eco-products, workshops, and a cafeteria with selected, organic and natural products, to eat while your kids play and have fun. They have also a very nice open space to enjoy if the weather is nice. This is a lovely place that you shouldn't miss.

PIZZA JARDIN - This is an easy and nice place to eat pizza and pasta. Your kids will feel free to run and play. At the entrance, children are given a balloon, and when they leave, a little present. They also have kids menus.

REAL CAFE BERNABEU - If your kids are passionate about soccer,you definitely should take them to this restaurant. They will love eating while seeing the RealMadrid football playing field, one of the biggest fields in Europe. You can also take the Bernabeu Tour and become a soccer player, visiting the changing rooms, the benches, the field, and many other places in this gorgeous stadium.

LA GABINOTECA - Even if it?s not a place geared towards kids, I?m sure they will enjoy it. There are low chairs, low tables, and old school blackboard walls. There is also a fun and tasty menu where you will find typical Spanish food with twist. Kids will love the Juan Palomo dessert; they give you the ingredients and you can make whatever you want? so fun! It is close to the Science Museum . My tip would be to go for lunch as it get quite bust during the night and they don't take reservations.

MERCADO DE SAN MIGUEL - In the heart of Madrid, this is a nice place to show your kids a typical Spanish market, full of fresh food, colours, people, and life. The perfect place to ***tapear*** (eat tapas)***.*** You can choose food from the many stands and eat it in one of the many bars inside the market. There is cheese, wine, fish, meat, hot dogs, fruit, juices, sweets, ice cream? whatever you want! Your kids will experience a typical Spanish way of eating. Be warned though, there is often a large crowd, but also a great athmosphere.

LIVING IN LONDON, TEA ROOM - Girls will love to have a ?cup of tea? in this wonderful stylish place. Apart from their exquisite cupcakes you can also find plenty of English tea sets, toys, and things for kitchens and living rooms.

CHOCOLATERIAS VALOR and Chocolateria San Ginés - Two perfect places to drink a wonderful cup of hot chocolate with the typical Spanish ?churros?.

HAPPY DAY BAKERY (Espiritu Santo, 11) - This bakery has great cupcakes and is in one of Madrid?s more lively neighborhoods, Malasaña. If you like alternative stores and life, you can take your kids to Malasaña and show them this part of the city, full of people, vintage stores, and other cute little stores. In the Happy Day Bakery there is just one little table, but you can take your cupcakes with you and eat them while you discover this great area.

SHOP

The Salamanca district is the perfect place to go shopping. You will find many nice children clothes stores in Lagasca and Claudio Coello

streets. If your kids get tired of shopping you can take them to a nice Merry-Go-Round and playground placed in Serrano Street, just in the heart of the Golden Mille and at the entrance of El Corte Inglés , big Spanish Department Store.

Imaginairum on Serrano Street - It?s the biggest Imaginarium store in the world! Your kids will love it. You can find toys for every age, a wide range of books, furniture and decor. The coolest thing is the kid?s hair salon. It is so fun finding a place where your kids can get their hair cut while they are playing. There is also a little cafe, that is perfect to get a little snack and a little market with ecological and organic food for kids.

Mi pequeño Lucas - This is a beautiful store with beautiful clothes for your kids. The clothes have contemporary esthetic designs inspired by classic designs with comfortable fabrics. All are made in Spain.

Así- It is a unique and wonderful house of dolls. Asi is a family-owned store that has been making their own dolls since 1942. They have incredible and beautiful toys and dolls with a classical touch that make them very special.

Copperpot (Espiritu Santo, 28. Entrance by San Andrés street) - It is one of my favourite stores. This is a very little dreamy and cute store that you and your kids will adore. It is place to find unique toys with a lot of personality and charm. They also offer their own line of products that are great and made with love. It is located in Malasaña and very close to Happy Day Bakery.

SLEEP

Petit Palace Alfonso XII - The rooms in this 4 star hotel has are designed to give everyone a comfortable rest, even families with four children. The little ones have got a place of their own to sleep, without uncomfortable rollaway beds. They have got family rooms with free baby cots, child-friendly TV channels and breakfast with products for children. They also welcome the childrens with bags of sweets and candies and a hand made special gift.
You can rent bikes and use strollers free of charge, so children will have an easier time of travelling and their parents will not have to carry around so much luggage.
AC Palacio de Retiro**-** This 5 star hotel is located in the centre of Madrid near the Retiro Park and is a stone?s throw from the Paseo Recoletos, the Plaza de la Independencia and the Plaza de Cibeles. It occupies a traditional twentieth century building, which is listed by the Patrimonio Nacional. They also have baby-sitting service in case you need it.
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