

VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Reina Sofía Museum

Madrid · From 12€

https://museoreinasofia.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-line tickets & rates



History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Royal Hospital to Temple of Art

GOOGLE 4.5 ★★★★☆ 72 524 reviews

TIQETS 4.6 ★★★★★ 3 544 reviews

The Reina Sofía Museum rises on the foundations of a hospital past, the former **San Carlos Hospital**, built at the end of the 18th century under the reign of Charles III. Designed by Francesco Sabatini, this imposing building was transformed into a temple of modern art after decades of work, marking a symbolic transition between care and culture. The institution was born from the will to unify the dispersed collections of the Spanish State, creating a space dedicated to artistic expression since 1900.

The institutional history accelerates in the 1980s, when the museum begins exhibiting temporary works as early as 1986. The official declaration as a national museum takes place in May 1988, driven by the first director Tomás Llorens, who strives to rehabilitate the place of 20th-century Spanish artists who had been underrepresented until then. This period lays the foundations for an ambitious and structured national collection.

The inauguration of the permanent collection on **September 10, 1992** constitutes a major milestone, affirming the center's vocation as a global reference for contemporary art. The name “Reina Sofía” honors Sophie of Greece, wife of King Juan Carlos I, thus anchoring the institution within the Spanish monarchy while opening its doors to the whole world. This date marks the cultural affirmation of democratic Spain on the international stage.

The architectural evolution culminates with the extension designed by Jean Nouvel, inaugurated in 2005. This bold project increases the museum's surface area by 60%, integrating modern auditoriums and flexible exhibition spaces. Today, with more than 1.6 million annual visitors, the Reina Sofía is no longer just a repository of works, but a living **nervous center** where art dialogues with contemporary society.

THE EXPERIENCE

From the moment you cross the threshold, the visitor is seized by the tension between the historical architecture of the Sabatini building and the sleek modernity of the Nouvel extension. Natural light streams through the large glass panels, illuminating the canvases and creating a contemplative atmosphere conducive to immersion. One immediately feels the weight of Spanish history, carried by works that bear witness to the political and social upheavals of the last century.

The stroll becomes an intense emotional journey, where each room tells a facet of the Spanish soul. From radical avant-gardes to contemporary installations, the space breathes with constant creative energy. It is a complete sensory experience, where the gaze gets lost in pictorial details to better grasp the dramatic charge of the subjects treated, offering a unique moment of intellectual and aesthetic pause.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

Atocha District · Metro: Estación del Arte (L1, L10) or Atocha (L1, L10, direct exit).

OPENING HOURS

Closed on Tuesdays. Open Monday to Sunday from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM, last admission at 8:30 PM.

FEES

Adult fee: €12. Free for under 18s. {promo}.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 2 to 3 hours to calmly explore the permanent and temporary collections without rushing between rooms. The collection comprises more than 20 000 works.

PHOTOS

Photography is strictly prohibited in the room dedicated to Guernica. Allowed elsewhere without flash or tripod. Respect this rule to preserve the artwork.

AUDIENCE

Perfect for adults passionate about modern art. Teenagers will appreciate the historical context of the Spanish Civil War.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

Metro

: Plaza del Emperador Carlos V — 3 min à pied

Madrid-Atocha Station (7 min) · Embajadores (8 min)

Bus

: Desamparados — 5 min à pied

Madrid-Atocha Station (9 min) · Embajadores (11 min)

Car

Madrid-Atocha Station (4 min) · Embajadores (6 min)

BiciMAD / Bike

Madrid-Atocha Station (4 min) · Embajadores (6 min)

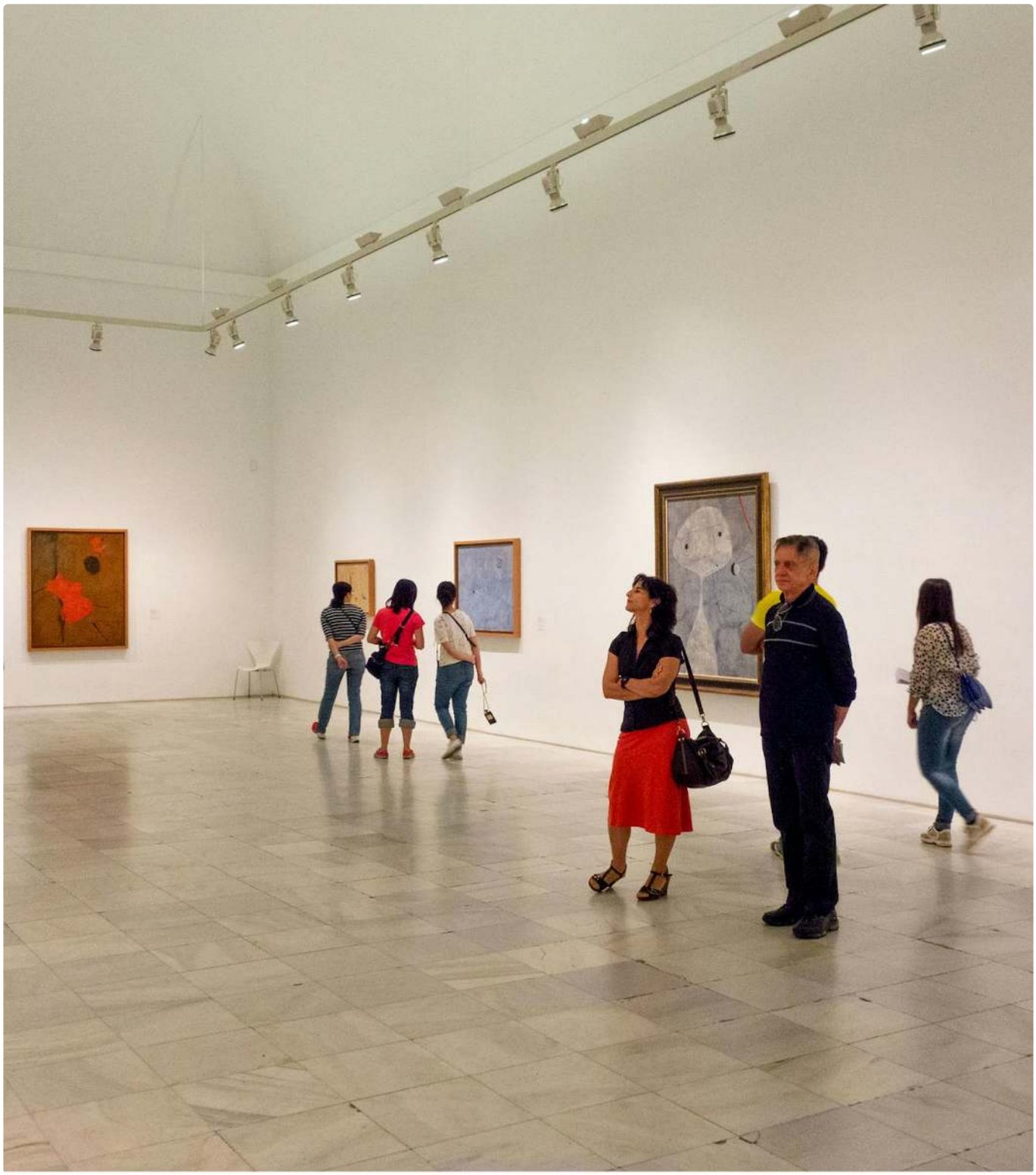
LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Reina Sofía Museum ?



📍 Museo Reina Sofía: 2, Ronda de Atocha, 28012, Madrid — 28012 Madrid

🌐 40°24.475′ N, 3°41.673′ O



ORGANIZATION

Chronological and Architectural Tour

Ground Floor (New Building)

This level primarily houses major temporary exhibitions and modern reception areas. Jean Nouvel's architecture dominates here, with its clean lines and natural light. It also features the bookshop, boutiques, and dining spaces integrated into the museum. It is the ideal starting point for consulting interactive maps and planning your visit.

Intermediate levels (Sabatini Building)

These floors feature the permanent collection of 20th-century Spanish art, organized chronologically. They showcase historical avant-gardes, surrealism, and geometric abstraction. The spacious rooms allow for a fluid reading of the stylistic evolution of national artists. This is where the historical core of the collection resides, with major works by Picasso and Dalí.

Upper Levels and Auditoriums

The highest floors offer different perspectives on the international collections and contemporary installations. They sometimes provide views of the historic inner courtyard. These spaces also house modern auditoriums used for lectures and performances, reinforcing the museum's role as a place for debate and artistic innovation.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Disabled Access**

Full wheelchair access with elevators and ramps throughout all buildings.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Family-friendly, although the artistic content requires a certain level of maturity.

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Must-Sees in the Golden Triangle

01 **PABLO PICASSO** Dedicated room on the first floor

Guernica

This monumental 1937 fresco is undoubtedly the museum's most famous work. It depicts the horrors of the bombing of the Basque town during the Spanish Civil War. Its fragmented Cubist style and monochrome palette convey a universal pain. One must take the time to observe the animal and human figures to grasp the depth of its anti-war message.

> 💡 Picasso painted this work in less than two months, working day and night, which explains the raw intensity and **speed of execution** visible in certain strokes.

02 **SALVADOR DALÍ** Permanent collection

The Great Masturbator

An emblematic piece of Spanish Surrealism, dating from 1929. This bronze sculpture depicts an androgynous figure with dreamlike and unsettling forms. It perfectly embodies Dalí's psychoanalytic exploration, blending sexuality, mythology, and dreams. The work often provokes a mix of fascination and unease in the viewer.

> 💡 Dalí designed this sculpture to challenge the moral conventions of his time, playing with anatomical **double meaning** to unsettle the spectator.

03 **PABLO PICASSO** Permanent Collection

Woman in Blue

Painted in 1924, this work depicts Dora Maar, Picasso's muse and companion. The portrait is treated with apparent simplicity but remarkable expressive power. The vivid colors contrast with the model's introspective expression. It is a perfect example of the artist's late Cubist maturity.

> 💡 Dora Maar, a photographer by training, influenced Picasso's view on female representation, bringing a touch of **photographic modernity** to his painting.

04 **JOAN MIRÓ** Permanent Collection

The Palm House

This joyful and colorful canvas illustrates Miró's poetic approach. The organic shapes and primary colors evoke a childlike and free world. The work contrasts strongly with the gravity of certain other pieces in the museum, reminding us of the diversity of modern art. It is an invitation to lightness and imagination.

> 💡 Miró often used motifs inspired by his childhood in Catalonia, creating a universal visual language based on **graphic simplicity**.

05 **JUAN GRIS** Permanent collection

The musician's table

A masterpiece of synthetic cubism, this 1912 still life decomposes everyday objects into precise geometries. Gris, Picasso's companion in the movement, mastered chromatic balance with mathematical rigor. The work demonstrates how art can analyze reality without destroying it. It is essential for understanding the formal evolution of the Cubist movement.

> 💡 Juan Gris was the only Cuban among the great Cubists, and his more **intellectualized** approach to form marked an entire generation of European artists.

06 **VASSILY KANDINSKY** International collection

Delicate tension

This 1923 watercolor testifies to Kandinsky's period of pure abstraction. The dynamic lines and vibrant colors translate musical and spiritual sensations. The work invites the visitor to perceive art not as an imitation, but as an expression of the invisible. It is a bridge to the international abstract art present in the museum.

> 💡 Kandinsky firmly believed that each color had a **sound equivalent**, comparing the composition of a painting to the creation of a symphony.

07 **ROBERT DELAUNAY** International Collection

Portrait of Tristan Tzara

Created in 1923, this portrait captures the spirit of Dadaism through an ornamental and rhythmic treatment. Delaunay uses geometric shapes to suggest the agitated personality of his subject. The work reflects the intellectual effervescence of the interwar period. It shows the growing influence of French avant-gardes on European art.

> 💡 Tristan Tzara, founder of Dada, was known for his dark humor and provocations, which is reflected in the **unstable energy** of Delaunay's portrait.

08 **GUILLERMO PÉREZ VILLALTA** Contemporary collections

Scene. Characters leaving a rock concert

This 1979 work captures the essence of post-Franco Spanish counterculture. The characters emerging from a rock concert embody the social and artistic liberation of the era. The realistic yet emotionally charged style reflects the transition from a dark age to a new freedom. It is a valuable testimony to Spanish youth in the 1970s.

> 💡 Pérez Villalta captured this scene just after Franco's death, when rock music was becoming a symbol of **political deliberation** in Spain.

TIPS

Optimizing Your Visit to Reina Sofía

TIMING

Aim for weekday mornings, ideally before 10:30 AM, to avoid crowds. Free evening sessions attract large numbers of visitors, resulting in queues that can exceed an hour.

TICKET

Be sure to book a skip-the-line ticket online. Although the entry fee is €12, this guarantees you a specific time slot and avoids the endless wait at physical ticket counters.

TOUR

Start with the 20th-century Spanish collections before moving on to international works. This chronological approach helps contextualize the evolution of modern art in Europe.

PHOTO

Photos are allowed without flash in most rooms, but strictly prohibited in the Guernica room. Memorize this work rather than looking for a photo angle.

BREAK

Take advantage of the dining options integrated into the museum for a quick break. Otherwise, the Atocha neighborhood offers numerous nearby restaurants for a more substantial lunch.

CHILDREN

Although suitable for families, the content requires a certain level of maturity. Use the family guided tours to explain the historical context of the Civil War to teenagers.

AUDIOGUIDE

The multilingual audioguide (French, English, Spanish) is highly recommended to contextualize the works. It allows you to understand complex historical and artistic references without a human guide.

COMFORT

Allow 2 to 3 hours of walking. Wear comfortable shoes, as the museum is vast and the levels are connected by stairs or elevators. A cloakroom is available if needed.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book a skip-the-line ticket for the Reina Sofía?

Yes, highly recommended. Although free slots exist in the evening, they generate considerable queues. The paid ticket offers a guaranteed time slot for a smooth visit. This helps you avoid peak crowds.

Can I enter the museum for free?

Free entry is offered on certain evenings, but attendance is very high. To guarantee stress-free access, we recommend booking a standard ticket in advance. This is the best way to avoid queues.

Are there reduced rates?

Those under 18 enter for free. Discounts are available for students and seniors subject to conditions. Check the exact criteria when purchasing online. Rates vary depending on your profile.

How does the skip-the-line ticket work?

It allows you to bypass the main ticket office queue. You gain direct access to the ticketing area or entrance depending on the formula chosen, optimizing your visit time. Save precious minutes.

How much time should I allow to visit the museum?

Allow a minimum of 2 to 3 hours. The collection includes more than 20 000 works, but a focused route through masters like Picasso and Dalí is achievable in 2 hours. Focus on the key pieces. Temporary exhibitions are also

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The Hidden Hospital Heritage

The main building still retains traces of its original function as a hospital. Built under Charles III, it was used to treat the royal troops. This hospital architecture, with its wide corridors and high ceilings, has been subtly adapted for public reception, creating a unique **spatial continuity**.

The impact of the Nouvel extension

The 2005 extension did not merely enlarge the museum; it changed its perception. By adding 60% more space, Jean Nouvel made it possible to integrate 500-seat auditoriums and flexible spaces. This transformed the Reina Sofía into an **active cultural hub**, going beyond static exhibition.

The Strategic Golden Triangle

Alongside the Prado and the Thyssen-Bornemisza, the Reina Sofía forms the 'Golden Triangle'. These three museums are located along the Paseo del Prado, allowing for a total immersion in Spanish art. Visiting all three in one day is possible but requires good organization to avoid rushing through them.

A living and growing collection

The museum does not merely preserve; it actively acquires. With nearly 25,000 items covered, the collection continues to grow, particularly through donations and targeted purchases. The focus is on Latin American art, strengthening cultural ties between Spain and its former colonial empire.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Located in the heart of the Atocha district, the museum benefits from a rich and accessible urban environment. Just a few steps away, the **Paseo del Prado** offers a pleasant tree-lined promenade, ideal for digesting artistic impressions. Nature lovers can head to the Retiro Gardens, a historic haven of peace perfect for a break. For foodies, numerous high-quality restaurants are located nearby, allowing visitors to combine art with Madrid's gastronomy. Finally, Atocha station, directly connected to the museum, facilitates access from all over Spain, while the bohemian neighborhood of Malasaña offers an alternative atmosphere to extend the evening.



Leaving the Reina Sofía means carrying with you an indelible imprint of Spanish art. The intensity of the works, particularly when facing masterpieces like Guernica, leaves a lasting **emotional shock** that resonates long after you leave. This visit is not merely a visual discovery; it is an immersion into Europe's recent history, making this cultural appointment essential for any art enthusiast or anyone curious about the soul of Madrid.