

Five stunning hikes near Madrid

What Madrid lacks in beaches, it more than makes up for in mountain view.— Shutterstock

By Natalia Diaz

“¡Vaya, vaya! ¡Aquí no hay playa!” - which translates to “here, there is no beach!” - is a familiar refrain in Madrid, a good-humored lament to the fact that the Spanish capital lacks its own city beach. But what Madrid lacks in coastline, it certainly makes up for in spellbinding natural views, thanks to its proximity to the Sierra de Guadarrama mountain range and the Manzanares River that flows out into the lowlands. A dramatic, biodiverse terrain of rough granite rock formations, waterfalls, forests, glacial lakes and lagoons forms a spectacular backdrop to Madrid’s countless hiking trails, which link a string of historic hill towns. A mere hour’s drive from Madrid, the Sierra de Guadarrama offers a great getaway for hikers of all levels who want to escape the city crush, even for just a day. So, after you’ve explored the capital’s top sights, and caught your breath in its green city parks, head to the hills. Here’s a roundup of the best hiking trails near Madrid.

Siete Picos (Seven Peaks)

Best easy hike
10km (6.2 miles), 3-4 hours, easy

Taking its name from the seven granite peaks that line up along its soaring rocky massif, this simple, relaxed hiking trail is one of Madrid’s most popular routes because of its accessibility, low difficulty level and panoramic views. In the Middle Ages, this famous landmark was known as the “Sierra del Dragon” because its distinguishing summits resemble the serrated backside of a dozing dragon. The family-friendly Siete Picos hike starts from the Puerto de Navacerrada ski station and follows the El Telegrafo ski lift up to the ridge, before tracing the lofty spine of the Siete Picos and looping back to Puerto de Navacerrada along the Schmidt Trail. You get a lot of views for your buck along the rocky ridge - bring your camera!

