Madrid is not only the capital of Spain, it’s also one of Europe’s great cultural centers and a lively and cosmopolitan metropolis with many pubs, cafes, and night clubs open late into the night.

With a population of over 3 million, Madrid is the third largest city in the European Union after Paris and London. Located at a high altitude, Madrid has a climate marked by warm dry summers and cool winters.

Starting out as a small Muslim settlement established by the Moorish leader, Muhammad I of Cordoba, in the mid-9th century, Madrid became the capital of Spain in 1562 under Felipe II. It emerged as a modern city under Charles III (1716-1788). In 1975, after the death of Francisco Franco, political transition to a constitutional monarch began and King Juan Carlos was installed as king with a residence in Madrid. With fast-paced economic development in the 1980s and 90s, Madrid consolidated its position as an important European economic, cultural, industrial, educational, and technological center.

It contains many major monuments such as the medieval center dating back to the Hapsburg Empire and the Museo del Prado, an internationally ranked art gallery. Significant landmarks include the Puerta del Sol, in the heart of Madrid, and the central square or Plaza Mayor.

Madrileño cuisine features hot pot stews such as the well-known cocido madrileño, a flavorful concoction of chick peas, vegetables, and pork. There are many lamb and veal recipes, but Madrid is a real treat for fish lovers. Its shops and restaurants feature an extensive selection of quality fish. You may also enjoy a variety of young wines, including whites, rosés, and reds, from the Vinos de Madrid wine region outside the city.

Madrid offers expansive cultural and artistic activity and exciting night life.