

Get to know them.
Take care of them.

Gardens of Buen Retiro



el Retiro



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Art and Culture

All the renovations in El Retiro Park from the XVIII century onwards have left visible traces of the different periods and fashion trends in which they were carried out. The result is a diverse and harmonious landscape.

The majestic character of El Retiro Park is enhanced by the numerous statues of kings, statesmen, scholars and scientists as well as the allegoric and mythological sculptures that can be spotted in every corner. Specifically commissioned for these Gardens by the most prominent Spanish sculptors of the XX century -Benlliure, Bellver, Estany, Macho and Coullaut Valera, among others- these sculptures make the Park a genuine open air museum. Outstanding pieces are the Fuente del

El Ángel Caído (The Fallen Angel) considered as the only monument in the world dedicated to the Devil, the magnificent sculptural group of Monument to Alfonso XII and the equestrian statue of General Martínez Campos. The Park's perimeter fence and its access gates, dating back to 1870, are also of significant monumental value.



Santiago Ramón y Cajal

The Park's location in the city centre and its traditional leisure activities -rowing boats, puppet theatre, open air concerts, kiosks, artists- make it an inviting meeting place for both people from

Madrid and visitors. At weekends or on bank holidays, open air events and spontaneous activities blend with nature and art in the gardens to make the Park a very attractive spot for strolling around and enjoying the entertainment.



*Portrait artist by
The Great Lake*



Statue of General Martínez Campos

History

The Gardens of El Buen Retiro were created in the XVII century by order of Felipe IV as a leisure estate for the kings and queens of the House of Austria. During the reigns of the House of Bourbon, in the XVIII and XIX centuries, the Royal Place and its surroundings were enriched with additional structures. Projects undertaken during the reign of Fernando VII include the re-forestation of the Park, and the construction of the Casa de Fieras (the Royal Zoo), the Royal Jetty and the Jardín de los Caprichos, the king's private garden, from which remain the Artificial Mountain and the Casita del Pescador (Fisherman's Cottage). Successive demolitions carried out on the grounds and the serious damages suffered by the Park during the Independence War, when it was used by the French soldiers as a fortress and quarters, together with pressure from the city's urban expansion during the XIX century shaped its current appearance. In 1868 the Park became property of the City of Madrid and was opened to the citizens for their enjoyment.



*Detail of a Street Lamp,
Puerta de Madrid (Madrid Gate)*

At the end of the XIX century and beginning of the XX century, El Retiro was used as a venue for various International

Exhibitions. The Palacio de Cristal and the Palacio de Velázquez are two of the emblematic buildings which remain from that time. The Cecilio Rodríguez Gardens were also incorporated into the Park, and new uses



Detail from Teixeira's City Map, 1656



Palacio de Velázquez (Velázquez Palace)

were given to old buildings. Modern architecture spread across the Park over the last decades of the XX century. The Chopera Sports Center and the new kiosks are examples of this new style of architecture. Currently, plans are in course to completely rehabilitate the Park's landscape, monuments and natural heritage.

Nature and Sustainability

El Retiro Park constitutes one of the lungs that make up the rich natural heritage of Madrid. It is the main green area in the city centre, as much because of its 118 hectares as for its rich vegetation. There is a well marked botanical path, starting at the entrance to the Park by la Plaza de la Independencia (Independence Square). A two-hour stroll along this path allows visitors to identify 54 species of trees and plants.



Fuente de la Alcachofa (Artichoke Fountain)

Due to their rareness, some tree specimens are worth a special mention. The famous Bald Cypress or Ahuehuete (*Taxodium mucrunatum*), located in the Parterre Gardens is possibly the oldest tree in the Park and quite possibly the oldest in Madrid. Records indicate that the Bald Cypress was planted in 1633. Equally impressive is the magnificent Aleppo Pine (*Pinus halepensis* Miller) located near La Rosaleda (The Rose Garden).



Bald cypress at El Parterre



Art and Nature meet in El Retiro Park

Water has always been a key element in El Retiro, including from the Park's origins. The Estanque Grande (the Great Lake) streams, ponds and fountains were part of the garden's basic structure. Nowadays, water is the natural habitat of numerous species of aquatic birds. In addition, in some of the quieter wooded areas of the park, visitors can observe blackbirds, greenfinches, blue tits, great titmouses and other insect-eating birds.

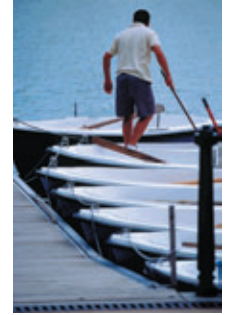


Swamp Cypress in the lake by the Palacio de Cristal

El Retiro Park was originally located outside the city walls. However, with the growth of Madrid, the Park now finds itself in the urban heart of the city. Overuse and very aggressive environmental pressures now threaten this fragile and historical park.

The Madrid City Council is currently applying the concept of sustainable management to the Park. In the past, occasional steps were taken to safeguard the Park's natural habitat and resources, including banning traffic and closing the grounds at night.

Actually, the Park Management Plan attempts to regulate reasonable and environmentally sound use of the Gardens of El Buen Retiro.



Jetty by The Great Lake

It is vital that the social, cultural and recreational activities that make El Retiro such a lively place be compatible with conservation efforts and future improvements. Citizens need to be made aware of the significant impact that inappropriate uses can have on the Park's health. To that end, it is essential that visitors to the Park be acquainted with its historical and natural values.

The Madrid City Council runs environmental education programmes, including guided tours, for students and the general public. For more information, please visit us at www.munimadrid.es. These programmes are complemented by the creation of information desks and the addition of new educational activities.



The Great Lake and Monument to Alfonso XII, focal point of activity and bustle



Alcald Gate (circa 1839)

PLAZA DE LA INDEPENDENCIA

THE GREAT LAKE AND MONUMENT TO ALFONSO XII
The Great Lake has been part of the Gardens since the XVII century. The monumental memorial commemorating Alfonso XII is a fine example of early XX century Spanish sculpture.

PARTERRE GARDENS
The Parterre is the only French style garden in El Retiro Park. Commissioned by Felipe IV, it has an open design, free of trees. The design -box hedges interspersed with flowerbeds- invites the passer-by to contemplate the Parterre from above.

Information desk Bosque del Recuerdo

- 1 PUPPET THEATRE
- 2 GALAPAGOS FOUNTAIN
- 3 BAND STAND
- 4 CASA DE VACAS (EXHIBITIONS)
- 5 HERMANOS ÁLVAREZ QUINTERO
- 6 CASITA DEL PESCADOR
- 7 ARTIFICIAL MOUNTAIN
- 8 RUINS OF S. ISIDORO'S HERMITAGE
- 9 JETTY
- 10 MONUMENT TO ALFONSO XII
- 11 GENERAL MARTÍNEZ CAMPOS
- 12 FLORIDA PARK
- 13 STATUES WALK
- 14 CAMPANILLAS FOUNTAIN
- 15 BALD CYPRESS
- 16 JACINTE BENAVENTE
- 17 ALCACHOFA FOUNTAIN
- 18 EGYPTIAN FOUNTAIN
- 19 SANTIAGO RAMÓN Y CAJAL
- 20 PALACIO DE VELÁZQUEZ
- 21 CASA DE FIERAS (FORMER ZOO)
- 22 PALACIO DE CRISTAL
- 23 SWAMP CYPRESS
- 24 RAMÓN DE CAMPOAMOR
- 25 MEMORIAL FOREST
- 26 LA CHOPERA SPORTS CENTER
- 27 PÍO BAROJA
- 28 FALLEN ANGEL FOUNTAIN
- 29 BENTO PÉREZ GALDÓS
- 30 CECILIO RODRÍGUEZ PAVILLION
- 31 INSTITUTE OF METEOROLOGY
- 32 DANTE ALIGIERI
- 33 HOHOUSES (MUN. TREE NURSERIES)
- 34 NATURE WORKSHOP

- HANDICAPPED ACCESIBLE
- SYMBOLIC BUILDINGS
- SCULPTURES
- MONUMENTAL FOUNTAINS
- SINGULAR TREES
- REST AREAS
- INFORMATION DESKS
- BOTANICAL PATH



Information desk Casita del Pescador

CAMPO GRANDE
The Campo Grande is a landscape garden. It was designed as the setting for the International Exhibitions that were held in the Park from the end of the XIX century onwards. Nowadays, some of its representative pavilions, such as Palacio de Velázquez (1883) and Palacio de Cristal (1887) serve as venues for exhibitions organized by the Ministry of Culture.

CECILIO RODRÍGUEZ
A distinct garden because of its trimmed cypresses, box hedges and pergolas, this garden was designed by Chief Gardener Cecilio Rodríguez as an extension to the old Casa de Fieras (Former City Zoo).

Information desk La Rosaleda

PLANTELES AND THE THREE SQUARES GARDEN
The Planteles and Three Squares Garden is a traditional Madrid garden. Shady and cool, inviting the visitor to take a pleasant stroll. The design consists of plots limited by trees and hedges on the perimeter, and bushes and shrubbery on the inside.

THE ROSE GARDEN
The Rose Garden was designed by Chief Gardener Cecilio Rodríguez in 1915.



The Lake in El Retiro, (circa 1885)



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DE MEDIO AMBIENTE**



ACCESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Gardens of El Buen Retiro have 18 gates opening to the five streets that surround its current boundaries:

Calle de Alfonso XII

Calle de Alcalá

Calle de O'Donnell

Avenida de Menéndez Pelayo

Calle del Poeta Esteban de Villegas

BUS LINES

1, 2, 9, 14, 15, 19, 20, 26, 28,
32, 51, 52, 61, 63, 74, 146,
152, 202, Circular

UNDERGROUND STATIONS

Retiro y Príncipe de Vergara (Line 2)

Ibiza (Line 9)

Atocha (Line 1)

Atocha-Renfe (Line 1) 

OPENING TIMES

Summer (April - Sep.) 6 am to 12 pm

Winter (Oct. - March) 6 am to 11 pm

For more information:

www.munimadrid.es • telephone 010

*"Those who yearn
to have a garden and
have none, please themselves
with the finest of all".*

Gómez de la Serna