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FREE GUIDE · MADRID

Prado Museum

Velázquez, Bosch, Goya, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt... — the 17 must-see works of the world's greatest picture gallery, explained one by one



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Your visit at a glance

The Prado is no ordinary museum: it's the private collection of the kings of Spain turned into a public picture gallery, with a concentration of masterpieces that few places on the planet can match. It has more than 1,700 works on display, so trying to see it all in one visit is the perfect recipe for walking out exhausted without having enjoyed a thing. The trick: go straight for the essentials. This tour brings together the museum's seventeen must-see works —the ones you really can't miss—, with the context to understand why they're brilliant and 1, 2 and 3-hour routes so you can choose according to the time you have.

At a glance

PRICE

€15 general · €7.50 reduced

FREE ENTRY

Mon–Sat 6–8pm · Sun/holidays 5–7pm

HOURS

Mon–Sat 10am–8pm · Sun/holidays 10am–7pm

TIME

1-3 h (about 3 h for all 17)

WORKS HERE

The 17 must-sees

METRO

Estación del Arte (L1)



Part of Tickets Visit

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With this free guide you already do a great visit: the essentials, with a route. If you want to make the most of it, at the end I'll show you the complete version.

Before you go in: book your skip-the-line ticket

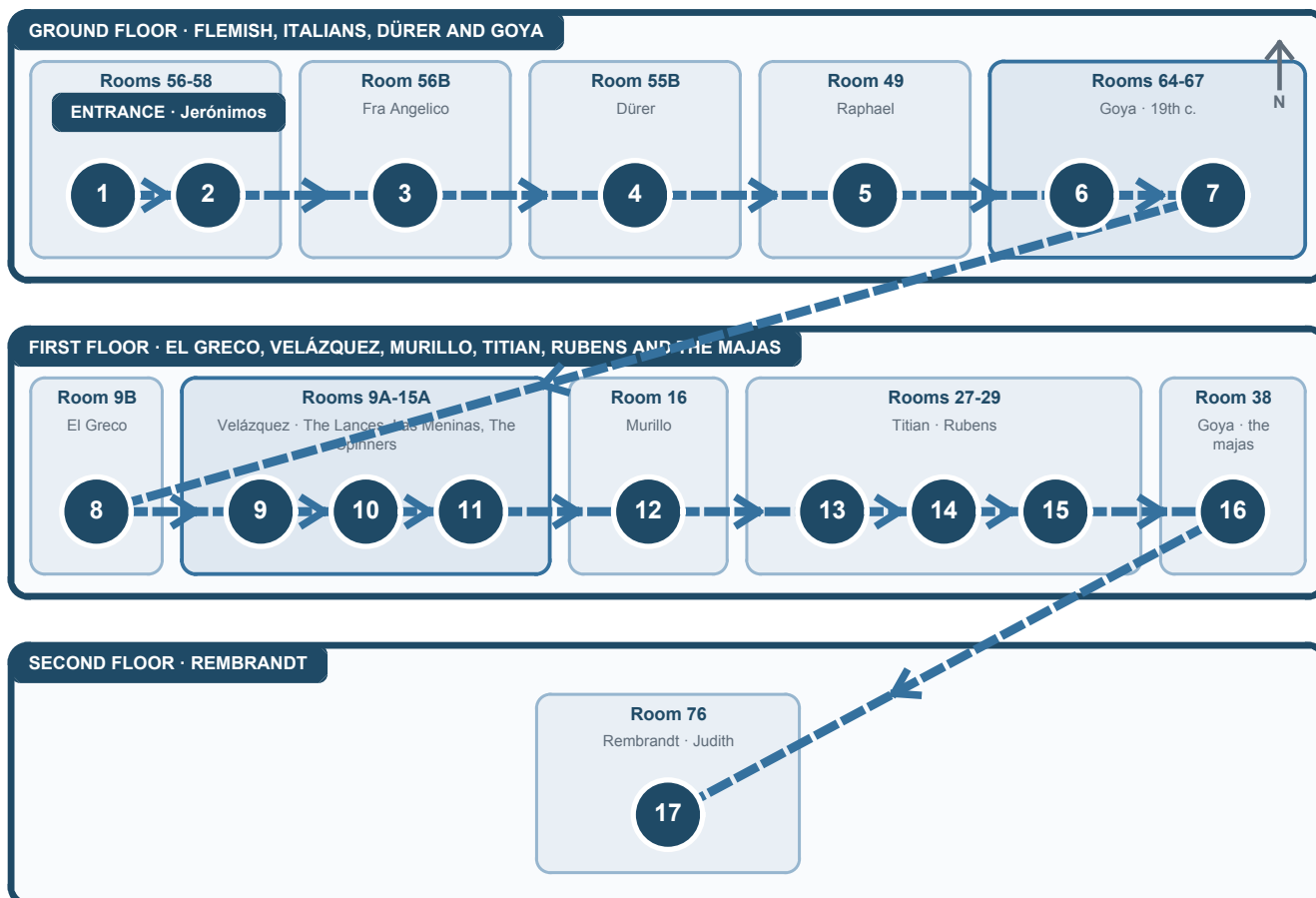
On Civitatis, with free cancellation. Skip the ticket-office queue.

» **Buy your ticket**

The map and the route

Come in through the Jerónimos entrance and organise your visit floor by floor to avoid going up and down more than you need to. On the GROUND FLOOR you'll find the Flemish primitives (Van der Weyden, Bosch), the Italian masters (Fra Angelico, Raphael), Dürer's self-portrait and the 19th-century Goyas (The Third of May and the Black Paintings). Then head up to the FIRST FLOOR, the heart of the museum: Velázquez (Las Meninas, The Lances and The Spinners), El Greco, Murillo's Immaculate Conception, Titian's Charles V and the Rubens works in the central gallery, and Goya's majas. And on the SECOND FLOOR the Prado's only Rembrandt is waiting for you. Follow the numbers on the stops: they run in the most comfortable order for making your way around the museum.

PRADO MUSEUM · VILLANUEVA BUILDING (SCHEMATIC, NOT TO SCALE)



Schematic layout by room number; not the official plan and not to scale. Important: the location of the works may change. The Prado rearranges its rooms fairly often (rehangs, loans and restorations), so the room where you find each painting may not match the one shown here. Check the floor on the museum's own panels or ask a staff member on the day of your visit.

Visiting order: GROUND FLOOR: 1 The Descent from the Cross › 2 The Garden of Earthly Delights › 3 The Annunciation › 4 Dürer's Self-Portrait › 5 The Cardinal › 6 The Third of May › 7 The Black Paintings — UP TO THE FIRST FLOOR — 8 The Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest › 9 The Lances › 10 Las Meninas › 11 The Spinners › 12 The Immaculate Conception (Murillo) › 13 Charles V (Titian) › 14 The Adoration of the Magi › 15 The Three Graces › 16 The Majas — SECOND FLOOR — 17 Judith (Rembrandt)

Schematic layout by area; the number shows the visiting order. Not to scale: follow the museum's own floor plans and signs on the day.

THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

1

The Descent from the Cross — Rogier van der Weyden

Room 58 (ground floor) · 10-15 min

Starts strong: a Flemish panel from around 1435. Van der Weyden shuts ten near-life-size figures into a gilded box so that grief has nowhere to escape. The Virgin faints and her body mirrors the curve of Christ's. Philip II was obsessed with it.



*The Descent from the Cross, Rogier van der Weyden (c. 1435),
Prado Museum*

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DON'T MISS THIS

The fainting Virgin and the dead Christ form the same broken curve, one traced onto the other. And in the top corners, two tiny crossbows: a nod to the guild that paid for the work.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

In the premium guide: the panel that bewitched Philip II to the point of ordering a copy so he'd never have to part with it.

THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

2

The Garden of Earthly Delights — Bosch

Room 56A (ground floor) · 15 min

This is where the traffic jam forms, and rightly so. Bosch's triptych (c. 1490-1500): from paradise to hell by way of a garden of pleasures full of impossible creatures. Philip II bought it. A warning against sin turned pop icon and the first surrealist in history.



The Garden of Earthly Delights, Bosch (c. 1490-1500), Prado Museum

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GO TO HELL

The right-hand panel, the dark one: the melancholy-faced 'tree-man', the fellow crucified on a harp and the two giant ears skewered by a knife. Terror with a sense of humour.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

In the premium guide: what the triptych hides when it's closed, why it has survived so intact — and the 20th-century genius who confessed to living obsessed with it.

THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

6

The Third of May 1808 — Goya

Room 64 (ground floor) · 10-15 min

With this painting, the pretty version of war was over. Goya (1814) paints the cold-blooded execution of Madrid citizens by Napoleon's troops. A lantern lights up the man in the white shirt with his arms in a cross, a universal martyr, facing a wall of faceless soldiers. Manet and Picasso both drink from this.



The Third of May 1808 in Madrid, Francisco de Goya (1814), Prado Museum

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LOOK AT IT LIKE THIS

The man in white, arms like a crucified figure, and a mark on his right hand that recalls the stigmata. And something that never fails: the soldiers have no faces. On purpose.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

In the premium guide: why this painting invented protest painting — and the 'brother' hanging beside it, without which you can't fully understand it.

THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

7

The Black Paintings (Saturn) — Goya

Room 67 (ground floor) · 15 min

A warning: this room makes you uncomfortable, and that's the point. Goya lined the walls of his house with these fourteen scenes —with no intention of showing them—. Later they were transferred onto canvas. The most famous, 'Saturn', shows the god eating his son with pure madness. Art far ahead of its time.



Saturn Devouring His Son,
Francisco de Goya (c.
1819-1823), Prado
Museum

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WORK THE ROOM

Saturn's maddened face and the brutality of the gesture. And don't leave yet: 'The Dog', almost abstract, and 'Fight with Cudgels' will leave you just as shaken.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

In the premium guide: the story of the Quinta del Sordo — and a secret about the titles of these paintings that changes the way you look at them.

Practical tips

Best times

Come first thing (10:00) or in the last two hours of the afternoon: there are far fewer people than in mid-morning. If your priority is Las Meninas, head straight to room 12 the moment you're in, before it fills up.

Buy your ticket in advance

The Prado is one of the most visited museums in Europe and the ticket queue can eat up part of your morning, especially at weekends and on public holidays. Buying your ticket online and booking your time slot lets you enter through the fast-track access, with almost no wait. Arrive a few minutes before your time.

Getting in free

The Prado has a free window for its permanent collection: Monday to Saturday from 18:00 to 20:00 and Sundays and public holidays from 17:00 to 19:00. There's usually a queue, so get there 30-45 min early. Always check on the official website, and bear in mind that in 2 hours you'll only have time for the essentials.

With children

Turn Bosch's 'Garden of Earthly Delights' into a game of spotting strange creatures, and the mirror in 'Las Meninas' into a riddle ('who is Velázquez painting?'). With little ones, one intense hour beats a marathon. There's a cloakroom for leaving backpacks.

Accessibility and services

The museum is wheelchair accessible (with free loan) and there's free entry for people with disabilities and one companion. By the Jerónimos entrance you'll find a café, a bookshop-store and a cloakroom: a good spot for a break halfway round.

Combine it

You're right in the middle of the Art Walk: a few minutes on foot away are the Reina Sofía (with Picasso's 'Guernica') and the Thyssen-Bornemisza. There's a combined ticket for all three museums if you want to do the triangle in one or two days.

Practical info

Address: Calle de Ruiz de Alarcón 23 / Paseo del Prado s/n, 28014 Madrid (main entrance via the Jerónimos door). Metro: Estación del Arte (L1) and Banco de España (L2); the commuter trains and Atocha station are very close. Guide price: general admission €15, reduced €7.50, free for under-18s and students up to 25. Free window: Mon–Sat 18:00-20:00 and Sun/holidays 17:00-19:00 (permanent collection only). Hours: Mon–Sat 10:00-20:00, Sun and holidays 10:00-19:00; closed 1 January, 1 May and 25 December. Always check them on the official website before you go, as hours, prices and the location of the works can change.

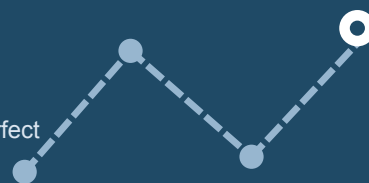
Official website: www.museodelprado.es

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» **Buy your ticket**

THE COMPLETE VERSION

Take the complete visit

With this free guide you already cover the essentials. The PREMIUM is your complete visit to Prado Museum: every work with its story, a 3-step looking guide for every painting, the cheat-sheet for your phone and the tips to skip the queues. For less than the price of a coffee.

In the free guide you miss out on:

- 3 The Annunciation — Fra Angelico**
Room 56B (ground floor) · 8-10 min
- 4 Self-Portrait — Dürer**
Room 55B (ground floor) · 8 min
- 5 The Cardinal — Raphael**
Room 49 (ground floor) · 8 min
- 8 The Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest — El Greco**
Room 9B (first floor) · 8-10 min

...and 9 more works.

PREMIUM Guide · Prado Museum

€4.99

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- ✓ All 17 works (the free guide has only 4), each with its story.
- ✓ «What it represents» and «How to look at it» in 3 steps: a looking guide for every painting.
- ✓ The «Route on one page» cheat-sheet for your phone, plus 1-, 2- and 3-hour routes.
- ✓ The timeline, the keys, the artist bios and a glossary to understand it all.
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If the guide doesn't help on your visit, write to us and we'll refund the €4.99. No questions asked.

For comparison: a guided tour costs €30-60 per person. This guide walks you through with the same detail, everyone travelling with you can use it, and it's yours forever.

Still no ticket? Book skip-the-line

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» **Check availability and prices**

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