



Madrid, 23 April 2025

More than 550 industry professionals flocked to Hotel Meliá Castilla for an event organised by the city's Tourism Department.

Almeida unveiled the capital's Tourist Mobility and Decentralisation Strategy at the 3rd Madrid City Tourism Forum

- Launch of the new Tourism Decentralisation Plan for 22 tourist areas
- The Tourist Mobility Strategy has been designed to improve the city's visitor services and transport system
- Madrid is the world's second most popular destination, with 23.3 million overnight stays and international spending in excess of 16.117 billion euro

The Mayor of Madrid, José Luis Martínez-Almeida, inaugurated the third edition of the Madrid City Tourism Forum, organised by the city's Tourism Department. In keeping with this year's theme, "Keys to Managing a Global Urban Destination", the mayor presented the capital's new plans for tourist mobility and decentralisation to the more than 550 tourism industry professionals attending this forum, held today at Hotel Meliá Castilla.

As Almeida pointed out, today the Spanish capital is exceptionally well-positioned as an international tourism destination: "In a global context of uncertainty, Madrid has emerged as a haven of stability in the tourism sector", an achievement made possible by the combined efforts of the public and private sectors, as well as the people of Madrid.

During his speech, the mayor highlighted the stellar results of 2024, when the city registered 23.3 million overnight stays and international visitors spent over 16.117 billion euro in Madrid, validating the city council's high-value, sustainable tourism model. "These figures mean we can pick and choose the kind of tourists we want: the kind that fall in love with Madrid, respect our traditions and create wealth and well-being for everyone," Almeida remarked, adding that municipal authorities have set their sights on long-term, extended-stay tourism.

The mayor took this opportunity to announce the three main tools that Madrid City Council is using to pursue that goal: the RESIDE Plan to crack down on illegal short-term rentals and the new Tourist Mobility Strategy, both presented by Borja Carabante, Councillor for Urban Planning, Environment and Mobility Division, and

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the Tourism Decentralisation Plan led by Tourism Councillor Almudena Maíllo, which will make sure that every district in Madrid reaps the benefits of tourism. “Right now, Madrid is the second most popular destination in the world and the first in business tourism. It’s our duty to keep raising the bar for quality, while maintaining the healthy balance that defines us,” Almeida underscored. The best way to stay in this “virtuous circle”, according to the mayor, is by harnessing “the vast talent at our fingertips, the creativity in the tourism industry, and by creating synergies” so that Madrid remains the powerhouse it is today.

Madrid’s bet on high-value tourism paid off in 2024

At the forum, Almudena Maíllo presented a comprehensive overview of Madrid’s tourism sector last year as published in the *Madrid Tourism Report 2024*, a yearbook that provides a highly accurate assessment of how the city’s tourism model has performed. “The best way to consider the future is to put the present under a microscope,” Maíllo remarked, reminding her audience that 2024 was a record year for tourism in Madrid, with 11.2 million visitors and 23 million overnight stays, numbers that reflect a solid commitment to quality growth.

The city councillor singled out one fact that illustrates this forward leap in value: one million additional overnight stays translated into 21% more international spending. Maíllo claimed, “We’ve achieved the goals set in our first strategic plan of reducing seasonality and making our model more sustainable,” adding that, “nine out of the twelve months of the year, Madrid welcomes over 900,000 visitors per month.”

The success of this strategy rests on four essential pillars: international tourism, high-yield tourism, MICE tourism and experiential tourism. Over the last six years, Madrid has managed to consolidate its reputation as a city that attracts high-yield visitors. By way of example, the number of Virtuoso consortium travellers who choose Madrid has risen 88% since 2019, with each person spending an average of 12,867 euro. For six years in a row, the World Travel Awards has named Madrid as the World’s Leading Meetings & Conference Destination. This business tourism has increased the average stay of international visitors to 4.5 nights, and they now spend 1,686 euro on average, more than double the figure for domestic tourists.

Madrid has also leveraged its competitive edge as the world capital of experiences. Its busy calendar of cultural and sporting events, like the Mutua Madrid Open, the Laureus Awards, and upcoming NFL and Formula 1 fixtures, have had a direct impact on the local economy, generating 1.539 billion euro in revenue. And let’s not forget the city’s staggering array of culinary offerings.

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The success of this high-value tourism model has made Madrid more attractive to investors, resulting in a 30% increase in five-star hotel infrastructure over the past six years and situating the city as Europe's top hotel investment destination. This means more jobs and better quality of life for city residents: the hotel industry employs more than 13,000 families, and each bed in a five-star hotel creates up to 35 jobs.

Air transport has proved to be a vital cornerstone of Madrid's tourism model. The Spanish capital aspires to be southern Europe's biggest hub, a bridge between Latin America and Asia. With 14 routes to North America, 37 weekly connections to China, the new Tokyo and Doha routes, and close public-private sector cooperation via *Madrid Turismo by IFEMA*, "Madrid has successfully diversified its inbound tourism markets," Maíllo declared.

Madrid presents its Tourism Decentralisation Plan

Additionally, Maíllo outlined the new Tourism Decentralisation Plan, an ambitious road map that aims to diversify and expand visitor experiences outside Madrid's traditional sightseeing areas, so that tourism flows are more evenly distributed across the capital. "Madrid has room to grow without putting a strain on its model," she explained, "because the city experiences less overtourism than other urban destinations around the world, and that gives us a strategic advantage."

According to the city's chief tourism official, this plan is the product of "rigorous analysis and careful listening, aided by artificial intelligence tools like MadridChatGPT, which is already present in 125 countries". In this way, planners were able to identify the unique features of each area, understand what truly drives visitors, and build a tourism narrative, one neighbourhood at a time, giving every block and every street corner a chance to be seen and heard.

The strategy has three major objectives: redistribute the benefits of tourism to reach more districts, consolidate Madrid as a year-round destination, and improve relations between locals and visitors. "In Madrid," Maíllo said, "every neighbourhood is a destination waiting to be discovered and experienced, which is why we want to propose a new way of looking at the city."

Roll-out of the plan calls for giving each tourist area a distinctive visual identity, with digital campaigns, outdoor advertising, branded content, merchandise, promotional videos, and events. The slogan of the launch campaign, slated to begin next week, is "More Streets to Discover", a friendly invitation to visitors and

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residents alike to explore streets brimming with history, flavour and community life in Madrid's neighbourhoods. The first areas to be featured in this campaign are Carabanchel, El Capricho and Casa de Campo Park. The first stage of the plan will cover a total of 22 tourist areas, including Salamanca, Lavapiés, Usera, Madrid Río Park, Las Quintas, Chueca, Chamberí and Gran Vía. They will later be joined by nine additional zones like Paseo del Arte (Art Walk), Villaverde, Ventas, Moratalaz, San Blas, Pacífico, Prosperidad, Ciudad Universitaria and Delicias.

Madrid's Tourist Mobility Strategy

At the forum, Borja Carabante, City Councillor for Urban Planning, Environment and Mobility, presented the Tourist Mobility Strategy that will improve the city's visitor services and transport system. This ambitious set of measures, developed within the framework of the Madrid 360 Strategy, aspires to offer visitors the greatest possible variety of top-notch alternatives, ensure that its actions have a positive effect on the city's economy, and do so while respecting the environment and the transport systems that Madrid's own residents use on a daily basis.

In terms of mobility, tourists in the city of Madrid make half a million trips each day on average, and even more in the autumn and winter months. Barajas, Chamartín, Centro, Retiro and Arganzuela are the districts that register the highest volume of trips. The majority of visitors (78%) come to Madrid by air, as opposed to 18% by train and 4% by road. The preferred methods of reaching their accommodation in the city are Metro and taxi (32% each), followed by ride-hailing vehicle (15%), private vehicle (6%), city bus (4%), shuttle bus (4%), Cercanías (suburban rail, 1%), and intercity bus (1%). Another 5% walk to where they plan to stay. Once they're settled, 40% get about on foot, 29% take the Metro, and 8% use the city buses operated by the municipal company EMT Madrid. The rest of the time, they travel by taxi (7%), ride-hailing vehicle (4%), private vehicle (4%), sightseeing bus (2%), Cercanías (2%) and shuttle bus (2%).

One of the biggest novelties is a new regulation affecting sightseeing buses, which will limit routes that create traffic problems on the city's main thoroughfares and introduce strict environmental requirements. Current sightseeing routes will be replaced by three new ones—"Historic Madrid", "Modern Madrid - Bernabéu Stadium" and "Modern Madrid - Ventas"—and only vehicles with an ECO or ZERO-emission environmental label will be allowed to operate on them. Companies will also be required to report the number of passengers transported, hours in service and routes covered.

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In addition, the strategy calls for the creation of new pedestrian tourism routes as part of the “Anda Madrid” (“Walk Madrid”) initiative, with six itineraries connected to the city’s main tourism hubs and green areas that can be accessed via QR codes, the city website and tourist information offices. Existing routes like the Landscape of Light, La Castellana and Chinatown-Usera will also be revised and improved.

Other significant measures include optimising taxi and ride-hailing services in high-demand tourist areas; remodelling sightseeing and shuttle bus stops; cracking down on improperly parked autorickshaws; introducing a new regulation for hotel stops; asking ADIF (the Spanish railway infrastructure manager) to devise a plan for new taxi ranks at Atocha and Chamartín stations; and improving communication and signage to make it easier for tourists to get about Madrid sustainably. Furthermore, the strategy includes a new plan for informing the public of how major events may affect mobility in the city, with a view to minimising their negative impact and helping visitors to plan their trips more effectively.

The challenges of urban destinations, tourism trends and sustainability

At the 3rd Madrid City Tourism Forum, industry leaders and major players came together to consider the main challenges that the capital is facing as it seeks to secure its position as a top global urban destination. In two round-table sessions, the forum focused on key aspects such as air transport, hotel offerings, brand identity, and the role of culture in shaping the city’s international reputation.

The first round table, titled “Madrid and the Challenges of Tourism,” featured Marco Sansavini, CEO of IBERIA, and Borja Escalada, CEO of Sancus Capital and owner of Hotel Villa Magna. Moderated by Yovanna Blanco, editor-in-chief of Business Insider Spain, the two speakers discussed how to attract the kind of high-value tourism that makes Madrid more competitive with improved air transport, sustainability and excellent experiences.

Afterwards, the round table on “Cultural Brands, Identity and Destinations” explored how cultural relevance affects the strategic positioning of urban destinations. Daniel Martínez, Vice President of IFEMA, Juan Pedro Moreno, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Digital Transformation of the Community of Madrid, and Pablo Pastor, General Manager South of Europe at LOEWE, participated in a three-way conversation moderated by Juan Cierco, Chairman of the CEOE Tourism Council. These experts debated the need to build a distinctive identity that combines local values, creativity and culture in order to boost Madrid’s international reputation.

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The programme also included two segments of brief talks, billed as “Trends in Ten: Key Factors That Will Affect Urban Tourism”, where prominent professionals spoke on the biggest transformations that are shaping the industry’s future.

Eva García San Luis, Head of Data & AI at Accenture, focused on how artificial intelligence will impact tourism experiences, while Quim Martínez Bosch, VP Public Sector CoE & Global Tourism Segment Lead at MasterCard, reflected on the evolving needs and motivations of the new traveller. They were followed by Carlos Cantó, CEO of SPSG Consulting, who outlined the top trends in sportainment, and Purificación González, CMO of Movistar Plus +, who analysed the rise of screen tourism.

Hoping to raise awareness of the importance of creating a positive, lasting legacy with MICE tourism in Madrid, the forum also invited Virginia Ródenas, Director of Communication, Institutional Relations and CSR at Envera, and Trinidad Rodríguez Martín, Managing Director of Madrid Red Cross and Blood Donation, to point out the opportunities and merits of making sustainability an integral part of such events in Madrid. The Red Cross set up a space in the hotel so that people could give blood during the forum if they wished.

The Madrid City Tourism Forum came to a close with a speech by Andy Stalman, co-founder and CEO of TOTEM Branding, who reminded everyone how important it is to build a consistent, distinctive brand that connects with visitors on an emotional level and strengthens the perception of Madrid as an open, authentic city. /

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