

Welcome to TimesPeople
Get Started

TimesPeople recommended: [Sunday Review](#)

11:08 AM

Recommend

[HOME PAGE](#) [TODAY'S PAPER](#) [VIDEO](#) [MOST POPULAR](#) [TIMES TOPICS](#)

[Log In](#) | [Register Now](#) | [Help](#)

The New York Times

Travel

Search All NYTimes.com

Go

[WORLD](#) [U.S.](#) [N.Y. / REGION](#) [BUSINESS](#) [TECHNOLOGY](#) [SCIENCE](#) [HEALTH](#) [SPORTS](#) [OPINION](#) [ARTS](#) [STYLE](#) [TRAVEL](#) [JOBS](#) [REAL ESTATE](#) [AUTOS](#)

Search 1,000+ destinations

Go

Plan Your Trip Times Picks

Go



Be the first to stay at
The Westin Lima Hotel & Convention Center

Opening May 2011

[BOOK NOW](#)

WESTIN
HOTELS & RESORTS



[EUROPE](#) > [SPAIN](#) > [MADRID](#)

HEADS UP

The Madrid Waterfront: Who Knew?



James Rajotte for The New York Times

The Madrid Rio revitalization project, which includes a 300-acre park with 17 new playgrounds along the Manzanares river, opened to the public this spring.

By ANDREW FERREN
Published: July 8, 2011

WOULD it be unpatriotic to assert that the Big Dig in [Boston](#) was small potatoes compared with [Madrid](#) Rio? The pharaonically scaled waterfront revitalization that opened on April 15 is rapidly shifting Madrid's recreational axis from Retiro Park to the once-forgotten western edge.

Madrid Travel Guide

[Where to Stay](#)

[Where to Eat](#)

[What to Do](#)

[Go to the Madrid Travel Guide »](#)

Who knew Madrid even had a river? Unlike Seville or [Bilbao](#), whose early fortunes were inextricably linked to their waterways, Madrid began as a hilltop fortress that conveniently had a little river, the Manzanares, winding

lazily through the plain below (to the west of the [Royal Palace](#), which stands on the site of the fortress). But for decades, not even the royal family could claim a water view, as the river was choked by two ribbons of the M-30 freeway, which rings the city.

It took just seven years for the Madrid Rio project to go from conception to inauguration. Four miles of the six- to eight-lane M-30 were tunneled underground and the land above was reborn as a picturesque 300-acre riverside park. It cost 400 million euros (about \$574 million), required the planting of 33,000 trees and 470,000 shrubs and plants, and took a lot of wrangling with environmental and neighborhood advocacy groups to create a sprawling esplanade that now runs through six municipal districts. Where traffic used to snake and snarl, people now stroll, jog, [bike](#) and splash.

The park includes 17 new playgrounds (including fitness areas for grown-ups with what look like stone-age gymnastics equipment made out of logs and ropes) as well as running and bike paths, a skate park and an almost-100-foot-high climbing wall.

RECOMMEND

TWITTER

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

REPRINTS

SHARE



Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com.
[Privacy Policy](#) | [What's This?](#)

[Log In With Facebook](#)

What's Popular Now

Suspect in Mutilation of an Afghan Woman Is Freed



Austin's Very Own Martini



Save \$45 on New York Sightseeing Tours >>



Advertise on NYTimes.com

TicketWatch: Theater Offers by E-Mail

Sign up for ticket offers from Broadway shows and other advertisers.

Sign Up

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

BOOK FLIGHTS



FLIGHT HOTEL PACKAGES
 CAR CRUISE ACTIVITIES

Leaving from: Going to:

Departing: 11 AM Returning: 11 AM

Adults: 2 Seniors: 0 Children: 0

[Search for flights](#)

MOST E-MAILED

MOST VIEWED

1. [Drive to Stem Shingles Meets Few Expectations](#)



2. [DOCTORS INC. New for Aspiring Doctors, the People Skills Test](#)



3. [OP-ED COLUMNIST The Magic Lever](#)

4.

What's more, the new park is revitalizing city attractions that have languished off the tourist radar but now suddenly seem at the center of the action. The fledgling multidiscipline arts center known as [Matadero Madrid](#) in the old slaughterhouses anchors the park to the south and has been swarming with people since Madrid Rio's opening weekend. Now that the highway and its tangle of access ramps no longer run between them, several once-isolated parks like the [Casa de Campo](#), Campo de Moro and Parque del Oeste now practically meet at the river's edge.

Reuniting the city center with its southwestern neighborhoods (area real estate prices have skyrocketed accordingly), the park's 33 bridges range from Renaissance-era to right now. The time warp is nowhere more visible than at the early-18th-century Puente de Toledo. Its harmonious rhythm of arches and curved bulwarks is echoed just a bit farther downstream in the corkscrew-shaped cylinder of steel designed by Dominique Perrault for the Puente de Arganzuela, the new bridge that is rapidly becoming Madrid Rio's most popular photo backdrop.

Nearby, the new Parque de la Arganzuela is already a neighborhood favorite. It features a quirky playground with giant sliding boards — some wide enough for parents and kids to slide side-by-side — and other novel amusements, like a tirolina (similar to a zipline, it transports riders, one at a time, about 100 feet across the park). As the summer starts to heat up, visitors can cool down on the new urban "[beaches](#)," large elliptical fountains designed for frolicking in jets of water and clouds of refreshing mist. At night, the Puente de Arganzuela lights up like a piece of an alien rocket fallen to earth.

Taking in the scene, Ana Martinez, a local architect who has worked with both private and municipal clients, said that unlike the new sports arena La Caja Mágica and other recent public projects that require admission tickets, "the river park is something that anyone in the city can enjoy every single day of the year."

Maps of the new park are available from the city's tourist information kiosks (there is one near the Puente del Rey) and also online at esmadrid.com/madridrio.

A version of this article appeared in print on July 10, 2011, on page TR7 of the New York edition with the headline: The Madrid Waterfront: Who Knew?.

[Connect with The New York Times on Facebook.](#)

- SIGN IN TO E-MAIL
- PRINT
- REPRINTS

More Headlines From Around the Web

Sponsored Links

STYLE + TECH FOR MEN

[When traveling, my friends always seem to get upgrades for everything from hotel rooms to airline seats. How can I get in on the act?](#)

CONSUMER REPORTS

[Is this bag compostable?](#)

CNBC

[The 10 Best Cities for Bachelors](#)

FIELD & STREAM

[Grizzly Attack Caught on Camera](#)

Get Free E-mail Alerts on These Topics

[Travel and Vacations](#)

[Madrid \(Spain\)](#)



Stanley Fish: Vocationalism, Academic Freedom and Tenure

5. [Well: When Fatty Feasts Are Driven by Automatic Pilot](#)



6. ARCHITECTURE REVIEW
[Koolhaas, Delirious in Beijing](#)



7. [Routine Ruse in Men's Soccer Tumbles Into Women's World Cup](#)



8. OPINION
[The Good Short Life](#)



9. [Drought Spreads Pain From Florida to Arizona](#)



10. [Returning Jeter's Big Hit: No Good Deed Goes Untaxed \(Perhaps\)](#)

[Go to Complete List »](#)

[Show My Recommendations](#)



Power struggle in Afghanistan

ALSO IN OPINION »

[World, not ended](#)

[Iowa's ag-gag law and the barn](#)

nytimes.com

OPINION

120 years of historic events.

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Jobs in Madrid](#)

Thousands of quality jobs over €80K

in Europe. Find yours today!

www.Experteer.com

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Hotels near IFEMA Madrid](#)

Nearby hotels on a map of Madrid.

Book online now, pay at the hotel.

Booking.com/IFEMA-Madrid

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



[HEALTH »](#)

[DINING & WINE »](#)

[TELEVISION »](#)

[OPINION »](#)

[SPORTS »](#)

[OPINION »](#)