

Chapter 1

Discovering the Best of Spain

In This Chapter

- ▶ Enjoying Spain's unique travel experiences
 - ▶ Admiring ancient and modern architecture
 - ▶ Staying at the coolest hotels
 - ▶ Tempting your taste buds
 - ▶ Appreciating great art at Spain's finest museums
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It's easy to rhapsodize about many things in Spain, so vast is its history and culture and so delightful are its people, cuisine, and wines. You'll literally trip over your own contenders for the best restaurants, hotels, architecture, and museums, no matter where you go. Surely you'll return from a trip to Spain having compiled your own "best travel experiences."

The following are places and experiences that rank among the best I've encountered in a couple of decades of travel in Spain. I consider many to be "must-sees" that I'd recommend to any friend going to Spain. In others, you might just as well treat them as suggestions and jumping-off points. The idea, though, isn't for you to just check off my list of what I think is best, but to plunge into Spain and discover for yourself all that it has to offer.

The Best Travel Experiences

- **Strolling Barcelona's La Rambla.** Much more than just a pretty mile-long pedestrian boulevard, La Rambla is a vibrant street parade and the epicenter of life in the Catalan capital. Lined with newspaper kiosks, fresh-flower stands, bird sellers, human statues in elaborate costumes and face paint, and historic buildings, it's where locals come day after day to practice the art of the *paseo* (stroll). Stop for tapas, dip into the redolent Boquería food market, and continue your rambles in the Gothic Quarter — the city's

oldest section and a maze of palaces, squares, antiques shops, and surprises. See Chapter 10.

- ✓ **Racing with beasts at the Running of the Bulls.** If you're nuts enough to run, you'll be running from, not with, the bulls. Every July, Pamplona hosts the festival of San Fermín and the *encierro*, a mad, exhilarating rush in which throngs of locals and tourists high-tail it through narrow cobbled streets with one-ton beasts nipping at their heels. To live it up, you don't have to run; the 24/7 festival ranks as one of Europe's great party scenes, with nonstop drinking and dancing (and sleeping) in the streets. Whether you run or just watch safely behind barriers, you're unlikely to forget the mayhem. See Chapter 12.
- ✓ **Tripping along on a tavern and tapas crawl.** The most inescapable element of Spanish cooking is tapas, small snacks now popular the world over. A *tapeo* is the food equivalent of an Irish pub crawl — a bar-to-bar treasure hunt, searching for and wolfing down finger foods that range from the endearingly simple, such as a wedge of tortilla omelet, to the piled-high *pintxos* in the Basque Country. You'll see Spaniards at their most festive and famished when they're out grazing. Traipse along the streets of medieval **Madrid**, the Triana neighborhood across the river in **Seville**, San Sebastián's **Parte Vieja**, the old town of **Bilbao**, or the Gothic Quarter in **Barcelona** — or any small town in Spain, for that matter. Pop into a tavern, knock back a drink and a couple of snacks, and hit the road, onto your next stop. See Chapters 10, 12, 13, and 15.
- ✓ **Getting lost in a tangle of time.** Spain overflows with fine museums, excellent repositories of Spanish art and history, but Spaniards live with their history on a daily basis. As a visitor, wandering the crooked streets in a lively old quarter makes for an exceptionally enjoyable history lesson.

The streets of **Toledo** may be impossible to make sense of, but they teem with synagogues, mosques, and palaces — centuries of Jewish, Moorish, and Christian history. Cordoba's **Judería** and Girona's **El Call**, two of Spain's best-preserved old Jewish quarters, are appealing mazes of white-washed streets, while Barcelona's **Barri Gòtic** (Gothic Quarter) is a slightly spooky but vibrant warren of alleyways that once formed the core of a walled-in city. **Salamanca's old quarter** around the stunning Plaza Mayor is the place to relive the academic life and extracurricular activities of university students. Other great places to wander, get lost, and absorb a dose of history are Granada's **Albaycín** district, San Sebastián's **Parte Vieja**, Bilbao's **Casco Viejo**, and Seville's enchanting **Barrio de Santa Cruz**. See Chapters 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17.

- ✓ **Joining the faithful at Andalusia's fiestas.** There's nothing quite like the stately pageantry of springtime festivals in southern Spain. The biggies are **Semana Santa** (Holy Week) and **Feria de Abril**, the April Fair that erupts two weeks after Easter in Seville. The galas

transform Seville into the most festive and colorful place in Spain. For Easter, the mood is deadly serious: Long processions parade throughout the city carrying religious floats, accompanied by penitents in long robes and pointy hoods, dirge music, and candles. The Feria de Abril is the purging after Easter, when the city erupts with a festival of flamenco and *sevillana* dancing, drinking, horse parades, and gorgeously bedecked Andalusian women in polka-dotted flamenco dresses. At the end of May, the **El Rocío pilgrimage** in Huelva is perhaps the rowdiest religious festival you'll witness. Attending one of the big festivals can mean extra headaches in terms of hotel rooms, crowds, and expense, but that's the cost of cultural immersion. See Chapter 15.

- ✔ **Appreciating art for art's sake.** Name the greatest artists of all time, and you'll count a significant, perhaps even disproportionate, number of Spaniards among them. You can view many of the masterpieces at some of the finest art museums in Europe. Madrid's **Prado**, endowed by kings, has monumental works by Velázquez, El Greco, and Goya (as well as great Italian and Flemish works). Pablo Picasso's impassioned *Guernica* is on view down the street at the **Reina Sofía**, as are the works of many other modern masters. Barcelona boasts an impressive collection of Picasso's early works, single-artist museums dedicated to native sons Joan Miró and Antoni Tàpies, and a splendid collection of Romanesque and Gothic religious art at the **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya**. Salvador Dalí's tortured genius holds surreal court at several museums in Spain, but the best place to get a taste of his unique gifts is his museum-theater in Figueres (Catalonia) and the home-museums he left behind in the Catalan countryside. See Chapter 10, 11, 13, and 15.
- ✔ **Meandering through Andalusia's *pueblos blancos*.** Dotting the rolling hills and earthy olive groves of southern Spain is a collection of tiny, picturesque whitewashed villages, some dramatically perched atop 1,524m (5,000-ft.) limestone slopes. Onetime defensive strongholds under the Moors, the perfect white towns are tiny mazes of medieval alleyways. The two largest *pueblos blancos* are **Ronda** and **Arcos de la Frontera**; from a base at either, you can easily take a driving tour of the many villages that lie between. See Chapter 16.

The Best Architectural Landmarks

- ✔ **Barcelona's *moderniste* madness.** The Catalan Art Nouveau movement, known locally as *modernisme*, was spearheaded by the austere aesthete Antoni Gaudí, the stunningly imaginative architect behind the futuristic (but still unfinished) cathedral **La Sagrada Família** and the wondrously wavy **La Pedrera** (Casa Milà). But Gaudí was just one of several *moderniste* masters who left their imprints on Barcelona. Follow the city's **Ruta del Modernisme** and

visit some of the other standouts, such as the apartment houses on Paseo de Gracia's Manzana de la Discordia (Block of Discord). See Chapter 10.

- ✔ **Museo Guggenheim Bilbao.** Frank Gehry's rapturous titanium sculpture on the banks of the River Nervión not only single-handedly revitalized industrial Bilbao, it revolutionized the way the public sees art museums, setting off a competition among cities across the globe to get their own Gehry (or something nearly as distinct and attention-grabbing). Critics have called it the greatest building of the modern era. Even if the structure were devoid of art inside, droves would come to experience its sensual curves and soaring presence. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Segovia's Roman Aqueduct.** Going on 2,000 years, the graceful Roman Aqueduct is one of the greatest examples of Roman engineering — in Spain or anywhere. Constructed of massive blocks of granite, in A.D. 90, without the aid of mortar or clamps, the 1km-long ($\frac{2}{3}$ of a mile) aqueduct is 29m (95 ft.) high and has 166 perfectly designed arches. Whether appreciated as a feat of engineering or for the incredible beauty with which it stretches across the city, it's one of Spain's most memorable sights, especially when illuminated at night. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Avila's city walls.** The imposing city walls (*murallas*) that enclose the small but surprisingly plain city of Avila are perhaps the finest in Europe. Built in 1090, Spain's very own great wall is 2.4km (1½ miles) long, 11m (36 ft.) high, and 3m (9 ft.) thick. If you're an architecture buff, get up close for a view of how remarkably unscathed the walls remain, and then retreat to see them framed against the horizon, from Cuatro Postes (Four Pillars), an old shrine just beyond the river. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Salamanca's stunning Old Quarter.** A university town and a living museum of early Spanish Renaissance architecture, Salamanca is a stately assembly of unique architecture built around Spain's loveliest Plaza Mayor. Salamanca's architecture is renowned for ornate Plateresque details — masterful Baroque carving — on stately facades. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Cordoba's Mezquita.** After the Alhambra, the great mosque stands as the pre-eminent architectural achievement of the Moorish dynasty that ruled Spain for 700 years. Unlike any mosque you've ever seen, the eighth-century structure dazzles visitors with a magical forest of candy cane–striped arches, consisting of more than 850 columns constructed of granite, jasper, and marble. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **Granada's Alhambra.** The supreme achievement of the Moors, and one of the greatest pieces of architecture anywhere in Europe, is the spectacular fortress and palace complex La Alhambra, a place of magic, mystery, and legend. Built by the Nasrid dynasty in the

13th and 14th centuries, it's a stunning, sprawling, and serene compound of palaces, residences, mosques, gardens, reflecting pools, patios, and a royal summer estate. It truly is as the Moors' intended — an earthly paradise. See Chapter 17.

The Best Luxury Hotels

- ✔ **Hotel Arts** (Barcelona; ☎ **800-241-3333** or 93-221-10-00). This waterfront high-rise overlooks Barcelona's beaches and is within easy reach of the Gothic Quarter and Las Ramblas. It's a model of modern, high-tech sophistication. Rooms are spacious and airy, with dazzling views of the Mediterranean Sea and the city creeping up into the hills. See Chapter 10.
- ✔ **Hotel Claris** (Barcelona; ☎ **800-888-4747** in the United States, or 93-487-62-62). The Catalan capital's other great top-of-the-line hotel is wonderfully eclectic: Its chic contemporary design coexists easily with a 19th-century palace facade and a private museum of Egyptian art. This hotel draws a stylish crowd. See Chapter 10.
- ✔ **Gran Hotel Domine Bilbao** (Bilbao; ☎ **94-425-33-00**). A luxury hotel with hipster design cred and abundant style, its primary calling card is its unrivaled location: Across the street looms the titanium juggernaut that has the world beelining to Bilbao, the Guggenheim Museum. Rooms are sleek, and the lounge resounds with retro charm. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Hotel María Cristina** (San Sebastián; ☎ **888-625-5144** in the United States, or 943-43-76-00 in Spain). A stately, Belle Epoque hotel where stars hunker down for the San Sebastián Film Festival, this place has formal grace and unrestrained Old World opulence. It can't be beat in northern Spain. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **AC Palacio del Retiro** (Madrid; ☎ **902-29-22-93**). Overlooking the serene expanse of Retiro Park and within walking distance of the Prado, this handsome upscale hotel, in a beautiful early-20th-century palace, adds a perfect dose of modern style and creature comforts to a historic structure. See Chapter 13.
- ✔ **AC Ciudad de Toledo** (Toledo; ☎ **902-29-22-93** or 925-28-51-25). With spectacular views across the river to Toledo, pretty nearly as El Greco painted it, this stylish, modern, midsize hotel with cheerfully decorated rooms is the top choice in this tourist magnet south of Madrid. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **AC Palacio de San Esteban** (Salamanca; ☎ **923-26-22-96**). Tasteful contemporary design complements the historic shell of a 16th-century convent in the heart of Salamanca's monumental quarter. Though chic and minimalist, the building's beautiful bones, including stone walls, arched ceilings, and an interior courtyard, have been lovingly preserved. See Chapter 14.

- ✓ **Hotel Alfonso XIII** (Seville; ☎ 800-325-3535 in the United States, or 95-491-70-00). One of Spain's most famous hotels, this historic place is a favorite of royalty and others with noble means. At the edge of lush María Luisa park, it is elegance incarnate, with marble floors, carved wooden ceilings, and Moorish arches and tiles. It has plenty of attitude to go with its exalted status. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Hacienda Benazuza** (Sanlúcar la Mayor/Seville ☎ 95-570-33-44). In the countryside about 16km (10 miles) outside Seville, this lovely farmhouse estate, an Arab country house dating to the tenth century, seems far too extravagant to be a hotel. It pampers guests in rustic Andalusian luxury, and the restaurant, overseen by the famed chef of El Bulli in Catalonia, ranks as one of the most exclusive in Spain. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Casa de Carmona** (Carmona; ☎ 95-419-10-00). In a pretty small town 32km (20 miles) east of Seville, this magnificent property gracefully inhabits a distinguished Renaissance palace. The small hotel evokes a feeling of aristocratic luxury and privilege, with chess and billiard rooms and a richly styled library. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **AC Palacio de Santa Paula** (Granada; ☎ 902-29-22-93). A beautifully converted convent is home to Granada's plushiest accommodations. Though its location can't compete with the Parador de San Francisco (within the grounds of the Alhambra), it has style to burn, a winning mix of contemporary and historic design. See Chapter 17.

The Best Unique and Boutique Hotels

- ✓ **Prestige Paseo de Gracia** (Barcelona; ☎ 902-20-04-14). Surrounded by the city's most upscale shops and quintessential *moderniste* buildings, this new boutique hotel is a quiet, Zen-like retreat bathed in soothing style. Confident and restrained, it does design as well as any hotel in the city, but never shouts its cutting edge. See Chapter 10.
- ✓ **Relais d'Orsà** (Barcelona; ☎ 93-406-94-11). High on a hill with a bird's-eye view of Barcelona and the sea is this handsome secret of an inn laid out in a palace dating to 1900. Refined and oh so relaxing, it exudes a fresh air that's not really a part of the city, though getting down to Gaudí and the Ramblas is easy enough if you can tear yourself away. See Chapter 10.
- ✓ **La Plaça de Madremanya** (Baix Empordà; ☎ 972-49-04-87). Part fine-dining establishment and part relaxed country hotel, this delightful little place, converted from a 15th-century farmhouse, has an abundance of chic style. Terraces overlook gardens, an architectural pool, and green rolling hills. The restaurant, La Plaça, is among the best north of Barcelona. See Chapter 11.

- ✔ **Castell de Empordà** (Baix Empordà; ☎ 972-64-62-54). This winning rural inn exhibits a comfort and elegance that belie the fact that it's in a 700-year-old castle. Although rooms in the castle, tower, or more modern annex are all inviting, you'll be drawn outdoors to the handsome pool, gardens, and terrace with serene views of the plains and rolling hills of the Baix Empordà. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Miróhotel** (Bilbao; ☎ 94-66118-80). One of Spain's hippest fashion designers, Antonio Miró, created this chic, modern boutique hotel just down the street from the Guggenheim Museum. The high-tech hotel is like Miró's clothes: clean, cool, artful, and quietly luxurious. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Posada Mayor de Migueloa** (Laguardia; ☎ 945-62-11-75). In a tiny, hilltop medieval town in the heart of the Rioja wine region, this charming and friendly family-run inn is a place for wine aficionados and gourmands. Rooms are cozy, the restaurant is first-rate, and the cavernous wine cellars deep beneath the inn have been storing wine since the early 17th century. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Villa Soro** (San Sebastián; ☎ 943-29-79-70). An exquisite small hotel in a late-19th-century villa nestled in a residential neighborhood of San Sebastián, Villa Soro combines the services of an upscale hotel with the intimacy (and more accessible prices) of an inn. Quiet and elegant, it's a perfect discreet retreat — and it's just down the street from one of Spain's finest restaurants, Arzak. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Parador Príncipe de Viana** (Olite; ☎ 948-74-00-00). This fine *parador*, or state-owned hotel, has bones no other hotel can match. In Olite, one of the oldest towns in the Navarrese kingdom, just south of Pamplona, it's ensconced within one section of the fairy-tale medieval Palacio Real de Olite, the royal palace and castle topped by cone-shaped turrets. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Casa de Madrid** (Madrid; ☎ 91-559-57-91). Bed and breakfasts aren't exactly common in Spain, and although technically a B&B, this swank little place is more like a small 18th-century palace. Perfectly located near an actual palace, the Palacio Real, the seven rooms are superbly decorated with antiques and rich fabrics. A few rooms have kitchenettes, ideal for longer stays. See Chapter 13.
- ✔ **Hotel Residencia Rector** (Salamanca; ☎ 923-21-84-82). This fine small hotel, in a distinguished mansion at the edge of Salamanca's monumental historic district, is an oasis of refined calm. It gets all the details exactly right, and the friendly, unobtrusive service is unequaled in hotels of this size. You'll think you've stepped into a five-star luxury hotel, only the prices are much friendlier. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Casa de los Azulejos** (Córdoba; ☎ 957-47-00-00). Finally, a small hotel worthy of the gorgeous Mezquita and old Jewish quarter in Córdoba. The 17th-century colonial house features a central patio

overflowing with plants and just eight character-filled, colorful rooms — which don't lack for the Andalusian tile floors of the inn's name. See Chapter 15.

- ✓ **Hotel Las Casas de la Judería** (Seville; ☎ 95-441-51-50). Tucked into a tiny street at the edge of the Santa Cruz neighborhood, this midsize hotel, part of a small chain, nailed an unbeatable formula — stylish inns housed in historic mansions — and begat a wave of imitators across Seville and the rest of Andalusia. In a 17th-century palace that once belonged to the patron of Cervantes, it wears its colorful history with a dose of good cheer. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Hotel San Gabriel** (Ronda; ☎ 95-219-03-92). This folksy and family-operated inn aims to be more personal even than most boutique hotels. The friendly owners and their children put their heart and soul into this lovely 1736 mansion, and San Gabriel is as cozy as staying at your favorite aunt's house — if she lived in a beautiful, historical part of charming Ronda. A bargain. See Chapter 16.
- ✓ **Hotel Casa Morisca** (Granada; ☎ 958-22-11-00). This is a romantic and magical place to stay after you've visited the Alhambra, which itself is romantic and magical and then some. This small inn, in a 15th-century villa in the Arab quarter, is similar in style to the nearby, equally atmospheric **Palacio de Santa Inés** and **Carmen de Santa Inés**. See Chapter 17.

The Best Fine Dining Restaurants

- ✓ **Àbac** (Barcelona; ☎ 93-319-66-00). A pioneer in El Born, the hippest dining scene in Barcelona, still-trendy Àbac continues to stand out for its confident and stylish presentation of Catalan haute cuisine. Details clearly matter here, and this chic restaurant competes with the best in Spain. See Chapter 10.
- ✓ **Comerç 24** (Barcelona; ☎ 93-319-21-02). A creative and chic take on tapas by one of Barcelona's hottest young chefs, this Born district spot is cool enough to be a nightclub. And the suitably theatrical tapas are tiny works of art. See Chapter 10.
- ✓ **El Celler de Can Roca** (Girona; ☎ 972-22-21-57). Just outside of Girona is this modern but relaxed restaurant that showcases the individual talents of three brothers. One is the chef, another the wine master, and the youngest the dessert wizard. Dining here is a culinary treat of the imagination, with flavors and presentation that are cutting edge but not self-conscious. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **El Bulli** (Roses/Catalonia; ☎ 972-15-04-57). North of Cadaqués on the Costa Brava is one of the most famous and innovative restaurants in Europe. Foodies from around the world fight for reservations at Ferrán Adrià's legendarily experimental and influential dining palace, which is open just six months a year. If you think you've had

inventive cuisine, you'll reassess all that's come before — if you can get in. See Chapter 11.

- ✔ **Zortziko** (Bilbao; ☎ 94-423-97-43). Basques are famous for their cooking, and Bilbao's top restaurant is right up there with San Sebastián's finest. The elegant and formal dining room allows patrons to appreciate Daniel García's memorable menu of both innovative dishes and traditional Basque dishes. The wine cellar is one of the most impressive in the region. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Akelarre** (San Sebastián; ☎ 943-31-12-09). Pedro Subijana's distinguished restaurant, on a hill above the Bay of La Concha, is a major destination for gourmands. A perennial, amicable rival of the other San Sebastián gurus, Arzak and Martín Berasategui, Subijana is perhaps the most classic of the three, but that's not to say he's not a creative artist in the kitchen. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Arzak** (San Sebastián; ☎ 943-27-84-65). The standard-bearer of new Basque haute cuisine, Juan Mari Arzak refuses to rest on well-earned laurels. In a house that's been in his family for more than 100 years, Arzak and his daughter Elena run surely the friendliest gastronomic temple in Spain. Elegant but inviting, this is one place not to miss in Spain if you're serious about eating. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Martín Berasategui** (San Sebastián; ☎ 943-36-64-71). How can one city have so many exquisite restaurants? The youngest of San Sebastián's top-ranked fine-dining establishments continues in the esteemed tradition of Arzak and Subijana, though the determined and creative Berasategui isn't one to be content. He's now involved with several restaurants, including the one at the Guggenheim Bilbao, but it's clear why this one carries his name. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Santceloni** (Madrid; ☎ 91-530-88-40). Until recently, Madrid's top restaurants were formal and largely traditional. However, creative fine dining has arrived in a big way, and leading the pack is this chic and starkly modern place connected to the upscale Hespería hotel. Santi Santamaría, who has a thing for truffles and foie gras, has brought some of the flair and creativity of legendary El Bulli to the capital. See Chapter 13.
- ✔ **El Pecado** (Salamanca; ☎ 923-26-65-58). Salamanca may be a dignified, ancient university town, but it gets an unexpected dose of Almodovarian flair at this campy but excellent restaurant not far from the Plaza Mayor. Outfitted with a wink-wink religious theme and named for wrongdoing, the kitchen makes few missteps in its creative, modern approach to Spanish cooking. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **La Ermita** (Toledo; ☎ 925-25-31-93). This sleek new restaurant is all picture windows looking across the river to Toledo on the hill. If you can distract yourself from the unrivalled view, you'll find a well-executed and refined contemporary menu, which adds a modern touch to traditional Castilian dishes. See Chapter 14.

- ✓ **Almudaina** (Córdoba; ☎ 957-47-43-42). This elegant and inviting restaurant in a 16th-century mansion, with six dining rooms and a vine-covered patio, is Córdoba's most sophisticated. The market-based menu includes regional Andalusian as well as French dishes. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Egaña Oriza** (Seville; ☎ 95-422-72-11). In Seville, land of fried finger foods, is this top-notch restaurant specializing in Basque cuisine. Elegantly located in a restored mansion just off the Murillo Gardens and near Parque María Luisa, it's the place to go in town for a unique dining experience. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Tragabuches** (Ronda; ☎ 95-219-02-91). Quiet, charming Ronda, one of the south's "white villages," seems almost too easygoing to have a wildly inventive restaurant. With a young chef at the helm, unapologetically modern Tragabuches creates audacious interpretations of classic Andalusian dishes. See Chapter 16.

The Best Museums

- ✓ **Museu Picasso** (Barcelona; ☎ 93-319-63-10). Before moving to Paris and making his mark as the greatest artist of the 20th century, Pablo Picasso spent much of early creative career in Barcelona. His museum in the Catalan capital, in a dazzling, sprawling palace in the Gothic Quarter, is the largest collection of his works in Spain. It's not comprehensive, but it's a great place to get a handle on Picasso's forming genius. Also of interest, in Picasso's native city in southern Spain, is the new Museo Picasso Málaga. See Chapters 10 and 16.
- ✓ **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC)** (Barcelona; ☎ 93-622-03-76). The foremost museum of Catalan medieval art, one of the best of its kind in the world, is a surprisingly lively and engrossing collection of Romanesque and Gothic. Especially cool is how the museum displays altarpieces, icons, and frescoes in apses, just as they were in the country churches in which they were found. See Chapter 10.
- ✓ **Teatre Museu Dalí** (Figueres; ☎ 972-67-75-00). Salvador Dalí was one of the most famous artists of the 20th century, and the Catalan surrealist painter designed this funky theater-museum as his legacy. Oddball, idiosyncratic, and amusing, it's as much funhouse as it is museum. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Museo Chillida-Leku** (San Sebastián; ☎ 943-33-60-06). On the outskirts of San Sebastián is the open-air museum of the city's favorite son and one of the greatest sculptors of the 20th century, Eduardo Chillida. Scattered around the pastoral grounds surrounding a 500-year-old farmhouse are a couple dozen of his monumental abstract sculptures in stone and iron. It makes for a lovely, relaxed outing, and it's great for families. See Chapter 12.

- ✔ **Museo del Prado** (Madrid; ☎ 91-330-28-00). The granddaddy of Spanish museums and one of the very finest and most extensive classical art collections in the world, the Prado is a place art aficionados could get lost in for weeks. Even casual fans should thrill at the opportunity to see so many Old Masters and masterpieces by Velázquez, Goya, El Greco, Titian, Raphael, Botticelli, and Rubens. Velázquez's stunning masterpiece, *Las Meninas*, is the showstopper. See Chapter 13.
- ✔ **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía** (Madrid; ☎ 91-467-50-62). Madrid isn't only about Old Masters. The Reina Sofía is all about contemporary art, and you can't find a greater modern work than Picasso's *Guernica*, a massive statement about war that still sends shivers up the spine. The museum also possesses a wonderful collection of works by Miró, Dalí, and the top painters and sculptors of abstract expressionism, pop art, and minimalism. See Chapter 13.
- ✔ **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** (Madrid; ☎ 91-369-01-51). A private collection purchased by the Spanish government, this major art museum contains more than 800 works that span the range of Western Art, from primitives and medieval art to 20th-century Avant Garde and Pop Art. It may not be the Prado (which is literally across the street), but it's the next best thing. See Chapter 13.