

ACCESSORISE LIKE A MADRILEÑO

No self-respecting *madrileño* leaves the house without a huge pair of sunglasses, a scarf or several pieces of jewellery. Helen Jones scours the streets to bring you an essential guide to affordable accessories

Decorate yourself

A friend of mine has a hard and fast fashion rule: "No matter how broke you are, accessorise, accessorise, accessorise." In her book, it doesn't matter if you can't afford a new top or shirt, last year's version with new beads or a tie is enough to give you fashion forgiveness for another season.

In Madrid, it's easy to follow my friend's advice. Cute badges, big bags, massive sunglasses and beautiful watches can be found all over the city, brightening up the dullest of day-to-day wear and making you look as if you've actually made an effort (or at least have your own style).

Whether you're in a high street store on Gran Vía, or in a specialist shop in La Latina, there is always an accessories section to die for, with affordable but attractive pieces. And if you really want to splash out and get some good quality sunglasses, jewellery or shoes, then Madrid is a great place to do that too.

What's your style?

Styles change according to *barrio*. In Salamanca you can't be seen without a pashmina, while in Chueca big bags are *de rigueur* for girls and boys alike. In fact, guys are heading more and more for the accessory section of high street stores such as Springfield. Funky belts, caps and wristbands are all available, while a good pair of designer sunglasses or a smart watch is still a great way for men to dress up.

What you carry, not just what you wear, also enriches your ensemble. "Bags add to your look; they give you personality," says Nuria Sánchez, who, with her sister Marta, co-owns accessory shop Ensánchez near Alonso Martínez. Nuria's designs are practical, unisex bags for everyday use. "I use mine from when I leave the house in the morning until I come back home late at night," she says.

While designer accessories are special and most definitely the best investment in the long term, shops such as Misako, Accessorise and Salvador Bachiller make trendy affordable. Thanks to them, the sturdy one-style-fits-all black bag is probably only one of the vessels in your wardrobe, and could well be joined by red, brown or blue ones (and even green patent, I admit) that are also part of any (adopted) *madrileño's* accessory collection.

Even the right shopping bags are becoming essential accessories, encouraging us to be environmentally friendly and fashion conscious at the same time. Mango currently offers customers a durable cloth bag to carry their purchases, not only promoting recycling, but also creative marketing.

Hats and specs

Of course, accessories don't always have to be temporary trends. At La Pezera, a designer accessory workshop in calle Pez, unique brooches, hats, tiaras and jewellery are often made to order, according to the colour and style that suits you best. Summer colours such as yellows, oranges and pinks will dominate the workshops' products over the coming months, but business partners Chavela and Cecilia are flexible to the customer's needs, whether in terms of colours or choice of fabrics, which includes velvet, silk, felt and linen.

And then there are some accessories that can only be worn by the chosen few – glasses. Gone are the days when wearing specs was the death of any attempt at looking half decent, especially in Spain. "While people in their forties are turning to this season's Ray Ban-style rounder frames, young people are much more likely to go for narrower glasses, with either very discreet or seriously noticeable frames. It's a question of extremes," says Javier of Óptica Estéban in the centre of town. Designers such as Etro and Etnia Barcelona are constantly experimenting with colours and patterns to create increasingly louder statement specs that can be seen on both girls and boys around the city.



Above left: Celia sports an oversized ring. Above right and bottom left: Colourful accessories from La Pezera. Bottom right: Jorge and Javier never leave the house without their shades. Photos: Helen Jones

You lot!

According to accessory designers Chavela and Cecilia, your head must be accessorised in summer 2008. Whether it's an Alice band or a full blown head decoration, your head will not be bare! As Chavela says, "It all depends on how daring you are."

Sisters Olivia and Harriet Russell, both students from Nottingham, vote for scarves and earrings on Gran Vía. Harriet's never without some neck protection. "I never wear a lot of jewellery, but I always wear scarves. They're practical and also a great way of adding colour to an outfit." Meanwhile, Spanish student Olivia used to love hats, but is currently leaning towards earrings. "They're a great bridge between your head and your body," she says, sporting a seriously funky neon ice cream earring.

I spotted Jorge de A (yes, that's his name!) and Javier Borrazas, in Paseo San Ildefonso looking extremely cool. They both work in the fashion industry. "We always wear our sunglasses, no matter the time of year," says Jorge. Like most of the population of Madrid then.

Meanwhile, Celia Valenciano's favourite accessories are the more than 10 rings she has for decorating her hands. The art journalist, who lives in Lavapiés, says, "I like hands and I love to decorate them with rings, and I like rings on guys too." For Celia, rings not only match what she's wearing but also reflect how she's feeling: "I don't have a favourite, it all depends on the day."

Accessory fan Faiyaz Dossaji likes to shop in Madrid when he's visiting on business. "Accessories are good quality but not outrageously priced, like in London or Paris." His favourite piece is currently the bag he bought here a few months ago. "It's stylish, can take wear and tear and is convenient for trips as short as a day or as long as a week. I can keep my camera, wallet, passport and other important items right beside me without having to scrounge through other pieces of luggage."

So there really is no excuse for not having your own style in Madrid. Whether it's through comic badges, or those red shoes you just couldn't avoid buying, remember the rule: accessorise, accessorise, accessorise!

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