



PRIME TRAVELER

Madrid, Order the Caña

The free tapa custom most visitors never learn about, the bar crawl culture built around it, and the museums worth planning a whole day for.

PRIME TRAVELER · INSIDER TRAVEL INTELLIGENCE

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I Order the Caña

In a real number of old school Madrid tabernas, ordering a caña, a small glass of draft beer, still comes with a free tapa placed next to it without you asking. This custom has genuinely faded in plenty of newer bars, but it survives in enough traditional spots that it's worth actively seeking out rather than assuming it's a thing of the past.

Why This Still Happens

The tradition comes from an older style of Madrid bar culture where a small bite was simply part of what a drink included, not an upsell. Bars that still do this tend to take real pride in it, and asking a bartender directly whether the caña comes with something is a completely normal, expected question, not an awkward one.

A SMALL PHRASE WORTH KNOWING

Asking "¿la caña viene con algo?" (does the beer come with something) is a genuine, welcomed question in the right kind of bar, and often gets a smile rather than confusion.

Which Bars Still Do It

Older, family run tabernas in neighborhoods like La Latina and central Madrid are more likely to continue the custom than newer, more design forward bars aimed at a younger crowd. A worn wooden counter and a bartender who's clearly been there for decades are both good signs.

II De Tapeo: The Bar Crawl Culture

Going de tapeo, moving from bar to bar for one drink and one small bite at each stop, is the real backbone of a Madrid evening, and it runs on its own specific rhythm.



THE CAÑA, THE TAPA, THE COUNTER. THIS IS THE WHOLE TRADITION

One Drink, One Bite, Move On

Staying at a single bar for an entire evening misses the actual point of this tradition. A proper night out here means several short stops, not one long sit down meal.