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Travel

# MADRID AS MUSE

For *Carolina Herrera's*  
*first show* in Europe,  
creative director *Wes Gordon*  
*found inspiration in*  
a favorite city.  
By Sarah Khan



Models backstage at Carolina Herrera's spring 2026 show holding handbags inspired by the colors and shapes of Madrid.

The Palace Hotel reopened last year after a two-year renovation.



“Here’s a regalness that struck me the first time I went to Madrid,” Carolina Herrera creative director Wes Gordon recalls. “That’s paired with a youthful, fresh energy, which creates a combination that’s unique globally.” That special spirit compelled Gordon to mount Carolina Herrera’s spring 2026 fashion show in the Spanish capital, a city that has particular significance for the brand, which is owned by the Spanish parent company Puig. Carolina Herrera, who is from Venezuela, has a daughter who lives in the city, and the family has long loved it there. “It’s a place that feels very much in sync with who we are as a brand. There’s a boldness of beauty, an energy, a vibrancy that feels very Herrera,” Gordon says.

The stage for the show, which marked the first time Carolina Herrera presented a collection in Europe, was the Baroque backdrop of the Plaza Mayor, Madrid’s historic main square. On a sultry September evening, the statue of King Philip III overlooked a carousel of designs marked by volume and drama, paying homage to the flowers, bygone royals, and 1980s counterculture of Spain. It was all set to the beat of contemporary Spanish music. More than 1,200 guests—not including residents of the surrounding apartments, who had VIP seats at their windows—converged for the show, which also marked the debut of the brand’s new handbags in shades of Rioja red and Violeta purple, inspired by the textures and silhouettes of the city. As Gordon puts it, “This was an experience that couldn’t be replicated anywhere else—the clothes felt very grand and very Madrid.”

To infuse the collection with even more local soul, Gordon tapped a host of Spanish talents to add their signature flair. Celebrated



Spanish designer Sybilla crafted sculptural dresses channeling the spirit of Herrera, while Alejandro Gómez Palomo reinterpreted the brand’s iconic white shirt through his own lens. Ensembles also incorporated hand-blown glass accessories from artist Mar del Hoyo’s brand Levens Jewels, and porcelain necklaces and earrings shaped like carnations, a nod to Spain’s national flower, crafted by Andrés Gallardo and Marina Casal of AndresGallardo.

“Every time I go, I find new things to fall in love with,” Gordon says of Madrid. The city delivered a majestic backdrop for the drama of the collection, but Gordon believes the dynamic city is the perfect setting for so much more: “Madrid is the most beautiful stage on which to live life.”

MODELS IN PLAZA MAYOR: PABLO CUADRA/GETTY IMAGES; REMAINING IMAGES: COURTESY OF THE DESIGNER AND VENUES.



## STAY

### SANTO MAURO

Gordon loves the Santo Mauro, a former duke’s palace with interiors by celebrated designer Lorenzo Castillo.

### THE PALACE, A LUXURY COLLECTION HOTEL

Madrid’s largest luxury hotel got a refresh, reopening last spring after a major two-year renovation.

### NÔMADE TEMPLE

The newly opened hotel is in a restored early-20th-century building.

### HOXTON HOTEL

The hospitality group is opening a new location in a modernist-style building on the Plaza de Santa Ana.

## DINE

### CASA LUCIO

A favorite of Carolina Herrera’s. Fried eggs with French fries is the dish to order.

### EMI

The cozy new restaurant from Noma chef Rubén Hernández Mosquero infuses Nordic and Asian influences into familiar Spanish fare.

### LOS 33

This trendy spot is famous for its “bikini,” a grilled cheese and cured ham sandwich.

## VISIT

### SOROLLA MUSEUM

Dedicated to the work of Impressionist Joaquín Sorolla, the museum is reopening this year after a long renovation.

### MUSEO DEL PRADO

“I wander and find a new 16th-century still life to fall in love with, or an El Greco,” Gordon says of Spain’s main national art museum.