

# Celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas in Madrid

By Kara Martin

The holidays are upon us and you may be looking for ways to entertain your family or any visitors during those busy days between Christmas and Epiphany. Instead of searching for the ten lords a-leaping, here are some ideas of how to celebrate, to give back to the community and to delight in the spirit of the season.



**December 26** Why not celebrate Boxing Day as the Canadians do by donating all those clothes you've been meaning to clear out of your closet today?

There are a number of churches and bins throughout the city to accept donations.

One specific example is worth noting: Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church is collecting clothes for small children that are in good or excellent condition to be given to the children at the Battered Women's Shelter. Contact coordinator Maria Rosario at 91-632-3714 if you have clothes to donate.

Now that you're in the giving groove, consider 12 euros for 12 days. Remember the spirit of the season and carry one euro for each day between Christmas and Epiphany to share with someone less fortunate. Give joyfully.

**December 27** Head for the hills! Take a trip up to Navacerrada, El Escorial, Segovia, or any number of locations in the nearby sierra. Whether by bus, train, or car, you won't be disappointed with the beautiful mountain vistas. Why not join the INC tour of El Escorial to view the life size nativity scenes throughout this historical town. See page 12 for details.



**December 28** Spanish "April Fool's Day" Venture to the Plaza Mayor and find gags galore for celebrating the fool's day. There are also holiday vendors hawking goodies of the season. Later, move on to the Puerta del Sol and visit the Cortilandia at El Corte Inglés and see the extravagant outdoor display come to life. It can get crowded, but kids love the music and magic of the elaborate street performance, which takes place every hour.



**December 29** Sledding anyone? Take your flying saucers to the Morcuera Pass. The Madrid Notebook says this is the only spot in the Madrid region, together with the Val Cotos, where you can sled once the snow falls. From Madrid, follow the M607, exit at Soto el Real and follow the signs to Miraflores de la Sierra. Once in the village, follow signs to the Morcuera pass, located at an altitude of 1,800 meters. The Notebook recommends arriving before 10:30 am or after 2:30 pm to avoid the crowds.



**December 30** Madrid has recently unveiled a great way to discover or rediscover its many museums and monuments. The Madrid Card is 28 euros for one day and permits free admission into 40 museums as well as five to 10 free trips via public transport and use of the Madrid Vision tourist bus. For more information, check out the website [www.madridcard.es](http://www.madridcard.es) or call 91-713-0444.



**December 31** Buy your grapes! Do as the Spaniards do and eat one grape for each of the 12 gongs as the clock strokes midnight. Many hotels and restaurants



offer all-inclusive packages for ringing in the New Year in style.

**January 1** HAPPY NEW YEAR! This is typically one of the quietest days you'll experience in Madrid. Start out the morning with churros and chocolate as many of the all-night revelers will be doing. It's New Year's Resolution time, so sit back and reflect on all that you'd like to accomplish in 2004.



**January 2** Fun and music for any age can be had at the Zarzuela, which is staging *Los Sobrinos del Capitán Grant*, a musical comedy based on Jules Verne's book, *The Children of Captain Grant*. See page 4 for details.



**January 3** Get to know your neighbors. As most of us are strangers in a strange land, share a bit of your country with your neighbors by baking something typical from your homeland or buying a small token of goodwill to share.



**January 4** Hijas de la Caridad Convent at General Martinez Campos, 18, run a daily soup kitchen and would be happy to receive donations of food staples. Karlene Abrams has kindly offered to coordinate a collection of food from INC members. Today, set aside a new food item in preparation for the next INC General Meeting, when we will collect all donations.



**January 5** Cabalgata de Reyes Madrid and many of the outlying communities hold a parade in the evening to celebrate the coming of the three kings. Line up early with your kids and see the lovely floats before you tuck them in bed in preparation for Reyes, the Day of the Kings.



**January 6** Roscon de Reyes/Epiphany - Nearly every bakery this time of year sells a roscón, or crown cake, for el Dia de los Reyes. Each crown cake has a figurine baked somewhere inside and one tradition holds that whoever receives the slice with the figurine has to buy next year's cake. Happy New Year, everyone!

