



Madrid to envelop itself completely with a forest

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First came **the ring roads** that circumnavigated Madrid serving as looping arteries for motorized vehicles. Known as M30, M40 and M50 these are the way in and out of the city. Then in 2007, **the Anillo Verde** (Green Ring) bikeway was completed forming an off-road circle that gave those more active-minded a space where they could feel welcome. As trends go, Nature, too, is set to make a return to the Spanish capital thanks to another circumnavigating project – **the Metropolitan Forest**.

A 75-km crown of trees

Last summer, the Municipality of Madrid put out the tender for the creation of the peri-urban corridor that seeks to unify the already existing green spaces and parks on the municipal territory into one, uninterrupted peripheral crown of trees. Its length, when completed, will measure 75 kilometres and its surface will be 35,000 hectares and 450,000 trees.

The introduction of such an initiative probably needs no hard selling to the public, but still the authorities were sure to inform the public of **all the potential benefits** that the forest would bring about. It will serve to rebalance the city, reduce CO2 emissions, fight against climate change, restore the ecological landscape of degraded areas, increase the offer of pedestrian and cycling routes, as well as benefit the health of the inhabitants. And let's not forget the much-needed reduction of urban heat islands in the heavy summers of Madrid.

The green belt will be composed of native species, representative of the local natural heritage, and resilient to the anticipated climate change scenarios. There will be trails for walking and practicing sports, living areas and other facilities that will encourage their use for recreation and enjoyment by the citizens.

In order to guarantee continuity, the so-called '**ecoducts**' (**green bridges**) will be constructed in order to save the main transport arteries at certain points and contribute to the ecological and functional continuity of the corridor and the parts that make it up.

Don't think of it as a homogenous forest, though

Overall, **80% of the planned green infrastructure is already there** under the form of parks and green spaces, so the project involves the completion of the rest in order to fill the gaps and join the patches into a unified whole.

Nonetheless, authorities point out that the green belt will be there to fully represent the ecological diversity on the municipal territory and the variety of its soils will support different landscapes. For that purpose, the project has been divided into 5 lots, each of which has been awarded to a different contractor. Each of these ecosystem lots has been given its own poetic name:

- **AMONG NATURAL MOUNTAINS:** Connections of El Pardo Mountain with that of Valdelatas and Casa de Campo. Re-naturalisation of the fluvial axis of the Manzanares river.
- **LINKING URBAN PARKS:** Connections of the metropolitan free space system, Valdebebas, Fairgrounds, the O'Donnell wedge, Vicalvaro, Valdebernardo and Cerro Almodóvar with the Nueva Centralidad del Este. This will seek to create stable link among all these parks, which had previously been isolated from each other due to the road infrastructure.
- **THE GREEN RING OF THE SOUTHEAST:** Enhancement of the free space systems of the urban expanse to the southeast, from the Cerro de la Herradura to the Cantiles del Manzanares. This area will see the creation of two new Metro stops on Line 9.
- **THE RIVER PARKS OF THE SOUTH:** Connections of the river systems of the Manzanares river and La Gavia stream with the integration of large peripheral pieces of the free-standing parks in Entrevías, La Atalayuela, Mercamadrid and Butarque.
- **THE METROPOLITAN RING:** Integration of the southwest metropolitan system (Getafe, Leganés, Alcorcón) with the Casa de Campo. Rejuvenation of the river environments of the Meaques stream.

Once the Metropolitan Forest of Madrid becomes a fact (reportedly it will take 12 years) we will then be also able to also speak of green infrastructure. The new green crown of the capital will be a much-needed addition to a city that is sure to face challenges stemming from climate change, global warming and desertification.

Source: <https://www.themayor.eu/en/a/view/madrid-to-envelop-itself-completely-with-a-forest-9089>