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on exhibit

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WHAT: "The Spanish Portrait From El Greco to Picasso" at Madrid's Prado Museum.

WHEN: Oct. 20-Feb. 6.

WHY GO: All the Spanish heavyweights will be there, including the Crete-born El Greco, court painters Diego Velazquez and Francisco de Goya, and avant-garde pioneers Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris and Joan Miro. Extending across six centuries and presenting more than 80 works, this thematic exhibition combines international loans with canvases from the Prado's collection to trace the evolution of style, significance and social meaning in Spanish portraiture.

DON'T MISS . . . Velazquez's "Las Meninas" (1656), an ingenious and psychologically complex depiction of the daughter of King Philip IV with her attendants. **Picasso's "Self-Portrait"** (1901) exemplifies the somber beauty of the artist's Blue Period.

FEE: Free with paid admission to the Prado (\$3.70).

EXTRAS: Don't miss the superlative collections of art from Spain -- and the rest of Europe -- at the **Centro de Arte Reina Sofia** (Calle de Santa Isabel 52) and the **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** (Paseo del Prado 8), both just a short walk from the Prado.

SLEEPS: The nearby, and luxurious, **Villa Real Hotel** (Plaza de las Cortes 10, 011-34-91-420-3767, www.derbyhotels.es) offers a "Discover the Art of Madrid" package (\$235) that includes room, breakfast, half-day car rental and a one-day ticket to most Madrid museums. Equally well-located is the upscale **NH Nacional** (Paseo del Prado 48, 011-34-91 -429-6629, www.hotelnhnacional.com); doubles start at \$125.

PACKAGES: Gate 1 Travel has a four-night "Madrid Super Saver" deal starting from \$469 per person double. Lodging and round-trip air from JFK in New York is included (D.C. airports also available), with weekly departures starting Nov. 2. Details: 800-682-3333, www.gate1travel.com.

INFO: 011-34-91-330-2800, museoprado.mcu.es. Metro: Banco de Espana or Atocha.

-- **Seth Sherwood**

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