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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



arvind grover

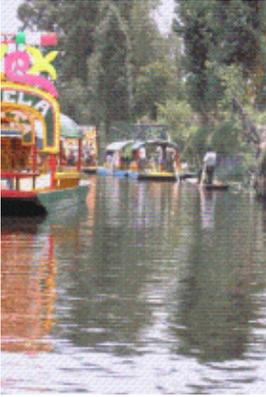
Day Trip to the South of Mexico City

Mexico City, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: For any first time visitor to Mexico City there are a few "must-do's." Here is a perfect way of getting some of those out of the way in a one day serving (should you be limited for time). This day trip is devised so you can mix sitting-down time with a good dose of walking around, some sun, and the much needed Mexican culinary delights. There is a little for the architecture lover, something for the art aficionado, some good suggestions for food and drinks, and also a suggestion for a visit to Xochimilco, Mexico's version of Venice! Enjoy.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Mexico City

DAY NOTE: This is a fantastic way of seeing some of the highlights of Mexico City's South end of town. It is a crammed day full of variety, so start early. There are two portions that require walking (the Jardines and the Museo Dolores Olmedo) so take comfortable shoes. Here you will get a glimpse at the top end architectural gems as well as top art and the reknown water canals of Xochimilco. Enjoy!



Plaza San Angel

One of the most beautiful and oldest neighborhoods



San Angel Inn

Charming 18th-Century Hacienda



Museo Dolores Olmedo

The home of Diego Rivera's muse and largest collector.



Xochimilco

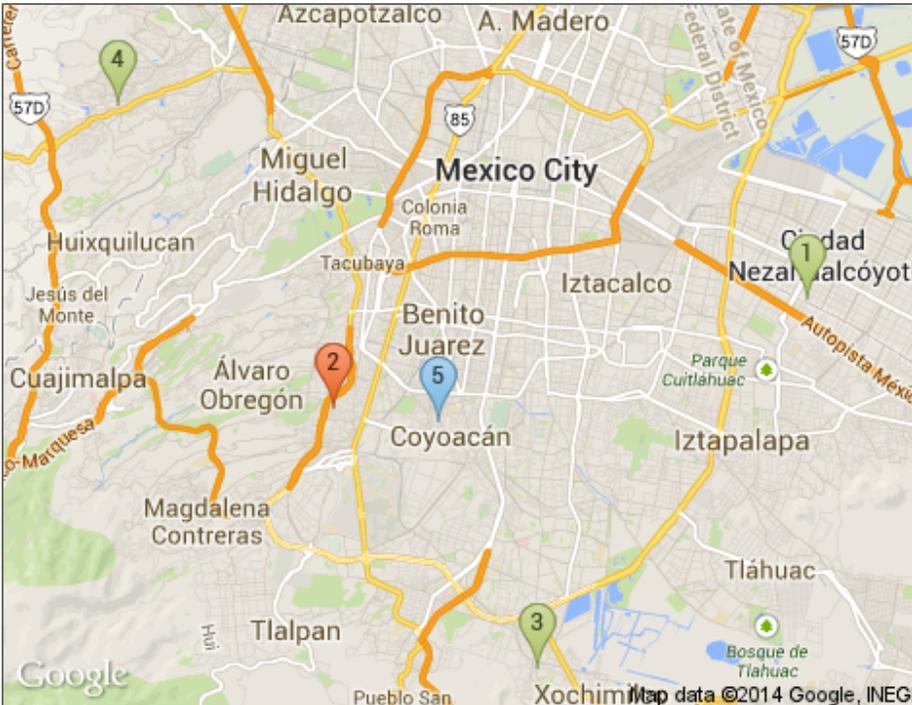
Aztec Canals & Artificial Islets



Guadalupana (La)

The best cantina in the city

Day 1 - Mexico City



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: This is a fantastic way of seeing some of the highlights of Mexico City's South end of town. It is a crammed day full of variety, so start early. There are two portions that require walking (the Jardines and the Museo Dolores Olmedo) so take comfortable shoes. Here you will get a glimpse at the top end architectural gems as well as top art and the reknown water canals of Xochimilco. Enjoy!

contact:
tel: +52 55 5568 1360

location:
Avenida Paseo del Pedregal
Mexico City 01900

1 Plaza San Angel

DESCRIPTION: One of the most beautiful and oldest neighborhoods of Mexico City, the San Angel Plaza – or downtown – is an eclectic mix of cobblestone streets, colonial mansions and delightful traditional restaurants. Saturdays sees the Bazaar open its doors with truly unique and rather expensive Mexican arts and crafts, and Sundays are a great day to visit this sleepy, town-like neighborhood in the middle of the Mexico City hustle and bustle. © NileGuide

MY NOTE: Start at the local plaza. Saturdays you can step into the Bazaar where boutique arts and crafts will amaze you. Otherwise simply walk along the cobblestone streets peeking into the colonial mansions and perfectly groomed gardens.



wcities

contact:

tel: 52 55 5616 2222
fax: 52 55 5616 0973
<http://www.sanangelinn.com/>

location:

Diego Rivera 50 Y Altavista
Mexico City 01060

2 San Angel Inn

DESCRIPTION: This restaurant has enjoyed a long tradition in the area of San Angel in the south of the city. It is situated in a Colonial hacienda, and its varied menu continues to make it a choice spot for dining. It is ideal for both families and businesspersons. House specialties include Crepas de Huitlacoche (crepes filled with corn truffle), Chiles Rellenos (poblano peppers stuffed with cheese and ground beef, Robalo a la Veracruzana (filet of sea bass with green olives, tomatoes and vegetables). Wandering musical trios add to the ambiance. This restaurant was the winner of a Dirona Award. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of San Angel Inn

MY NOTE: Early lunch is recommendable to avoid the crowds. Any dish here is divine mexican cuisine.

contact:

tel: 5 555 1016
<http://www.museodoloresolmedo.org.mx/>

location:

Avenida México 5843
Mexico City D.F. 16030

3 Museo Dolores Olmedo

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

November is a great time to visit because Ms. Olmedo's tradition of creating a beautiful offering to honor the dead (celebrated on November 1st and 2nd) continues year after year. The colors and creativity from the flower arrangements are something you will find nowhere else in the world.

DESCRIPTION: This was Dolores Olmedo's home in the southern part of Mexico City. She was a friend of Diego Rivera and posed for him as many paintings of his will attest. Ms. Olmedo was a very wealthy and active socialite from the 1930's through the 1960's and since 1994, a few years before her death she converted this XVII century mansion into a museum and opened it to the public for everyone to enjoy.

The gardens are immaculate and the peacocks that roam freely are a sight to behold but her private collection of 145 of Diego Rivera's paintings as well as a substantial sampling of Frida Kahlo's work are the reason you should trek to this part of the city.

You will not feel like you are in a staid museum but rather a guest of Ms. Olmedo because the house has been maintained as it was when she lived here and many of her personal items are on display as well as her bedroom and other rooms which until a few years ago were closed to the public. There is a restaurant and a gift shop and you should probably devote half a day to this visit since getting there can take at least half an hour depending on traffic.

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MY NOTE: Set in a hacienda style home, Dolores Olmedo Museum is an architectural gem with massive grounds and stunning wild life running around, as well as some of the largest collections of Rivera and Frida work.



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contact:
tel: +52 5 5525 9380
(Información Turisticos)

location:
Avenida México Xochimilco
Mexico City D.F. 16500

hours:
Daily 7a-10p

4 Xochimilco

DESCRIPTION: 400 Kilometers of water canals make of Xochimilco Mexico's version of Venice. The best way to see this wonder of the ancient world is to arrive at the Nativitas boarding area and jump onto a "trajinera" – large wooden boats beautifully decorated with colorful paintings and flower arrangements. The boat trip (which can last one to five hours depending on what you choose) takes you past floating gardens, a vast array of bird life and "tinampas" which were islets made by the Aztecs by compacting mud and straw and building them around roots of aquatic trees. Weekends are very hectic here with a variety of floating mariachi bands, corn sales people, and partiers. For a more relaxed time visit on a weekday. © NileGuide

MY NOTE: This takes approximately two hours, or you could make it a day trip asking for the five hour voyage into the natural reserve. Make sure you ask your taxi driver, or the locals, to drop you off at the "Nativitas Embarcadero" to start off.



wcities

contact:
tel: 52 55 5554 6253

location:
Higuera, 14
Mexico City D.F. 04000

hours:
10p-3a Tu-Sa

5 Guadalupeana (La)

DESCRIPTION: You haven't truly experienced Mexico City until you've visited a typical Mexican cantina. La Guadalupeana is one of the oldest and most popular cantinas in the city. It was founded in 1923 and has still maintained the classic look of a traditional cantina. It offers a broad variety of tequilas, pulques and other Mexican drinks for its guests to sample. With its kicking Mariachi music and great drinks, La Guadalupeana will give you a true taste of what Mexico has to offer. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: After an exhausting sight-seeing day La Guadalupeana is the perfect spot to lounge about. Whether it be just for a few cocktails or a large meal this spot, with lush surroundings (check out the amazing Vigin of Guadalupe painting).



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Mexico City Snapshot

Local Info

A stay in Mexico City of three days will give you just enough time to visit the Centro Historico and Chapultepec Park. If your trip to the capital is five days long, you should take at least one-day trip to nearby sites. Visit for a week, and you'll have enough time to see Mexico City's main attractions and spend a day or two exploring the area around it. The four main bus terminals – one for each direction – make exploration outside the Valle de Mexico comfortable and inexpensive.

The most important place to visit near Mexico City is the ruined city of Teotihuacan. Located about a one-hour bus ride north from D.F., this is the site of the marvelously impressive Temples of the Sun and the Moon. Archeologists remain hard at work excavating the massive complex and interpreting their findings but precious little is fully understood about this culture that collapsed around 600 AD. A rite of passage for visitors to Mexico is the steep and arduous climb up the Temple of the Sun; do it if you are physically able and you will be rewarded with a spectacular view.

East of Mexico City on the road to the Caribbean port of Veracruz, stands Puebla, which was founded by the Spanish in 1531. It is Mexico's fourth largest city. The colonial center has been designated a World Heritage Site because of its unique combination of architecture that spans five centuries. Shoppers will delight in visiting the workshops and galleries of the city's famed Talavera pottery industry. The cuisine is famed and includes the sauce, mole poblano, which contains twenty ingredients including chili peppers and chocolate.

South of Mexico City stand two cities that merit visits of their own. Cuernavaca and Taxco. Cuernavaca, nicknamed the City of Eternal Spring, occupies a high, wide mountain valley located about a two-hour drive from the capital. This proximity has made it a popular weekend destination for Chilangos looking to escape DF's sometimes-smoggy air. Ravines slice Cuernavaca into hilltops and valleys, some of which have become parks that are perfect for strolling. In the heart of the city, conquistador Hernan Cortes built his palace after he was ousted as supreme ruler of Mexico City; today it is a fine regional

museum and houses important Diego Rivera murals.

The Silver City, Taxco, is a picturesque little town that hugs the mountains from which the Spaniards extracted a fortune in the precious metal. But it was only in the 1920s that American William Spratling settled here and reintroduced silversmithing to the populace. Locals embraced the art form and today you can't walk one block without encountering at least one plateria. Some of the establishments cater to bus tours and provide inexpensive jewelry but you can still find some artisans that produce high-quality necklaces, rings, and earrings.

Near Cuernavaca, but light year's away in spirit is Tepoztlan. Surrounded by craggy mountaintops, Tepoztlan is equal parts Brigadoon and Santa Fe, New Mexico. New Age folks from around the world have colonized the town. It's not unusual to see white-clad yoga enthusiasts deep into their practice in the Tepozteco pyramid high atop one of the cliffs that overlooks town.

West of Mexico City lies the village of Valle de Bravo. The pleasant little town hugs the shores of a half-century old manmade lake and is filled with interesting shops and restaurants. Visitors can rent the vacation homes that hover over the water, which is filled with pleasure craft. Valle de Bravo's unique location makes it a year-round destination for parasailers.

Fine toll roads connect Mexico City to these towns and many more. For bus travel, make sure you know which one station you need: Terminal del Norte for Teotihuacan; Tasquena in the south for Cuernavaca, Taxco, and Tepoztlan; and Observatorio in the west for Valle del Bravo. TAPO is Mexico City's eastern bus station and connects to cities like Puebla and Veracruz.
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History

People have inhabited the Valley of Mexico and areas surrounding it for over 10,000 years. The native peoples in this area from 9500 BCE-7000 BCE lived under the rule of the Olmec culture, which spanned over most of Central and South America. Due to the lack of a natural water outlet, inhabitants migrated to the

fertile lakeshores of the Valley of Mexico, especially Lake Texcoco. Not far from the shores of this lake sprang up the legendary city of Teotihuacan, its earliest building dating from the year 200 BCE. The civilization of Teotihuacan thrived here for hundreds of years, achieving a population estimated to be around 100,000 inhabitants and covering over 30 square kilometers. The decline of the Teotihuacan culture came about sometime during the 7th or 8th Century, its exact reason is unknown.

After the fall of Teotihuacan, the city of Tenochtitlan was built on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco by the Nahua Aztec (Mexico) Tribe in the year 1325 CE, when the wandering tribe purportedly had a prophecy fulfilled involving a vision of an eagle perched on a cactus, with a serpent in its claws. If this vision sounds familiar, it is because it is now the image in the center of the Mexican flag. The location of the city forced the Aztecs to build an elaborate system of chinampas (canals), remnants of which exist today in the area south of the city known as Xochimilco. Tenochtitlan and the Aztec people grew to be an extensive empire, covering the majority of what is modern day Mexico, with estimates of the population of the city reaching 200,000, and growing in size, connecting surrounding lakes by a system of bridges, aqueducts and roads. However, all of this was about to change.

On November 8, 1519, the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés arrived in Tenochtitlan. According to legend, the conquistador was at first believed to be the plumed serpent god Quetzalcoatl by the King Moctezuma and his court, because of previous prophecies predicting the arrival of the god and many coincidental occurrences. Meetings between the Aztecs and the Spanish were translated with the help of a slave woman known today as La Malinche, who translated from Nahuatl (the Aztec language) and Maya, and Spaniard Geronimo de Aguilar translated from Maya to Spanish. Not much later, the Spaniards, already prepared for battle, took Moctezuma captive, and

Mexico City Snapshot continued

during this captivity, tensions between the Aztecs and the Spanish began to mount dramatically. When it came time for the Aztecs to celebrate the festival of Tóxcatl, the Spanish attacked the vulnerable Aztecs during the festivities in what came to be known as the "Massacre in the Main Temple," which sparked a passionate revolt against the Spanish by the Aztec people.

On the first of July, 1520, the Spaniards were forced to flee Tenochtitlan due to the unceasing Aztec revolt against them. This exodus, known as La Noche Triste ("the sad night"), did not go unnoticed by the Aztecs, who chased the Spaniards out of the city and along the lake, where the Spaniards were headed to Tlacopan. The Spaniards purportedly lost about 2/3 of their forces during la noche triste, along with a large amount of gold, jewels and other valuables they had gotten from the city. After a year of back and forth plotting and fighting, in addition to a smallpox epidemic that wiped out about 40 percent of the population of Tenochtitlan, the Aztecs finally surrendered to Cortés and his army on August 13, 1521.

Once the Spanish had control of the city and all the surrounding areas, they set up the viceroyalty of Nueva España in 1535, with the first Viceroy being Antonio de Mendoza. Under this viceroyalty, the Spanish Empire continued to explore Latin America, founding cities and increasing their territories.

Mexico remained under Spanish control until the Mexican War of Independence in 1810, however it did not officially gain its independence until 1821. In 1824, Mexico City was named the Mexico Federal District. In 1847 a new war arose, this time the Mexican-American war, resulting in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which forced Mexico to give up the territories of Nuevo Mexico and Alta California, which today consist of California, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and parts of Utah and Wyoming.

Beginning in 1876 was the period known as the Porfiriato, the period of dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, which brought about a very distinctly French influence in Mexico City.

It was during this 30 year period that many of the beautiful landmarks of Mexico City were constructed, including the Ángel de la Independencia, the Palacio de Bellas Artes and the Paseo de la Reforma. However, Díaz was forced to resign during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The time after the Mexican Revolution really saw Mexico City's most flourishing time of growth in hundreds of years.

In 1968, Mexico City was granted the honor of hosting the Olympic Games, which was tarnished by the killing of hundreds of students by army and police forces just ten days before the Olympics in what has come to be known as the "Tlatelolco Massacre," which is just one of the controversies surrounding this only Olympic event ever held in Latin America. Mexico City has also played host to the 1970 FIFA World Cup, as well as the same event in 1986, which came just one year after an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.1 damaged over 3000 buildings and left 10,000 people dead. However, the hosting of the FIFA World Cup stood as a testament to the city's rapid recovery.

Today, Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world with over eight million inhabitants. Mexico City is also the Federal District of Mexico and the Capital of the United Mexican States. Featuring two UNESCO World Heritage Sites (three including Teotihuacan), Mexico City is today the center of culture and politics in Mexico as it has been throughout its very long, dramatic, and sometimes tragic history. However, today Mexico City is anything but tragic, attracting tourists from all over the world and serving as a main representative for this incredible country.

©

Hotel Insights

The city is known as the Ciudad de Palacios (City of Palaces) for its exquisite colonial architecture, making way for a modern cosmopolitan urban landscape. There is an array of hotel accommodations, which afford a variety of options to suit each traveler's preference, whether it's a small

guesthouse or a world class hotel. Some areas are better suited to the tourist for their convenience and should be considered upon choosing adequate lodging.

Centro Histórico

This area in the city center is known as the Centro Histórico for its colonial buildings, cathedrals and houses. The narrow streets bear names commemorating the city's most momentous historic events. Avenida 16 de Septiembre harbors the stately centuries old Gran Hotel de la Ciudad de México. A wonderful Art Nouveau building with an impressive glass dome, its terraces overlook the Zócalo and is ideal for witnessing the annual Independence Day Celebrations (September 15 and 16) presided over by the Republic's president. The more contemporary Hotel J.W. Marriott, is located nearby and a convenient distance from the Catedral Metropolitana and the government's Palacio Nacional, built by the conquistador Hernán Cortés.

Avenida de la Reforma

Avenida de la Reforma is one of the most important avenues in the city. It is said that Empress Carlota had it built to emulate Paris' Champs Elysées, and in order to observe Maximilian of Hapsburg as he made his way toward the Palacio Nacional. Many hotels, most of them belonging to international or national chains, now flank this avenue. The María Isabel-Sheraton Hotel faces the Monumento a la Independencia, or El Ángel. Other hotels in the area are the elegant Hotel Emporio, the modern Hotel Fiesta Americana Reforma and the international Four Seasons Hotel.

Zona Rosa

Located near Avenida de la Reforma and adjacent to the city center, the Zona Rosa is ideal for its nightlife with a wide array of bars and discotheques situated throughout the area. The Holiday Inn and Galería Plaza Hotel both offer refined modern amenities. The Hotel del Ángel is located near the Monumento del Ángel de la Independencia, which provides convenience of location and comfort with all the classic amenities.

Mexico City Snapshot continued

Chapultepec

Heading south along Avenida de la Reforma, the expansive area known as Bosques de Chapultepec offers several choices including the Hotel Presidente Intercontinental and the Camino Real Mexico. Also in the area are the upscale W Mexico City and the Four Seasons Hotel.

©

Restaurants Insights

Food is more than simple sustenance in Mexico; it is a way of life, an essential ingredient in the vibrant culture of this country, through which family, friends and lovers come together. In a city this big, it is not surprising that there are many different areas in which to seek out good restaurants, although some in particular stand out.

Chapultepec/ Polanco

The areas of Chapultepec and Polanco have a wide array of dining options in a pleasant part of town. Visitors to the area can start their day with a spectacular view of the Bosque de Chapultepec. Mi Viejo Pueblito serves up amazing traditional Mexican foods like tacos, and parrilladas. If you're not in the mood for a whole meal, but still want the authentic Mexican atmosphere, María Bonita is a fun bar with a large variety of snacks. If you're more the type to wing it, along the Avenida Mazaryk in Polanco there is an upbeat atmosphere with sidewalk tables and a younger crowd in places like Area Bar and Terrace.

Zona Rosa

For those who prefer a quiet, cosmopolitan atmosphere, the Zona Rosa area is the best choice for a drink and light entertainment. La Marinera serves up traditional Mexican seafood in a lively atmosphere. Focolare offers a great experience combining live music with delicious, traditional specialties in the heart of Zona Rosa. And when you're done eating, stop in at Bar Frida, the Frida Kahlo themed bar that's almost more of a gallery than a watering hole.

Centro Histórico

Head to the Centro Histórico for a taste of the city's heritage and have a bite to eat in the famous Restaurante Bar Café Tacuba on the street of the same name. La Casa de las Sirenas offers a wide variety of cuisine served alongside musical entertainment to make for a fun dining experience. Or if you're in the mood for something a little fancier, Los Girasoles will provide you with haute Mexican cuisine next door to the Mexican Senate, so you may spot some very powerful people dining alongside you. L'Heritage offers international cuisine in a beautiful, historic building. The Casa de los Azulejos, part of the Sanborn's chain of restaurants is also found here.

San Angel

The beautiful, cobblestone streets and romantic plazas of San Angel are home to some of the best restaurants in the city. The restaurant at the San Angel Inn has been serving delicious local cuisine for many years, and the added bonus of wandering musicians makes this an unforgettable dining experience. Brasserie Q offers up amazing French food in an authentic atmosphere. Stop by Tasca Manolo for dishes from all over Spain served up in an ancient mansion. Pardiños serves up fresh seafood from the Mexican state of Veracruz while Mauna Loa specializes in Chinese food with Hawaiian and Polynesian decor and entertainment after 9p.

Coyoacán

Spend the day in the colonial neighborhood of Coyoacán enjoying great food and mingling with writers, intellectuals and artists who flock here, as did the painters Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera in their time. Flor y Canto offers up all things traditional, from the haute cuisine to the decor and atmosphere, while Bistro Voilá offers French food in a relaxed, bistro atmosphere. El Hábito serves up superb food along with an entertaining cabaret show, all in the historic home of a well known Mexican writer. For something a little more exotic, Fun Lom offers diners what

some consider to be the very best Peking Duck along with other delectable Chinese dishes.

©

Nightlife Insights

Imagine the largest city in the world, and then picture the sheer diversity of choices for entertainment and sightseeing. From the very ancient to ultra-modern, Mexico City offers all that and more.

Museums

Mexico City is home to over 150 museums, the most of any city in the world, so to visit them all would be quite challenging. However, there are various museums in the city that are not to be missed. The Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Anthropology Museum) is one of the most renowned anthropology museums in the world, and houses extensive collections of artifacts from Mesoamerica, including the famous Aztec Sun Stone. The Museo Arqueológico de Xochimilco (Archaeological Museum of Xochimilco) is a recreation of what life was like in Xochimilco in pre-Hispanic times. The museum houses objects that date as far back as to the Olmec culture, or around 9000 BCE. The Museo Nacional de Historia (National History Museum) is located in the Castillo de Chapultepec and features exhibits about the social and political history of Mexico. The museum also features murals by some of Mexico's most famous artists. The Museo del Templo Mayor is a modern building constructed on the site of the Aztec Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan. Here you can view artifacts from the temple, including the original stone depiction of the goddess Coyolxauhqui. Mexico City has also been home to many famous artists, and there is certainly no shortage of museums dedicated to them. The Frida Kahlo Museum is located in the artist's former home, and in addition to her own works, you can view other personal possessions of hers as well as works by other Mexican painters. Another artist who has several museums dedicated to him is Diego Rivera. The Museo Estudio Diego Rivera (Diego

Mexico City Snapshot continued

Rivera Studio Museum) is the artist's former studio which has been basically left alone since the day he died, so you can see the studio as it was. The Museo de Arte Moderno(Museum of Modern Art) features works from many different painters of the Mexican school of painting.

Theater

Mexico City is home to many theaters and many theater productions of all kinds. Among the best-known theaters for live drama or comedy are the Centro Teatral Manolo Fábregas and the Teatro Insurgentes. Teatro Sergio Magaña in Santa María La Ribera presents mainly comedies featuring television actors and actresses. Teatro Benito Juárez puts on Greek plays as well as other internationally famous works for incredibly affordable prices.

Music

Being one of the world's largest cities, Mexico City often hosts some of the world's biggest names and concerts in music. The Estadio Azteca hosts many of these blockbuster events. The Palacio de Bellas Artes, along with being one of the city's most beautiful landmarks, also plays host to classical concerts, opera, and some theater as well. Among those who perform at the Palacio de Bellas Artes is the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional, who perform both classical and contemporary works. The Orquesta de Cámara de Bellas Artes puts on classical, chamber music and choir performances throughout the year while the Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México frequently hosts guest musicians and composers at the Ollín Yoliztli Cultural Center.

Outdoors

Mexico City is full of parks and other opportunities to spend time outdoors. The 1600 acre Bosque de Chapultepec is a large park just east of the center of the city which is home to numerous attractions, including a lake, where you can hire a boat and paddle around. The Bosque de Chapultepec makes for a fun day out, whether you are taking a bike ride, a walk

or just lying in the grass. Another of the city's main parks is the Alameda Central, where visitors will find a number of statues and monuments among the greenery and fountains. The Alameda Central is also a historic site in the city, as it dates back to the 16th Century. One of the oldest attractions in Mexico City are the ancient canals, orchinampas of Xochimilco, which means "land of the flowers" in Nahuatl. These canals are lined with flowers and vendors, while visitors can cruise the 14 kilometers(8.5 miles) of canals in wooden boats decorated with flowers. There are several good outdoor retreats just outside the city as well. The Bosque Nacional del Desierto de los Leones(National Forest of the Lion's Desert) is a 200 hectare retreat of greenery where people go to escape the city by bicycling, jogging, and doing other outdoor activities. The Cerro de la Estrella(Hill of the Star) is located next to Lake Texcoco, and is the ancient site of Aztec sun renewal ceremonies. Aside from visiting the hill itself, visitors can go to the museum to learn more about the history of this special place.

Family& Kids

Being that Mexico City is one of the largest in the world, there is no shortage of family and kid friendly activities. For something a little educational that the whole family will find interesting, visit the Papalote Museo del Niño(Children's Kite Museum), with its interactive exhibits and IMAX theater. Another museum the kids will enjoy is Ripley's Ciudad de México, where you will be immersed in a world of stuff that's almost too hard to believe, like shrunken heads and human hair dresses. Mexico City is also home to a number of amusement parks, like Six Flags México and Funny Land. As it gets very hot here during certain times of year, there are also a number of water parks like Parque Acuático El Rollo. Here in the city, you will also find a number of zoos, like the Parque Zoológico de Chapultepec, located in the Bosque de Chapultepec, the Zoológico de Zacango, located just about 30 minutes outside the city, and the Zoológico Los Coyotes.

Historic Attractions

As Mexico City is such an old, historic city, the numbers of historic attractions in and near the city are endless. Probably the most popular attraction is the ancient city of Teotihuacan, with its grand pyramids of the sun and moon, along with 156 square kilometers(60 square miles) of temples, altars and other fascinating objects. The Arbol de la Noche Triste(Tree of the Sad Night) is the tree under which the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés is said to have cried during his troops retreat from the city of Tenochtitlan. Another historic sight pertaining to Cortés is the Casa de la Malinche, the house where his Aztec lover and interpreter once lived. The Plaza de la Constitución/ El Zócalo was constructed on top of the ceremonial site of Tenochtitlan beginning in the 16th Century, and today serves as the city's primary plaza. Another Spanish building built on top of a sacred Aztec site is the Palacio Nacional, built by Cortés on top of the kind Moctezuma's royal residence. The Palacio contains several murals by Mexico's most famous painter, Diego Rivera. The historic Castillo de Chapultepec, located in the Bosque de Chapultepec was once home to the Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlotta during the French occupation of Mexico. Since 1939, the castle has been the home of the National History Museum. The Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe(Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe) is built on the famed spot where an indigenous man named Juan Diego had a vision of the Virgin Mary. After Juan Diego told the bishop, he was skeptical and demanded proof, and Juan Diego had another vision, the image of the virgin appeared in a cape with which Diego was carrying roses. The bishop immediately ordered a church built on the site of these visions. Today, visitors can see the miraculous cape in a case behind the altar. Mexico City also has its fair share of monuments, commemorating the many wars, struggles and heroes throughout the city and country's history. Probably the city's most famous monument is the Monumento a la Independencia, also known as El Ángel(the angel). El Ángel was built to commemorate the centennial of

Mexico City Snapshot continued

Mexico's war of independence, and it was erected in 1910, after being commissioned by President Porfirio Díaz in 1902. The monument also includes a mausoleum at its base which holds the remains of 12 heroes of Mexican independence. Also commissioned by Porfirio Díaz is the Monumento a la Revolución, which stands in the Plaza de la República next to the Museo Nacional de la Revolución, and is home to the remains of two Mexican presidents. Another monument to Mexico's heroes is the Monumento a los Niños Héroes (Monument to the Boy Heroes), was built in honor of the six teenage cadets who died defending the Chapultepec Castle from United States forces in 1847, and then the heroes are honored in various ways all over Mexico City and the entire country.

©

Things to Do Insights

Mexico City has boundless opportunities for any visitor or local, no matter what you may be in the mood to do, from historical sights to ultra-modern museums. Here are a few options for touring around this dynamic city.

Alameda Central

Start at the Hidalgo underground station and take the green exit leading to the Alameda Central, one of the city's main parks, where you can visit any of the numerous statues here or the monument to Beethoven. Nearby, discover the Museo Alameda, where Diego Rivera's most famous mural is housed. Painted in 1948, his *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central* (Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Central Alameda) was brought here after the 1985 earthquake, was rescued from the rubble of the Hotel Prado. This mural reflects Rivera's view of Mexican history and his childhood memories within the framework of a typical Sunday stroll in the city's central park. At the far end of Alameda Central, the Plaza de la Santa Veracruz is where the Iglesia de San Juan de Dios is found, displaying its wonderful facade—the oldest in the city. Next door, the Museo Franz

Mayer houses an interesting collection of Mexican applied arts and the Museo de la Estampa (Print Museum) exhibits a series of José Guadalupe Posada's engravings of the Calavera Catrina. To one side, the Iglesia de la Santa Veracruz, the plaza's namesake, is one of the most important baroque buildings in the capital, for its architecture and for the brotherhood Hernán Cortés established here in gratitude for his safe arrival in the Mexican port. The remains of the Spanish sculptor, Manuel Tolsá are buried here. The nearby palatial white marble wonder of the Palacio de Bellas Artes housing several museums, includes the Museo Nacional de Arquitectura and boasts murals by Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros and Tamayo. The Palacio Nacional is in the vicinity, as are other Federal District governmental buildings. The Café Tacuba awaits the hungry, with Mexican food, mariachis and the rhythm of rondallas (street musicians) to finish off the day.

Bosque de Chapultepec

One of the few remaining "lungs" of the city, the green expansiveness of the Bosque de Chapultepec (Chapultepec Woods) is a popular place, particularly on Sundays. It is divided into three sections by large avenues with lakes, museums and other sites of interest for outdoor fun. Near the underground station Chapultepec, is the first section of the woods where it is easy to get around on foot. Upon exiting the underground, stands the Monumento a los Niños Héroes. Dating from 1952, this semi-circle of six columns stands tall commemorating six young soldiers who died defending the Castillo de Chapultepec upon the invasion of the United States in 1847. At that time the castle served as the Colegio Militar. From here, follow the signs to the Castillo and at the foot of the hill a small red brick, Germanic-style building from the 19th-century houses the Casa de los Espejos (House of Mirrors)—for a bit of distorted, playful fun. Part of the Castillo itself dates from 1785, home to the Viceroy of Nueva España and in 1843, it became the Colegio Militar. Later, Maximilian of Hapsburg and his

wife Carlotta arrived in Mexico in 1864, refurbishing it for use as their private residence. The original furnishings remain on view in some of its halls, as remnants of their occupants. It currently serves as the Museo Nacional de Historia and offers a breathtaking panoramic view of the city. Visit the lake, zoo or the expansive Museo Nacional de Antropología. Finish the tour off with a bite to eat at any of the restaurants in or near the park, like Adonis, which offers up Lebanese food in nearby Polanco.

Zócalo/ Plaza de la Constitución

Mexico City has always been cosmopolitan, revealing centuries of history hidden in its streets and buildings. Take the underground to the Zócalo/ Plaza de la Constitución station where the Palacio Nacional and the Catedral Metropolitana are situated. Take Calle Guatemala behind the Cathedral to the alleyway called Pasaje Seminario, where the journey begins into the origins of the history of Mexico at the Templo Mayor. These ruins of the ancient Aztec ceremonial city of Tenochtitlán date back to around 1325 and underwent seven stages of construction. The Temple's museum houses a monumental sculpture of Coyolxauhqui and the Caballero Águila (Eagle Knight). Moving on, the Catedral Metropolitana and Sagrario Metropolitano exemplify the church's influence in Mexico. The Calle República de Brasil leads to the Plaza de Santo Domingo where the Museo de la Medicina stands, dedicated to all things related to medicine, in the same location where once the Palacio de la Inquisición served the purposes of the Inquisition. Traveling down Calle Argentina the Colegio de San Ildefonso with its 19th-century facade was once the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria until 1978, when it became a cultural center. Inside there are numerous murals by three renowned revolutionary muralists: Orozco, Siqueiros and Rivera. It is said that the painter Frida Kahlo first met Diego Rivera here. If you are in the area in autumn, you're in luck. September and October are the season for the traditional chiles en nogada (Stuffed Poblano Chile Peppers) to be savored at the Hostería de Santo Domingo on the

Mexico City Snapshot continued

corner of Calle Palma, upon crossing the plaza. Created especially for the Emperor Agustín de Iturbide, who played a crucial role towards Mexican independence, this delicacy reflects the three colors of the national flag. Finish the walking tour at Calle Madero where the Torre Latinoamericana stands, along with the mansion of the Conde del Valle de Orizaba, known as the Casa de los Azulejos, dating back to 1737. The revolutionary Emiliano Zapata and his men had breakfast here upon entering the capital, and later José Clemente Orozco embellished it with his mural Omnisencia ("Omniscience"), which is now a delicious restaurant for you to refuel after your tour.

Xochimilco

Mexico's popular traditions, customs and natural reserves are found further south, including Tlalpan and Xochimilco where delightful trajineras (small covered boats) take the traveler through the legendary Aztec canals known as chinampas. Nearby, San Ángel and Altavista are, without a doubt, two commercial districts that command tourist attention for their shops, sites of interest, restaurants and nightclubs such as Ríoja, Casa de los Cántaros and Bar Mezzanote. Located just south of the city, the cultural, entertainment and recreational options are countless. The Casa de la Cultura San Ángel and the Ex-Convento del Carmen are two worthwhile sites to see for those interested in art in its various forms of expression. A few steps away, the Museo Carrillo Gil is situated.

Bus Tours:

Turibus(+52 5 563-6693/http://64.78.37.75/turibus/recorrido_turistico_df.html) Journeys Beyond the Surface(+52 55 922 0123/<http://www.mexonline.com/journeysbeyond.htm>) Gray Line Mexico City(+52 555 583 5533/<http://www.grayline.com/Grayline/destinations/mexico/mexicocity.go>) Wayak Tours(+52 5568 2085/<http://www.wayakbus.com>)

Walking Tours:

Journeys Beyond the Surface(+52 55 922 0123/<http://www.mexonline.com/journeysbeyond.htm>) Mexico City Historical

Centre(+52 55 5345 8000) Jewish Tours(<http://www.jewishtours.com.mx>)

Other Tours:

Segway Tours(+ 52 55 5207 2611/<http://www.segwaytours.com.mx/indexi.html>) ©

Travel Tips

Getting There

By Air

Benito Juárez International Airport(MEX) + 52 55 2482 2424/ +52 55 2598 7000 <http://www.aicm.com.mx/>

Its terminals house the following airlines:

Aeromexico(+1 800 237 6639/ <http://www.aeromexico.com/>)

Air France(+1 800 237 2747/ <http://www.airfrance.com/>)

American Airlines(+1 800 433 7300/ <http://www.aa.com/>)

US Airways(+ 1 800 428 4322/ <http://www.usairways.com/>)

British Airways(+1 800 247 9297/ <http://www.britishairways.com/>)

Canada(+1 888 247 2262/ <http://www.aircanada.com/en/home.html>)

Continental(+1 800 525 0280/ <http://www.continental.com/>)

Delta(+1 800 221 1212/ <http://www.delta.com/>)

Japan Airlines(+1 800 525 3663/ <http://www.jal.co.jp/en/>)

Lan Chile(+1 800 733 3975/ <http://www.lan.com/>)

Lufthansa(+1 800 645 3880/ <http://www.lufthansa.de/>)

Mexicana Airlines(+1 800 531 7921/ <http://www.mexicana.com/>)

Northwest(+1 800 225 2525/ <http://www.nwa.com/>)

United(+1 800 241 6522/ <http://www.united.com/>)

From the Airport

Metro: There are a number of transit services available to and from the airport.

The Metro can be found outside of Gate A. Look for the distinctive M(Metro Logo). The trains run every ten minutes until 1a.

Bus: Bus transit is available from the airport to several nearby towns. There are no bus offices at the airport, you must exit the terminal near lounge D and buy a ticket at the booth where the buses are parked. Bus companies include Pullman de Morelos offering service to Cuernavaca and Estrella Roja offering service to Puebla.

Taxi: The official airport cabs are available near the far end of lounges A and E next to the arrival gates in special booths marked TAXI/TRANSPORTACION TERRESTRE(Ground transportation). These booths are staffed by personnel wearing bright-yellow jackets emblazoned with TAXI AUTORIZADO(authorized taxi). You can call for a taxi at Taxi Mexico and Sitio Polanco 241

Car Rentals:

Avis(+1 800 831 2847/ <http://www.avis.com/>)

Budget(+1 800 527 0700/ <http://www.budget.com/>)

Dollar(+ 1 800 365 5271/ <http://www.dollar.com/>)

Hertz(+1 800 654 3131/ <http://www.hertz.com/>)

National(+1 800 227 7368/ <http://www.nationalcar.com/>)

Royal(+1 800 314 8616/ <http://www.royalrac.com/>)

Bus

Mexico city is serviced by four major bus stations that include Camionera del Norte, Camionera del Sur, Camionera del Oriente, and Camionera del Poniente. Major companies servicing these stations include Autotransportes de Oriente, and Autobuses Unidos.

Train

Rail service to Mexico City is limited as a consequence of governmental privatization.

Car

Mexico City Snapshot continued

Driving in Mexico City should only be undertaken by the intrepid traveler. For the fearless, Mexico City can be accessed by routes 190, 136, 142, 130, 67, and 3.

Getting Around

Mexico City is serviced by an efficient system of bus and metro lines(<http://www.urbanrail.net/am/mexi/mexico.htm/>). Trolleys are also a common form of transit. The "abono de transporte" ticket is valid for buses, trolleys and the metro.

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Fun Facts

Mexico City

State: Federal District

Country: Mexico

Mexico City By The Numbers:

Population: 8.7 million(city); 19.2 million(metropolitan)

Average January Temperature: 20°C/ 68°F

Average July Temperature: 25°C/ 77°F

Average Annual Rainfall: 65 cm/ 25.7 in

Quick Facts:

Time Zone: GMT-6

Electricity: 110 volts; US-style two-pin plugs are standard

Country Dialing Code:+52

Number of Museums& Galleries: 260

Number of Sister Cities: 39

Did You Know?

Mexico City is home to the second oldest university in the Americas

Because Mexico City is built on top of an underground reservoir from which water is constantly drawn, it is sinking at a rate of six to eight inches a year.

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