

Mexico City

Unconventional and beguiling, this megalopolis is an endless parade of sights, sounds and smells. It feels intimate despite its gargantuan size but good guidance is still essential – and this is where we step in. Here we uncover the city's tastiest tacos and the retailers breathing new life into classic crafts, lead you to our favourite mural-splashed buildings and the best places in which to practise your salsa – ending up in a dimly lit mezcal bar or two for good measure. *Órale, amigos!*

Need to know

Get to grips with the basics

- 01 **Rebranding the city:** Mexico City recently rebranded itself from DF (Distrito Federal) to CDMX (Ciudad de México) and you'll see sculptures of its new initials dotted across the city.
- 02 **Shopping on the metro:** Mexicans can be incredibly entrepreneurial and, as a result, the entire metro system is one perpetual hustle. You'll find people selling everything from chewing gum to camera tripods.
- 03 **Personal security:** Mexico City is generally safe thanks to a government clampdown on criminality in the capital. That said, beware of pickpockets and take care using your phone.
- 04 **Lunch over dinner:** Lunch is the main meal of the day and is usually eaten late (at about 15.00). Dinner is lighter and less important, which is why some of the city's restaurants finish serving late afternoon.
- 05 **Cash society:** Cash is king here and not just when it comes to street-food stalls or taxis: it's even used on the metro. You can still pay by card in most shops, restaurants and bars but keep some *efectivo* (cash) on hand.

Hotels

Where to stay

- 1 Nima Local House Hotel, Roma Norte
Home from home

This historic building once belonged to one of Mexico's greatest art collectors, Guillermo Tovar y de Teresa. In the rooms you'll find cosmetics by Persea and artisanal textiles.
236 Colima, 06700
+52 (55) 7591 7175
nimalocalhousehotel.com

- 2 Casa Dovela, Condesa
Apartment living

This California-style townhouse is a cross between luxury home and boutique hotel, with three spacious apartments.
152 Cuernavaca, 06170
+52 (55) 2155 6312
casadovela.com

- 3 Las Alcobas, Polanco
Tastefully appointed

Las Alcobas delivers quiet luxury with an intimate atmosphere: 31 spacious rooms and four suites with polished wooden furnishings.
390 Avenida Presidente Masaryk, 11560
+52 (55) 3300 3900
lasalcobas.com

Food and drink

Cultural cravings

- 1 Bar El Sella, Doctores
What the doctor ordered

This classic restaurant is known for its food and merry day-drinking. Order a *cazuela* (stew) of chorizo bubbling in cider to start and then a *chamorro* (meltingly tender pork shank), plus guacamole, hot tortillas and salsa for DIY tacos.
210 Doctor Balmis, 06720
+52 (55) 5578 2001
barelsella.com.mx

- 2 Amaya, Juárez
Grape expectations

Chef Jair Téllez serves classics such as ceviche and *sopes* (maize patties) with chorizo but his playful dishes are the real draw. Amaya also showcases Bichi, the family's natural winery in Tecate, and is the place to taste the best vintages from Mexico and Latin American producers.
95 General Prim, 06600
+52 (55) 5592 5571
amayamexico.com

- 3 Kura, Roma Norte
Extraordinary sushi

At this izakaya you can enjoy hearty *donburi* (rice-bowl dishes), ramen good enough to rival Tokyo, yakitori of grilled baby octopus and plates of sashimi. Chef Takeya Matsumoto has many years of experience in Mexico and pays special attention to the sushi.
378 Colima, 06700
+52 (55) 5511 8665

- 4 Pastelería Ideal, Centro Histórico
Pastry palace

A bakery that opened its doors in 1927, this is the ideal place to sample the gamut of Mexican pastries. There's an airy courtyard with stacks of sweet breads in every shape, including *orejas* (elephant ear-shaped pastries with syrup).
74 República de Uruguay, 06000
+52 (55) 5512 2522
pasteleriaideal.com.mx

- 5 Bósforo, Centro (West)
Specialty mezcal

The easygoing staff here pour mezcal varieties you've never heard of and will probably never try again: they're not commercially produced. Ask for a selection of the unmarked bottles and try a flight of three.
31 Luis Moya, 06000

Retail

Shop to it

- 1 ADN Galería, Polanco
Mexican modernism

The foremost vintage design gallery in Mexico City is the work of Paulo Peña and Paulina Hassey. Over the past decade they've put together a priceless collection of 20th-century Mexican modernism by surveying the country for unique pieces by the likes of Mathias Goeritz.
62 Moliere, 11560
+52 (55) 5511 5521
adn-galeria.com

- 2 Studio David Pompa, Roma Norte
Lights fantastic

After a trip to Oaxaca, where he observed artisans working with *barro negro* (black clay), *chilango* designer David Pompa had the idea of creating light fixtures made with Mexican materials. Today his studio creates wonderfully rudimentary pendant and standing lights.
264 Colima, 06700
+52 (55) 6583 5027
davidpompa.com

- 3 Macolen, San Miguel Chapultepec
Pressing matters

The old refrigerator shelves holding countless fanzines and artists' books hint at the previous life of this Risograph printing press and shop: it used to be a convenience store. All the pieces are Riso-printed on site and available in a limited run of 25 copies each.
31 General Antonio León, 11850
+52 (55) 7155 1804
macolen.com

- 4 Maison Manila, Polanco
Smart stuff

This young brand is an encouraging sign for Mexican fashion: it has a dependable range with thoughtful but minimal shifts between seasons. Founder Rossana Diaz del Castillo's driving principle is creating accessible luxury fashion.
61 Séneca, 11560
maisonmanila.com

Vocabulary

Talking the talk

- 01 **Mande?** What/pardon?
- 02 **Fresa:** Posh person with expensive taste
- 03 **Qué onda?** How's it going?
- 04 **Guëy (wey):** Dude/mate/buddy
- 05 **-ito/a:** Diminutive suffix added to most words. For example: *Tomamos una cervcecita?* (Shall we have a cheeky beer?)



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