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Haven Report



Mexico City, Mexico:
Eternal Spring In The Dazzling Metropolis...



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Mexico City: Eternal Spring In The Surreal, Dazzling Metropolis Of Everything

By Patrick Little

I step outside of my apartment on a Thursday evening in January to check out a *taquería* recommended by some friends. I'm wearing a sweatshirt, but I could probably do without it.

Walking through the Plaza Jardín Centenario, I take in the hundreds of people who are *paseando*, an activity for which there is no perfect translation in English, roughly meaning being out and about, enjoying the company of others with no particular plan in mind...

As I approach the plaza filled with benches, fountains, and trees of every

variety, I'm greeted by an elderly couple taking an evening stroll hand-in-hand. A group of friends sitting in the patio section of one of the plaza's many restaurants raises their glasses of mezcal as one offers a toast. Two men—violinist and guitarist—play mariachi songs. A young couple talk playfully on a park bench; they seem to have been there for a while. A man sitting on the edge of the fountain with the coyote sculptures asks me if I want to know my future. I tell him I'll hold off for now, but wish him a pleasant evening.

There's a palpable energy in the plaza tonight, an audible rhythm in the

air, and soon I detect the source: a drum circle of some 50 people or so. It seems choreographed, but most people are in street clothes—they seem to have come straight from work. A gentleman in his 60s is wearing a red headband, shaking maracas and doing pirouettes to the frenetic drum beat. He's really into it, but my guess is that he's an accountant or a lawyer by day. He just has that look.

I get to El Chamán, the *taquería* I've been recommended. It's nondescript and unpretentious on the inside, but it's packed. Apparently the secret I've been let in on is something

everyone already knows: This place makes some of the best tacos in the neighborhood. I order four tacos—two *al pastor*, two with steak, all topped with *queso manchego*, guacamole, and *picante* sauce on corn tortillas. They're divine; I slowly devour them one by one. I'm tempted to order more... but, alas, I'm stuffed after four. Everything, including two glasses of mezcal and a Victoria—my favorite Mexican beer—comes out to about US\$6. I chat with the waitress for a while, pay my bill, and head back out to *pasear* through the plaza once more.

I think about walking through the pop-up market where people are selling artisanal goods, but the drum circle is drawing me like a magnet...

This is the Mexico City I've fallen in love with... but this is just one Mexico City. Unlike many places you may have come across in *Overseas Living Letter*, Mexico City offers a seemingly unlimited amount of possibilities and experiences. With such a diverse array of life and culture, any attempt to define this place succinctly is like trying to find a blanket big enough to cover the ancient pyramids of Teotihuacán: It simply can't be done.

I'm going to take a stab at it anyway...

The Impossible Task: Succinctly Defining Mexico City's Broad Appeal

A mythical and modern metropolis founded by an advanced

indigenous people, Mexico City is a mesmerizing hub of human civilization. It's a world capital of culture and anthropology with a rich and fascinating history, an abundance of breathtaking architecture, and astounding gastronomy, to boot...

And for those with U.S. dollars, Mexico City is cheaper than it's ever been... and getting cheaper.

Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí paid the city one of its most memorable—if unconventional—compliments, as only Dalí could. He visited Mexico City just one time, in 1938, swearing to never return. He said he couldn't



Main fountain in Plaza Jardín Centenario by day

stand to be in a place more surreal than his paintings.

(In my case, one visit was not nearly enough to fully comprehend and appreciate this beautiful and chaotic urban masterpiece...)

Much has changed since Dalí's visit, but the surrealism has perhaps only intensified. At once sophisticated and sprawling, otherworldly and familiar, cosmopolitan and provincial, it's a city of delicious contradictions.

Long overlooked—and at times, even discouraged—as a travel or

retirement spot, Mexico City is suddenly the destination du jour on everyone's radar. Even *The New York Times* called Mexico City a top travel destination for 2016... and for good reason.

Mexico City stands alone among major urban centers in the world. Few places on earth can boast such an eclectic panorama of lifestyle, activities, landscape and cuisine—fewer still can make these claims and match Mexico City's year-round temperate climate.

Breaking The Rules Of "Big City" Living

Amid the wealth of culture, history, incredible food, and classic and modern architecture, it's the size of Mexico City alone that continually humbles visitors, newcomers, and lifelong inhabitants alike.

How big is Mexico City?

It has a population that equates to roughly half of Spain's; in fact, there are more people in Mexico City than all of Portugal. Not enough context? How about this: More people live in Mexico City—24 million, by some estimates—than all of Scandinavia. Tokyo is the only city in the world with a greater population.

And yet, Mexico City is without the coldness that seems requisite in a city of its size and significance. After all, this is still Latin America; ignore all of the beautiful parks and plazas and theaters and markets and delicious street food at every corner, and you're left with the warmth and welcoming

nature of the people of Mexico City, an endearing trait that seems to unify all Spanish-speaking cultures...

As I'm sure you've begun to suspect, there are a number of reasons Mexico City appeals to the would-be expat. The estimated 700,000 Americans who already live in the city are a testament to that.

Rebranding...

Mexico City is often referred to as "el D.F." (*el Distrito Federal*), but in 2016 the city voted in referendum to do away with the federal district distinction.

Much like Washington D.C.'s long-standing disgruntlement at being subjected to "taxation without representation," Mexico City has always been in the same situation... but no longer.

In 2017, it officially ratified its constitution, giving Mexico City more autonomy than it ever had before.

A major rebranding is took place to call the city "CDMX" rather than "el D.F." Throughout the city—in parks, on taxi cabs, on government-sponsored billboards—you can find giant block "CDMX" letters.

But federal district designations aside, don't be surprised when you continue to hear residents and others refer to the city as "el D.F." Old habits die hard.



So why did they all move here? A friend of mine from here who recently moved back after living in Spain for several years put it simply: "Se puede vivir como un rico sin serlo," he said. You can live like a rich man without being one...

But before we get too far into the appeal of Mexico City for locals and foreigners alike, here's a look at how the city got to where it is today...

From Tenochtitlán To Modern Mexico City: A History Of Envy And Intrigue

In the early 14th century, the rulers of the great Aztec Empire known as the Mexicas (may-SHEE-cahs) were in migration, searching for a place to establish a permanent imperial city. Eventually, they arrived on an island in the middle of the slowly evaporating Lake Texcoco, some 7,250 feet above sea level, in what is now known as the Valley of Mexico.

Upon arrival, they were met with an auspicious sign: an eagle with a serpent in its mouth, perched atop a nopal (prickly pear) cactus. According to legend, the eagle saluted the migrants, who believed

this to be an omen foretold by legend and a directive from their god Huitzilopochtli to build the imperial city at this site, which they believed to be the center of the universe. They called the city Tenochtitlán.

Tenochtitlan became arguably the most advanced pre-Columbian city in the Americas. Over time, it absorbed other cities that were established throughout the Valley of Mexico. Tenochtitlán eventually reached a population of some 300,000 in the late 15th century, making it one of the largest cities in the world at the time.

Then in 1519, two worlds collided. Glory- and gold-seeking conquistadors from Spain, led by Hernán Cortés, arrived to Tenochtitlán after a horseback journey from Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico. Upon climbing one of the great surrounding mountains and seeing Tenochtitlán for the first time, one of the Spaniards lamented that no city in Europe could ever match the beauty of the city before his eyes.

At first, the Mexicas believed the Spanish to be deities and treated them as such; they were in awe of these bearded, light-skinned men in brilliant suits of armor,



Statue in Zócalo commemorating Mexico City's origin story

Landmark Of Consequence: El Castillo De Chapultepec

Chapultepec Castle (Castillo de Chapultepec) is among the most remarkable landmarks in all of Mexico City and the site of many noteworthy historical events.

Located on a rocky plâteau amid the Bosque de Chapultepec (the largest urban green space in all of Latin America), Chapultepec Castle has the distinction of being the only castle in the Americas to ever be the home of a sovereign.

The purpose of the castle has varied throughout history. It was originally commissioned in the late 18th century to be the home for the Viceroy Bernardo de Gálvez during the era in which Mexico City earned the moniker "City of Palaces." The viceroy died during the castle's construction, never making it his home. The premises remained

mostly vacant until the 1830s, when it was repurposed as a military training facility.

In 1847, Chapultepec Castle fell to American troops in what proved to be a turning point in the Mexican-American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo at the war's end ceded one-third of Mexico's territory to the United States.

In 1864, Chapultepec Castle became the home of Maximilian I when he was declared Emperor of Mexico by Napoleon III. At this time, several improvements were made to the castle to make it suitable for the Austrian monarch and his wife, the Empress Charlotte.

When, under the leadership of Benito Juárez, Mexico once again

became a constitutional republic, the castle was unoccupied for a few years. Then it briefly designated an observatory site for astronomy and meteorology. Porfirio Díaz made the castle his presidential residence during his 35 years in office, which was among the reasons some say the Mexican Revolution started.

Finally, in the 1930s, Chapultepec was declared a national museum, and is among the most visited places in all of Mexico City. Visitors marvel at the relics from the time of Maximilian and Charlotte, the artwork, beautiful gardens, and breathtaking views of Mexico City from this unforgettable landmark.

If and when you go to Mexico City, I wouldn't miss this one.



riding upon horses and speaking a strange tongue...



Statue in Zócalo commemorating Mexico City's origin story

But the newcomers had colonial designs on this new land, and before long, the hospitality and goodwill soured. Within a couple of years, the Spanish had all but completely razed Tenochtitlan to the ground, building their own Spanish-style city in its wake and subjugating the indigenous people in the process. In 1521, Ciudad de México was officially incorporated, marking the beginning of an era of colonial rule.

In the 300 years that followed, Mexico City developed in ways completely unique from any other city in the Americas; a proper system of nobility, almost identical to that of the Old World, was established in what was then considered "New Spain." To house the capital city's viceroys and noblemen, exquisite palaces and increasingly more lavish haciendas were built, modeled after the grandeur of European capitals like Paris and Vienna. It was during this time that Mexico City came to be known as "the City of Palaces."

In 1821, Mexico City, officially "*el Distrito Federal*," became the seat of government of a new nation, as Mexico formally established its independence from Spain after a violent, 10-year struggle.

But throughout the 19th century, Mexico City continued to combat foreign invaders with imperial interests, particularly France and the United States. In 1847, during the Mexican-American War, the U.S. Army besieged the Chapultepec Castle at the Battle for Mexico City. (As a result, Mexico ceded territory in California, New Mexico, and Arizona to the United States.)

In 1867, Mexico City once and for all regained its sovereignty from foreign powers when President Benito Juárez ordered the execution by firing squad of Maximilian I, the Austrian who had ruled as Emperor of Mexico with the blessing of Napoleon III of France.

At last, Mexico had only itself to deal with...

In the early 20th century, the Mexican Revolution took hold throughout most of the country, including Mexico City. The unrest was prompted by widespread resentment for Porfirio Díaz, whose power had long gone unchecked during his 35-year presidency. Near the end of the bloody, messy, and confusing 10-year conflict, a new constitution was created that's still in use today.

The remainder of the 20th century was a time of rapid economic expansion, modernization and explosive population growth, bringing about a number of problems, which took the city a long

time to address. Twenty-four million people today... yet in 1900, there were only about 500,000.

High In The Sky, Cool In The Tropics

So, what's it like to live in Mexico City?

Let's first consider the climate. Because of the altitude—at least 7,250 feet everywhere in the city—it can take newcomers a day or two (or perhaps longer for some) to get used to. Even coming from Medellín, Colombia, which has an elevation of just under 5,000 feet, I could feel the symptoms—light-headedness, minor fatigue, maybe the feeling that you've had two or three glasses of mezcal...

To combat these marked albeit short-lived symptoms, I find myself taking an extra hour of sleep, and maybe a few extra ounces of (bottled) water, the first day I'm there. By the second or third full day at the very most, I find that my body has adjusted.

It's the altitude, however, that, despite being in the tropics, gives the city its comfortable, temperate climate. Temperatures tend to hover around 70 degrees Fahrenheit throughout most of the year. From November until February, one can expect more days in the 60s. I'm told, however, that it's not unusual—on rare occasion—for the temperature to dip into the high 40s in December and January... but I've been there that time of year and have been comfortable most days in short sleeves.

During the dry season, from March to May, temperatures push to the

mid-80-degree range. The summer—especially September—tends to be the rainiest time of year, but for many *chilangos* (people from Mexico City), it's also the best time of the year, as flowers in Mexico City's many beautiful parks are in full bloom.

For someone like me, who spent years experiencing both snowy winters and hot and humid summers in Baltimore, Maryland, on the U.S. East Coast, Mexico City essentially feels like spring year-round. Perhaps more accurately, if you're used to more extreme seasons, one can say that Mexico City goes from warm spring, to wet spring, to cool spring, back to warm spring once again.

No matter where you're coming from, it probably won't be necessary to reinvent your wardrobe before you get here.

Getting To Know Mexico City, Piece By Piece

From the very beginning of its storied history, even when the Aztec Empire still reigned, Mexico City has had the tendency to absorb and incorporate surrounding towns and cities in the Valley of Mexico. It's what makes the city so hard to wrap one's head around, even for those who have lived here their whole lives.

From the historic center, now known as *Zócalo* (the site of Tenochtitlán that the Mexicas believed to be the center of the universe), Mexico City sprawls in every direction in 16 *delegaciones*, or boroughs. Each borough has the feel of its own city, each comprised of its own diverse neighborhoods—referred to as *colonias*, of which there are

more than 300 in Mexico City—and distinctive landmarks. Truth be told, it would probably take at least a year's worth of issues of *Overseas Living Letter* to cover every *colonia* of Mexico City...

Rather than do that, I've hand-picked a few of my favorite places, plus a few others of note, in the supremely diverse and livable megalopolis that is Mexico City.

Zócalo

Formerly the center of Tenochtitlán, *Zócalo* is the cultural and political center of Mexico. Also known as *el Centro Histórico*, most of the buildings in the main square were built in the 16th century by the Spanish using the stones that had previously comprised the buildings of Tenochtitlán.



Cathedral of Mexico in Zócalo, Mexico City

Zócalo features some of Mexico's most famous landmarks, including the Presidential Palace, the Cathedral of Mexico, and the Art Museum of Mexico, as well as the National Palace of Mexico

where you can see Diego Rivera's brilliant murals telling the country's complex history.

Behind The Name

"*Zócalo*" got its name from when Mexico declared its independence from Spain. The statue of King Carlos IV of Spain at the very center of this part of the city was symbolically removed. There was no longer a foreign king overlooking Mexico City, statue or otherwise. In the spirit of independence, the name of what was left—just the pedestal, or *zócalo*—came to represent the whole city center.

My favorite is *el Palacio de Bellas Artes*, the Fine Arts Palace. Baroque in style with accents of art deco, the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* opened in 1938 and offers free admission on Sundays. Along with ballet, theater, and opera performances, it features work by Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco, and other Mexican artists that emerged to prominence in the early 20th century.



Palacio de Bellas Artes, Zócalo, Mexico City

After decades of neglect, there was a time not long ago when it was ill-advised to venture into *el Zócalo*... But, thanks to concerted preservation and restoration efforts by the government, *el Zócalo* has once again become a place that

Mexicans are proud to have visitors and newcomers see.

La Condesa And Roma

La Condesa and Roma are adjacent *colonias* in the Cuauhtémoc borough of Mexico City. Modern, hip, and livable, these two places are arguably the epicenter of cosmopolitan urban life and among the most desirable places to live in the city, both for locals and expats.

Both places are popular dining destinations, boasting some of the best restaurants in the city. A personal favorite of mine is Lardo in La Condesa (Calle Agustín Melgar 6, Condesa 06140), which has a large, open bar space and serves many traditional Mexican dishes, as well as some with Spanish and Arabic influence.



Parque de España, Condesa, Mexico City



Parque de México, Condesa, Mexico City

Between the two, La Condesa is slightly more upscale and has two of the most beautiful parks in all of

Mexico City: Parque de España and the bigger, grander, more exquisite Parque de México. Both parks are enclosed by Avenida de Amsterdam, a large, elliptical, and tree-covered street. It's shaped this way because it was a racetrack back in the day. Nowadays, it's a nice place to take a stroll, and is a popular destination for runners and dog-walkers.



An apartment building in Condesa, adjacent to Parque de México

Roma is technically divided into two *colonias*, Roma Norte and Roma Sur. Truth be told, there is not a whole lot that distinguishes the north and south. My initial impression was that the two Romas have the feel of Williamsburg, the trendy Brooklyn neighborhood.



An apartment building in Condesa, adjacent to Parque de México

Roma is full of beautiful architecture, boutique stores, plenty of green space and no shortage of fantastic dining. A great local place for tacos—of which Mexico City has no shortage—is Taquería Álvaro Obregón, on the street bearing the same name (Calle Álvaro Obregón 110, Roma Norte, 06700).



The Plaza de Rio de Janeiro is a popular place to pasear in Mexico City's Roma neighborhood

Another of my favorite places to eat in the area is Cantina La Número 1 (Av. Cuauhtémoc 150, Doctores, 06720). Though technically in colonia Doctores, it's right on the border with Roma del Norte. The lamb chop was out of this world. For the adventurous, I recommend trying the *escamoles*—ant eggs—a local delicacy and one of Mexico City's many culinary vestiges of the Aztec Empire still enjoyed today.

Coyoacán

Close your eyes for a second and imagine what a borough of a city of some 20 million people might look like. Whatever comes to mind, I guarantee it looks nothing like Coyoacán.

Much of Coyoacán feels like a quiet pueblo, and it's among the most distinct boroughs of Mexico City. About 10 km south of Zócalo, it's not hard to see that Coyoacán used to be its own city, separate from the rest of Mexico City. The colorful buildings, rarely more than two or three stories high, give this area its distinct character.

Coyoacán is where famed Mexican painter Frida Kahlo lived and endured a turbulent marriage with perhaps the other most famous artist in the history of Mexico, muralist Diego Rivera. Her "Casa Azul," both her childhood home and the house she lived in at the end of her life, following her separation from Rivera, is a popular tourist destination.



Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo statue in a cultural space in Coyoacán



Frida Kahlo's Blue House in Coyoacán, now a popular museum

Coyoacán is also where Hernán Cortés built his hacienda. These days, the property is a popular wedding venue, as you'll see from one of the videos I captured. Mexican poet and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz also spent his final days here, in La Fonoteca, now an open cultural space.

The *colonia* del Carmen is the center of the action in Coyoacán. The main plaza, Plaza Jardín Centenario—the scene captured at the beginning of this article—is full of fine restaurants, cafés, street performers, and fortune tellers. A pop-up market is located here on most days.

Overall, Coyoacán has a bohemian, artsy vibe, replete with quaint and esoteric bookstores and artisanal shops. It's the place you're most likely to find expats wearing Birkenstocks and discussing art and politics on park benches.

I've already recommended El Chamán (Calle Caballoco 6 Local 1, Villas Coyoacán, La Concepción, 04000) for some outstanding tacos. For a more upscale meal in this area, check on Los Danzantes (Plaza Jardín Centenario 12, Coyoacán 04000). It boasts an outstanding selection of mezcal and offers modern takes on traditional Mexican dishes—especially from Oaxaca. I very much enjoyed my *lengua en cuñete*, cow tongue in a soup of pickled veggies.

Polanco

Polanco is the most well-to-do neighborhood in all of Mexico City, with a broad selection of fine dining and upscale shopping. This neighborhood includes the

immaculately maintained Lincoln Park (el Parque Lincoln), which has a statue of Abraham Lincoln donated by the U.S. government to the people of Mexico as a gesture of goodwill.



Lincoln Park (Parque Lincoln) in Polanco, Mexico City

Many of the decorous homes here are standalone houses and gated, but there are apartment buildings as well. A good place for a fancy drink in Polanco is Gin Gin, a stylish, upscale bar. Also, for a good bookstore—which also has great coffee and breakfast—check out El Péndulo. There are others throughout the city, but the best location is in Polanco.



El Péndulo Café and Bookstore in Polanco, Mexico City

Avenida Presidente Masaryk is one of the main avenues in Polanco and the epitome of Mexico City's glamorous side. Essentially Mexico's 5th Avenue, Avenida Masaryk is

considered one of most high-end shopping streets in the world.

For all its pomp and wealth, Polanco—against all odds—also has one of the best hole-in-the-wall taco joints in all of Mexico City. It's called Taquería Turix (Calle Emilio Castelar 212, Esquina Henrik Ibsen 11550) and it's well worth standing in the line that perpetually seems to go out the door and up the block for the *cochinita pibil*, a pork dish typical of the Yucatán region of Mexico.

Paseo De La Reforma

Built during the reign of Maximilian I, this is Mexico's answer to Paris' Champs-Élysées. Maximilian wanted a direct route from his home, Chapultepec Castle, to Zócalo, the main city center.



El Ángel de la Independencia, Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City

At the center of el Paseo de la Reforma is el Ángel de la Independencia, one of the most recognizable monuments in all of Mexico City. Paseo de la Reforma is also the financial center of Mexico, with the tall buildings—the only part of the city with skyscrapers—as proof. BBVA Bancomer, Santander, and other big banks have their Mexican headquarters here, as well as the Mexican Stock Exchange.

Not unlike Polanco, there are a number of upscale shopping offerings along el Paseo de la Reforma.

My favorite aspect of this grand boulevard is that cars and other motor vehicles are prohibited from passing through on Sundays. It's closed down for bikers and pedestrians, of which thousands take advantage.

Escandón

Escandón seems to be the “next” Roma or La Condesa in Mexico City. Perhaps a bit more residential, the architecture is a combination of modern art deco buildings and those restored from the “Porfiriato,” the three-decade presidency of Porfirio Díaz, a time of economic growth marked by the construction of many of Mexico City's most emblematic structures.

Located in the Miguel Hidalgo borough, Escandón is also among the most desirable places to live in all of Mexico City. It has a combination of the broad avenues of Roma and La Condesa as well as narrower, charming streets with colorful buildings draped in bougainvillea.

Tepito

It would feel disingenuous not to include a place like Tepito in a comprehensive article on Mexico City. Tepito an authentic working-class *chilango* neighborhood, full of markets selling meats, vegetables, clothing, consumer goods—almost anything imaginable—all at a discount.

However, a visit to Tepito is not for the faint of heart; my friend Ernesto

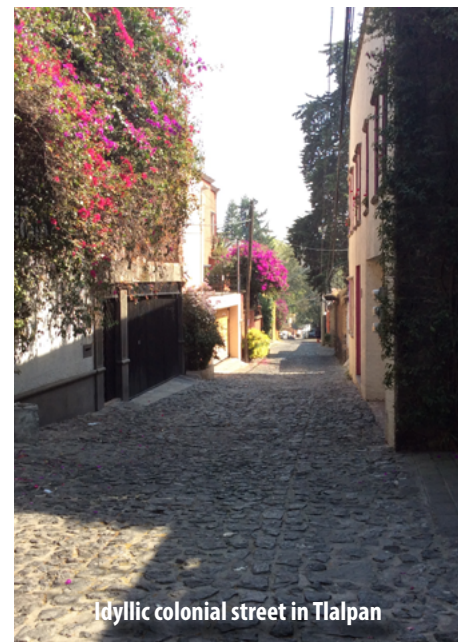
told me that his aunt went into Tepito one time and had her earrings stolen... straight from her ears.

I suppose that's the kind of risk you run by venturing into the blue-collar heartbeat of Mexico City...

Lisa of Expat and Foreigners Support and Services has been living in Mexico City for three years now. She tells me she loves going to Tepito, both for the thrill of it, and for the glory of finding a wide range of items on sale, including her daughter's Halloween costume this past year. More on Lisa and her perspectives in the “expat interview” section of this issue...

Tlalpan

Tlalpan is among the oldest and most charming parts of all of Mexico City. It's also the largest borough by land area, much of which is a large natural park, protected from development. Like Coyoacán, it used to be its own separate city and much of it feels like its own quaint, peaceful village, distinct from the rest of Mexico City.



Idyllic colonial street in Tlalpan

Another popular spot for expats, Tlalpan has one of the many British-American schools in the city, and has all of the features of comfortable urban (or suburban) living. The metro system doesn't connect very easily, however, so if you're trying to go between Tlalpan and the rest of the city, your best bet is either the metro bus, Uber, or a taxi.

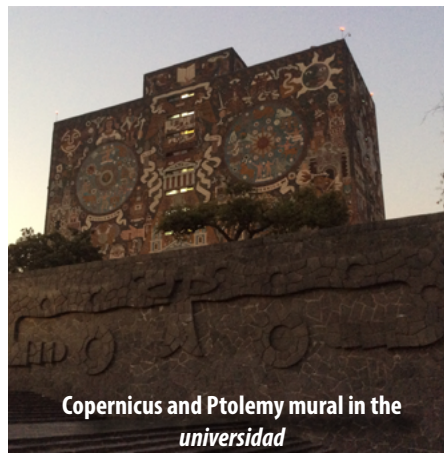


Tlalpan is full of quaint, narrow colonial streets, such as the one in the photo above. Much of Tlalpan centro's appeal is in Plaza de la Constitución, a large, beautiful central plaza. Not quite the size of Plaza Jardín Centenario in Coyoacán, the main plaza of Tlalpan centro nonetheless has its cafés, markets, restaurants, and ice cream shops to make for a delightful Sunday afternoon.

Ciudad Universitaria

This is the area of the city where UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) is located, which is considered one of the finest institutions of higher learning

in all of Latin America. UNAM is a major reason Mexico City attracts intellectuals and scholars from all over the world.



The buildings are all made from volcanic rock, obtained from the mountains that surround the Valley of Mexico, giving the campus its distinct, earthy feel. There are large works of art displayed throughout the campus, including sculptures and murals, like the one honoring Ptolemy and Copernicus that you can see in the picture above.

The UNAM campus is considered a UNESCO World Heritage site and is inviting for visitors. It's one of the many places within the city an expat interested in learning or improving their Spanish can go to take classes.

I must say, one of the biggest surprises for me was seeing how many football—not *fútbol*—fields there were on the UNAM campus. It's no secret that Mexico has become one of the biggest international markets for the NFL, but I didn't realize how many people were actually playing the sport.

Xochimilco

Located on the south side of Xochimilco Lake in the south part

of the Mexico City, Xochimilco (so-chee-MEAL-co) is a popular borough for tourists and locals alike. Often known as "the Venice of Mexico City," Xochimilco is the best place to go for a romantic gondola ride this side of the Mediterranean.

Admittedly, many go to Xochimilco under more festive pretenses...

Taking a ride in the brightly colored gondolas (called *trajineras*) is a must for any amount of time you spend in Mexico City. Hire your own private captain—and even your own mariachi band—and take in the beautiful waterways of this one-of-a-kind part of the city.

Many well-traveled expats have told me that this is their favorite place anywhere in all of Mexico...

Also in Xochimilco, one can see *chinampas*, farms that use the same agricultural practices as the Aztecs.

What Makes Mexico City Tick

Mexico is the second-largest economy in Latin America, trailing only Brazil in the region. As Mexico's undisputed economic and political capital, as well a major financial and business hub of Latin America and an "alpha" world capital, there are few industries that don't have a presence in Mexico City, if any.



Many multinational companies have their Latin American headquarters here. Among the biggest industries in Mexico City are telecommunications, tourism, finance, and retail. Visit a place like Santa Fe, a high-rise commercial area in the southwestern part of the city, and you can get a sense of just how affluent and commercially developed Mexico City really is.

Tourism continues to rise in Mexico City, something which everyone in the city seems to be proud of and making great effort to accommodate.

Additionally, there is a thriving “informal” economy all throughout Mexico City, consisting of street-food stands, pop-up markets, sellers of artisanal crafts, street musicians, and more. It’s one of the things that most impresses me about Mexico City; while you do see some beggars in certain parts of the city, there is a pervasive entrepreneurial spirit that seems to drive most everyone to make an honest living, sometimes in the most creative of ways.



Markets—both permanent and of the pop-up variety—are all over Mexico City, offering every kind of food imaginable, artisan products, and more

Getting Around And To Mexico City

In a city so expansive with so many people, it shouldn’t be of much surprise that getting around Mexico City has the potential to be a bit complicated... In fact, I’m told that some residents of Mexico City spend up to 45 days per year just getting from A to B. It’s not hard to believe, and it’s likely the reason many try to live close to where they work.

That said, it doesn’t have to be complicated, and there is a wide range of options for getting around. The metro subway system will take you almost everywhere worth going in the city, and then some. It costs just 5 pesos per ride—whether you use a metrocard or buy a *boleto sencillo*, a single-ride ticket. The metro is safe and reliable, though it can at times be very crowded, especially during rush hour.



A map of Mexico City's sprawling metro system

One Friday evening, I had to wait for four trains to pass until I was able to get on board. There were just too many people, packed in

like sardines...

However, that was a rare instance, and I would encourage anyone to use the metro when they can.

The public transportation system also includes the metro bus system, another reliable way to get around. For just a peso more per ride than the subway, the metro bus is often an option for getting to places the subway won’t take you. Also, since the metro bus has its own dedicated lane, it’s typically not at the mercy of the often hellacious traffic that cars and private buses have to deal with.

Another great option—especially within or between adjoining *colonias*—is the Ecobici, Mexico City’s public bike system. An annual membership costs just 400 pesos. For short-term visitors, a day pass on the Ecobici is 90 pesos.



Ecobici, Mexico City's public bike system

Uber is also widely used and is incredibly cheap, especially considering the favorable exchange rate. Taxis are OK to use, but I’d say Uber is the safer and more reliable option.

As far as getting in and out of Mexico City, Benito Juárez

International Airport is your best bet. A modern and comfortable airport, many major airlines have daily flights in and out of here, and it's readily accessible from most places within the city (about 25 minutes from Roma and La Condesa, for example). Southwest Airlines recently opened up inexpensive service to and from Mexico City through Juárez Airport, a major boon for American expats looking to go to and from the States.

From the airport, the metro system is accessible, but I'd advise a first-time visitor to either get an Uber (which you can access on your phone from one of the many Wi-Fi hotspots in the airport) or catch a cab from one of the official city taxis, painted pink with "CDMX" in big block letters on the side.

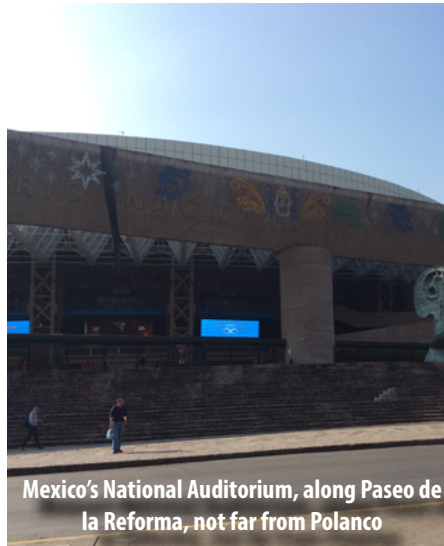
What Is There To Do In Mexico City?

The better question might be, "What isn't there to do in Mexico City?" And I'm not sure I have a concrete answer for that one...

For The Culture Culture...

As I'm sure you've already come to realize, Mexico City is drenched in culture and activities... from fine art to ballet to *lucha libre* (Mexican wrestling) to opera and theater, this place offers it all.

Forget expensive European capitals like Paris. For the sophisticated art lover, Mexico City is perhaps the optimal destination for relocation. This assertion is hard to argue with when you consider that Mexico City has the most museums of any city in the world.



Mexico's National Auditorium, along Paseo de la Reforma, not far from Polanco

El Bosque de Chapultepec (often referred to as simply "Chapultepec") is another noteworthy place when it comes to recreation in Mexico City. Located along el Paseo de la Reforma—between the financial heart of Mexico City and Polanco—this is the largest urban green space in all of Latin America. It's a great place to take a stroll, go for a jog, or ride in a paddle boat. There's also a nice zoo within the park.

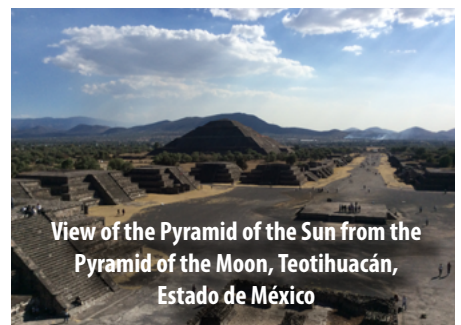
In addition to el Castillo de Chapultepec (see sidebar on page 11), Chapultepec has two of Mexico's most important museums: el Soumaya, a modern art museum designed by famed architect Frank Gehry and sponsored by Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim, and the Mexican Museum of Anthropology, beautifully designed and containing artifacts of the many indigenous groups who have lived in Mexico through the centuries.



Artifacts from Mexico City's famed Museum of Anthropology



While the anthropology museum is incredible, a visit to the pyramids of Teotihuacán is a must for a firsthand perspective of Mexican antiquity. Located about 40 km north of city limits, this well-preserved ancient city is an absolute marvel of human history. To this day, nobody knows where the pyramids came from; the Aztecs found the city completely abandoned and were so impressed by what they saw that they gave the place its ethereal name, which translates roughly to "where men become gods."



View of the Pyramid of the Sun from the Pyramid of the Moon, Teotihuacán, Estado de México

A Sporting Chance...

For sports aficionados, Mexico City is a great place as well. Soccer is big, as you might have guessed, and the city has three teams: Pumas, Cruz Azul, and Club América. Club América is essentially Mexico's Yankees; they're at once the most loved and hated team in the country. Cruz Azul is the choice squad of blue-collar folks, while Pumas—sponsored by UNAM—are somewhere in between.

But it's not all soccer in Mexico City. The NFL is huge here—you can tell by the sheer volume of people who wear NFL gear. In recent years, Mexico City has hosted an annual NFL game, which will likely continue for years to come.

The NBA has caught on to this trend as well. There have been major games played here and even talks of bringing a team to the city.

A Foodie's Paradise...

Of course, it's hard to discuss activities in Mexico City without mentioning the food.



Street food is ubiquitous in Mexico City and is a typical dining option for all walks of life

Whether it's on the street, in a fancy restaurant, or a local joint, it's hard to come by a bad meal in Mexico City. To be sure, Mexican cuisine is diverse, and tastes from all over the country find their way to the capital. In fact, for all its richness and diversity, traditional Mexican food has been declared an intangible UNESCO world treasure.

But a word to the wise: When the waiter brings different salsas to accompany your meal, try a small taste of the salsa before you lather your food with it—even if you think you've seen the salsa before. Suffice it to say I learned this lesson the hard way—and, unfortunately, the lesson entailed more than just a burning mouth for a couple of hours...

And if you get tired of eating Mexican all the time, rest assured to know that the city has outstanding food from virtually everywhere in the world.

Where Is Mexico City Headed?

As the capital of the country, with the second-biggest GDP in Latin America, Mexico City is the driver of Mexico's economic well-being and is in a constant state of expansion and improvement. Like cosmopolitan centers in the United States and Europe, Mexico City is a breeding ground for new urban trends—yet is ever mindful of its colorful past.

The Mexican peso is already the cheapest it's ever been against the

dollar at the moment of writing this—and it's expected to drop further. Though disheartening for those who get paid in pesos, it's a major boon for Americans looking to move or buy real estate here.

With the rhetoric and economic ripple effect coming from the United States in recent years, one might suspect that such uncertainty could breed backlash towards Americans—but that is hardly the case. The people of Mexico City are as welcoming as ever. Come here with a respectful and curious mindset, and they will be respectful of you.

In the end, Mexico has its own controversial politicians to deal with.

Corruption and controversy are nothing new for Mexico. Injustices do occur, and there is most certainly a great deal of poverty in many parts of the city. In the end, life continues to hum along, as if impervious to political happenings, domestic or foreign.

About Mexico City's Expat Community

Chilangos are proud of the fact that people are drawn to this city from all over the world, and the expat community includes folks from

the United States, Spain, Canada, France, the U.K., Germany, every country in Latin America... and then some. I've met expats from as far reaching places as Barbados, South Africa, and Israel.

With millions of expats in this city, there are groups and events catered exclusively for people from elsewhere, and it's really not hard to find them. One good resource is a website called InterNations. Also, there are a number of Facebook groups for expats focused on anything from eating out and having drinks, to reading books to playing sports to absorbing Mexico City's culture and comparing notes on how to make the most of living in this city.

I can't tell you how many times throughout the writing of this issue that I've found myself in conversation with someone who has insisted on telling me I need to know the "real Mexico City"... and how often that person's version has been unlike anyone else's I had previously talked to.

But therein lies the beauty of Mexico City: The city thrives on contradictions. One can live what seems like an infinite number of experiences here, and it enables a great deal of what I'll call "cultural flexibility." For the newcomer who's up for it, it's possible to completely immerse oneself in the culture and community to perhaps lead a life that's completely unrecognizable to the one you may leave behind. This is especially the case considering the welcoming nature of people from Mexico City.

Then again, if you are attached to certain aspects of American

culture, you'll be happy to know that you won't have to make too many sacrifices; in fact, it's possible to, in a sense, "create" a life here full of the cultural comforts of your life in the States.

In other words, in Mexico City, it's up to you how *chilango* your life becomes... not there is just one way to be *chilango*.

Learning Español Chilango... Or Not

English is relatively widely spoken throughout Mexico City. I've been impressed and delighted by the English I've heard from the people I'd least expect to know it. Visitors and expats will find a great number of people from Mexico City who speak English clearly and idiomatically and who are eager to practice and learn more.

I would go so far as to say that it's possible to have a great experience living here without ever speaking Spanish...

That said, far from everyone speaks English. In my opinion, for the absolute best possible experience living here, it would be advisable to acquire at least some basic Spanish vocabulary. As with most places, making some show of effort to learn or respect the local language will make for a much fuller experience. Start off by building some vocabulary using a language app like Duolingo, or maybe check out the BBC's foreign language resources.

Then, once you get to Mexico City, there are many options to continue to get your Spanish up to speed. Language schools are ubiquitous

throughout the city, and most of the dozens of Mexico City's universities offer Spanish classes for visitors and newcomers. Private tutors are also easy to find, which may be the best way to get one's conversation abilities up to speed. Patience, practice, and an open mind go a long way...

Having lived in both Spain and Colombia previously, I can tell you that Mexican Spanish is not without its charms and—at times infuriating—quirks. However, Mexico City is a great place to learn Spanish for the first time—or to polish a foundation—as people here tend to speak slowly and enunciate every word. Just don't expect to master the slang overnight.

As a side note, while Spanish is by far the most widely spoken language in Mexico, there are more than 60 native languages spoken throughout the country. Many folks from Mexico City pride themselves on knowing how to speak Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs.

How Low Can You Go: Cost Of Living In Mexico City

An Uber driver told me that he has friends that live off of 30 pesos a week in Mexico City...

This is the most extreme example I've encountered of how the cost of living in Mexico City varies greatly depending on where you live and spend your time. A fancy house in Polanco, for example, could cost up to 40,000 pesos per month.

Then again, I have a friend living in Roma—a very desirable neighborhood—who pays roughly

6,000 pesos for a room in a nice apartment, centrally located. Considering how nice of a place it is, it's not hard to imagine just how low the prices go the farther you move from the most livable parts of the city...

But even if you live somewhere where the rents or mortgages are highest, Polanco or La Condesa, for example, expect your bills to be significantly lower than what you're used to in the States—perhaps with the exception of cable and internet.

Friends of mine, a couple who moved from Richmond, Virginia, have expressed the affordability of having a maid who comes to the house to cook and clean as being among the biggest surprises in Mexico City. They said this is something they wouldn't dream of having back in the States, and yet the price—about 400 pesos for services provided twice per week—and convenience afforded by the maid's services makes it almost a no-brainer.

Eating out—even at the most expensive places—will seem remarkably cheap compared with a restaurant in the States. What's incredible is that you don't have to go to the fanciest places to eat well in Mexico City. My most expensive meal—which included several dishes, a couple of beers, a glass of mezcal for good health, and dessert came out to about US\$45.

And that was *by far* the most I've paid for a meal...

It's extremely common to have meals on the street—and that goes for all walks of life in Mexico City.

A fun game to play here is “find the cheapest street tacos”... the cheapest I've found were 5 pesos. Game on.

Cheap Peso And Rising Demand: Mexico City's Booming Property Market

Mexico City has a dynamic property market ripe for foreign investment. It's evident just walking the streets, as nearly everywhere you go there are billboards and posters advertising apartments and standalone homes for sale.

Browse any of the many real estate sites catering to Mexico City (see the Rolodex), and you'll find the same story. It may be impossible to quantify just how many options there are for property purchase in Mexico City.

For potential buyers, where to buy is best answered by why you're buying. Generally speaking, a speculative play is probably best in up-and-coming neighborhoods such as Escandón, Insurgentes Sur, or Nápoles.

Some may be led to believe the uncertainty the Mexican economy faces could wreak havoc on the property market here, rendering a pure speculation play a bit more risky.

But after conversations with a Mexican economist—as well as several real estate professionals here—I'm convinced that right now is an excellent time to buy property in Mexico City, external politics notwithstanding. Demand is on the rise, much of which can be attributed to waves of

people moving in from Estado de México, just outside of Mexico City. Property values in most parts of the city are expected to rise significantly over the next three to five years.

To be sure—the places listed are far from the only good places to live, but places like Coyoacán, Roma, La Condesa, Polanco, and others offer a quality of life that's hard to match anywhere.

As far as renting goes, it's incredible how far money can go in a city this dynamic and livable. A three bedroom apartment in Roma can cost as little as 20,000 pesos per month... For those really living on a budget and willing to live beyond the most desirable places in the city, well, it's not that all different from “find the cheapest tacos” game. Note, however, that while a 5 peso taco may still be delicious, renting anything below a few thousand pesos per month and you're making some serious sacrifices for your lifestyle and safety.

Signing a renter's lease requires an *aval* as a consigner, that is, a person who owns property in Mexico City. A workaround for this in many cases is to pay the equivalent of two deposits on a house or apartment you're renting. In any case, hiring a lawyer is probably the best way to go for navigating this process, especially if your Spanish is not strong.

It should be noted that the prices you see for places online compared to what you're told in person can vary dramatically, especially if you're navigating webpages in English. For the

prospective buyer or renter alike, make appointments to see a place in person and meet face-to-face with a seller or real estate agency before you even think about naming a price of any kind.

Mexican Health Care

There are three tiers of health care services available in Mexico:

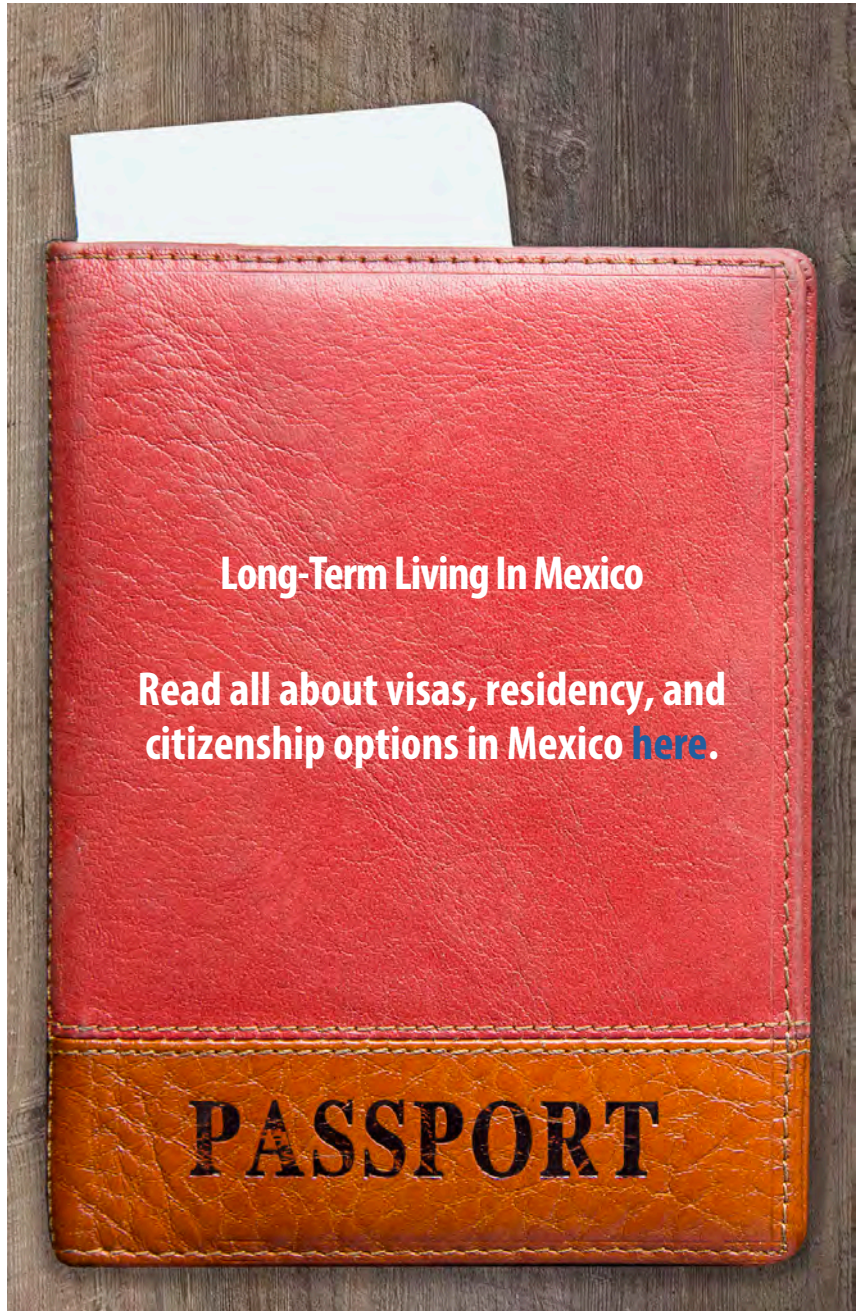
- First, there are government services that cover basic needs for the uninsured—of which more than half of all Mexicans depend on.
- Second, there is health care offered through IMSS, Mexico's social security, which is available to legal foreign residents. This tier is free at the point of care.
- Third, private insurance.

The quality of care provided by the former two options is pretty poor, and, for expats, it's most advisable to opt for the remaining option, which is buying private insurance.

Generally speaking, private insurance is relatively inexpensive, but the price can vary greatly, depending on what you're covered for, and which hospitals you have access to.

Some of the best private insurance plans offer coverage that would rival the best health care in the States, and it's not difficult to find a top-notch doctor who speaks English fluently.

In terms of where to get care, the most reputable hospital networks are Centro Médico ABC, Médica Sur, and Hospital Ángeles. See the Rolodex for more information on each of these.



Setting Yourself Up: Ease Of Doing Business

In order to obtain a bank account in Mexico, one must show proof of legal residency (a nonresident or permanent visa), a valid passport, proof of address (via a bill of some kind), and a minimum deposit that will vary from bank to bank but won't exceed 1,000 pesos. If you have all of these things ready, it's possible to walk into a bank and open an account in the same day.

Personally, I have checking and investing accounts through Charles Schwab that suit me for now. They enable me to take out money from any ATM in the world with no surcharges—ever. It's worth looking into for a stay abroad for any amount of time. For someone who travels as much as I do, a bank account like this is a critical thing to have.

To work in Mexico City, most temporary residences alone won't cut it. You'll need to turn in a specific job offer, along with your residency credentials, passports, and some paperwork as a part of the application.

If, however, you acquire a permanent residency, you won't have to fill out any further paperwork. You're already good to go.

Note that as a foreign resident, any changes to your job or living situation—such as moving to a new address—will have to be reported to Mexican immigration authorities.

Setting up a business in Mexico City is relatively straightforward and

inexpensive. Still—just like applying for residency—it is recommended to enlist the help of an attorney within Mexico City, as well as an accountant, of which there are many listed in the Rolodex.

A limited liability company (*sociedad de responsabilidad limitada*) can be set up in Mexico with a minimum of 3,000 pesos in fixed capital (about US\$150 at the time this writing). A limited liability stock corporation (*sociedad anónima*, or SA) can be started for 50,000 pesos in fixed capital. Unlike an LLC, an SA will require the company to contract an accounting firm to oversee proper management of the company.

The steps for getting a business off the ground are as follows: First, you'll have to register the company name with the Ministry of External Affairs. Next, you need to enter a "proforma" agreement, in which the proprietors of the company agree to follow the commerce laws of Mexico and not invoke those of one's native country.

After that, you'll need to enlist an attorney to draft the charter and bylaws of the company, which should outline the corporate structure, stock provisions, management provisions, provisions for liquidation, and more. The charter will have to be notarized and filed with the Public Registry of Commerce.

Once the charter has been filed, the company will need a tax registry number, which can be obtained through the Sistema de Administración Tributaria. From there, you'll need to register the business to Mexican Social Security

(IMSS) followed by the local tax administration, la Secretaría de Finanzas del Gobierno del Distrito Federal. The next step is to register the business with the local *delegación* (borough) and then with the Sistema de Información Empresarial (SIEM), the national business registry.

Los Impuestos: The Tax Man Cometh

Mexico has a progressive tax code depending on level of income, ranging from 1.92% to 35%. The threshold for the highest personal income tax rate (35%) is 3,898,140.13 pesos annually.

Nonresidents who work in Mexico are exempt from paying taxes on the first 125,000 pesos they earn. Beyond that amount, they are subject to pay 15% to 20% of their total earnings.

There is no state income tax in Mexico City—nor in any state in Mexico. For businesses, the corporate tax rate is 30%, which is a bit high for a developing country.

Gains made from selling securities (stocks and bonds) are subject to a 10% tax. Also, there is a 16% VAT (sales tax) for most transactions in Mexico.

Mexico has a double taxation treaty with the United States. Mexico will not collect taxes on income from outside of Mexico—at least for most of the countries that I'm aware of.

It's highly recommended for someone with some sources of monthly income within Mexico—especially those who have

started a business—to hire a local professional to aid in filing taxes properly. In the Rolodex section of this issue, I've provided a number of local agencies that can provide accounting services, whether it's for your personal income, or for taxes pertaining to a business you open up in Mexico City.

Cash Or Credit?

With the exception of buying street food, or other goods from Mexico City's "informal" economy, credit cards are accepted almost everywhere. However, I'd advise to carry some cash at all times.

As I've mentioned a couple of times already, the Mexican peso is cheaper than it's ever been against the dollar. As of this writing, it's at 21.80 pesos to the dollar. All signs seems to suggest that the peso will only continue to drop from here...

Staying Connected: Phone And Internet

Getting a cell phone doesn't require residence papers; if you have a "liberated" cell phone, all you need to do is buy a SIM card from a Mexican carrier, and you're good to go.

You can also buy a "simple" phone for relatively cheap—I've seen them for as little as 200 pesos in certain places in Mexico City, though I'd bet my last peso that you could find one for even cheaper.

Once you have a new SIM card for your existing phone, or a new device just for Mexico, you can choose to either sign up for a monthly plan or pay-as-you-go, which requires recharging of *saldo* (credit) as needed. The majority of

expats I know opt for the latter, as it doesn't require an annual contract. You can recharge your phone for credit at convenience stores like 7-Eleven or Oxxo, or online.

A data plan in Mexico will cost somewhere in the neighborhood of 800 pesos per month; most people I've talked to who do pay-as-you-go seem to end up spending about the same amount.

The biggest carrier in Mexico is TelCel, owned by Carlos Slim. Other options include Iusacell, Nextel, Movistar, and Unefon.

In terms of internet, you will likely have to get a contract through TelMex, which was a literal monopoly up until recently. TelMex still has the best infrastructure of any cell phone company in Mexico, and it offers plans that bundle in Wi-Fi starting at about 400 pesos per month.

LGBT Welcoming?

As a modern, cosmopolitan city, Mexico City is indeed LGBT friendly. Same-sex couples have complete and entire equal protection under the law and are not afraid to show their affection with one another publicly.

Mexico City is, in fact, the only place in Mexico where gay marriage is legal; same-sex couples come from all over the country to get married here. Further, Mexico passed a law requiring other states in Mexico to recognize gay marriages that take place in Mexico City.

Zona Rosa continues to be among the most notable gay-friendly and progressive areas in the city. But,

these days, it's far from the only place that's welcoming to the LGBT community. Roma, La Condesa, and Coyoacán are progressive enclaves as well, and same-sex couples need not exercise caution when showing affection anywhere in the city.

Your Pets in Mexico City

With its many parks and innovative green spaces, Mexico City is a great city to have a dog. The downside of this is that you have to be careful where you step; unfortunately, not everyone in Mexico City is courteous when it comes to cleaning up after their pets.

If you want to bring a pet with you when you move to Mexico City, it's quite simple. You'll just need for your veterinarian to sign an International Certificate of Good Health (Form 77-043) and to immunize your pet for rabies and distemper no more than 15 days before entering the country.

It's advised to have all information on these forms clearly filled out, and to bring a duplicate copies of each when you pass through Mexican customs and immigration. As long as your pets are properly immunized and you have the documents to show it, you won't have to worry about your pet being quarantined when entering the country.

Inconveniences and Annoyances

Up until recently, Mexico City was infamous for its pollution and poor air quality. But, thanks to innovative measures to combat this problem, the problem has been steadily

declining for the past 15 years. A couple such measures include prohibiting cars with certain license plates from being driven on certain days of the week and making public transportation free on select days of the year. Other cities with pollution problems, like Paris and Medellín, have adopted similar measures.

Ultimately, the most common complaint I hear from people living in Mexico City is the traffic. If you're driving or taking a cab somewhere, sometimes it can take up to an hour longer than expected to get from one place to another. This is one of the reasons why, in general, people in Mexico City are not known for their punctuality.

It should be noted that Mexico City is in an active tectonic region, and people who live here are quite accustomed to minor earthquakes about once per year. There are also active volcanoes in the region surrounding Mexico City in the Valley of Mexico, but generally speaking, the volcanoes pose no threat to the city's inhabitants.

Parking can be another challenge—particularly in the oldest, most colonial sections of the city like Coyoacán, Tlalpan, and Zócalo. Expect to pay as much as 200 pesos to park in certain parts of town; if you're living in Coyoacán or Tlalpan, you will want to pay for a garage or a parking space for your car, which can cost as little as 400 pesos per month.

Depending on their level of travel experience and time spent out of their home country, some expats have talked about being more vigilant in Mexico City than they're used to. I personally can't say (knock



on wood) I've ever felt like I've been in real danger since I've been in Mexico City.

I have heard stories of robberies and rip-offs from various people that are a bit unsettling—but let's face it: Crime is to be expected in a city this big. As long as you are aware of your surroundings, and don't venture into a part of town ill-advised, you're unlikely to encounter any problems.

The majority of the places I've mentioned in this article are safe at most times of the day, with the exception of Tepito, or a place like Iztapalapa. Zócalo is also known to get dangerous in certain parts at nighttime. Use your head, don't go somewhere you're not supposed to be, and you'll be fine. On the flipside, I'm told that if you

move to and establish yourself in one of these places, the people there will look after you and treat you like their own—more so than any other place in the city.

Is Mexico City The Place For You?

Given its size, diversity of landscape and varying neighborhoods, Mexico City is a place where a range of people could thrive. Very different types of people have told me—for a wide-range of reasons—that they can't imagine living anywhere else ever again. It's a city where you can truly have it all without being prohibitively wealthy.

In terms of living here with young children, I've heard mixed feedback; some say it's a city built for kids. Mexico is, ultimately, an

incredibly family-centric society, and the range of activities for children of all ages is a testament to this. Others tell me they'd prefer to live in a place where they can have a yard for their kids to play around; to be sure, there are most certainly places in the city where this need can be met. I suspect for many, this is simply a matter of adjusting to a new, complex and—at times—overwhelming place.

That said, places like Tlalpan and Coyoacán, among other areas, offer a quiet existence... but, in the end, if you don't plan on spending all of your time in those places alone, it's inevitable that you'll encounter urban chaos at some point. If you never—never, ever—want to experience that, I'd advise looking to move somewhere other than Mexico City.

Then again, come see this place for yourself before you rule it out...

You'll probably be surprised by what you find.

Also, I'm not sure it's the best place in the world for someone who needs to have extreme outdoor sports readily accessible; the rugged outdoorsman will have to go a few hours outside of the city for climbing, kayaking, and the like.

But for the lover of culture, great food, art, architecture, and endless entertainment options, Mexico City awaits you. Trust me: It's not going to get much better than this—especially not for the price.. 🎧



About The Author

Patrick Little is a writer and editor from Baltimore with a limitless curiosity for new experiences, adventure, and opportunity. He has worked on a wide range of publications focused on dividend stocks, early startup companies, overseas living

and investing, and virtually everything in between.

Currently residing in Medellín, Colombia, Patrick used to live in Spain, and speaks fluent Spanish. A graduate of Washington and Lee University, Patrick is also a freelance Spanish/English translator and is currently writing a book about a medical mystery he survived while living in Spain.

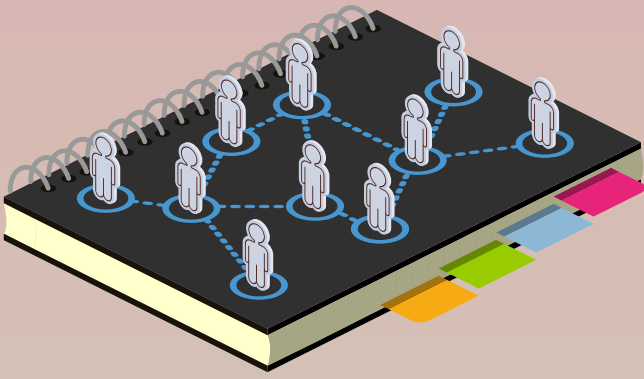


Video Resource

To view our Mexico City video resource, click the link below.

[Mexico City, Overview](#)





Ro1odex

By Patrick Little

Emergencies Contacts

Police: 066

Fire: 57 68 25 32

Gas and Water Leaks: 56 54 32 10

Ambulance: 065 or 53 95 11 11

**Attention to victims of crime:
01 800 0074533**

Attention for immigrants: 01 800 009 11 11

Recommended: Download the smartphone app "Mi Policia," which enables you to register an emergency without having to make a phone call. Especially helpful for those who don't speak English

Consulates

United States:

Paseo de la Reforma 305

Cuauhtémoc 06500, Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 5080 2000 ext. 0

Canada:

Schiller 529

Polanco 11560, Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 5724 7900

United Kingdom:

Río Lerma 71

Cuauhtémoc 06500, Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 1670 3200

Australia:

Rubén Darío 55

Polanco 11580, Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 1101 22 00

Expatriate Services

Integra Relocation Services

info@integrarelo.com

www.integrarelo.com

Expats and Foreigners Support Services:

info@expatservices.mx

Health Care

Hospital Ángeles - Four locations

www.hospitalesangeles.com

Hospital Ángeles Pedregal

Calle Camino Santa Teresa 1055,

Héroes de Padierna, La Magdalena Contreras

10700 Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 5449 5500

Hospital Ángeles Lomas

Vialidad de la Barranca 22, Valle de las Palmas

52763 Huixquilucan de Degollado,

Estado de México

Phone: +52 (55) 5246 5000

Hospital Ángeles Mocol

Gelati 29 Col. San Miguel Chapultepec, Miguel Hidalgo

11850 Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 5278 2300

Hospital Ángeles Lindavista

Río Bama 639, Magdalena de las Salinas,

Gustavo A. Madero

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Centro Médico ABC - Two locations

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01120 Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 26 14 74 99

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154
Tlaxcala, Cuajimalpa de Morelos,
Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 1103 1600

Médica Sur - Two locations

<http://www.medicasur.com.mx>

Comercio 40
Escandón, Miguel Hidalgo
+52 (55) 5424 6806

Puente de Piedra 150
Torricelli Guerra, Tlalpan
+52 (55) 5424 7200

International Schools

Escuela Inglesa Kent
(Early Childhood - Secondary)
www.escuelainglesakent.com

Upper Primary/Secondary School
Río Lerma 222
Cuauhtémoc 06500, Ciudad de México Phone:
+52 (55) 5207 0087

Primary School
Zamora 42
Condesa 06140, Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 5211 7783

Lower Primary
Río Duero 50
Cuauhtémoc 06500, Ciudad de México Phone:
+52 (55) 5511 1587

Early Childhood Care
Citlaltepētli 31
Condesa 06140, Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 5286 7845

American School Foundation (Kindergarten
- Secondary)
www.asf.edu.mx

Bondojito 215
Las Américas 01120, Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 5227 4900

Westhill Institute (American school)
www.westhillinstitute.edu.mx

Athos Campus
Monte Athos 330
Lomas de Chapultepec 11000, Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 5520 2455

Carpatos Campus
Montes Carpatos 940
Lomas de Chapultepec 11000, Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 5282 4686

Santa Fe Campus
Domingo García Ramos 56
Zona Escolar Prados de la Montaña 05610,
Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 5292 6627

British American School
Av de los Insurgentes Sur 4040,
Tlalpan Centro I, Tlalpan, 14000 Ciudad de
México
Phone: +52 (55) 5573 4514

Legal

Fragomen Mexico,
S. de R.L. de C.V. Insurgentes Sur 1898, Piso 16,
Lado Sur 2 Colonia Florida 01030, Ciudad de
México
mexicocityinfo@fragomen.com
T +52 (55) 5955 4400
www.fragomen.com/locations/mexico-city/about

Goodrich, Riquelme & Asociados
Paseo de la Reforma 265
Cuauhtémoc 06500, Ciudad de México
Phone: +52 (55) 5533 0040
Fax: +52 (55) 5525 1227
<http://www.goodrichriquelme.com/>

Real Estate

Inmo Vivienda

www.inmovivienda.com.mx

Phone: +52 (55) 5615 5300

Grupo Coyoacán

www.grupocoyoacan.com

Rayo

www.rayovende.com

Hir Casa

www.hircasa.com

Phone: +52 (55) 5554 8062

Cataño Bienes Raíces

www.catanomexico.com

Capri Bienes Raíces

www.capribienesraices.com

Phone: +52 (55) 5511 8790

Taxes

Deloitte & Touche Accounting & Advisory

Paseo de la Reforma 505

Cuauhtémoc 06500, Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 5080 6000

Rivers & Olivares Contadores Públicos

v. de las Palmas 755, Pisos 4 y 11

Col. Lomas de Chapultepec, Ciudad de México

Phone: +52 (55) 9178 1600

Fax: +52 (55) 9178 1604

Email: info@ryo.com.mx



Mexico City Shopping List

Local currency is the MXN
Go here to convert into U.S. dollars
at today's exchange rate.

Beverages

Domestic Red Wine

MXN\$150.⁰⁰
1 bottle

Filtered Water

MXN\$15.⁵⁰
5L

Orange Juice

MXN\$13.⁹⁰
1L

Lipton Tea

MXN\$9.⁰⁰
600 mL



Coke
MXN\$21.⁰⁰
3L



Nescafé Coffee
MXN49.⁹⁰
120 g



Beer
MXN\$120.⁰⁰
6-pack

Fresh Fruit And Vegetables

Navel Oranges

MXN\$12.00
1 kg

Apples
MXN\$40.00
1 kg

Tomatoes

MXN\$25.00
1 kg

Grapes
MXN\$80.00
1 kg

Bananas

MXN\$12.00
1 kg

Green Bell Pepper

MXN\$40.00
1 kg

Cauliflower

MXN\$18.00
1 kg

Potatoes

MXN\$14.00
1 kg

Onions
MXN\$18.00
1 kg

Cucumber

MXN\$10.00
1 kg

Sweet Red Pepper

MXN\$20.00
1 kg

Shallots

MXN\$25.00
1 kg

Broccoli

MXN\$12.00
1 kg

Zucchini

MXN\$40.00
1 kg

Garlic

MXN\$14.00
clove/unit

Eggplant

MXN\$15.00
1 kg

Leaf Lettuce

MXN\$15.00
head

Staples And General Groceries



Sliced White Bread
MXN\$29.00
1 loaf



Ice Cream
MXN\$50.00
500 g



Snickers
MXN\$7.50
2 oz



Oreos
MXN\$14.50
216 g



Potato Chips
MXN\$10.00
62 g

Local Raisins
MXN\$33.50
250 g

Local Rice
MXN\$20.90
1 kg



Strawberry Jam
MXN\$28.50
430 g

Salt
MXN\$4.80
500 g



Kellogg's Corn Flakes
MXN\$29.90
560 g

Spaghetti Sauce
MXN\$26.00
680 g



Soy Sauce
MXN\$20.90
290 mL



Local Ketchup
MXN\$23.50
350 g



Sugar
MXN\$19.90
500 g



Mayonnaise
MXN\$21.50
390 g



Flour
MXN\$14.80
1 kg



Spaghetti Noodles
MXN\$3.90
200 g



Sweetened Condensed Milk
MXN\$14.00
360 g



Tabasco Sauce
MXN\$8.50
355 mL



Tuna Fish
MXN\$13.50
135 g



Tomato Sauce
MXN\$6.00
1 kg



Skippy Peanut Butter
MXN\$49.90
340 g



Campbell's Soup
MXN\$22.90
420 g



Crackers
MXN\$8.00
186 g



Cooking Oil
MXN\$29.90
1L



Meat, Fish, And Poultry

Beef Strip Loin
MXN\$134.⁰⁰
1 kg

Hot Dogs
MXN\$30.⁹⁹
8-pack

Bacon
MXN\$40.⁰⁰
200 g

Fresh Shrimp
MXN\$219.⁰⁰
1 kg

Ground Beef
MXN\$79.⁰⁰
1 kg

Chicken Quarters
MXN\$63.⁰⁰
1 kg

Whole Mojarra
MXN\$52.⁰⁰
1 unit

Sliced Ham
MXN\$20.⁰⁰
250 g

Pork Chops
MXN\$84.⁰⁰
1 kg

Eggs And Dairy

Milk
MXN\$17.⁵⁰
1L

Manchego Cheese
MXN\$57.⁰⁰
400 g

Philadelphia Cream Cheese
MXN\$22.⁰⁰
190 g

Imported Butter
MXN\$26.⁸⁰
225 g

Eggs
MXN\$18.⁵⁰
1 dozen

Yogurt
MXN\$16.⁰⁰
442 g

Household Goods And Toiletries

Paper Towels

MXN\$24.90

3 rolls

Gillette Razor

MXN\$49.00

2 pack



Toilet Paper

MXN\$30.00

4 rolls

Laundry Soap

MXN\$15.90

940 mL

Pantene Shampoo

MXN\$47.50

400 mL

Dove Hand Soap

MXN\$20.00

1 bar



Pedigree Dog Food

MXN\$498.00

15 kg

Energizer Batteries

MXN\$10.00

4 pack

Colgate Toothpaste

MXN\$38.00

100 mL

Fabric Softener

MXN\$20.50

800 mL

Miscellaneous

Dish Soap

MXN\$26.00

750 mL

Gasoline

MXN\$18.50

1L

EATING OUT:

A beer **MXN50**

Rum and coke **MXN100**

A coffee: **MXN45**

A sandwich (or equivalent): **MXN80**

Average cost of a meal out per person:

Lunch: **MXN100**

Dinner: **MXN300**



Monthly

Budgets



[Go here to convert into U.S. dollars](#)
at today's exchange rate.

Penny-Pincher's Budget (for a couple, bare minimum costs)

Item	Cost	Notes
Rent	MXN3,000	
Transportation (bus, taxi, etc.)	MXN300	Includes 2 metro rides/day
Gas (cooking/heating)	MXN275	
Electricity	MXN100	Monthly price in Iztapalapa; bills issued every two months
Water	MXN150	
Telephone (home)	MXN400	Most basic internet package
Cable TV	MXN320	
Cell phone	MXN800	Basic phone plan or pay-as-you-go
Entertainment	MXN1,000	
Groceries	MXN1,400	
TOTAL	MXN7,745	

Apartment or House Rental Budget (for a couple)



Item	Cost	Notes
Rent	MXN8,500	
HOA Fees	MXN1,000	This can vary greatly depending on the location and building in Mexico City; can go as high as 3000, as low as 300
Property Taxes	MXN1,200	Property taxes tend to be low in Mexico; this figure represents the higher end of what one might pay
Transportation (bus, taxi, etc.)	MXN1,350	Calculated with metro use and Uber rides
Gas	MXN750	This will vary depending on location in CDMX, skewing higher in more expensive areas; in Polanco, it's 900 peso
Telephone	MXN800	
Internet	-	Bundled with phone.
Cable TV	MXN600	
Household Help	MXN2,400	
Entertainment	MXN5,000	
Gym Membership	MXN2,000	
Groceries	MXN850	
Medical Appointment	MXN800	
TOTAL	MXN25,120	



Apartment or House Ownership Budget (for a couple)

Item	Cost	Notes
HOA Fees	MXN1,000	This can vary greatly depending on the location and building in Mexico City; can go as high as 3000, as low as 300
Property Taxes	MXN1,200	Property taxes tend to be low in Mexico; this figure represents the higher end of what one might pay
Transportation (bus, taxi, etc.)	MXN1,350	Calculated with metro use and Uber rides
Gas (cooking, heating)	MXN750	This will vary depending on location in CDMX, skewing higher in more expensive areas; in Polanco, it's 900 pesos
Telephone	MXN800	
Electricity	MXN400	Monthly price, though electric bills are given every two months; as with gas, prices will vary throughout the city
Internet	-	Bundled with phone.
Cable TV	MXN600	
Household Help	MXN2,400	
Entertainment	MXN5,000	
Groceries	MXN2,000	
Gym Membership	MXN850	
Medical Appointment	MXN800	
TOTAL	MXN16,750	(excluding mortgage)

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- Whether it's better to rent or to buy, given the local market right now...
- What to take with you, what to ship, and what to leave behind...
- Which visa options would make most sense for you and how you qualify...
- Who to contact for legal help, health insurance, banking, shipping, residency, taxes...

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