



**GETTING THERE** See map pax, xx  
International flights arrive in Mexico City at Aeropuerto Internacional Benito Juárez, which is about 20 minutes to an hour from the city center by taxi depending on traffic.

**GETTING AROUND**  
Traffic is horrendous in Mexico City, with limited parking. The safest and most reliable mode of transportation is to use a taxi arranged for you by your hotel.

**WEATHER**  
In March, Mexico City enjoys warm, sunny days with an average high of 75°F (24°C) and an average night-time low of 46°F (8°C).

**ACCOMMODATIONS**  
Luxeious Casa Vieja is an elegant hacienda; suites from \$360; [www.casavieja.com](http://www.casavieja.com)

Four Seasons has a serene courtyard; doubles from \$430; [www.fourseasons.com/mexico](http://www.fourseasons.com/mexico)

W is a chic boutique hotel with deluxe doubles from \$360; [www.whotels.com](http://www.whotels.com)

**EATING OUT**  
In Mexico City, you will find cuisine from every region of the country, as well as dishes from South America and Europe. Try entrées featuring mole, a spicy sauce with a bit of chocolate, or tender marinated beef amachero. Puro Corazon serves trendy nouvelle Mexican cuisine on a rooftop overlooking the Zócalo.

**PRICE FOR TWO**  
\$100 per day.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**  
[www.mexicocity.com.mx](http://www.mexicocity.com.mx)

### Catedral Metropolitana

The largest and most important cathedral in the Western Hemisphere presents an impressive display of architectural styles, with an ornate Spanish Baroque façade and Neo-Classical dome. Began in 1525, Catedral Metropolitana was built with rubble from the adjacent ruins of the Aztec Templo Mayor, which was destroyed following the Spanish conquest of 1513. Designed and constructed in stages, it took 240 years to complete.



**Above (left to right):** Teotihuacán: Talic (rain god) amphora at Templo Mayor; Coyoacán  
**Main:** Street performer at the Zócalo

## AZTEC EMPIRE

ANCIENT YET MODERN, MEXICO CITY PULSATES WITH LIFE AND CULTURE, serving up a veritable feast of history, art, music, and cuisine. Once known as Tenochtitlán by the Aztecs who founded their city in a giant volcanic caldera in 1325, this is North America's oldest city and one of the world's largest. The city's stunning contrasts can both delight and assault the senses. Narrow streets bustle with traffic and pedestrians, the spicy aroma of cooking food mingles with exhaust fumes. Elegant towers of glass and steel rise above ornate Spanish colonial palacios and ancient Aztec ruins. A maze of colorful market stalls stand alongside elegant shops filled with high-end fashions and jewelry, and everywhere the harmonies of church bells and street musicians compete with the shrill whistles of police directing traffic. The cobblestone streets in the historic area present an impressive variety of boutiques, restaurants, and galleries housed in elaborate colonial mansions, exceptional museums, baroque churches, and lush urban parks.



Organ grinders play sweet, sad songs below the golden dome of the Palacio de Bellas Artes and in neighboring Alameda Central.

At the heart of the city, the vast open Zócalo is the gathering place for social and political events. On festival days, the plaza throngs with crowds that surround spectacularly dressed dancers as they stomp and chant to a rhythmic drumbeat. Overseeing the mayhem are some of the city's iconic structures: the magnificent Catedral Metropolitana, the Aztec ruins of the Templo Mayor, and the Palacio Nacional where Rivera Diego's mural, *Epic of the Mexican People*, tells the story of Mexico. Away from the Zócalo, organ grinders play sweet, sad songs below the golden dome of the spectacular Palacio de Bellas Artes and in neighboring Alameda Central. The Paseo de la Reforma is lined with shimmering skyscrapers, embassies, galleries, hotels, and marble and gold monuments, while a few miles down the Paseo lies the green expanse of Chapultepec Park and the hilltop Castillo, which has commanding views of this splendid and constantly surprising city.

**Inset:** Catedral Metropolitana in the Zócalo  
**Below (left and right):** Mexico City skyline; green VW taxis



### CITY DIARY

The city is warm and sunny in late March, the delicate violet-colored blossoms of the jacaranda trees are beautiful. Five days is enough time to see the highlights in the central historic area, visit charming Coyoacán and San Ángel, see fabulous museums and ancient ruins, enjoy fine dining, and attend evening performances.

#### Five Days of Cultural Delights

Explore the wonderful collection of Mexican and pre-Hispanic art and culture at the Museo Nacional de Antropología. Visit the opulent Castillo de Chapultepec or Museo de Arte Moderno with oils by the great Mexican muralists. Take a taxi along Paseo de la Reforma past the golden El Ángel (Winged Victory).

Head to Centro Histórico and tour the sites surrounding Zócalo, starting with ancient Templo Mayor. Enter Palacio Nacional and admire Diego Rivera's brilliant murals. Explore Catedral Metropolitana's glittering altars and fabulous artworks. Have dinner overlooking the Zócalo and watch as the Mexican honor guard lowers the giant Mexican flag with music and ceremony.

Tour the stunning white marble Palacio de Bellas Artes, then stroll through lovely Alameda Central, and visit the nearby museums. See Mexican masterpieces at Museo Nacional de Arte, decorative arts at Museo Franz Mayer, and Mexican folk art at Museo de Arte Popular.

Hire a car and driver and head to Teotihuacán, the incredible ruins of Mesoamerica's cultural and commercial center. Climb the Pyramid of the Sun, and walk along the Avenue of the Dead to the Quetzalpapalotl Palace Complex. Ascend the Pyramid of the Moon for panoramic views of the complex.

Take a taxi to lovely San Ángel and visit Bazar Sabado, a Saturday-only fine arts and crafts market. Visit Museo Casa Estudio Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo before having lunch in the garden courtyard at San Ángel Inn, a former Carmelite monastery.

#### Dos and Don'ts

- ✓ For reasons of personal safety, behave and dress conservatively as you explore the city.
- ✗ Don't tempt pickpockets by wearing expensive jewelry or displaying wealth in public places.
- ✓ Visit Templo Mayor as early as you can in the morning when it is easier to see the details of the carvings in the ruins and before the sun gets too hot.
- ✗ Don't hail a taxi from the street. It is a much better idea to ask your hotel to phone for a taxi for you.

**Below:** Monument El Ángel on the Paseo de la Reforma



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