

DIRECTORY

BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices are typically open from 8am or 9am to 2pm or 3pm Monday to Friday. Banks operate 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and some stay open Saturdays from 9am to 1pm. Most other businesses are open from 9am to 8pm Monday to Saturday, and many stay open on Sundays, too. A few of the more traditional establishments still take a lunch break from 2pm to 3pm or 4pm, closing up for the day on Saturday.

Most museums close on Monday. On Sundays nearly all museums and archaeological sites are free, and the major ones can get very crowded. Some museums may technically limit free admission to Mexican nationals, though the rule is rarely enforced. A few may be free on other days, as noted in the Neighborhood listings.

For opening hours of drinking and eating establishments, see the corresponding chapter introductions.

CHILDREN

As elsewhere in Mexico, kids take center stage in the capital. Sunday is the big day when families go out to parks and museums and fill the restaurants at midday. Many theaters stage children's plays and puppet shows on weekends, and museums often organize hands-on activities for kids. Cartoons are a staple at cinemas around town, with weekend matinees at the Cineteca Nacional (p183), though keep in mind that children's films are often dubbed in Spanish.

Mexico City's numerous parks and plazas are usually buzzing with children's voices. Bosque de Chapultepec is the obvious destination, with the Papanote Museo del Niño (p81), La Feria (p81) and the Chapultepec Zoo (p79), not to mention several lakes with rowboat rentals. But also consider Condesa's Parque México (p86), where Sunday is family activities day. In Xochimilco, kids find the sensation of riding the gondolas through the canals as magical as any theme park.

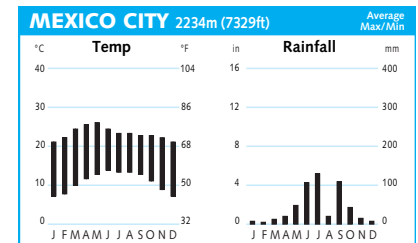
Children are welcome at all kinds of accommodations and in virtually every café and restaurant – even in some cantinas, which are labeled '*familiar*' (family oriented, meaning children are allowed in).

See 'Top Picks for Children' in the Neighborhoods chapter (p73) for recommended sights and activities.

Children are likely to be excited and stimulated by the colors and bustle of Mexico City, but they may feel the effects of the altitude, the pollution, the noise and the heat more than grownups do. Take care to replace fluids if a child gets diarrhea, and be prepared for minor effects brought on by change of diet or water, or disrupted sleeping patterns. If your kids don't take to typical Mexican food, plenty of restaurants serve up 'international' food, with kiddie menus.

CLIMATE

Visitors who are accustomed to the heat of Mexico's beaches may be surprised by the temperate climate of Mexico City. At this altitude it rarely gets too hot, and even in the summer months you may need a sweater. The warmest months are April and May, before the rains start. From late May or early June through September warm, sunny days often change rapidly to cool, wet evenings. The chilliest time is between November and February, when thermal inversion is also likely to occur. This is also when air pollution tends to be at its worst.



COURSES

Though Spanish-language students more often choose places like Cuernavaca or Oaxaca to work on their verb tenses, the capital offers boundless cultural and historical resources to complement your language studies, plus the chance to mingle with students of Latin America's largest university.

Centro de Enseñanza Para Extranjeros (Foreigners Teaching Center; [Map p105](#); ☎ 5622-2467; www.cepe.unam.mx; Universidad 3002, Ciudad Universitaria) The national university (see p104) offers six-week intensive classes meeting three hours daily (US\$340). Students who already speak Spanish may take courses on Mexican art and culture, which are taught in Spanish and run concurrently with the UNAM semester.

Centro Cultural Tepeticpac Tlahtolcalli ([Map p64](#); ☎ 5518-2020; www.tepeticpac.com; Dr Mora 5; **M** Hidalgo) If you'd like to brush up on your Nahuatl – or Mixtec or Otomí – this cultural center offers courses in indigenous languages. On Saturdays you can join workshops on Aztec dance, codex reading or *huehueltl* (indigenous drum) playing.

International House ([Map p88](#); 5211-6500; www.ihmexico.com/eng/espext2.htm; Alfonso Reyes 224, Condesa) The Mexico City branch of the prestigious worldwide chain of language schools is located in Condesa. Classes meet for 20 hours weekly, with a maximum of six students per group (US\$200 per week). The institute can arrange homestays.

For cooking courses see [p134](#).

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

Visitors are allowed to bring certain items into Mexico duty-free, including medicine for personal use, two still or video cameras, one portable computer, 10 DVDs, 30 music CDs, two mobile phones, portable sports equipment, and, if you're 18 or older, 3L of wine, beer or liquor and 400 cigarettes. For more details on what you may bring in, check the Mexican Customs website at [www.aduanas.sat.gob.mx](#). Click on 'Pasajeros', then select the English-language version.

When you enter Mexico the standard customs-inspection routine is to complete a customs declaration form (which lists duty-free allowances), then choose between going through a goods-to-declare channel or a nothing-to-declare channel. Those not declaring items must pass a traffic signal. The signal responds randomly: a green light lets you pass without inspection, a red light means your baggage will be searched.

DISCOUNT CARDS

The ISIC student card, the IYTC card for travelers under 26, and the ITIC card for teachers can help you obtain reduced-price air tickets to or from Mexico at student- and youth-oriented travel agencies. Reduced

prices on Mexican buses and at museums, archaeological sites and so on, are usually only for those with Mexican education credentials, but the aforementioned cards will sometimes get you a reduction. The ISIC card is the most widely recognized. A Hostelling International card will save you a few pesos in some hostels in Mexico City.

ELECTRICITY

Electrical current in Mexico is the same as in the USA and Canada: 110V, 60 cycles. Don't use European or Australian 220-240V appliances without a transformer (which will be built into an adjustable appliance). Mexico actually has several different types of electrical socket. If the plug on your appliance doesn't fit your Mexican socket, electrical goods shops have a variety of adapters and extensions. For more information about electricity and adapters, see [www.kropla.com](#).

EMBASSIES

All foreign embassies in Mexico reside in Mexico City. The following is a selective list. They often keep limited business hours – usually something like 9am or 10am to 1pm or 2pm Monday to Friday – and may close on both Mexican and their own national holidays. Many provide 24-hour emergency telephone contact.

Australia ([Map p84](#); ☎ 1101-2200; www.mexico.embassy.gov.au; Rubén Darío 55; **M** Polanco or Auditorio)

Belize (off [Map p78](#); ☎ 5520-1274; www.mfa.gov.bz; Bernardo de Gálvez 215, Lomas de Chapultepec)

Canada ([Map p84](#); ☎ 5724-7900; www.mexico.gc.ca; Schiller 529; **M** Polanco)

Cuba ([Map p84](#); ☎ 5280-8039; www.embacuba.com.mx; Avenida Presidente Masaryk 554; **M** Polanco)

France ([Map p84](#); ☎ 5282-9700; www.francia.org.mx; Campos Eliseos 339; **M** Auditorio)

Germany ([Map p84](#); ☎ 5283-2200; www.mexiko.diplo.de; Horacio 1506, Los Morales)

Guatemala (off [Map p78](#); ☎ 5540-7520; embagatemx @minex.gov.gt; Avenida Explanada 1025, Lomas de Chapultepec)

Ireland ([Map p84](#); ☎ 5520-5803; embajada@irlanda.org.mx; Blvd Ávila Camacho 76-3)

Italy ([Map pp42-3](#); ☎ 5596-3655; www.italian-embassy.org/ambasciata_cittadelmessico; Paseo de las Palmas 1994, Lomas de Chapultepec)

Japan ([Map pp74-5](#); ☎ 5211-0028; www.mx.emb-japan.go.jp; Paseo de la Reforma 395; **M** Sevilla)

Netherlands (off [Map p42-3](#); ☎ 5258-9921; www.paísesbajos.com.mx; Av Vasco de Quiroga 3000, Edificio Calakmul, 7 piso, Santa Fe)

New Zealand ([Map p84](#); ☎ 5283 9460; kiwimexico@prodigy.net.mx; Jaime Balmes 8, Piso 4, Los Morales)

Spain ([Map p84](#); ☎ 5280-4383; www.mae.es/Consulados/Mexico/es/home; Galileo 114; **M** Polanco)

UK Embassy ([Map pp74-5](#); ☎ 5242-8500; www.embajadabritanica.com.mx; Río Lerma 71; **M** Insurgentes); Consulate General (☎ 5242-8500; Río Usumacinta 26; **M** Insurgentes)

USA ([Map pp74-5](#); ☎ 5080-2000; www.usembassy-mexico.gov; Paseo de la Reforma 305; **M** Insurgentes)

EMERGENCY

Ambulance, Fire (☎ 060)

Cruz Roja (Red Cross; ☎ 5557-5757)

Hospital ABC (☎ emergency 5230-8161; www.abc.hospital.com; Sur 136 No 116, Colonia Las Américas; **M** Observatorio)

Hospital Ángeles Clínica Londres ([Map p92-3](#); ☎ emergency 5229-8445; Durango 64, Colonia Roma; **M** Cuauhtémoc)

HEALTH

It's relatively easy to stay healthy in Mexico City as long as you follow a few common-sense rules to protect yourself from food-borne illness, altitude sickness and air pollution.

Food- and water-borne illness

Mexico City's booming population and sinking infrastructure are a couple of the factors that have combined to create serious sanitation problems that can affect food and water. Most restaurants frequented by travelers are perfectly safe, but be highly selective when eating food from street vendors. If a street stand or restaurant looks clean and well run, the vendor is clean and healthy and follows sanitation rules, and the place is busy with lots of customers, then the food is probably safe. Generally speaking, vegetables and fruit should be washed with purified water or peeled, and dairy products that might contain unpasteurized milk should be avoided. Tap water in Mexico City is generally not safe to drink. Vigorous boiling for three minutes is the most effective means of water purification.

An easier option is to buy bottles of purified water to drink, which are inexpensive and available at supermarkets, street stalls and convenience stores.

Altitude & pollution

Although smog levels have improved over the last decade, Mexico City's air pollution can still be disagreeable, especially during the months from November to February, when thermal inversion traps contaminants and emissions close to the ground. The triple-whammy of the city's high altitude, air pollution and dry climate often causes sore throat, runny nose or eyes, light-headedness, insomnia, slight headaches and shortness of breath. To lessen the chance of altitude sickness, avoid over-exertion, eat light meals and take it easy on the alcohol. If you suffer from severe allergies, asthma, hypertension, and heart, lung or breathing problems, you should consult a doctor before your trip.

HOLIDAYS

Christmas–New Year and Semana Santa (Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter) are the chief Mexican holiday periods. While coastal resorts and other major tourist destinations are quite busy, these can be pleasantly quiet times in Mexico City. There's little point scheduling a business trip to the city between December 15 and January 6, or during the week either side of Easter. Many Mexicans also take holidays in July or August.

Banks, post offices, other offices and many shops are closed on the following days:

Año Nuevo (New Year's Day) January 1

Día de la Constitución (Constitution Day) February 5

Día de la Bandera (Day of the National Flag) February 24

Día del Nacimiento de Benito Juárez (Anniversary of Benito Juárez' birth) March 21

Día del Trabajo (Labor Day) May 1

Cinco de Mayo (anniversary of Mexico's 1862 victory over the French at Puebla) May 5

Día de la Independencia (Independence Day) September 16

Día de la Raza (commemorating Columbus' arrival in the Americas, and the founding of the Mexican mestizo) October 12

Día de la Revolución (Revolution Day) November 20

Día de Navidad (Christmas Day) December 25

INTERNET ACCESS

It's easy to get on the internet in Mexico City these days. For those traveling with a laptop computer, all top-end and many midrange hotels have wireless internet, although some may charge an extra fee (M\$40 to M\$70 per day) and others may have insecure, open networks. Even the least expensive places are likely to have a computer in the lobby where you can check email for a small price. All of the youth hostels have computers available for guests. Internet cafés abound, especially in the Zona Rosa and Colonias Roma and Condesa. The average rate is M\$15 to M\$20 per hour. The internet icon in the Sleeping chapter indicates that at least a computer console is available.

The most common local provider is Prodigy Infinitum offered by **Telmex** (www.telmex.com.mx).

LEGAL MATTERS

Mexican law is based on the Roman and Napoleonic codes, presuming an accused person is guilty until proven innocent.

The minimum jail sentence for possession of more than a token amount of any narcotic, including marijuana and amphetamines, is 10 months. As in most other countries, the purchase of controlled medication requires a doctor's prescription.

It's against Mexican law to take any firearm or ammunition into the country (even unintentionally) without a permit from a Mexican embassy or consulate.

Road travelers should expect occasional police or military checkpoints. They are normally looking for drugs, weapons or illegal migrants. Drivers found with drugs or weapons on board may have their vehicle confiscated and may be detained for months while their cases are investigated.

Useful warnings on Mexican law are found on the **US Department of State website** (www.travel.state.gov).

Getting Legal Help

Report crimes and get legal assistance at any of three offices of the **Agencias del Ministerio Público** (www.pgjdf.gob.mx) Centro Histórico (Map p64; ☎ 5346-8720, ext 16520; Victoria 76; 📍 Juárez); Plaza de la República (Map pp74-5 ☎ 5592-2677, ext 1114; Paseo de la Reforma 42; 📍 Hidalgo); Zona Rosa (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5345-5382; Amberes 54; 📍 Insurgentes). All offices are reportedly open between 9am and 5pm daily and have English-

WI-FI ACCESS

Besides hotels, quite a few restaurants and cafés have wireless internet access available. In Condesa, these include **Caffè Toscano** (p163) and Café La Gloria (p148); in Polanco, Segafredo (p163); and in Colonia Roma, Mesón de Thé Caravanserai (p165) and Café de Carlo (p164), among many others. The rapidly proliferating Starbucks branches also offer free access, as do branches of Sanborns and VIPS coffee shops (just ask a waiter for the password).

The DF government is in the process of making the entire city a free wireless zone. As of the time of research, you can get online gratis anywhere in the Centro Histórico.

speaking personnel. They will help you with forms to report any incident, even if it's just for the purposes of an insurance claim, and give you a receipt number. To follow up your case online, go to the website, click on 'Denuncia los delitos', then 'Seguimiento de denuncias'.

If arrested, you have the right to contact your embassy or consulate. Consular officials can tell you your rights, provide lists of local lawyers, monitor your case, make sure you are treated humanely, and notify your relatives or friends – but they can't get you out of jail. By Mexican law, the longest a person can be detained by police without a specific accusation is 72 hours.

If Mexican police wrongfully accuse you of an infraction (as they have been known to do in the hope of obtaining a bribe), you can ask for the officer's identification, to speak to a superior or to be shown documentation about the law you have supposedly broken. You can also note the officer's name, badge number, vehicle number and department (federal, state or municipal). Pay any traffic fines at a police station and get a receipt, then make your complaint at Sectur or any of the above Agencias del Ministerio Público.

MAPS

Maps handed out free by Mexico City tourist modules include useful plans of the Centro Histórico and some other key neighborhoods, along with a metro map. Those needing more detail should pick up a Guía Roji fold-out map of Mexico City (M\$80), or a Guía Roji Ciudad de México street atlas (M\$215), updated annually, with a comprehensive index. Find them at Sanborns stores and at larger newsstands.

Mexico's national geographical institute, **INEGI** (Map pp48-9; ☎ 5512-1873; www.inegi.gob.mx; Balderas 71; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Juárez), publishes topographical maps covering the whole country (subject to availability). Another outlet is at the **airport** (☎ 5786-0212; Sala C; 🕒 8am-8pm), and INEGI headquarters are in **Colonia Mixcoac** (Map pp42-3; ☎ 5278-1000, ext 1207; Patriotismo 711; 🕒 8:30am-9pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Mixcoac).

MEDICAL SERVICES

For recommendation of a doctor, a dentist or a hospital, call your embassy or **Sectur** (☎ 078), the tourism ministry. An extended list of Mexico City hospitals and English-speaking physicians (with their credentials), in PDF format, is available on the website of the **US embassy** (www.usembassy-mexico.gov/medical_lists.html). A private doctor's consultation generally costs between M\$500 and M\$1000.

Hospital ABC (American British Cowdry Hospital; Map pp42-3; ☎ 5230-8000, ☎ emergency 5230-8161; www.abchospital.com; Sur 136 No 116, Colonia Las Américas; 📍 Observatorio) One of the best hospitals in Mexico, with an outpatient section and English-speaking staff.

Hospital Ángeles Clínica Londres (Map pp92-3; ☎ 5229-8400, emergency 5229-8445; www.hospitalangelesclinicalondres.com; Durango 64; 📍 Cuauhtémoc)

The pharmacies that are found inside Sanborns stores are among the most reliable, as are the following:

Farmacia de Ahorros (Map pp92-3; ☎ 5264-3128; Yucatán 40; 🕒 24hr; 📍 Metrobus Álvaro Obregón)

Farmacia París (Map pp48-9; ☎ 5709-5349; República de El Salvador 97, Centro; 🕒 8am-10:30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun; 📍 Isabel La Católica) Offers allopathic, homeopathic and herbal remedies.

Médicor (Map p64; ☎ 5512-0431; Independencia 66; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 6:30pm Sat; 📍 Juárez) Specializing in homeopathic medicines.

MONEY

Mexico's currency is the peso, which can be denoted by 'M\$', 'MX\$' or 'MN' (for *moneda nacional*). Any prices quoted in US dollars will normally be written 'US\$5' or '5 USD' to avoid misunderstanding. The peso is divided into 100 centavos. Coins come in denominations of 20 and 50 centavos and one, two, five, 10, 20 and 100 pesos. There are notes of 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000 pesos.

For exchange rates, see inside the front cover. For information on costs, see p13.

The most convenient form of money in Mexico is a major international credit card or debit card – preferably two if you have them. Visa, MasterCard and American Express cards can be used to obtain cash simply from ATMs in Mexico, and are accepted for payment by most airlines, car-rental companies and travel agents, plus many upper midrange and top-end hotels, and some restaurants and stores. Occasionally there's a surcharge for paying by card, or a discount for paying cash. Making a purchase by credit card normally gives you a more favorable exchange rate than exchanging money at a bank, and isn't subject to commission, but you'll normally have to pay your card issuer a 'foreign exchange' transaction fee of around 2.5%.

As a backup to credit or debit cards, it's a good idea to take a little cash and a few traveler's checks. US dollars are easily the most exchangeable foreign currency in Mexico. Euros, British pounds and Canadian dollars, in cash or as traveler's checks, are accepted by most banks and some *casas de cambio* (exchange houses).

Be discreet when changing money or making payments and avoid counting currency in public places or flashing cash when making purchases. For additional tips on keeping your money safe, see p257.

ATMs

ATMs (*caja permanente* or *cajero automático* in Spanish) are plentiful in Mexico City, and are the easiest source of cash. You can use major credit cards and some bank cards, such as those on the Cirrus and Plus systems, to withdraw pesos from ATMs. The exchange rate that banks use for ATM withdrawals is normally better than the 'tourist rate' for currency exchange – though that advantage may be negated by extra handling fees and interest charges.

To avoid the risk of 'card cloning,' use ATMs only in secure indoor locations, not those in stand-alone booths. Card cloners obtain your card number and PIN by means of hidden cameras then make a copy of your card and use it to withdraw cash from your account.

Changing Money

You can exchange cash and traveler's checks in banks or at *casas de cambio*. Banks go through a more time-consuming procedure than *casas*

de cambio, and usually have shorter exchange hours. There is often a better rate for *efectivo* (cash) than for *documento* (traveler's checks).

The greatest concentration of ATMs, banks and *casas de cambio* is on Paseo de la Reforma between the Monumento a Cristóbal Colón and the Monumento a la Independencia, but there are others all over town.

AMERICAN EXPRESS

American Express (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5207-7049; Paseo de la Reforma 350; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat; 🚗 Pesero 'La Villa' or 'Metro Chapultepec')

CASAS DE CAMBIO

Centro de Cambios y Divisas (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5705-5656; Paseo de la Reforma 87F; ☎ 8:30am-7:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-2:30pm Sun; 🚗 Pesero 'La Villa' or 'Metro Chapultepec')

Cambios Centro Histórico (Map pp48-9; ☎ 5512-9536; Madero 13; ☎ 9:30am-6:30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; 🎨 Bellas Artes)

Tipping

In general, workers in small, cheap restaurants don't expect much in the way of tips, while those in expensive establishments expect you to be lavish in your largesse. Workers in the tourism and hospitality industries often depend on tips to supplement miserable basic wages. In restaurants and hotels frequented by high rollers, tipping is up to US levels of 15%; elsewhere 10% is usually plenty. If you stay a few days in one place, you should leave up to 10% of your room costs for the people who have kept your room clean (assuming they have). A porter in a midrange hotel will be happy with M\$10 a bag. Taxi drivers don't generally expect tips unless they provide some special service. Car-parking attendants expect a tip of M\$3 to M\$5, and the same is standard for gas-station attendants.

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

Mexico City's recently resuscitated English-language daily newspaper, *The News*, is sold at many downtown newsstands, as well as by several of the bookstores mentioned in the Shopping chapter. The paper covers the main items of Mexican and foreign news, has long stock exchange listings and a few interesting Mexico features, and will keep you in touch with US, Canadian and European sports. **Inside Mexico** (www.insidemex.com) is a free monthly in

English that covers expat life; pick up a copy at cafés and hotels around town.

ORGANIZED TOURS

Journeys Beyond the Surface (☎ 5922-0123; www.travelmexicocity.com.mx) Offers personalized walking tours on aspects of the DF experience, with a get-off-the-beaten track attitude. Enhanced by expert commentary, tours may cover pre-Hispanic architecture, the muralist movement, or life in low-income neighborhoods, depending on participants' interests.

Mexico Soul & Essence (☎ 5564-8457; www.mexicosoulandessence.com) Culinary-cultural excursions by articulate bicultural guides with a passionate interest in their subject. Tours combine browsing markets for ingredients, kitchen instruction with well-regarded chefs, and dining in some of the city's finest restaurants. Cooking courses are also offered (see p134).

Recorridos Dominicales (☎ 5662-8228, ext 526; www.cultura.df.gob.mx/culturama/visitasguiadas; ☎ 10:45am-1pm Sun) Sunday walking tours organized by the DF cultural ministry. Routes vary weekly, with participants divided between 10 guides; the website lists the week's destination and departure point. Commentary is in Spanish only but even non-Spanish speakers may enjoy seeing some of the little-visited places on the agenda, as well as meeting the middle-class Chilangos who generally attend. There's no cost, but it's customary to tip the guides M\$20 or so.

Tranvía (☎ 5491-1615; adult/child M\$35/25; ☎ 10am-5pm) Motorized version of a vintage streetcar runs a 45-minute circuit of the Centro Histórico, with guides relating fascinating bits of lore (in Spanish) along the way. On Thursday night there's a special cantina tour (M\$100 including wine, reservation required). Tours depart from Av Juárez by Bellas Artes. A similar tour operates in Coyoacán, departing from in front of the Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares.

Turibús Circuito Turístico (☎ 5133-2488; www.turibus.com.mx in Spanish; adult/child 4-12 M\$100/50, 2-day pass M\$140/70; ☎ 9am-9pm) Provides tourist-eye view of the key areas. The total *recorrido* (route) lasts about three hours, but you can get off and back on the red double-decker bus at any designated stop along the way, which are marked by red banners. Buses pass every 30 minutes or so, stopping at the Auditorio Nacional and the west side of the cathedral, among other places. Tickets are sold on board. The fare includes headphones for recorded explanations in English, French, Italian, German or Japanese.

POST

An airmail letter or postcard weighing up to 20g costs M\$10.50 to the US or Canada, M\$13 to Europe or South America, and M\$14.50 to

the rest of the world. Items between 20g and 50g cost M\$18, M\$21 and M\$23. *Certificado* (registered) service costs an extra M\$20. Mark airmail items 'Vía Aérea.' Delivery times (outbound and inbound) are variable. An airmail letter from Mexico to the USA or Canada (or vice-versa) should take somewhere between four and 14 days to arrive. Mail to or from Europe takes between one and two weeks.

Oficinas de correos (post offices) are typically open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm Saturday. You can receive letters and packages care of a post office if your mail is addressed to the post office's *lista de correos* (mail list), or *poste restante*. In the former case, a list of mail recipients is posted; in the latter, you'll need to ask a postal clerk to check. Mail addressed as follows should arrive at the central post office:

Monica CHASE (last name in capitals)
Lista de Correos (or Poste Restante)
Correo Central
México
DF 06010
MEXICO

To claim your mail, present your passport or other identification. There's no charge, but many post offices only hold *lista* mail for 10 days before returning it to the sender.

For assured and speedy delivery, you can use one of the more expensive international courier services, such as **UPS** (☎ 800-902-92-00; www.ups.com), **Federal Express** (☎ 800-900-11-00; www.fedex.com) or Mexico's **Estafeta** (☎ 800-903-35-00; www.estafeta.com). Packages up to 500g cost up to about M\$350 to the US or Canada, or M\$450 to Europe.

Post Offices

Palacio Postal (Map pp48-9; ☎ 5521-1408; Tacuba 1; 🎨 Bellas Artes) The stamp windows, marked '*estampillas*,' stay open beyond normal post office hours (until 8pm Monday to Friday, and on Sunday). Even if you don't need stamps, check out the sumptuous interior (see p55).

Other post-office branches, scattered around town, open 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm Saturday, unless noted otherwise.

Cuauhtémoc (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5207-7666; Río Tiber 87; 🎨 Insurgentes)

Plaza de la República (Map pp71; ☎ 5592-1783; Arriaga 11; 🎨 Revolución)

Zócalo (Map pp48-9; ☎ 5512-3661; Plaza de la Constitución 7; 🎨 Zócalo) To the west of the square, inside an arcade of jewelry shops.

Zona Rosa (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5514-3029; Londres 208; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat; 🎨 Sevilla)

RADIO

Of the dozens of radio stations broadcast in Mexico City, the following government-run or independent stations feature especially interesting programming. All can be heard online as well.

Radio Educación (1040AM; www.radioeducacion.edu.mx) Best place to hear Mexican folk and regional music, as well as interviews and programs on political issues. Run by the national education ministry (SEP).

Radio Horizonte (107.9 FM; www.horizonte.imer.com.mx) Mostly jazz, including Cuban and Brazilian varieties, plus some blues and salsa. BBC jazz program (in Spanish) on Sundays.

Radio Ibero (90.9 FM; ibero909.fm) *Rock en español*, presented by students from the Universidad Iberoamericana.

Reactor (105.7 FM; www.reactor.imer.com.mx) Mexican indie scene, featuring some of the upstart bands who perform at Multiforo Alicia (p173) and the Chopo street market (p123).

To hear news and sports updates in English, tune in to **Radio Imagen** (90.5 FM) at 5:30am Monday to Saturday and 11pm Sunday to Friday.

SAFETY

Mexico City is generally portrayed as an extremely crime-ridden city, so first-time visitors are often surprised at how safe and human it feels. While the incidence of street crime remains too significant to deny the risks – four kidnappings, 70 car thefts and 55 muggings a day in 2006 – there is no need to walk in fear whenever you step outside. A few precautions greatly reduce any dangers.

Robberies happen most often in areas frequented by foreigners, including the Bosque de Chapultepec, around the Museo Nacional de Antropología and the Zona Rosa. Be on your guard at the airport and bus stations, and remember to keep your bag between your feet when checking in. Avoid pedestrian underpasses that are empty or nearly so. Crowded metro cars and buses are favorite haunts of pickpockets. Stay alert and keep your hand on your wallet and you'll be fine.

Unless absolutely necessary, avoid carrying ATM cards, credit cards or large amounts of cash. Most importantly, if you become a robbery victim, don't resist. Give the perpetrator your valuables rather than risking injury or death.

A far more immediate danger is traffic, which statistically takes more lives in the capital than street crime, though things have improved slightly in recent years with the installation of timed crossing signals at major intersections. Obvious as it sounds, always look both ways when crossing streets. Some one-way streets have bus lanes running counter to the traffic flow, and traffic on some divided streets runs in just one direction. Never assume that a green light means it's safe to cross, as cars may turn left into your path. It is useful to take the 'safety in numbers' approach, crossing with other pedestrians.

Despite efforts to remove them, *ambulantes* (mobile street vendors) still clog many downtown streets, impeding movement along the sidewalk and forcing you to walk in the street. Attempting to move through the throngs makes you more susceptible to pickpockets. Metro riders have to contend with the blaring speakers of vendors of pirated CDs.

Expect to be approached by beggars almost anywhere in town, but especially in the Zona Rosa, Condesa, or wherever disposable income is conspicuously spent.

Taxi Crime

Although not as prevalent a danger as in the 1990s, taxi assaults do still occur and visitors are strongly advised to take precautions. Many victims have hailed a cab on the street and been robbed by armed accomplices of the driver. In particular, taxis parked in front of nightclubs or restaurants should be avoided, unless specifically authorized by the management. Rather than taking the risk of hailing cruising cabs, phone a radio *sitio* (taxi service). See p250 for a list of recommended companies.

TAXES & REFUNDS

Mexico's *impuesto de valor agregado* (IVA; value-added tax) is levied at 15%. By law the tax must be included in virtually any price quoted to you, and should not be added afterward. Signs in stores and notices on restaurant menus often state 'IVA incluido.' Occasionally

they state instead 'IVA no incluido' or 'más el IVA' (IVA must be added to the quoted prices).

TELEPHONE

Local calls are cheap; international calls can be expensive, but needn't be, especially with widely available discount cards. There are at least six ways you can make phone calls in Mexico:

Calling from your hotel Can be expensive as hotels charge what they like for this service

Cell phones Generally expensive

Internet telephony Services like Skype are the cheapest option if you have an account

Locutorios and casetas de teléfono Call offices where an on-the-spot operator connects the call for you; these can be cheaper than the Telmex card phones

Prepaid long-distance discount cards Cheaper than Telmex card phones or locutorios for long-distance and international calls, and can be used from most phones

Telmex public card phones Operated by the country's main, almost monopolistic, phone operator; these are common and fairly easy to use.

Cell Phones

Like other Mexican phone numbers, every Mexican *teléfono celular* (cell phone) has an area code (usually the code of the city it was bought in). The area code and the phone's number total 10 digits. When calling a cell phone from a landline, you dial ☎ 044 before the 10 digits if the cell phone's area code is the same as the area code you are dialing from; and ☎ 045 if the cell phone has a different area code. From cell phone to cell phone, just dial the 10-digit number. To call a Mexican cell phone from another country, dial your international access code, followed by the Mexican country code (☎ 52), then 1, then the 10-digit number.

If you want to use a cell phone in Mexico, the three main operators – **Telcel** (www.telcel.com), **IUSACell** (www.iusacell.com.mx) and **Movistar** (www.movistar.com.mx) – all sell phones for around M\$400 to M\$800 including a charger and some call credit. For further credit you can buy top-up cards for M\$100 or more. Telcel is the most widespread network, with many sales outlets (including one at Mexico City airport) and coverage almost everywhere that has a significant population. Telcel top-up cards are widely available from newsstands and mini-

marts. Mexican cell phones generally cannot be used in other countries.

Roaming with your own cell phone from home in Mexico is possible if you have a GSM phone, but is generally very expensive. Much cheaper is to buy a local SIM card or 'chip' from a Telcel or Movistar outlet. You can usually top these up online.

Collect Calls

A *llamada por cobrar* (collect call) can cost the receiving party much more than if they call you, so you may prefer to pay for a quick call to the other party to ask them to call you back. If you do need to make a collect call, you can do so from card phones without a card. Call an operator on ☎ 020 for domestic calls, or ☎ 090 for international calls, or use a 'home country direct' service, through which you make an international collect call via an operator in the country you're calling. The Mexican term for 'home country direct' is *país directo*. Mexican international operators may know the access numbers for some countries, but it's best to get this information from your home country before you leave.

Prefixes & Codes

If you're calling a landline number in Mexico City, simply dial the local eight-digit number.

To call a landline number in another town or city in Mexico, you need to dial the long-distance prefix ☎ 01, followed by the area code (two digits for Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey; three digits for everywhere else) and then the local number. For example, to call from Mexico City to Oaxaca, dial ☎ 01, then the Oaxaca area code ☎ 951, then the seven-digit local number.

The area codes for most Mexican cities and towns are listed in the front section of the Mexico City phone directory. Alternatively, go to www.telmex.com/mx/hogar/ld_clavesld.jsp and input the name of the state and town you're calling.

To make an international call, dial the international prefix ☎ 00, followed by the country code, the area code and the local number. For example, to call New York City from Mexico, dial ☎ 00, then the US country code ☎ 1, then the New York City area code ☎ 212, then the local number.

To call a landline number in Mexico from another country, dial your international

access code, then the Mexico country code ☎ 52, then the area code and the number.

Public Card Phones

These can be found on virtually every street corner in town. By far the most common, and most reliable on costs, are those marked with the name of the country's biggest phone company, Telmex. To use a Telmex card phone you need a phone card known as a *tarjeta Ladatel*. These are sold at kiosks and shops everywhere – look for the blue-and-yellow 'Ladatel' signs. The cards come in denominations of M\$30, M\$50 and M\$100.

Calls from Telmex card phones cost M\$1 per minute for local calls; M\$4 per minute long-distance within Mexico; M\$5 per minute to the USA (except Alaska and Hawaii) or Canada; M\$10 per minute to Central America; and M\$20 to M\$25 per minute to the rest of the world. Calls to cell phones are M\$3.12 per minute (local) or M\$6.12 per minute (long distance).

Toll-Free & Operator Numbers

Mexican toll-free numbers (☎ 800 followed by seven digits) always require the ☎ 01 prefix. You can call most of these and emergency numbers from Telmex pay phones without inserting a telephone card.

US and Canadian toll-free numbers are ☎ 800 or ☎ 888 followed by seven digits. Some of these can be reached from Mexico (dial ☎ 00-1 before the 800), but you may have to pay a charge for the call.

For a domestic operator in Mexico, dial ☎ 020; for an international operator, dial ☎ 090. For Mexican directory information, dial ☎ 040.

TIME

Mexico City – like all of Mexico except a few western states – is on Hora del Centro (Central Time), which is the same as US Central Time. This is GMT minus six hours, and GMT minus five hours during *horario de verano* (daylight saving time), which runs from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.

TOILETS

Use of the bathroom is free at Sanborns stores. Public toilets are also found inside most market buildings; look for the 'WC' signs.

also check the passport and visa requirements for the USA.

Tourist Card & Tourist Fee

The Mexican tourist card – officially the *forma migratoria para turista* (FMT) – is a brief card document that you must fill out and get stamped by Mexican immigration when you enter Mexico, and keep till you leave. It's available at official border crossings, international airports and ports, and often from airlines, travel agencies and Mexican consulates.

One section of the card deals with the length of your stay in Mexico, and this section is filled out by the immigration officer. The maximum possible stay is 180 days, but immigration officers sometimes put a lower number (as little as 15 or 30 days in some cases) unless you tell them specifically what you need. It's advisable to ask for more days than you think you'll need, in case you are delayed or change your plans.

Though the tourist card itself is free of charge, it brings with it the obligation to pay the tourist fee of US\$22, called the *derecho para no inmigrante* (DNI, nonimmigrant fee). The exact amount of the fee in pesos fluctuates with exchange rates. If you enter Mexico by air, the fee is included in your airfare. If you enter by land, you must pay the fee at a bank in Mexico at any time before you reenter the frontier zone on your way out of Mexico (or before you check in at an airport to fly out of Mexico). Most Mexican border posts have on-the-spot bank offices where you can pay the DNI fee immediately. When you pay at a bank, your tourist card will be stamped to prove that you have paid.

Look after your tourist card because it may be checked when you leave the country. You can be fined for not having it.

A tourist card only permits you to engage in what are considered to be tourist activities (including sports, health, artistic and cultural activities). If the purpose of your visit is to work (even as a volunteer), to report or to study, or to participate in humanitarian aid or human-rights observation, you may well need a visa. If you're unclear, check with a Mexican embassy or consulate.

EXTENSIONS & LOST CARDS

If the number of days given on your tourist card is less than the maximum 180 days, its

Standards of hygiene may vary at these latter facilities, and a fee of M\$3 to M\$5 is usually charged. Toilet paper is dispensed by an attendant on request, or may be taken from a common roll outside the stalls.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The Mexico City Ministry of Tourism has modules in key areas, as well as at the airport and four bus stations. Attendants can answer your queries on Mexico City and distribute a decent map and practical guide, free of charge. At least one staff member should speak English.

The following offices are all open from 9am to 6pm daily, unless otherwise noted.

Antropología (Map p64; ☎ 5286-3850; Paseo de la Reforma; 🚶 Auditorio) At the entry to the Museo Nacional de Antropología.

Basílica de Guadalupe (Map pp42–3; ☎ 5748-2085; Plaza de las Américas 1; 🚶 La Villa-Basílica)

Bellas Artes (Map p64; ☎ 5518-2799; cnr Juárez & Peralta; 🚶 Bellas Artes)

Catedral (Map pp48–9; ☎ 5518-1003; Monte de Piedad; 🚶 Zócalo) West of the Catedral Metropolitana.

Del Ángel (Map pp74–5; ☎ 5208-1030; Paseo de la Reforma & Florencia; 🚶 Insurgentes) On the Zona Rosa side of Monumento a la Independencia.

San Ángel (Map p101; Plaza San Jacinto; 🕒 10am–6pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 Miguel Ángel de Quevedo)

Templo Mayor (Map pp48–9; ☎ 5512-8977; Seminario; 🚶 Zócalo) On the east side of Catedral Metropolitana.

Xochimilco (Map pp112–13; ☎ 5653-5209; Mercado) At the Nativitas boat landing. There are additional tourism modules at other landings, open Saturday and Sunday only.

Additionally, these city *delegaciones* (urban governmental subdivisions) operate information offices:

Coyoacán (Map p95; ☎ 5658-0221; Jardín Hidalgo 1; 🕒 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–8pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 Viveros) Inside the Casa de Cortés.

Xochimilco (Map pp112–13; ☎ 5676-0810; Pino 36; 🕒 9am–9pm Mon–Fri, 8am–8pm Sat & Sun) Off Jardín Juárez.

The office of **El Corazón de México** (Map pp48–9; ☎ 5518-1869; www.elcorazondemexico.com.mx, in Spanish; Gante 15; 🕒 10am–6pm; 🚶 San Juan de Letrán) provides information on these central Mexican states: Hidalgo, Morelos, Michoacán, Guerrero and Estado de México.

The national tourism ministry, **Sectur** (Map p84; ☎ 3002-6300, toll-free 078; Presidente Masaryk 172; 🕒 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat; 🚶 Polanco), hands out stacks of brochures on the entire country, though you're better off at the above modules for up-to-date information about the capital.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Mexico City is not yet very disability-friendly, though some hotels and restaurants (mostly towards the top end of the market), and some museums and archaeological sites now provide wheelchair access. Museums and hotels with disabled access are indicated on the **DF Tourism Ministry's website** (www.mexicocity.gob.mx). The absence of formal facilities is partly compensated by Mexicans' helpful attitudes toward others; special arrangements are gladly improvised.

Mobility International USA (☎ 541-343-1284; www.miusa.org) advises travelers with disabilities on mobility issues and runs exchange programs. Its website includes international databases of exchange programs and disability organizations, with several Mexican organizations listed.

In the UK, **Radar** (☎ 020-7250-3222; www.radar.org.uk) is run by and for people with disabilities. Its website has links to good travel and holiday sites.

Other good sources for travelers with disabilities include **MossRehab ResourceNet** (www.mossresourcenet.org), **Access-able Travel Source** (www.access-able.com) and **Disability Travel and Recreation Resources** (www.makoa.org/travel.htm).

VISAS

Every tourist must have a Mexican government tourist card, which is easy to obtain (see *opposite*). Some nationalities also need to obtain visas. Because the regulations sometimes change, it's wise to confirm them with a Mexican embassy or consulate before you go. The websites of some Mexican consulates, including the **London consulate** (portal.sre.gob.mx/conreinounido) and the **Los Angeles consulate** (www.sre.gob.mx/losangeles) give useful information on visas and similar matters. The rules are also summarized on the website of Mexico's **Instituto Nacional de Migración** (INM, National Migration Institute; www.inami.gob.mx). The **Lonely Planet website** (www.lonelyplanet.com) has links to updated visa information.

Citizens of the 27 EU countries, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA are among those who do not need visas to enter Mexico as tourists. The list changes sometimes; check well ahead of travel with your local Mexican embassy or consulate. Visa procedures, for those who need them, can take several weeks and you may be required to apply in your country of residence or citizenship.

Immigration officers won't usually keep you waiting any longer than it takes to flick through your passport and enter your length of stay on your tourist card. Remain patient and polite, even if procedures are slow. Anyone traveling to Mexico via the USA should be sure to check US visa and passport requirements.

Passports

US and Canadian tourists can enter Mexico without a passport if they have official photo identification, such as a driver's license, plus some proof of their citizenship such as an original birth certificate. But to return to or transit the USA by air, a passport or other secure travel document such as a NEXUS card is required.

To return to or transit the USA by land or sea, Americans and Canadians must present either a passport, or other documents proving identity and citizenship (for example driver's license and birth certificate), or the recently introduced US passport card, or a NEXUS or other 'trusted traveler' card. Canadians flying back from Mexico to Canada are advised to carry a passport. Further information is available on the websites of the **US State Department** (travel.state.gov), **US Customs & Border Protection** (www.cbp.gov), the **US Department of Homeland Security** (www.dhs.gov) and **Canada's Foreign Affairs Ministry** (voyage.gc.ca).

In any case it's much better to travel to Mexico with a passport because officials of all countries are used to passports and may delay people who have other documents. In Mexico you will often need your passport to change money and check into hotels.

All citizens of countries other than the US and Canada should have a passport that's valid for at least six months after they arrive in Mexico.

Non-US citizens passing (even in transit) through the USA on the way to or from Mexico, or visiting Mexico from the USA, should

validity may be extended, one or more times, up to the maximum. To get a card extended you have to apply to the [Instituto Nacional de Migración](#) (INM; [Map p84](#); ☎ 2581-0100; Av Ejército Nacional 862; 🕒 9am-1:30pm Mon-Fri). The procedure costs around M\$200. You'll need your passport, your tourist card and photocopies of the important pages of these documents.

If you lose your card or need further information, contact the [Sector tourist office](#) (☎ 078, 800-987-82-24), or your embassy or consulate. Any of these should be able to give you an official note to take to the INM office, which will issue a replacement for a cost of about M\$450.

WOMEN TRAVELERS

Gender equalization in Mexico has come a long way in a few decades, and the capital is certainly among the more progressive environments. It's no longer unusual for women to take prominent political and corporate roles, and once male-only domains like cantinas and pool halls are generally open to all. Foreign women usually have a great time in Mexico City, whether traveling with companions or solo.

That said, it's wise to remember that many Mexicans still believe in the difference between the sexes (rather than the equality). In general Mexican men are extremely polite, but lone women should expect a few catcalls and attempts to chat them up. Often these men only want to talk to you, but you can discourage unwanted attention by avoiding eye contact (wear sunglasses), dressing modestly, moving confidently and speaking coolly but politely if you are addressed and feel that you must respond. Wearing a wedding ring can prove helpful too. Don't put yourself in peril by doing things that Mexican women would not do, such as challenging a man's masculinity, drinking alone in a cantina, walking alone through empty streets at night, or going alone to isolated places. Keep a clear head. Excessive alcohol will make you vulnerable. For moral support, and company if you want it, head for accommodations where you're likely to meet other travelers (such as backpacker hostels and popular hotels), and join group excursions and activities.

During rush hours, the metro maintains women-only cars at the front of trains to discourage molestation amidst such heavily crowded conditions. A recent initiative

by the DF government also mandates buses exclusively for female passengers on certain routes, notably along Paseo de Reforma. Look for the sign, '*Exclusivo damas,*' posted on the windshield.

WORK

Mexicans themselves need jobs, and people who enter Mexico as tourists are not legally allowed to take employment. The many expats working in Mexico have usually been posted there by their companies or organizations with all the necessary papers.

English-speakers (and a few German- or French-speakers) may find teaching jobs in language schools, *preparatorias* (high schools) or universities, or can offer personal tutoring. Mexico City is probably the best place to get English-teaching work. The pay is low, but you can live on it. *The News* and [Craig's List](#) ([mexico.city.en.craigsl.com.mx](#)) are good sources for job opportunities. Pay rates for personal tutoring are rarely more than M\$150 an hour. Positions in high schools or universities are more likely to become available at the beginning of each new term; language schools tend to offer short courses, so teaching opportunities with them may come up more often.

A foreigner working in Mexico normally needs a permit or a government license, but a school will often pay a foreign teacher in the form of a *beca* (scholarship), and thus circumvent the law, or the school's administration will procure the appropriate papers.

Volunteering

A great way to engage with Mexican communities and contribute something other than tourist dollars is to do some volunteer work. Many organizations and projects can use your services for periods from a few hours to a year or more.

A good place to find out about what's available is the Casa de los Amigos ([p205](#)), a Quaker-run guesthouse in the Plaza de la República area which hosts visiting NGO staff and organizes workshops on nonviolent conflict resolution and economic justice. The Casa's Peace and Service Resource Center maintains a file of current volunteer opportunities and you can discuss the options with knowledgeable staff, look at recent reviews of volunteer stints written by volunteers, and meet people involved in similar projects. The Casa also has informal relationships with other Mexico

City NGOs that do peace and human rights work and can help people get connected with a group. Furthermore, it hires volunteers to carry out its own programs (Spanish language skills are required.)

Cuernavaca-based [Por Un Mejor Hoy](#) ([www.hoy.community.org](#)) is specifically geared to travelers who want to combine volunteer work in varied community projects with cultural immersion and sightseeing. A one-week stay including accommodation and breakfast costs US\$300.

VOLUNTEER DIRECTORIES

These sources are good places to start looking for volunteer opportunities throughout Mexico:

[Idealist.org](#) ([www.idealist.org](#))

[Transitions Abroad](#) ([www.transitionsabroad.com](#))

[Volunteer Abroad](#) ([www.volunteerabroad.com](#))

[Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations](#) ([www.alliance-network.org](#))

[Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service](#) ([www.unesco.org/ccivs](#))

For a town of such gargantuan proportions, Mexico City is remarkably easy to get around. Wherever you need to go, there is likely some conveyance heading there momentarily. A swift, extensive and incredibly cheap subway system covers most of the metropolis with frequent service almost round the clock. Above ground, peseros (small buses, also called minibuses or micros), regular buses and electric-powered trolley buses move the city's masses from points A to Z. The metrobus, a recent addition, plies its own lane along the city's principal north-south artery, Av Insurgentes. Taxis are plentiful and reasonably priced, whether you're hailing one off the street or (more securely) phoning one of the radio-taxi services. Of course you can also drive, though pollution, congestion and erratic driver behavior make this the least appealing option. Getting in and out of town is also fairly straightforward, with frequent, inexpensive bus services linking the capital with practically every point in the republic.

AIR

Nearly all sizable cities in Mexico have regular (usually daily) flights to/from Mexico City. Aeroméxico and Mexicana, the country's two

largest airlines, cover most of these domestic destinations. The larger domestic airlines serving Mexico City include Aero California, Aeromar and Aviacsa.

Recently started domestic carriers Interjet and Volaris offer very reasonable fares to and from a number of destinations, including Puerto Vallarta (under M\$400 each way) and Mérida (M\$550). There is a catch, however: they both fly in and out of Toluca, 64km west of the metropolis, a journey of up to two hours by shuttle and taxi to downtown Mexico City.

The peak travel periods of Semana Santa (Easter Week) and Christmas-New Year are hectic and heavily booked throughout Mexico: try to book transportation in advance for these periods.

Airlines

Aero California (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5785-1162; Paseo de la Reforma 332; 🚗 Reforma)

Aeromar (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5133-1111, toll free 800-237-66-27; Torre Mayor, Paseo de la Reforma 505; 🚗 Reforma)

Aeroméxico (☎ 5133-4010) Juárez (Map pp74-5; Paseo de la Reforma 80; 🚗 Reforma); Zona Rosa (Map pp74-5; Paseo de la Reforma 445; 🚗 Reforma)

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & climate change

Pretty much all forms of motorized travel generate CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are by far the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption in a year.

Carbon offset schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travelers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

Air Canada (Map p84; ☎ 9138-0280, ext 2228, toll free 800-719-28-27; Blvd Ávila Camacho 1, 13th fl; 🚗 Reforma pesero 'Km 13')

Air France (Map p84; ☎ 5571-6150, toll free 800-123-46-60; Jaime Balmes 8, 8th fl; 🚗 Polanco)

Alitalia (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5533-1240, toll free 800-012-59-00; Río Tiber 103, 6th fl; 🚗 Reforma)

American Airlines (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5209-1400; Paseo de la Reforma 300; 🚗 Reforma)

Aviaca (☎ 5716-9006, 800-011-43-57; Airport)

Avianca (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5571-4080, toll free 800-705-79-00; Paseo de la Reforma 195; 🚗 Reforma)

British Airways (Map p84; ☎ 5387-0300; Jaime Balmes 8, 14th fl; 🚗 Polanco)

Continental Airlines (Map p84; ☎ 5283-5500, toll free 800-900-50-00; Andrés Bello 45; 🚗 Auditorio)

Cubana (Map p84; ☎ 5250-6355; Sol y Son Viajes, Homero 613; 🚗 Polanco)

Delta Airlines (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5279-0909, toll free 800-123-47-10; Paseo de la Reforma 381; 🚗 Reforma)

Iberia (Map p84; ☎ 1101-1515; Av Ejército Nacional 436, 9th fl; 🚗 Polanco)

Interjet (Map p84; ☎ 1102-5555, toll free 800-011-23-45; Centro Comercial Antara, Av Ejército Nacional 843B; 🚗 Ejército Nacional)

Japan Air Lines (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5242-0150; Torre Mayor, Paseo de la Reforma 505, 36th fl; 🚗 Reforma)

KLM/Northwest (Map p84; ☎ 5279-5390; Andrés Bello 45, 11th fl; 🚗 Auditorio)

Lufthansa (Map p84; 5230-0000; Paseo de las Palmas 239; 🚗 Reforma pesero 'Km 13')

Magnicharters (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5679-1212; Guerra 9, cnr Bucareli; 🚗 Juárez)

Mexicana (☎ 5448-0990, toll free 800-502-20-00) Juárez (Map p64; Av Juárez 82, cnr Balderas; 🚗 Juárez); Zona Rosa (Map pp74-5; Paseo de la Reforma 312; 🚗 Insurgentes) Los Morales (Map p84; Pabellón Polanco)

Shopping Mall, Ejército Nacional 980; 🚗 pesero 'Ejército Nacional')

United Airlines (Map pp74-5; ☎ 5627-0222; Hamburgo 213, 10th fl; 🚗 Sevilla)

Volaris (☎ 1102-8000)

Airport

Aeropuerto Internacional Benito Juárez (Map pp42-3; ☎ 2482-2424; www.aicm.com.mx, in Spanish), 6km east of the Zócalo, is Mexico City's only passenger airport. With a capacity for about 24 million passengers annually, it's the largest airport in Latin America.

A new terminal, inaugurated in 2007, is expected to expand the airport's capacity by 10 million passengers. Delta, Aeroméxico, Continental, Lan Chile, Aeromar and Copa Airlines use the new facility, called Terminal 2, which also features a hotel, a parking garage and shops. Located 3km away from the main terminal, Terminal 2 is connected by monorail, supposedly a five-minute ride. Board the monorail from Puerta 6, labeled 'Crew Parking,' on the upper level of the main terminal. From Terminal 2, you can catch the monorail at Puerta 7. Passengers need to show their plane tickets to get on.

Terminal 1 is divided into eight *salas* (halls):

Sala A Domestic arrivals.

Sala B Check-in for Mexicana and Aero California; Hotel Camino Real access.

Sala C Check-in for Aviaca.

Sala D Check-in for Magnicharters.

Sala E International arrivals.

Sala F & J Check-in for international flights.

Sala G International departures.

The terminal's shops and facilities include dozens of *casas de cambio*; **Tamibe** (☎ 5726-0578) in Sala E2 stays open 24 hours. Peso-dispensing ATMs on the Cirrus and Plus networks are easy to find.

Telmex card phones and internet terminals abound; cards are available from shops and machines. Car-rental agencies and **luggage lockers** (up to 24hr M\$80; ⌚ 24hr) are in Salas A and E2.

BICYCLE

Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard has made great efforts to encourage bicycle use (see the boxed text on [opposite](#)), and though it still

MARCELO EBRARD, CYCLIST

In a city that is notoriously choked by traffic, Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard is bullish on bicycling. Addressing the environmental and psychic toll taken by the estimated 4.5 million motor vehicles that clog the streets daily, Ebrard has made an unprecedented attempt to encourage cycling as an alternative form of transportation. He's mandated the closing of Paseo de la Reforma and other major thoroughfares to car traffic on Sundays so that cyclists can enjoy hassle-free recreation once a week. He's installed bicycle-dispensing modules at key points around town, including the Zócalo and Bosque de Chapultepec. And aiming to boost the miniscule ranks of commuters (fewer than 1%) who use two-wheeled transportation to get to their jobs, he's offered breaks to companies that encourage their employees not to drive.

Ebrard doesn't just talk the talk, he rides the ride – once in a while. A resident of the trendy Condesa neighborhood, the mayor rides his bicycle to work in the center of town once a month, accompanied by his (perhaps less enthusiastic) entourage. Bicycle racks have been installed in the patio of the city government offices on the Zócalo for those staff members who show a more serious commitment.

For the moment, the focus appears to be more on recreational cycling than bicycle commuting as an alternative to cars. The lack of a viable bicycle-lane network or parking options, besides a continuing disregard by drivers for their nonmotorized counterparts, means cycling will remain a risky endeavor. Still, the message seems to be getting through on some level, as it's becoming increasingly common to see ordinary Chilangos riding their bikes around town. Or at least around Condesa.

isn't a common mode of transportation in the capital (except by delivery boys), cycling does seem to be catching on slowly. Bicycles can be a viable means to get around town and are often quicker and more pleasant than riding on overcrowded, recklessly driven buses. Although careless drivers and potholes can make DF cycling an 'extreme sport,' if you stay alert and keep off the major thoroughfares, it's manageable.

Bikes are loaned free from a module beside the Catedral Metropolitana (p56). Otherwise, you can rent a bicycle from a module in front of the Museo de la Antropología (p79).

A *ciclovia* (bicycle path) follows Av Chapultepec along a protected median from Bosque de Chapultepec to the Centro Histórico (though a detour through the streets of Colonia Roma is ignored by motorists). Another route runs along Paseo de la Reforma from the Auditorio Nacional to the Museo Rufino Tamayo. Follow the red stripe.

A more extensive trail runs from Av Ejército Nacional in Polanco through the Bosque de Chapultepec, skirting the Periférico freeway from La Feria to Av San Antonio, with several steep bridges passing over the freeways. The trail then continues south to the Parque Ecológico de la Ciudad de México, for a total distance of 90km.

BUS AROUND TOWN

Mexico City's thousands of buses and peseros (also called microbuses or combis) operate from around 5am until 8pm or 9pm daily;

electric trolleybuses run until 11:30pm. Only a few routes run all night, notably those along Paseo de la Reforma and the metrobus along Av Insurgentes. This means you'll get anywhere by bus and/or metro during the day but will probably have to take a few taxis after hours.

Peseros are generally gray-and-green minibuses operated by private firms. They follow fixed routes, often starting or ending at metro stations, and will stop at virtually any street corner. Route information is randomly displayed on cards attached to the windshield. Fares are M\$2.50 for trips of up to 5km, M\$3 for 5km to 12km and M\$4 for more than 12km. Add 20% to all fares between 11pm and 6am. Municipally operated full-size orange buses (labeled 'RTP') and trolleybuses only pick up at bus stops; fares are M\$2 regardless of distance traveled.

Women-only bus routes now run along Paseo de la Reforma and other key routes. The option was recently implemented in response to complaints from female riders that they are often molested on overcrowded buses. Look for the sign, '*Exclusivo Damas*.'

Along Av Insurgentes, a special metrobus plies a dedicated lane from metro Indios Verdes in the northern DF down to the southern end of San Ángel, near the national university (at the time of writing, construction was underway to extend the line 8.5km further south to Tlalpan). These 18m-long wheelchair-accessible Volvo vehicles stop at metro-style stations in the middle of the street, spaced at three- to four-block intervals. Access is by prepaid card, issued by machines at the

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

entrance to the platforms, and rides cost M\$3.50 (regardless of distance traveled). Rechargeable cards (M\$8) are placed on a sensor device for entry. The metrobus runs round the clock, though frequency is reduced to every 20 minutes between midnight and 5am, when the fare increases to M\$5.

Pesero routes ply practically every street that crisscrosses the Centro Histórico grid, while electric-powered trolleybuses follow a number of the key *ejes* (priority roads) throughout the rest of the city.

IN & OUT OF TOWN

Mexico City has four long-distance bus terminals serving the four compass points.

Terminal de Autobuses del Norte (Map pp42–3; ☎ 5587-1552; www.centraldelnorte.com.mx; Av Cien Metros 4907, Colonia Magdalena de las Salinas; 🚏 Autobuses del Norte) serves points north, including cities on the US border.

Terminal de Autobuses de Pasajeros de Oriente (TAPO; Map pp42–3; ☎ 5762-5894; Calz Ignacio Zaragoza 200, Colonia Diez de Mayo; 🚏 San Lázaro), usually called TAPO, serves points east and southeast, including Puebla, Veracruz, Yucatán, Oaxaca and Chiapas.

GETTING INTO TOWN

The metro is convenient to the airport, though hauling luggage amid rush-hour crowds can be a Herculean task. Authorized taxis provide a painless, relatively inexpensive alternative.

Metro

The airport metro station is Terminal Aérea, on Línea 5 (yellow). It's 200m from the terminal: leave by the exit at the end of Sala A (domestic arrivals) and continue past the taxi stand, to the station.

To the city center, follow signs for '*Dirección Politécnico*'; at La Raza (seven stops away) change for Línea 3 (green) toward '*Dirección Universidad*.' Metro Hidalgo, at the west end of the Alameda, is three stops south; it's also a transfer point for Línea 2 (blue) to the Zócalo.

To get to the Zona Rosa from the airport, take Línea 5 to 'Pantitlán' the end of the line. Change for Línea 1 (pink) and get off at metro Insurgentes.

Arriving at the airport, take the Av Aeropuerto Municipal exit on the *Dirección Politécnico* side, and proceed directly to the terminal.

Taxi

Steer clear of street cabs outside the airport. Safe and reliable 'Transporte Terrestre' taxis, recognizable by their yellow doors and airplane logos, are controlled by a fixed-price ticket system.

Purchase taxi tickets from booths labeled 'Sitio 300,' located in Sala E1 (international arrivals), on your left as you exit customs, and by the Sala A1 (domestic arrivals) exit. Fares are determined by zones (shown on a map next to the booth). A ride to the Zócalo or Alameda Central is M\$127, to the Zona Rosa or Plaza de la República M\$152. One ticket is valid for up to four passengers and luggage that will fit in the trunk.

Taxi stands for the Sitio 300 taxis are outside Sala A and at the far end of the international terminal. Porters may offer to take your ticket and luggage the few steps to the taxi, but hold on to the ticket and hand it to the driver. Drivers won't expect a tip for the ride, but will of course welcome one.

To reserve a Transporte Terrestre taxi to the airport call ☎ 5571-9344; fares are slightly higher in this direction.

Central de Autobuses del Poniente (Map pp42–3; ☎ 5271-0149; Sur 122, Colonia Real del Monte; 🚏 Observatorio) is the departure point for buses heading west to Michoacán and shuttle services running to nearby Toluca.

Terminal Central del Sur (Map p95; ☎ 5689-9745; Av Taxqueña 1320; 🚏 Tasqueña) serves Tepoztlán, Cuernavaca, Taxco, Acapulco and other southern destinations.

All terminals have baggage-check services or lockers (M\$5 to M\$12 per item), as well as tourist information modules, newsstands, card phones, internet terminals, ATMs and snack bars.

For certain destinations you have a choice of terminals, thus avoiding the need to travel across town for connections. Oaxaca, for example, is served by TAPO, Sur and Norte terminals. Guadalajara can be reached from Terminal Norte or Poniente.

There are also buses to nearby cities from the airport. Direct buses to Cuernavaca, Querétaro, Toluca, Puebla and Córdoba depart from platforms adjacent to Sala E. Ticket counters are on the upper level, off the food court.

USEFUL BUS ROUTES

'Autobuses del Sur' & 'Autobuses del Norte' trolleybus Eje Central Lázaro Cardenas between north and south bus terminals (stops at Plaza de las Tres Culturas; Plaza Garibaldi; Bellas Artes/Alameda; metro Hidalgo)

'Metro Hidalgo-La Villa' bus or pesero Paseo de la Reforma between Auditorio Nacional or metro Chapultepec and Basílica de Guadalupe (stops at Zona Rosa; Av Insurgentes; Alameda/metro Hidalgo; Plaza Garibaldi; Plaza de las Tres Culturas)

'Metro Sevilla-P Masaryk' pesero Between Colonia Roma and Polanco via Av Álvaro Obregón and Av Presidente Masaryk (stops at metro Niños Héroes; Av Insurgentes; metro Sevilla; Leibnitz)

'Metro Tacubaya-Balderas-Escandón' pesero Between Centro Histórico and Condesa, westbound via Puebla, eastbound via Durango (stops at Plaza San Juan; metro Balderas; metro Insurgentes; Parque España; Av Michoacán)

Metrobus Runs north-south along Av Insurgentes from Metro Indios Verdes to San Ángel (stops at Paseo de la Reforma; metro Insurgentes; Colonia Roma; Parque México; metro Chilpancingo; Monumental Plaza México; Parque La Bombilla)

Check schedules by phoning the bus lines or by visiting their (sometimes functional) websites.

ADO Group (☎ 5133-2424, 800-702-80-00; www.ticketbus.com.mx) Destinations include Campeche, Cancún, Mérida, Oaxaca, Palenque, Puebla, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Veracruz, Villhermosa, Xalapa.

Estrella Blanca Group (☎ 5729-0707; www.estrellablanca.com.mx) Acapulco, Mazatlán, Monterrey, Puerto Escondido, Puerto Vallarta, Tijuana.

Estrella de Oro (☎ 5689-3955; www.estrelladeoro.com.mx, in Spanish) Acapulco, Taxco, Zihuatanejo.

Estrella Roja (☎ 5130-1800, 800-712-22-84; www.estrellaroja.com.mx, in Spanish) Puebla, Tepoztlán.

ETN (☎ 5089-9200, 800-800-0386; www.etn.com.mx) Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, San Miguel de Allende, Toluca, Uruapan.

Omnibus de México (☎ 5141-4300, 800-765-6636; www.odm.com.mx, in Spanish) Chihuahua, Durango, Saltillo, Tampico, Zacatecas.

Primera Plus (☎ 800-375-7587; www.primeraplus.com.mx, in Spanish) Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Morelia, Pátzcuaro, Querétaro, San Miguel de Allende, Uruapan.

Pullman de Morelos (www.pullman.com.mx, in Spanish) Cuernavaca.

You can pick up tickets beforehand at **Ticketbus** (☎ 5133-2424, 800-702-80-00; www.ticketbus.com.mx), a booking agency for over a dozen bus lines out of all four stations. (A 10% surcharge is added to the cost of the ticket, up to a maximum of M\$50.) In addition to the Ticketbus locations below, a couple more are located inside the international-arrivals terminal at the airport. Outlets are generally open 9am or 10am to 7pm or 8pm Monday to Friday with an hour lunch break, and mornings only on Saturday.

Ticketbus also offers purchase by phone with Visa or Mastercard.

Buenavista (Map p71; Buenavista 9; 🚏 Revolución)

Centro Histórico (Map pp48–9; Isabel la Católica 83E; 🚏 Isabel la Católica)

Condesa (Map pp74–5; Iztaccíhuatl 6, cnr Insurgentes; 🚏 Chilpancingo)

Polanco (Map p84; Av Presidente Masaryk, cnr Hegel; 🚏 Polanco)

Reforma (Map pp74–5; Paseo de la Reforma 412; 🚏 Sevilla) Across from La Diana Cazadora.

Roma Norte (Map pp92–3; Puebla 46; 🚏 Cuauhtémoc)

Roma Norte (Map pp92–3; Mérida 156; 🚏 Hospital General)

Zócalo (Map pp48–9; Turismo Zócalo, La Palma 34; 🚏 Zócalo)

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving

Touring Mexico City by car is strongly discouraged, unless you have a healthy reserve of stamina and patience. Even more than elsewhere in the country, traffic rules are seen as suggested behavior. Red lights may be run at will, no-turn signs are ignored and signals are seldom used. On occasion you may be hit by a bogus traffic fine, a routine means for traffic cops to increase their miserly salaries. Nevertheless, you may want to rent a car here for travel outside the city. Avoid parking on the street; most midrange and top-end hotels have guest garages.

To help combat pollution, Mexico City operates its 'Hoy No Circula' (Don't Drive Today) program, banning many vehicles from being driven in the city between 5am and

10pm on one day each week. Exempted from the restriction are cars with a *calcomanía de verificación* (emissions verification sticker), obtained under the city's vehicle-pollution assessment system.

For other vehicles (including foreign-registered ones), the last digit of the license plate number determines the day when they cannot circulate. Any car may operate on Saturday and Sunday.

Day Prohibited last digits

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Monday | 5, 6 |
| Tuesday | 7, 8 |
| Wednesday | 3, 4 |
| Thursday | 1, 2 |
| Friday | 9, 0 |

RENTAL

Car-rental companies have offices at the airport, at bus stations and in the Zona Rosa. Rates generally start at about M\$500 per day, but you will often do better by booking ahead online. For a list of rental agencies, check www.mexicocity.gob.mx, then click 'Transporte' and 'Renta de Autos.'

Avis (Map pp74–5; ☎ 5511-2228; Paseo de la Reforma 308; 📍 Insurgentes)

Thrifty (Map pp74–5; ☎ 5207-1100; Paseo de la Reforma 322; 📍 Insurgentes)

TAXI

Mexico City has several classes of taxi. Cheapest are the cruising street cabs, though they're not recommended due to the risk of assaults

(see p258). If you must hail a cab off the street, check that it has official taxi license plates. In 2007, the city government began issuing new plates that each have a chip in them for tracking the taxi. The number on the plate begins with a large letter 'A' followed by 5 numbers. All legitimate taxis, whether taken from the street, a taxi stand or a radio dispatcher, should have these plates. Also look for the *carta de identificación* (also called the *tarjetón*), a postcard-sized ID which should be displayed visibly inside the cab, and ensure that the driver matches the photo. If the cab you've hailed does not pass these tests, get another.

In cabs hailed off the street, fares are computed by *taxímetro* (meter), which should start at M\$6 to M\$7. The total cost of a 2km or 3km ride in moderate traffic – say, from the Zócalo to the Zona Rosa – should be M\$40 to M\$45. Between 11pm and 6am, add 20%.

A radio taxi costs two or three times as much, but the extra cost adds an immeasurable degree of security. When you phone, the dispatcher will tell you the cab number and the type of car. Hotels and restaurants can call a reliable cab for you.

Some reliable radio-taxi firms, available 24 hours, are listed below. Maps in this chapter show the locations of some key *sitios*.

Taxi-Mex (☎ 9171-8888, 5634-9912)

Taxis Radio Unión (☎ 5514-8124)

RET (☎ 8590-6720, 8590-6721)

Radio Maxi Seguridad (☎ 5768-8557, 5552-1376)

Sitio Parque México (☎ 5286-7129, 5286-7164)

The predominant language of Mexico is Spanish. Mexican Spanish is unlike Castilian Spanish (the language of much of Spain) in two main respects: in Mexico the Castilian lisp has more or less disappeared and numerous indigenous words have been adopted. About 50 indigenous languages are spoken as a first language by more than seven million people in Mexico, and about 15% of these don't speak Spanish.

Travelers in Mexico City can almost always find someone who speaks at least some English. All the same, it is advantageous and courteous to know at least a few words and phrases in Spanish. Mexicans will generally respond much more positively if you attempt to speak to them in their own language.



It's easy enough to pick up some basic Spanish, and for those who want to learn the language in greater depth, courses are available in Mexico City itself (see p251). You can also study books, CDs and tapes before you leave home. These resources are often available free at public libraries. Evening or college courses are also an excellent way to get started.

For a more comprehensive guide to the Spanish of Mexico, get a copy of Lonely Planet's *Mexican Spanish Phrasebook*.

SOCIAL

Meeting People

Hi!
 ¡Hola!
 Bye!
 ¡Adiós!/Ciao.
 Please.
 Por favor.
 Thank you (very much).
 (Muchas) Gracias.
 Yes.
 Sí.
 No.
 No.
 Excuse me. (to get past)
 Permiso.
 Sorry!
 ¡Perdón!
 Pardon? (as in 'what did you say?')
 ¿Mande?/¿Cómo?/¿Qué?
 Do you speak English?
 ¿Habla inglés?
 Does anyone speak English?
 ¿Hay alguien que hable inglés?
 Do you understand? (informal)
 ¿Me entiendes?
 I (don't) understand.
 (No) entiendo.
 Could you please ...?
 ¿Puede ... por favor?
 speak more slowly **hablar más despacio**

repeat that
 write it down **repetirlo**
escribirlo

Going Out

What's there to do in the evenings?
 ¿Qué se puede hacer en las noches?
 What's on ...?
 ¿Qué pasa ...?
 around here
 this weekend
 today
 tonight
para acá
este fin de semana
hoy
esta noche
 Where are the ...?
 ¿Dónde hay ...?
 places to eat
 clubs/bars
 gay venues
lugares para comer
antros/bars
lugares para gays

PRACTICAL

Question Words

Who is it? **¿Quién es?**
 What? **¿Qué?**
 Which? **¿Cuál/Cuáles?** (sing/pl)
 When? **¿Cuándo?**
 Where? **¿Dónde?**
 How? **¿Cómo?**
 How much is it? **¿Cuánto cuesta?/**
¿Qué precio tiene?
 Why? **¿Por qué?**

LOCAL LINGO

Spice up your chat with some slang expressions! You'll hear many of these words and phrases around Mexico City.

antro – a bar or a club
antrear – to go clubbing
Vámonos de antro. – Let's go to a club/bar.
¡Bájale! – Don't exaggerate! Come on!
camal – bro' (brother)
¡Cámara! – Right on!
¡Chale?! – No way!
chavo – guy, dude
chava – girl, gal
chela – beer
chido/chida – very cool
¡Qué chido! – How cool!
chingar – literally 'to fuck'; it has a wide range of colloquial usages in Mexican Spanish equivalent to those in English
chingón – crude way to say something is very good, great
¡Fue un reven bien chingón! – It was a fantastic party!
¿Te gustó el concierto? Sí, estuvo bien chingón. – Did you like the concert? Yes, it was great.
la chota – the police
chupar – to drink, but could also refer to oral sex (literally 'to suck on something')
Vamos a chupar. – Let's go for some drinks.
cuate, cuaderno – buddy
un desmadre – a mess
fregada – bad, difficult
llevarse a la fregada – to make angry
¡Me lleva la fregada! – I'm pissed off!
¡Vete a la fregada! – Get the hell out of here!
fregón – really good at something, way cool, awesome; nicer than *chingón*
Este club está fregón. – This club is way cool.
El cantante es un fregón. – The singer is really awesome.
¡Guácatelas! ¡Guácala! – How gross! That's disgusting!
güey – dude; can also be used for women
huevos – testicles (literally 'eggs')
jefe – father
jefa – mother
kekás, quekás – quesadillas
lana – money, dough (literally 'wool')
Me late. – Sounds really good to me.
ligar – to flirt
¡No manches! ¡No mames! – Get outta here! You must be kidding!
mota – marijuana
Nel. – No.
No hay tos. – No problem. (literally 'there's no cough')
neto/meta – the truth
¿Neta? – Really?
¿Qué onda? – What's up? What's happening? The word *onda* means literally 'a wave of water'.
ser muy buena onda – to be really cool/nice
Mi novio es muy buena onda. – My boyfriend is really cool.
Eres muy buena onda. – You're really cool/nice.
tirar la onda – try to pick someone up, flirt
¡Orale! (positive) – Sounds great! (responding to an invitation)
¡Orale! (negative) – What the *#&\$!?! (taunting exclamation)
¡Paso sin ver! – I can't stand it! No thank you!
(un) pedo – (a) fart
No hay pedo. – No problem.
¿Qué pedo? – What's up? What's your problem?
Está re' pedo. – He's blasted. He's drunk.
¿Qué pex? – What's up?
pistear – to drink booze
Vamos a pistear. – Let's go drinking.
reven – huge, loud party either at someone's house or at an *antro*
irse de reventón – to go partying
¡Vámonos de reventón! – Let's party!
ruca – woman
Simón. – Yes.
Sale y vale. – I agree. Sounds good.
¡Te pasas! – That's it! You've gone too far!
¿Te cae? – Are you serious?
la tira – the police
¿Qué tranza? – What's up?
Me vale. – I don't care. Whatever.
varo – money, dough
vieja – wife, girlfriend (could be an endearment or derogatory depending on context)

Numbers

| | | | |
|---|---------------|----|--------------|
| 0 | ceró | 5 | cinco |
| 1 | uno | 6 | seis |
| 2 | dos | 7 | siete |
| 3 | tres | 8 | ocho |
| 4 | cuatro | 9 | nueve |
| | | 10 | diez |
| | | 11 | once |

| | |
|------|---------------|
| 12 | doce |
| 13 | trece |
| 14 | catorce |
| 15 | quince |
| 16 | dieciséis |
| 17 | diecisiete |
| 18 | dieciocho |
| 19 | diecinueve |
| 20 | veinte |
| 21 | veintiuno |
| 22 | veintidós |
| 30 | treinta |
| 31 | treinta y uno |
| 32 | treinta y dos |
| 40 | cuarenta |
| 50 | cincuenta |
| 60 | sesenta |
| 70 | setenta |
| 80 | ochenta |
| 90 | noventa |
| 100 | cien |
| 1000 | mil |
| 2000 | dos mil |

Days

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| Monday | lunes |
| Tuesday | martes |
| Wednesday | miércoles |
| Thursday | jueves |
| Friday | viernes |
| Saturday | sábado |
| Sunday | domingo |

Banking & Post

Where's the nearest ...?

¿Dónde está ... más cercano?

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| ATM | el cajero automático/ el cajero permanente |
| exchange house | la casa de cambio |
| post office | el correo |

I'd like to change ...

Quisiera cambiar ...

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| cash | dinero en efectivo |
| money | dinero |
| traveler's checks | cheques de viajero |

Do you accept credit/debit cards?

¿Aceptan tarjetas de crédito/débito acá?

I want to send a ...

Quiero enviar ...

| | |
|----------|------------|
| fax | un fax |
| parcel | un paquete |
| postcard | una postal |

I want to buy a/an ...

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Quiero comprar un ... | |
| aerogramme | aerograma |
| envelope | sobre |
| stamp | estampilla |

Communications

I want to buy a SIM card/phonecard.

Quiero comprar una tarjeta SIM/telefónica.

I'd like to rent a cell phone.

Quiero un celular para alquilar.

I want to make a ...

Quiero hacer una ...

| | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| call (to ...) | llamada (a ...) |
| collect call | llamada por cobrar |

Where can I find a/an ...?

¿Dónde puedo encontrar ...?

I'd like a/an ...

Quiero ...

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| adaptor plug | un adaptador |
| charger for my cell phone | un cargador para mi celular |
| prepaid cell | un celular pre-pagado/ pagado por adelantado |
| SIM card for your network | una tarjeta SIM para su red |

Where's a local internet café?

¿Dónde hay un cibercafé/café internet por acá?

I'd like (to) ...

Quiero ...

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| get online | usar internet |
| check my email | revisar mi correo electrónico |
| wireless internet | internet inalámbrico (also simply wi-fi) |

Transportation

What time does the ... leave?

¿A qué hora sale el ...?

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| boat | barco/lancha |
| bus (long distance) | autobús/camión |
| bus (local) | pesero/micro |
| plane | avión |

What time's the ... (bus)?

¿A qué hora es el ... (autobús)?

| | |
|-------|---------|
| first | primer |
| last | último |
| next | próximo |

Is this taxi available?

¿Está disponible este taxi?

Please put the meter on.

Por favor, ponga el taxímetro.

How much is it to ...?

¿Cuánto cuesta ir a ...?

Please take me (to this address).

Por favor, lléveme (a esta dirección).

FOOD

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| breakfast | desayuno |
| lunch | comida |
| dinner | cena |
| snack | merienda/ botana (in a bar) |
| to eat | comer |
| to drink | tomar |

Can you recommend a ...?

¿Puede recomendar ...?

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| bar | un antro/bar |
| café | un café |
| coffee bar | una cafetería |
| restaurant | un restaurante |

Are you open?

¿Está abierto?

When are you open?

¿Cuándo está abierto?

Are you now serving breakfast/lunch/dinner?

¿Ahora, está sirviendo desayuno/la comida/la cena?

Is the service charge included in the bill?

¿El precio en el menú incluye el servicio?

I'd like to see a menu.

Quisiera ver la carta/el menú.

Do you have a menu in English?

¿Tienen un menú en inglés?

Can you recommend something?

¿Puede recomendar algo?

I'm a vegetarian.

Soy vegetariano/a. (m/f)

I can't eat anything with meat or poultry products, including broth.

No puedo comer algo de carne o aves, incluyendo caldo.

Is it (chili) hot?

¿Es picoso?

I'd like mineral water/natural bottled water.

Quiero agua mineral/agua purificada.

That was delicious!

Estaba delicioso!

The check, please.

La cuenta, por favor.

Food Glossary

See also the 'Little Whims' boxed text in the Eating chapter (p151)

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a la parrilla | – grilled |
| adobada | – pan-broiled |
| adobada | – marinated with <i>adobo</i> (chili sauce) |
| agua mineral | – mineral water or club soda |
| agua purificado | – bottled, natural water |
| aguacate | – avocado |
| al albáñil | – 'bricklayer style' – served with a hot chili sauce |
| al carbón | – char-broiled |
| al mojo de ajo | – with garlic sauce |
| al pastor | – 'shepherd style' – cooked on a spit |
| albóndigas | – meatballs |
| antojitos | – 'little whims' – Mexican tortilla-based snacks like tacos and <i>garditas</i> |
| arrachera | – tender Argentinean-cut skirt steak |
| arroz a la mexicana | – pilaf-style rice with a tomato base |
| ate | – jam, preserves served in slices as a dessert |
| atole | – gruel made with ground corn |
| atun | – tuna fish |
| avena | – oatmeal |
| aves | – poultry |
| azúcar | – sugar |

barbacoa – pit-smoked barbecue

bistec – steak

bolillo – French-style roll

brocheta – shish kabab

buñuelos – tortilla-size fritters with a brown-sugar syrup

cabra – goat

cabrito – kid goat

café americano – black coffee

café con leche – coffee with hot milk

cajeta – goat's milk and sugar boiled to a paste

calabacita – zucchini ('courgette' in the UK)

calamar – squid

caldo – broth or soup

camarones – shrimp

cangrejo – crab

carne de puerco – pork

carne de res – beef

carne – meat

carnero – mutton

carnitas – pork simmered in lard

cebolla – onion

cecina – thin cut of meat, salted and hung; served grilled

cerdo – pork

chicharrones – fried pork skins

chiles en nogada – mild green chilies stuffed with ground meat and fruit, battered and deep-fried; served with a walnut cream sauce and pomegranates

chorizo – Mexican-style bulk sausage made with chili and vinegar

chuleta de puerco – pork chop
churros – long doughnut-like fritters
cochinita pibil – pork, marinated in chilies, wrapped in banana leaves, and pit-cooked or baked
coco – coconut
coctel de frutas – fruit cocktail
consome – chicken broth, usually with some vegetables and garbanzo beans
cordero – lamb
costillas de res – beef ribs
crema – cream
crepas – crepes or thin pancakes

elote – fresh corn on the cob
empanizado – breaded
ensalada – salad
esquites – boiled corn kernels served in a cup

filete a la tampiqueña – steak, *tampico*-style, a thin tenderloin, grilled and served with chili strips and onion, *rajás* and an *enchilada*
filete – filet
flor de calabaza – squash blossom
frijoles charros – beans cooked with sausage, tomatoes, chilies and onions (also called *frijoles rancheros*)
frijoles negros – black beans
frijoles refritos – refried beans
frito – fried

galleta – cookie
gelatina – gelatin; also Jello, jelly)

helado – ice cream
hielo – ice
higado – liver
horchata – a soft drink made with melon seeds or rice
huachinango veracruzana – Veracruz-style red snapper with a sauce of tomatoes, olives, vinegar and capers
huevos a la mexicana – eggs scrambled with onion, tomato and chili
huevos estrellados – fried eggs, sunny-side up
huevos fritos – fried eggs
huevos rancheros – fried eggs served on a corn tortilla, topped with a sauce of tomato, chilies and onions, and served with refried beans
huevos revueltos – scrambled eggs
huitlacoche – corn mushrooms; a much-esteemed fungus that grows on corn

jaiba – crab
jamaica – a type of hibiscus flower used to make a flavored-water drink
jamón – ham
jitomate – red tomato
jugo de manzana – apple juice
jugo de naranja – orange juice
jugo de piña – pineapple juice

jugo de toronja – grapefruit juice

langosta – lobster
leche – milk
lengua – tongue
lentejas – lentils
licuado – smoothie
limón – lime (lemons are rarely found in Mexico)
lomo de cerdo – pork loin

machacado – pulverized jerky, often scrambled with eggs
mantequilla – butter
mariscos – seafood, shellfish
menudo – stew of tripe
milanesa – thin slices of chicken, beef or pork, breaded and fried
mixiote – chili-seasoned lamb steamed in agave membranes or parchment
mole negro – chicken or pork in a very dark sauce of chilies, fruits, nuts, spices and chocolate
mole poblano – chicken or turkey in a sauce of chilies, fruits, nuts, spices and chocolate
mole – a traditional stew
mollejas – sweetbreads (thymus or pancreas)

nieve – sorbet, sherbet
nopales – sliced cactus paddles, sautéed or grilled; also served as a salad
ostras/ostiones – oysters

pan – bread
papas fritas – potato chips
papas a la francesa – french fries
papas – potatoes
pastel – cake
pato – duck
pay – pie
pechuga – breast
picadillo – a ground-beef filling that often includes raisins and nuts or peas and carrots
piña – pineapple
pipian verde – a stew of chicken, with ground squash seeds, chilies and tomatillos
platano macho – plantain
platano – banana
pollo – chicken
postre – dessert
pozole – a soup or thin stew of hominy, meat, vegetables and chilies
pulpo – octopus

rajás – strips of mild green chili fried with onions, often mixed with cream
sábana – beef filet pounded paper thin and seared
sopa – soup, either *aguada* (wet) or *seca* (dry); in *sopa seca* all cooking liquid has been absorbed by rice or pasta
sopa de ajo – garlic soup

sopa de cebolla – onion soup
sopa de pollo – chicken soup

té de hiebabuena – mint tea
té de manzanillo – chamomile tea
té negro – black tea
te de limón – lemongrass tea
ternera – veal
tinga poblana – a stew of pork, vegetables and chilies
tocino – bacon
tomates – tomatillos, green husk tomatoes
toronja – grapefruit
tuna – cactus fruit

uvas – grapes

venado – venison
verduras – vegetables

EMERGENCIAS

It's an emergency!
¡Es una emergencia!
 Could you help me, please?
¿Me puede ayudar, por favor?
 Where's the police station?
¿Dónde está la comisaría?

Call ... !
¡Llame a ... !
 the police la policía

a doctor un médico
 an ambulance! una ambulancia

HEALTH

Where's the nearest ...?
¿Dónde está ... más cercano?
 dentist el dentista
 doctor el médico
 hospital el hospital

Where's the nearest (night) pharmacy?
¿Dónde está la farmacia (de turno) más cercana?

I need a doctor (who speaks English).
Necesito un médico (que hable inglés).

Symptoms

I have (a/an) ...

Tengo ...
 diarrhea diarrea
 fever fiebre
 headache dolor de cabeza
 pain (here) dolor (aquí)

I'm allergic to ...

Soy alérgico/a a ... (m/f)
 antibiotics los antibióticos
 nuts las nueces
 peanuts los cacahuates

GLOSSARY

aduana – customs
agave – plant with thick pointed leaves growing straight out of the ground; see also maguey
aguardiente – literally ‘burning water’; strong liquor usually made from sugarcane
Ángeles Verdes – ‘Green Angels’; government-funded mechanics who patrol Mexico’s major highways in green vehicles and help stranded motorists with fuel, spare parts and service
antro – club with (often loud) recorded music and usually some space to dance
Apdo – abbreviation for *Apartado* (Box) in addresses; hence *Apdo Postal* means Post Office Box
artesanías – handicrafts, folk arts
autopista – expressway, freeway
azulejo – painted ceramic tile
balneario – bathing-place, often a natural hot spring
barrio – neighborhood of a town or city, often a poor neighborhood
cacique – regional warlord or political strongman
cafetería – snack bar or coffeehouse
callejón – alley
calzada – grand boulevard or avenue
camión – truck or bus
camioneta – pickup truck
campesino/a – country person, peasant
capitalino – a person from the capital (Mexico City)
casa de cambio – exchange house; place where currency is exchanged, faster to use than a bank
caseta de larga distancia, caseta de teléfono, caseta telefónica – public telephone call station, often in a shop
central camionera – bus terminal
cerro – hill
Chac – Maya rain god
charreada – Mexican rodeo
charro – Mexican cowboy
Chilango/a – citizen of Mexico City
chinampas – Aztec gardens built from lake mud and vegetation; versions still exist at Xochimilco
Coatlicue – mother of the Aztec gods
colectivo – minibus or car that picks up and drops off passengers along a predetermined route; can also refer to other types of transport, such as boats, where passengers share the total fare
colonia – neighborhood of a city, often a wealthy residential area
comedor – literally ‘eating place’; usually a sit-down stall in a market or a small, cheap restaurant
comida corrida – fixed-price menu with several courses; cheaper than eating à la carte
conquistador – early Spanish explorer-conqueror
correos – post office
cuota – toll; a *via cuota* is a toll road

curandero/a – literally ‘curer’; a medicine man or woman who uses herbal and/or magical methods and often emphasizes spiritual aspects of disease
de lujo – deluxe; often used with some license
delegación – large urban governmental subdivision in Mexico City comprising numerous *colonias*
de paso – a bus that began its route somewhere else, but stops to let passenger on or off at various points – often arriving late; a *local* bus is preferable
descompuesto – broken, out of order
DF – Distrito Federal (Federal District); about half of Mexico City lies in the DF
defeño – someone from the DF
embarcadero – jetty, boat landing
esq – abbreviation of *esquina* (corner) in addresses
feria – fair or carnival, typically occurring during a religious holiday
fonda – eating stall in a market; small restaurant
giro – money order
gringo/a – US or Canadian (and sometimes European, Australasian, etc) visitor to Latin America; can be used derogatorily
grito – literally ‘shout’; the *Grito de Dolores* was the 1810 call to independence by parish priest Miguel Hidalgo, which sparked the struggle for independence from Spain
güero/a – fair-haired, fair-complexioned person; a more polite alternative to *gringo*
hacienda – estate; Hacienda (capitalized) is the Treasury Department
Huizilpochtli – Aztec tribal god
iglesia – church
INAH – Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia; the body in charge of most ancient sites and some museums
INBA – National Fine Arts Institute
indígena – indigenous, pertaining to the original inhabitants of Latin America; can also refer to the people themselves
ISH – *impuesto sobre hospedaje*; lodging tax on the price of hotel rooms
IVA – *impuesto de valor agregado*, or ‘ee-ba’; a 15% sales tax added to the price of many items
lada – short for *larga distancia*
Ladatel – the long-distance telephone system operated by the former monopoly Telmex
larga distancia – long-distance; usually refers to telephones and telephone calls
licenciado – university graduate; abbreviated as *Lic* and used as an honorific before a person’s name
licuado – drink made from fruit juice, water or milk, and sugar
local – can mean premises, such as a numbered shop or

office in a mall or block, or can mean ‘local’; a *local* bus is one that follows a route within a defined zone or suburb
machismo – Mexican masculine bravura
madre – literally ‘mother’; used colloquially with an astonishing array of meanings
maguey – agave plant from which *pulque*, mezcal and tequila are made
mariachi – small ensemble of street musicians playing traditional ballads on guitars and trumpets
mercado – market; often a building near the center of a town, with shops and open-air stalls in the surrounding streets
Mesoamerica – the region inhabited by the ancient Mexican and Maya cultures
mestizaje – ‘mixedness’; Mexico’s mixed-blood heritage, officially an object of pride
mestizo – person of mixed (usually indigenous and Spanish) ancestry, ie most Mexicans
mezcal – strong alcoholic drink produced from *maguey* sap
microbus – small bus; usually refers to a van converted to allow passengers in and out easily
molcajete – stone bowl with legs, for grinding spices and making sauces
mole – a spicy sauce usually made with chilies, a variety of spices, and sometimes chocolate, served with meat
mordida – literally ‘little bite’; a small bribe to keep the wheels of bureaucracy turning
moreno/a – dark, especially a dark-complexioned or dark-haired person
Náhuatl – language of the Nahuatl people, descendants of the Aztecs
norteamericanos – North Americans; people from north of the US–Mexican border
Nte – abbreviation for *norte* (north); used in street names
Ote – abbreviation for *oriente* (east); used in street names
panadería – bakery, pastry shop
parada – bus stop, usually for city buses
paseo – boulevard, walkway or pedestrian street; also the act of taking a walk
Pemex – government-owned petroleum extraction, refining and retailing monopoly
periférico – ring road
pesero – local city buses, so named because they originally cost one peso
plaza de toros – bullring

propina – tip in a restaurant or bar
Pte – abbreviation for *poniente* (west); used in street names
pulque – thick, milky, alcoholic drink of fermented *maguey* juice
Quetzalcóatl – plumed serpent god of the Aztecs
rebozo – long woolen or linen shawl covering the head or shoulders
retablo – altarpiece or small painting on wood, tin or cardboard
s/n – *sin número* (without number); used in street addresses
Semana Santa – Holy Week, the week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday (a major holiday period)
servicios – toilets
sitio – taxi stand
supermercado – supermarket; anything from a small corner store to a large, US-style supermarket
Sur – south; often seen in street names
taller – shop or workshop; a *taller mecánico* is a mechanic’s shop, usually for cars; a *taller de llantas* is a tire-repair shop
taquería – taco stand
teocalli – Aztec sacred precinct
tequila – liquor produced from the *maguey* plant; see also *pulque* and *mezcal*
tianguis – indigenous people’s market; weekly neighborhood market
típico/a – characteristic of a region; particularly used to describe food
Tláloc – Aztec water god
topes – speed bumps; found on the outskirts of many towns and villages, only sometimes marked by signs
trajinera – gondola-like boat punted along the canals of Xochimilco
tzompantli – rack for the skulls of Aztec sacrificial victims
UNAM – Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico)
zócalo – main plaza or square
Zona Rosa – literally ‘Pink Zone’; an area of expensive shops, hotels and restaurants in Mexico City frequented by the wealthy and tourists

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