

Mexico City



Vibrant, cosmopolitan capital or smog-choked, crime-plagued urban stain that's best avoided? Is Mexico City closer to the magical realism of *Frida* or the asphalt jungle of *Amores Perros*?

Well, yes. Mexico City is a place of multifaceted offerings.

This is a city of serene parks and European-style plazas, teeming street life and bustling markets, boisterous bullrings and civilized cantinas, gleaming office towers and centuries-old monasteries, old-fashioned dance halls and minimalist electronica clubs. Over a hundred museums display pre-Hispanic, colonial and modern art or cover the city's long history. For culinary travelers, it's an endless banquet, from soulful taco stalls to world-class restaurants. Music is everywhere: emerging from the opera house, you're greeted by an organ-grinder. Over 2km high, Mexico City enjoys a springlike climate year-round. And the Chilangos, or *defeños*, or *capitalinos*, or whatever you name the locals, are a remarkably patient and helpful bunch.

Yet it's impossible to overlook the city's very real problems. Express kidnappings and taxi holdups, often dangerous levels of ozone and airborne particulates, intolerable traffic jams, overcrowded public transportation, practically unlimited urban sprawl: name your poison, it's here. But the polluted air improved considerably after the introduction of strict emission controls, and downtown streets have been made unquestionably safer than in previous decades.

Remember that Mexico City is, and has ever been, the sun in the Mexican solar system. To truly understand the country, you've got to come to grips with El Gran Tenochtitlán.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Study Diego Rivera's tableau of Mexican history at the **Palacio Nacional** (p142)
- Sip some smooth and smoky *mezcal*s at the **tasting salons** (boxed text, p183) of Roma and Condesa
- Cheer on the 'good guys' at the *lucha libre* bouts of **Arena Coliseo** (p188)
- Gaze upon the Aztec sun stone and other superb relics from Mexico's pre-Hispanic past at the **Museo Nacional de Antropología** (p153)
- Share Frida's pain at her blue birthplace, the Casa Azul, now home to the **Museo Frida Kahlo** (p158), in Coyoacán



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 55

■ ELEVATION: 2240M

■ POPULATION: 19.2 MILLION

HISTORY

Driving over the sea of asphalt that now overlays this highland basin, you'd be hard pressed to imagine that, a mere five centuries ago, it was filled by a chain of lakes. It would further stretch your powers to think that today's downtown was on an islet crisscrossed by canals, or that the communities who inhabited this island and the banks of the lake spoke a patchwork of languages that had as little to do with Spanish as Malay or Urdu. As their chronicles related, the Spaniards who arrived at the shores of that lake in the early 1500s were just as amazed to witness such a scene.

That lake covered much of the floor of the Valle de México when humans began moving in as early as 30,000 BC. Eventually the lake started shrinking and hunting became tougher, so the inhabitants turned to agriculture. A loose federation of farming villages had evolved around Lago de Texcoco by approximately 200 BC. The biggest, Cuicuilco, was destroyed by a volcanic eruption three centuries later.

Breakthroughs in irrigation techniques and the development of a maize-based economy contributed to the rise of a civilization at Teotihuacán, 40km northeast of the lake. For centuries Teotihuacán was the capital of an empire whose influence extended as far as Guatemala. However, it was unable to sustain its burgeoning population, and fell in the 8th century. The Toltecs, possibly descended from the nomadic tribes who invaded Teotihuacán, arose as the next great civilization, building their capital at Tula, 65km north of modern-day Mexico City. By the 12th century the Tula empire had collapsed as well, leaving a number of statelets to compete for control of the Valle de México. It was the Aztecs who emerged supreme.

Aztec Mexico City

The Aztecs, or Mexica (meh-shee-kah), arrived a century after the Toltecs' demise. A wandering tribe that claimed to have come from Aztlán, a mythical region in northwest Mexico, they acted as mercenary fighters for the Tepanecas, who resided on the lake's southern shore, and they were allowed to settle upon the inhospitable terrain of Chapultepec. After being captured by the warriors of rival Culhuacán, the Aztecs played the same role for their new masters. Cocoltli, Culhuacán's ruler, sent them into battle against nearby

Xochimilco, and the Aztecs delivered over 8000 human ears as proof of their victory. They later sought a marriage alliance with Culhuacán, and Cocoltli offered his own daughter's hand to the Aztec chieftain. But at the wedding banquet, his pride turned to horror: a dancer was garbed in the flayed skin of his daughter, who had been sacrificed to Huizilopochtli, the hummingbird god.

Fleeing from the wrath of Culhuacán, the tribe wandered the swampy fringes of the lake, finally reaching an island near the western shore around 1325. There, according to legend, they witnessed an eagle standing atop a cactus and devouring a snake, which they interpreted as a sign to stop and build a city, Tenochtitlán.

Tenochtitlán rapidly became a sophisticated city-state whose empire would, by the early 16th century, span most of modern-day central Mexico from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico and into far southern Mexico. The Aztecs built their city on a grid plan, with canals as thoroughfares and causeways to the lakeshore. At the city's heart stood the main *teocalli* (sacred precinct), with its temple dedicated to Huizilopochtli and the water god, Tláloc. In the marshier parts, they created raised gardens by piling up vegetation and mud, and planting willows. These *chinampas* (versions of which still exist at Xochimilco in southern Mexico City) gave three or four harvests yearly but were still not enough to feed the growing population.

To supplement their resources, the Aztecs extracted tribute from conquered tribes. In the mid-15th century they formed an alliance with the lakeshore states of Texcoco and Tlacopan to conduct wars against Tlaxcala and Huejotzingo, which lay east of the valley. The purpose was to gain a steady supply of sacrificial victims to sate Huizilopochtli's vast hunger, so that the sun would rise each day.

When the Spanish arrived in 1519, Tenochtitlán's population was 200,000 to 300,000, while the entire Valle de México had perhaps 1.5 million inhabitants, making it one of the world's densest urban areas. For an account of the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán, see p53.

Capital of Nueva España

So assiduously did the Spanish raze Tenochtitlán that only a handful of structures from the Aztec period remain today. Having

wrecked the Aztec capital, they set about rebuilding it as their own. The conquistador Hernán Cortés hoped to preserve the arrangement whereby Tenochtitlán siphoned off the bounty of its vassal states.

Ravaged by disease, the Valle de México's population shrank drastically – from 1.5 million to under 100,000 within a century of the conquest. But the city emerged as the prosperous, elegant capital of Nueva España. Broad, straight streets were laid over the Aztec causeways and canals. Indigenous labor built hospitals, palaces and a university according to Spanish designs with local materials such as *tezontle*, a red volcanic rock that the Aztecs had used for their temples. The various Catholic orders had massive monastic complexes erected.

Building continued through the 17th century but problems arose as the weighty colonial structures began sinking into the soft, squishy lakebed. Furthermore, lacking natural drainage, the city suffered floods caused by the partial destruction in the 1520s of the Aztecs' canals. Lago de Texcoco often overflowed, damaging buildings, bringing disease and forcing thousands to relocate. One torrential rain in 1629 left the city submerged for five years!

Urban conditions improved in the 1700s as new plazas and avenues were installed, along with sewage and garbage collection systems. This was Mexico City's gilded age. But the shiny capital was largely the domain of a Spanish and Creole elite who had prospered through silver mining. The masses of Indian and mixed-race peasants who served them were confined to the outskirts.

Independence

On October 30, 1810, some 80,000 independence rebels, fresh from victory at Guanajuato, overpowered Spanish loyalist forces west of the capital. Unfortunately, they were ill equipped to capitalize on this triumph, and their leader, Miguel Hidalgo, chose not to advance on the city – a decision that cost Mexico 11 more years of fighting before independence was achieved.

Under the reform laws instituted by President Benito Juárez, the monasteries and churches were appropriated by the government then sold off, subdivided and put to other uses. During his brief reign, Emperor Maximilian laid out the Calzada

del Emperador (today's Paseo de la Reforma) to connect Bosque de Chapultepec with the center.

Mexico City entered the modern age under the despotic Porfirio Díaz, who ruled Mexico for most of the years from 1876 to 1911 and attracted much foreign investment. Díaz ushered in a construction boom, building Parisian-style mansions and theaters, while the city's wealthier residents escaped the center for newly minted neighborhoods toward the west. Some 150km of electric tramways threaded the streets, industry grew, and by 1910 the city had more than half a million inhabitants. A drainage canal and tunnel finally succeeded in drying up much of Lago de Texcoco, allowing further expansion.

Modern Megalopolis

After Díaz fell in 1911, the Mexican Revolution (see p59) brought war, hunger and disease to the streets of Mexico City. Following the Great Depression, a drive to industrialize attracted more money and people, and by 1940 the population had reached 1.7 million. Factories and skyscrapers sprang up in the following decades, but the supply of housing, jobs and services could not keep pace. Economic growth continued in the 1960s, but political and social reform lagged behind, as was made painfully evident by the massacre of hundreds of students in the lead-up to the 1968 Olympic Games (see boxed text, opposite).

Mexico City continued to mushroom in the 1970s, as the rural poor sought economic refuge in its thriving industries, and the population surged from 8.7 to 14.5 million. Unable to contain the masses of new arrivals, the Distrito Federal (DF) spread into the adjacent state of México. The result of such unbridled growth was some of the world's worst traffic and pollution, only partly alleviated by the metro system (opened in 1969) and by attempts in the 1990s to limit traffic. On September 19, 1985, an earthquake measuring over eight on the Richter scale hit Mexico City, killing at least 10,000 and displacing thousands more. Still, people kept pouring in.

Today the metropolitan area counts 22 million inhabitants by some estimates, around a fifth of the country's population. Though growth has slowed in the last decade, there are still some 100,000 newcomers and 150,000 births annually. Mexico City is the industrial, financial and communica-

ECHOES OF TLATELOLCO

The year 1968 marked a pivotal moment for Mexican democracy. Perhaps due to the subversive mood of the era, unrest was rife and students took to the streets to denounce political corruption and authoritarianism. Mexico had been chosen that year to host the Olympics, and President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was anxious to present an image of stability to the world. Known for his authoritarian style, Díaz Ordaz employed heavy-handed tactics to stop the protests, in turn generating further unrest, with the mantle now being taken up by a broader coalition of middle-class *capitalinos*.

On the afternoon of October 2, a week before the Olympics were to begin, a demonstration was held on Tlatelolco's Plaza de las Tres Culturas. Helicopters hovered overhead and a massive police contingent cordoned off the zone. Suddenly a flare dropped from one of the choppers and shots rang out, apparently from the balcony that served as a speakers platform. Police then opened fire on the demonstrators and mayhem ensued. Later, government-authorized accounts blamed student snipers for igniting the incident and reported 20 protesters killed, although the real number is acknowledged to be closer to 400. News of the massacre was swept under the rug and the Olympic games went on without a hitch.

There are numerous theories as to what actually occurred that October day. But the generally accepted version is that the government staged the massacre, planting snipers on the balcony to make it seem as if the students had provoked the violence. Many Mexicans viewed the killings as a premeditated tactic to suppress dissent, and the massacre permanently discredited the post-revolutionary regime.

Almost four decades later, the Tlatelolco massacre was still recalled bitterly by a generation of Mexicans after an investigation – authorized by President Vicente Fox, the country's first opposition party president in modern history – failed to yield any new revelations. Meanwhile, a new museum, the Centro Culturales Universitario Tlatelolco (p162), was inaugurated beside the scene of the carnage to commemorate and document the epochal incident.

tions center of the country; its industries generate a quarter of Mexico's wealth, and its people consume two-thirds of the country's energy. Its cost of living is the highest in the nation.

For seven decades, the federal government ruled the DF directly, with presidents appointing 'regents' to head notoriously corrupt administrations. Finally, in 1997, the DF gained political autonomy. In 2000 Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a member of the left-leaning PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), was elected. *Capitalinos* overwhelmingly approved of 'Amlo.' His initiatives included an ambitious makeover of the Centro Histórico (financed in part by Carlos Slim Helú, the world's richest man as of 2007) and the construction of an overpass for the city's ring road.

While López Obrador was narrowly defeated in the presidential election of 2006 (an outcome he fiercely contested), his former police chief Marcelo Ebrard won a sweeping victory in Mexico City, consolidating the PRD's grip on the city government. Also registering an overwhelming takeover of the Federal

District's legislative assembly, the PRD passed a flood of progressive initiatives, including the sanctioning of gay unions and the legalization of abortion and euthanasia. Though Ebrard doesn't inspire the sort of fervor demonstrated by Amlo's followers, his progressive initiatives may have longer-lasting effects.

ORIENTATION

The Distrito Federal (DF) is comprised of 16 *delegaciones* (boroughs), which are in turn subdivided into some 1800 *colonias* (neighborhoods, more of which are added each year as the city expands). Though this vast urban expanse appears daunting, the main areas of interest to visitors are fairly well defined and easy to traverse.

Note that some major streets, such as Av Insurgentes, keep the same name for many kilometers, but the names (and numbering) of many lesser streets switch every few blocks.

Full addresses normally include the *colonia*. Often the easiest way to find an address is by asking for the nearest metro station.

Besides their regular names, many major streets are termed Eje (axis). The Eje system

establishes a grid of priority roads across the city. The north–south Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas, running from Coyoacán in the south to Tenayuca in the north, passes just east of the Alameda Central. Major north–south roads west of the Eje Central are termed Eje 1 Poniente, Eje 2 Poniente etc, while roads to the east of Eje Central are labeled Oriente. The same goes for major east–west roads to the north and south of the Alameda Central and Zócalo – Rayón is Eje 1 Norte, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier is Eje 1 Sur.

Maps

Mexico City tourist modules hand out color maps with enlargements of the Centro Histórico, Coyoacán and San Ángel. Those needing more detail should pick up a Guía Roji foldout 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.

Inegi (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-1873; www.inegi.gob.mx; Balderas 71, Centro; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Juárez), Mexico's national geographical institute, 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 pp126-7; ☎ 5278-1000, ext 1207; Patriotismo 711; ☎ 8:30am-9pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Mixcoac).

Centro Histórico & Alameda Central

The historic heart of the city is the wide plaza known as the Zócalo, surrounded by the presidential palace, the metropolitan cathedral and the excavated site of the main temple of Aztec Tenochtitlán. The 34-block area surrounding the Zócalo is known as the Centro Histórico (Historic Center), and is crammed with notable old buildings and interesting museums, as well as a number of reasonably priced hotels.

Av Madero and Av 5 de Mayo (or Cinco de Mayo) link the Zócalo with the Alameda Central park, eight blocks to the west. On the east side of the Alameda stands the magnificent Palacio de Bellas Artes. The landmark Torre Latinoamericana (Latin American Tower) stands a block south of Bellas Artes, beside one of the city's main north–south arterial roads, the Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas.

Plaza de la República

Some 750m west of the Alameda is the Plaza de la República, marked by the somber Monumento a la Revolución. This residential area has many budget and midrange hotels. The San Rafael and Juárez are west and south of here, respectively.

Paseo de la Reforma

Mexico City's grandest boulevard runs through the city's heart, connecting the Alameda to the Bosque de Chapultepec. Along the way, the Monumento a la Independencia (aka 'El Ángel') marks the northern side of the Zona Rosa, a glitzy shopping, hotel and nightlife district, while the Torre Mayor, the city's tallest building, stands at the gateway to Chapultepec Park.

Bosque de Chapultepec

Known to gringos as Chapultepec Park, this expanse of greenery and lakes spreads west of the Zona Rosa. It holds many major museums, including the renowned Museo Nacional de Antropología. North of the park is the swanky Polanco district, filled with embassies and upscale shopping and dining establishments.

North of the Centro

Six kilometers north is the Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico's most revered shrine, about 1km beyond the Terminal Norte, the largest of the four bus terminals.

South of the Centro

Av Insurgentes Sur connects Paseo de la Reforma to most points of interest in the south. Just south of the Zona Rosa is Colonia Roma (the Roma neighborhood), a quaint area of Porfirato-era architecture, art galleries and plazas. West of Roma is Colonia Condesa, a trendy neighborhood with pleasant parks and plentiful restaurants and cafés. About 10km further south are the former villages of San Ángel and Coyoacán and the campus of the national university. In the southeast of the city are the canals and gardens of Xochimilco.

INFORMATION

Drop into the **Instituto Nacional de Migración** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 2581-0100; Av Ejército Nacional 862, Polanco; ☎ 9am-1:30pm Mon-Fri) to get your tourist card stamped or check what other documents are needed.

Bookstores

Books in English and some other common languages can be found in top-end hotels and major museums, as well as most of the following bookstores.

CENTRO HISTÓRICO

American Bookstore (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-0306; Bolívar 23; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; **M** Allende) Has novels and books on Mexico in English.

Gandhi (☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun) Bellas Artes (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-4360; Juárez 4; **M** Bellas Artes); Madero (Map pp128-9; ☎ 2625-0606; Madero 32; **M** Zócalo) Citywide chain with a voluminous range of texts on Mexico and Mexico City, plus a worthwhile music section.

Librería Alemana (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5578-3074; Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas 61, Piso 3; ☎ 10am-4pm & 5-7pm Mon-Sat; **M** Doctores) German pop fiction and literature.

Librería Madero (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-2068; Madero 12; ☎ 10am-6:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; **M** Allende) Mexican history, art and architecture, including many secondhand titles.

Palacio de Bellas Artes (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-2593; Av Hidalgo & Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun; **M** Bellas Artes) Branch of government-sponsored Conaculta bookstore, with ample selection of posters, cards and art books.

OTHER AREAS

Rare-book aficionados can dig up some gems in the used bookstores along Av Álvaro Obregón in Colonia Roma.

Cenca (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5280-1666; Temistocles 73B, Polanco; ☎ 7:30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat & Sun; **M** Polanco) Wide variety of foreign magazines, plus bestsellers in English.

Gandhi (Map p139; ☎ 5661-0911; Av Miguel Ángel de Quevedo 121; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun; **M** Miguel Ángel de Quevedo) The large San Ángel branch has outlets on both sides of Quevedo.

Librería Pegaso (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-0174; Álvaro Obregón 99; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun; **M** Insurgentes) Inside the Casa Lamm; carries Spanish-language titles with a small English literature section, plus some Lonely Planet guides.

Emergency

The Policía Turística, recognizable by their neat blue-and-gray uniforms with white belts across their chests, patrol Paseo de la Reforma and the Centro Histórico, some zippering around on Segways. They are supposed to be able to speak English. Mobile units of

the GJDF (Federal District Attorney General's Office) can assist crime victims on the spot; call ☎ 061.

Agencias del Ministerio Público (☎ 9am-5pm) Centro Histórico (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5346-8720, ext 16520; Victoria 76; **M** Juárez); Plaza de la República (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5592-2677, ext 1114; Paseo de la Reforma 42; **M** Hidalgo); Zona Rosa (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5345-5382; Amberes 54; **M** Insurgentes) Report crimes and get legal assistance. All offices have English-speaking personnel. They will help you complete forms to report an incident and give you a number to follow it up online.

Cruz Roja (Red Cross; ☎ 065, 5395-1111)

Fire (☎ 068)

Hospital ABC (Map pp126-7; ☎ emergency 5230-8161; Sur 136 No 116, Colonia Las Américas; **M** Observatorio)

Hospital Ángeles Clínica Londres (Map pp132-3; ☎ emergency 5229-8445; Durango 64, Roma; **M** Cuauhtémoc)

Internet Access

Public internet services are easily located. Rates range from M\$10 to M\$30 per hour. In addition, many cafés (including Starbucks) offer wireless internet.

CENTRO HISTÓRICO

Café Internet 105 (Map pp128-9; Hidalgo 105; ☎ 8am-9pm; **M** Hidalgo)

Esperanto (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-4123; Independencia 66; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun; **M** Juárez)

Keep in Touch (☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Gante (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-4186; Gante 6, Pasaje Iturbide; **M** Allende); Pasaje América (Map pp128-9; Pasaje América; **M** Allende)

ZONA ROSA

Plenty of cybercafés occupy the Insurgentes roundabout.

Conecte Café (Map pp132-3; Génova 71, cnr Londres; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun; **M** Insurgentes)

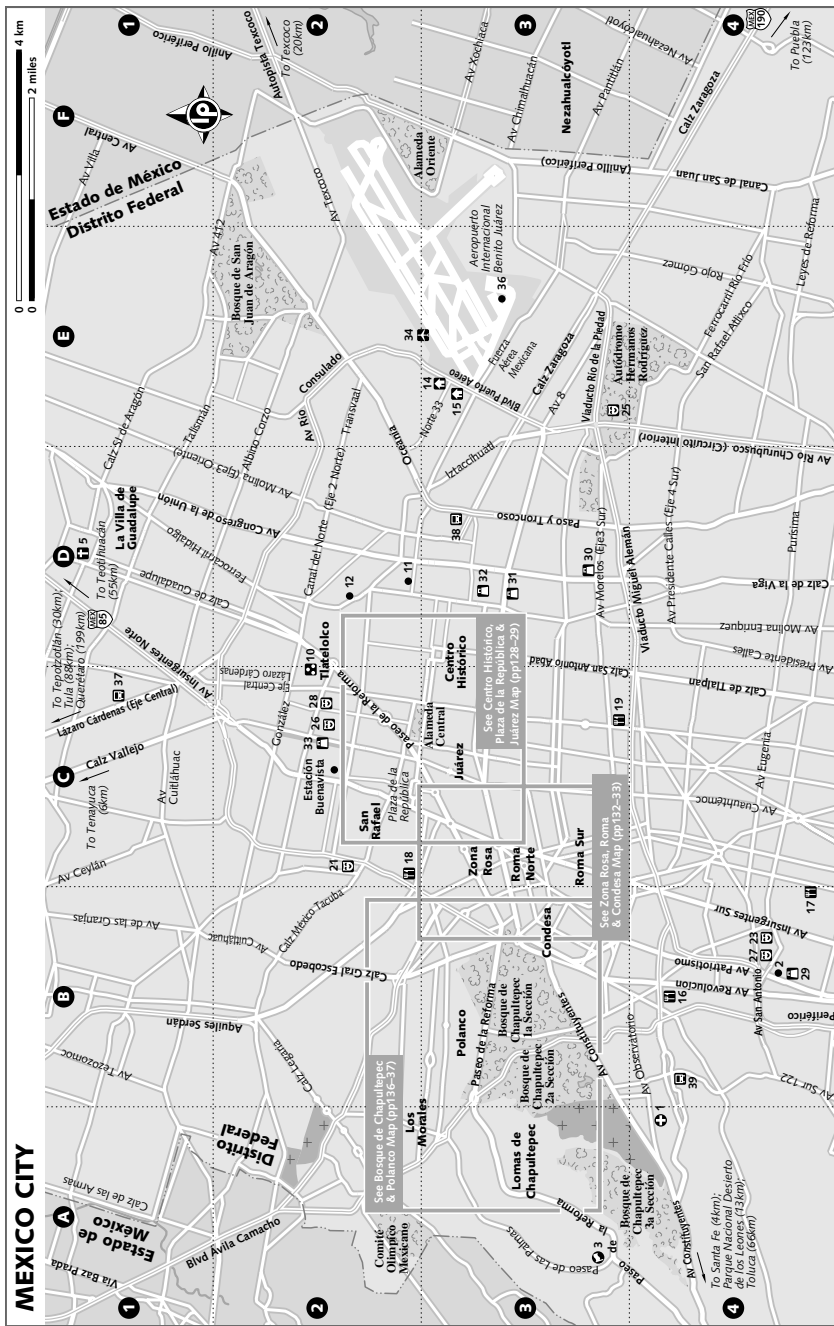
CONDESA & ROMA

Cafenauta (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5553-1517; Ensenada 6, Colonia Condesa; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun; **M** Patriotismo)

Giber City (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-2586; Jalapa 51, Colonia Roma; ☎ 10:30am-9pm Mon-Fri; **M** Insurgentes)

COYOACÁN

Papelería Dabo (Map p140; ☎ 5659-5547; Allende 45, cnr Cuauhtémoc & Coyoacán; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun; **M** Viveros)



SLEEPING

El Cenote Azul.....	13 B6
Fiesta Inn.....	14 E3
Hotel Aeropuerto.....	15 E3

EATING

El Borrego Vuelto.....	16 B4
Fonda Margarita.....	17 B4
La Polar.....	18 C2
Pozolería Tixtlá.....	19 C3

ENTERTAINMENT

Centro Cultural Universitario.....	20 B6
El Balcon Huasteco.....	21 C2
Estadio Azteca.....	22 C7
Estadio Azul.....	23 B4
Estadio Olímpico.....	24 B6
Filmoteca de la UNAM.....	(see 20)
Foro Sol.....	25 E3
La Casa de Paqueta la del Barrio.....	26 C2
Monumental Plaza México.....	27 B4
Salon Los Angeles.....	28 C2

SHOPPING

Fonart.....	29 B4
Mercado de Jamaica.....	30 D3
Mercado de Sonora.....	31 D3
Mercado La Merced.....	32 D3
Tiangulis Cultural del Chopo.....	33 C2

TRANSPORT

Airport Terminal.....	34 E3
Embarcadero Cuernavaca.....	35 D7
Terminal 2.....	36 E3
Terminal Norte.....	37 C1
Terminal Oriente (TAPO).....	38 D3
Terminal Poniente.....	39 B4

INFORMATION

Hospital ABC.....	1 A4
Inegi.....	2 B4
Italian Embassy.....	3 A3
Tourism Module.....	(see 5)

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Anahuacalli.....	4 C6
Basílica de Guadalupe.....	5 D1
Biblioteca Central.....	6 B6
Ciudad Universitaria.....	7 B6
Calcutico.....	8 B7
Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte.....	9 B6
Plaza de las Tres Culturas.....	10 C2
Sanctuario Nacional de la Santa Muerte.....	11 D2
Santa Muerte Altar.....	12 D2

SLEEPING

El Cenote Azul.....	13 B6
Fiesta Inn.....	14 E3
Hotel Aeropuerto.....	15 E3

EATING

El Borrego Vuelto.....	16 B4
Fonda Margarita.....	17 B4
La Polar.....	18 C2
Pozolería Tixtlá.....	19 C3

ENTERTAINMENT

Centro Cultural Universitario.....	20 B6
El Balcon Huasteco.....	21 C2
Estadio Azteca.....	22 C7
Estadio Azul.....	23 B4
Estadio Olímpico.....	24 B6
Filmoteca de la UNAM.....	(see 20)
Foro Sol.....	25 E3
La Casa de Paqueta la del Barrio.....	26 C2
Monumental Plaza México.....	27 B4
Salon Los Angeles.....	28 C2

SHOPPING

Fonart.....	29 B4
Mercado de Jamaica.....	30 D3
Mercado de Sonora.....	31 D3
Mercado La Merced.....	32 D3
Tiangulis Cultural del Chopo.....	33 C2

TRANSPORT

Airport Terminal.....	34 E3
Embarcadero Cuernavaca.....	35 D7
Terminal 2.....	36 E3
Terminal Norte.....	37 C1
Terminal Oriente (TAPO).....	38 D3
Terminal Poniente.....	39 B4

INFORMATION

Hospital ABC.....	1 A4
Inegi.....	2 B4
Italian Embassy.....	3 A3
Tourism Module.....	(see 5)

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Anahuacalli.....	4 C6
Basílica de Guadalupe.....	5 D1
Biblioteca Central.....	6 B6
Ciudad Universitaria.....	7 B6
Calcutico.....	8 B7
Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte.....	9 B6
Plaza de las Tres Culturas.....	10 C2
Sanctuario Nacional de la Santa Muerte.....	11 D2
Santa Muerte Altar.....	12 D2

CENTRO HISTÓRICO, PLAZA DE LA REPÚBLICA & JUÁREZ



INFORMATION	
Agencia del Ministerio Público... 1 C4	Catedral Metropolitana... 29 G3
Agencia del Ministerio Público... 2 D4	Centro Cultural de España... 30 G3
American Bookstore... 3 F4	Centro Cultural Tepeticpac
Bellas Artes Tourism Module... 4 A3	Tlahtolcalli... 31 D3
Café Internet 105... 5 D3	Centro de la Imágen... 32 D5
Cambios Centro Histórico... 6 F4	Distrito Federal Government
Catedral Tourism Module... 7 G4	Offices... 33 G4
Centro Cultural de España... (see 30)	El Caballito... 34 D3
Centro de Cambios y Divisas... 8 B4	Foreign Relations Secretariat... 35 E4
Corazón de México Tourist	Hemiciclo a Juárez... 36 E3
Office... 9 F4	Iglesia de la Santa Veracruz... 37 E3
Esperanto... 10 D4	Iglesia de Santo Domingo... 38 G3
Farmacia Paris... 11 G5	La Giganta... 39 H4
Gandhi Belles Artes... 12 E3	Laboratorio de Arte Alameda... 40 D3
Gandhi Madero... 13 F4	Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez... 41 H3
Inegi... 14 D4	Monumento a Cristóbal Colón... 42 B4
Keep in Touch Gante... 15 F4	Monumento a Cuauhtémoc... 43 B4
Keep in Touch Pasaje América... 16 E3	Monumento a la Revolución... 44 B3
La Torre de Papel... 17 F3	Museo Archivo de la
Lavandería Automática Édison... 18 C3	Fotografía... 45 G3
Librería Alemana... 19 E6	Museo de Arte Popular... 46 D4
Librería Madero... 20 F3	Museo de la Ciudad de
Mundo Joven... (see 86)	México... 47 G5
Médicor... (see 10)	Museo de la Secretaría de Hacienda y
Palacio Postal... 21 E3	Crédito Público... 48 G4
Post Office (Plaza de la	Museo del Estanquillo... 49 F4
República)... 22 G4	Museo Franz Mayer... 50 E3
Post Office (Zócalo)... 23 C3	Museo Interactivo de la
Templo Mayor Tourism	Economía... 51 F3
Module... 24 G4	Museo Mural Diego Rivera... 52 D3
Turismo Zócalo... 25 F4	Museo Nacional de
	Arquitectura... (see 59)
	Museo Nacional de Arte... 53 F3
	Museo Nacional de la Estampa... 54 E3
	Museo Nacional de la
	Revolución... 55 C3
	Museo Nacional de las
	Culturas... 56 G4
	Museo Nacional de San Carlos... 57 C3
	Nacional Monte de Piedad... 58 G3
	Palacio de Bellas Artes... 59 E3
	Palacio de Iturbide... 60 F4
	Palacio de la Inquisición... 61 G3
	Palacio de Minería... 62 F3
	Palacio Nacional... 63 G4
	Pemex Kid... 64 B2
	Portal de Evangelistas... 65 G3
	Sagrario Metropolitano... 66 G4
	Secretaría de Educación Pública... 67 G3
	Suprema Corte De Justicia... 68 G4
	Templo de Corpus Christi... 69 E3
	Templo de la Santísima
	Trinidad... 70 H4
	Templo de Nuestra Señora de
	Loreto... 71 H3
	Templo de San Francisco... 72 F4
	Templo Mayor... 73 G3
	Templo Mayor (Entrance)... 74 H3
	Torre Latinoamericana... 75 E4
	Tranvia Tour Stop... 76 E3
	Tribunales (courts) building... 77 E4
	Turibus Stop... 78 G3
	Turibus Stop... 79 E3
	Virgen del Metro... 80 D3
	SLEEPING
	Casa de los Amigos... 81 C3
	Gran Hotel Ciudad de México... 82 G4
	Holiday Inn Zócalo... 83 G4
	Hostal Moneda... 84 G4
	Hostal Virreyes... 85 E5
	Hostel Mundo Joven Catedral... 86 G3
	Hotel Astor... 87 A3
	Hotel Azores... 88 G3
	Hotel Canadá... 89 F4
	Hotel Catedral... 90 G3
	Hotel Compostela... 91 A4
	Hotel de Cortés... 92 D3

Internet Resources

The following sites compile oodles of information on the capital. Some offer their pages in English, but the English pages are often not as thorough or are barely comprehensible.

Artes Visuales (www.artesvisuales.com.mx) Covers DF galleries and museums.

Chilango (www.chilango.com) Online version of glossy what's-on mag with extensive restaurant and nightlife listings.

Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes (www.cnc.a.gov.mx) Up-to-date guide to museums, theaters and other cultural institutions.

DFiesta en el DF (www.defiestaenelf.com) Tourism department's exhaustive listings and practical information.

Secretaría de Cultura del Distrito Federal (www.cultura.df.gob.mx) Festivals and museum events.

Sistema de Transporte Colectivo (www.metro.df.gob.mx) All about the Mexico City metro.

Laundry

Lavanderías charge M\$50 to M\$90 for a 3kg load – slightly less if you do it yourself.

Aqualav (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5514-7348; Orizaba 42, Colonia Roma; ☎ 8:30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-3pm Sun; ☎ Insurgentes)

Lavandería Automática Édison (Map pp128-9; Édison 91; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat; ☎ Revolución) Near Plaza de la República.

Lavandería Lavamex (Map pp132-3; Río Pánuco 122; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat)

Libraries & Cultural Centers

Biblioteca Benjamín Franklin (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5080-2733; Liverpool 31; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri; ☎ Cuauhtémoc) Housed in the US Trade Center, the library subscribes to a range of periodicals, from *Foreign Affairs* to *Mad*. Leave your ID at the gate.

Canadian Embassy Library (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5724-7960; Schiller 529, Polanco; ☎ 9am-12:30pm Mon-Fri; ☎ Auditorio)

Casa de Francia (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-3151; www.francia.org.mx; Havre 15, Zona Rosa; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; ☎ Insurgentes) There's an art gallery and restaurant, plus a *medioteca* (multimedia center/library). Offers French books, periodicals, videos and CDs.

Hotel Édison.....	93 B3	El Regiomontano.....	128 D5	El Viena.....	162 F3
Hotel Fleming.....	94 D4	Hostería de Santo Domingo.....	129 G3	La Perla.....	163 F3
Hotel Gillow.....	95 F4	La Terraza del Zócalo.....	130 G4	Mixup.....	(see 49)
Hotel Imperial.....	96 C4	Los Girasoles.....	131 F3	Palacio de Bellas Artes.....	(see 59)
Hotel Isabel.....	97 F4	Mercado San Camilito.....	132 F2	Pasajero.....	164 F4
Hotel Jena.....	98 C3	Mi FONDA.....	133 E4	Pervert Lounge.....	165 F4
Hotel Majestic.....	99 G4	Puro Corazón.....	134 G4	Salon Cinematográfico	
Hotel Marlowe.....	100 E4	Restaurante Chon.....	135 H5	Fósforo.....	(see 26)
Hotel Mayaland.....	101 B3	Restaurante Vegetariano.....	136 F3	Teatro Blanquita.....	166 E3
Hotel Misión Reforma.....	102 C4	Sanborns.....	137 A5	Teatro de la Ciudad.....	167 F3
Hotel Monte Real.....	103 D4	Sanborns.....	138 D3	Zinco Jazz Club.....	168 F4
Hotel Mónaco.....	104 D3	Tacos de Canasta Chucho.....	139 F3		
Hotel New York.....	105 C3	Taquería Los Paísás.....	140 H5		
Hotel Principal.....	106 F4	Vegetariano Madero.....	141 F4		
Hotel Rioja.....	107 F4				
Hotel San Antonio.....	108 F4	DRINKING ☑			
Hotel San Diego.....	109 D5	Bar Mancera.....	142 F4	SHOPPING ☑	
Hotel San Francisco.....	110 D3	Café Cordobés.....	143 E4	Centro de Artesanías La	
Hotel Sevilla.....	111 A4	Café Jakemir.....	144 F5	Ciudadela.....	169 D4
Hotel Sheraton Centro		Café La Habana.....	145 C4	Dulcería de Celaya.....	170 A6
Histórico.....	112 D3	Hostería La Bota.....	146 F5	El Palacio de Hierro.....	171 G4
Hotel Washington.....	113 F3	La Faena.....	147 F4	Fonart.....	172 D3
Mexico City Hostel.....	114 G3	La Gioconda.....	148 F3	La Bodeguita del Habano.....	173 F4
NH Centro Histórico.....	115 F4	La Selva Café.....	(see 160)	La Europea.....	174 E4
Palace Hotel.....	116 C3	La Ópera Bar.....	149 F3	La Lagunilla Building 1.....	175 F2
		Las Duelistas.....	150 E4	La Lagunilla Building 2.....	176 G1
		Salón Corona.....	151 F4	La Lagunilla Building 3.....	177 F2
				Liverpool.....	178 G4
EATING ☑				Palacio de las Máscaras.....	179 F2
Al Andalus.....	117 H5			Plaza de la Computación y	
Café Colón.....	118 D3	ENTERTAINMENT ☑		Electrónica.....	180 E4
Café de Tacuba.....	119 F3	Arena Coliseo.....	152 G2	Teplito.....	181 H2
Café El Popular.....	120 F3	Arena de México.....	153 C5	Tianguis Dominical de la	
Casa de las Sirenas.....	121 G3	Bar Oasis.....	154 F3	Lagunilla.....	182 F1
Casino Español.....	122 F4	Cinematógrafo del Chopo.....	155 B2		
Churrería El Moro.....	123 E4	Cinemex Palacio.....	156 D3	TRANSPORT	
Cloister Café.....	(see 50)	Cinemex Real.....	157 D3	Bicycle Loans.....	183 G3
Coox Hanal.....	124 F5	Cinemex.....	158 C4	Magnicharters.....	184 C4
Costillas del Sitio.....	125 F4	Cultural Roots.....	159 F3	Mexicana.....	185 D3
El Cardenal.....	126 F4	Dada X.....	160 F4	Ticketbus Buenavista.....	186 C2
El Cuadrilátero.....	127 D4	El Tenampa.....	161 F2	Ticketbus Centro.....	187 F5
				Ticketbus Zócalo.....	(see 25)

Centro Cultural de España (Spanish Cultural Center; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-1925; www.ccemx.org; República de Guatemala 18; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue & Wed, 10am-11pm Thu-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun; ☑ Zócalo) See p144 for more details.

Instituto Goethe (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-0487; www.goethe.de/mex; Liverpool 89, Colonia Juárez; ☎ 9am-1:30pm & 4-7:30pm Tue-Thu, 10am-1:45pm Sat; ☑ Insurgentes) Subscribes to *Die Zeit* and other German periodicals.

Media

After a five-year hiatus, the *News* is back. Sold at Sanborns stores and Zona Rosa newsstands, the English-language daily has news plus some local cultural coverage. *Inside México* (www.insidemex.com) is a free monthly in English that covers expat life in Mexico; pick up a copy at cafés and hotels around town.

Tiempo Libre, the city's Spanish-language what's-on weekly, comes out Thursdays and is sold at newsstands everywhere.

Recommended Spanish-language newspapers include *La Jornada*, with excellent

cultural coverage, *El Universal* and *Reforma*, the latter available at convenience stores and some metro stations.

English-language newspapers and magazines are sold at Sanborns stores and at **La Torre de Papel** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-9703; Filomena Mata 6A; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-2:30pm Sat; ☑ Alameda), which also stocks newspapers from around Mexico.

Medical Services

For recommendation of a doctor, dentist or hospital, call your embassy or **Sector** (☎ 800-987-82-24), the tourism ministry. A list of area hospitals and English-speaking physicians (with their credentials) is on the US embassy website (www.usembassy-mexico.gov/medical_lists.html). A private doctor's consultation generally costs between M\$500 and M\$1000.

Hospital ABC (American British Cowdray Hospital; Map pp126-7; ☎ 5230-8000, emergency 5230-8161; www.abchospital.com; Sur 136 No 116, Colonia Las Américas; ☑ Observatorio) English-speaking staff, great hospital.

ZONA ROSA, ROMA & CONDESA



ZONA ROSA, ROMA & CONDESA





INFORMATION		EATING 🍴		T-Gallery.....102 B7	
Acqualav.....	1 E4	Bariloche.....	(see 122)	Taberna Red Fly.....	103 E6
Aeroméxico.....	2 B3	Café La Gloria.....	49 A7	Tiki Bar.....	104 D6
Agencia del Ministerio Público.....	3 D3	Café Mangia.....	50 C2	Travazares Taberna.....	105 E5
American Express.....	4 C3	Contramar.....	51 C5	ENTERTAINMENT 🎪	
Biblioteca Benjamín Franklin.....	5 E3	El Califa.....	52 B8	BGay BProud Café México.....	106 C3
Cafenauta.....	6 B7	El Diez.....	53 A8	Cafebrería El Péndulo.....	107 B7
Casa de Francia.....	7 D3	El Tizoncito.....	54 A7	Cafebrería El Péndulo.....	108 D3
Ciber City.....	8 D4	El Tizoncito.....	55 B7	Cibeles.....	(see 85)
Conecte Café.....	9 D3	Fonda el Refugio.....	56 C4	Cine Diana.....	109 B3
Del Ángel Tourism Module.....	10 C3	Fonda Garufa.....	57 A7	Contempo Cinema.....	(see 132)
Farmacia de Ahorros.....	11 D6	Hamburguesas.....	58 F4	El Bataclán.....	110 C6
Hospital Ángeles Clínica		Hip Kitchen.....	(see 35)	El Gran León.....	111 D6
Londres.....	12 E4	Il Postino.....	59 C5	Foro Shakespeare.....	112 A5
Instituto Goethe.....	13 D3	La Rauxa.....	60 B6	Living.....	113 B4
Japanese Embassy.....	14 B3	La Sábida Virtud.....	61 A7	Lumiere Reforma.....	114 C3
Lavandería Lavamex.....	15 C2	Lampuga.....	62 B7	Mamá Rumba.....	115 D6
Librería Pegaso.....	(see 22)	Los Bisquets Obregón.....	63 E5	Mixup (Zona Rosa).....	116 D3
Post Office (Cuahtémoc).....	16 C2	María del Alma.....	64 A6	Multiforo Alicia.....	117 F4
Post Office (Zona Rosa).....	17 C4	Mercado Medellín.....	65 D7	Papa Beto.....	118 C1
UK Embassy.....	18 C2	Nevería Roxy.....	66 A6	Ruta 61.....	119 B8
US Embassy.....	19 C3	Nevería Roxy.....	67 A7	Tom's Leather Bar.....	120 C7
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Non Solo Panino.....	68 E5		
Centro Bursátil (Bolsa).....	20 D2	Orígenes Orgánicos.....	69 C6	SHOPPING 🛍️	
Centro Caba.....	21 D5	Rojo Bistrot.....	70 B6	Bazar de la Roma.....	121 F4
Centro de Cultura Casa Lamm.....	22 E5	Tamales.....	71 D5	Bazar del Oro.....	122 C5
Centro Qi.....	23 C6	Taquería Hola.....	72 B7	Chic by Accident.....	123 D5
Edificio Basurto.....	24 C6	Taquitos Frontera.....	73 F5	Dione.....	124 D3
Edificio Tehuacán.....	(see 35)	Tezka.....	74 D4	Fonart.....	125 E2
Galería Nina Menocal.....	25 E6	Tianguis de Pachuca.....	75 A5	Jardín del Arte.....	126 D2
La Diana Cazadora.....	26 B3	Tierra de Vinos.....	76 C5	Lemur.....	127 D5
Monumento a la Independencia		Young Bin Kwan.....	77 C3	Mercado Insurgentes.....	128 C4
El Ángel).....	27 C3	Yug Vegetariano.....	78 C3	Milagro.....	129 B6
MUCA Roma.....	28 D5	DRINKING 🍷 🍺		Miniaturas Felguérez.....	130 D3
Torre Mayor.....	29 A4	Bar Milán.....	79 E2	NaCo Miscelánea.....	131 A7
Turibús Stop.....	(see 10)	Bengala.....	80 B5	Plaza del Ángel.....	132 C3
SLEEPING 🛏️		Black Horse.....	81 A7	Plaza Reforma 222.....	133 D3
6M9 Guest House.....	30 E3	Black Out.....	82 C3	Somas Plata.....	134 C3
Casa de la Condesa.....	31 E5	Cafetería Gabi's.....	83 E3	TRANSPORT	
Casa González.....	32 C2	Café Bola de Oro.....	84 B8	Aero California.....	135 C3
Condesa df.....	33 B6	Café Villa de Madrid.....	85 C5	Aeromar.....	136 C3
Four Seasons Hotel.....	34 B4	Cantina Covadonga.....	86 E4	Aeroméxico.....	137 F2
Hippodrome Hotel.....	35 C6	Condesa df.....	(see 33)	Alitalia.....	138 C3
Hostel Home.....	36 C5	El Centenario.....	87 A7	American Airlines.....	139 C3
Hotel Bristol.....	37 C2	Enanos de Tapanco.....	88 E6	Avis.....	140 C3
Hotel Cityexpress.....	38 D3	Hookah Lounge.....	89 B7	Chapultepec Bus Terminal.....	141 A4
Hotel Del Ángel.....	39 C3	La Bodeguita del Medio.....	90 B5	Delta Airlines.....	142 C3
Hotel Geneve.....	40 D3	La Botica.....	91 E6	Japan Air Lines.....	(see 29)
Hotel María Cristina.....	41 D2	La Botica.....	92 A7	Mexicana.....	143 C3
Hotel Milán.....	42 E5	La Botica.....	93 A7	RET.....	144 C4
Hotel Principado.....	43 E3	Malafama.....	94 B7	Sitio Parque México.....	145 B7
Hotel Roosevelt.....	44 C6	Meson de Thé Caravanseraí.....	95 E5	Thrifty.....	146 C3
Hotel Stanza.....	45 F5	Mestizo Lounge.....	96 E5	Ticktbus Condesa.....	147 C7
La Casona.....	46 B5	Papa Bill's Saloon.....	97 C3	Ticktbus Reforma.....	148 B3
Quality Inn.....	47 E5	Pastería Maque.....	98 B7	Ticktbus Roma Norte.....	149 F4
Red Tree House.....	48 B7	Pata Negra.....	99 B6	United Airlines.....	150 C4
		Rexo.....	100 B7		
		Sanborns Café.....	101 D3		

Hospital Ángeles Clínica Londres (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5229-8400, emergency 5229-8445; www.hospitalangelesclinicalondres.com; Durango 64, Roma; 📍 Cuahtémoc)

Farmacia de Ahorros (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5264-3128; Yucatán 40; 🕒 24hr; 📍 Álvaro Obregón)

Farmacia París (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5709-5349; República de El Salvador 97, Centro; 🕒 8am-10:30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun; 📍 Isabel la Católica)

Médlcor (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-0431; Independencia 66; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6:30pm Sat; 📍 Juárez)

The pharmacies in Sanborns stores are among the most reliable, as are the following.

Money

Most banks and *casas de cambio* (exchange offices) change cash and traveler's checks, but some handle only Euros and US or Canadian dollars. Rates vary, so check a few places. 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.

American Express (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-7049; Paseo de la Reforma 350; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Take a 'La Villa' or 'Metro Chapultepec' pesero.

Cambios Centro Histórico (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-9536; Madero 13; ☎ 9:30am-6:30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; **M** Bellas Artes)

Centro de Cambios y Divisas (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5705-5656; Paseo de la Reforma 87F; ☎ 8:30am-7:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-2:30pm Sun; ☎) Take a 'La Villa' or 'Metro Chapultepec' pesero.

Post

The stamp windows, marked *estampillas*, at **Palacio Postal** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-1408; Tacuba 1; **M** Bellas Artes) 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 p148).

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

Cuauhtémoc (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-7666; Río Tiber 87; **M** Insurgentes)

Plaza de la República (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5592-1783; Arriaga 11; **M** Revolución)

Zócalo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-3661; Plaza de la Constitución 7; **M** Zócalo) On the west side of the square, inside an arcade of jewelry shops.

Zona Rosa (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5514-3029; Londres 208; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat; **M** Sevilla)

Telephone & Fax

There are thousands of Telmex card phones scattered around town. Pick up cards at shops or newsstands bearing the blue-and-yellow 'Ladatel' sign.

Some *papelerías* (stationery stores), copy shops and internet cafés offer fax service; look for *fax público* signs. Sending one page to the US or Canada costs about M\$10; receiving a fax costs M\$5.

Toilets

Use of the bathroom is free at Sanborns stores. Most market buildings have public toilets; look for the 'WC' signs. Hygiene standards

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, including at the airport and bus stations. They can answer your queries and distribute a map and practical guide, free of charge. At least one staff member should speak English.

These offices are open from 9am to 6pm daily, unless otherwise noted.

Antropología (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5286-3850; Paseo de la Reforma; **M** Auditorio) At the entry to the Museo Nacional de Antropología.

Basilica de Guadalupe (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5748-2085; Plaza de las Américas 1; **M** La Villa-Basilica)

Bellas Artes (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-2799; cnr Juárez & Peralta; **M** Bellas Artes)

Catedral (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1003; Monte de Piedad; **M** Zócalo) West of the Catedral Metropolitana.

Del Ángel (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-1030; Paseo de la Reforma & Florencia; **M** Insurgentes) On the Zona Rosa side of Monumento a la Independencia.

San Ángel (Map p139; Plaza San Jacinto; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; **M** Miguel Ángel de Quevedo)

Templo Mayor (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-8977; Seminario; **M** Zócalo) East side of Catedral Metropolitana.

Xochimilco (Map p138; ☎ 5653-5209; Mercado) At the Nativitas boat landing. Additional tourism modules are at other landings, open Saturday and Sunday only.

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

Coyoacán (Map p140; ☎ 5658-0221; Jardín Hidalgo 1; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun; **M** Viveros) Inside the Casa de Cortés.

Xochimilco (Map p138; ☎ 5676-0810; Pino 36; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) Just off the Jardín Juárez.

The office of **Corazón de México** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1869; www.elcorazondemexico.com.mx; Gante 15; ☎ 10am-6pm; **M** San Juan de Letrán) provides information on Hidalgo, Morelos, Michoacán, Guerrero and Estado de México.

The national tourism ministry, **Sector** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 3002-6300, toll-free 078; Av Presidente Masaryk 172; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat; **M** Polanco), hands out brochures on the entire country, though you're better off at the tourism modules for up-to-date information about the capital.

BOSQUE DE CHAPULTEPEC & POLANCO

INFORMATION

Antropología Tourism Module.....	1	F4
Australian Embassy.....	2	F3
Belize Embassy.....	3	C4
Canadian Embassy & Library.....	4	F3
Cenca.....	5	E3
Cuban Embassy.....	6	C3
French Embassy.....	7	D3
German Embassy.....	8	C2
Guatemalan Embassy.....	9	B4
Instituto Nacional de Migración.....	10	C2
Irish Embassy.....	11	C3
Mundo Joven.....	12	E2
New Zealand Embassy.....	(see 55)	
Sectur.....	13	F3
Spanish Embassy.....	14	E2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Audiorama.....	15	G4
Castillo de Chapultepec.....	(see 27)	
Fuente de Tlaloc.....	16	D6
Fuente de Xochipilli.....	17	D5
Galería Abierta de las Rejas de Chapultepec.....	18	F4
Galería Alberto Mirsachi.....	19	E3
Galería López Quiroga.....	20	E2
Jardín Botánico.....	21	G4
La Feria.....	22	E5
Los Pinos.....	23	E5
Monumento a los Niños Héroes.....	24	G4
Museo de Arte Moderno.....	25	G4
Museo Nacional de Antropología.....	26	F3
Museo Nacional de Historia.....	27	G4
Museo Rufino Tamayo.....	28	G4
Papalote Museo del Niño.....	29	E6
Rowboat Rental.....	30	F4
Tribuna Monumental de las Águilas.....	31	G4
Zoológico de Chapultepec.....	32	F4

SLEEPING

Camino Real México.....	33	G3
Hotel Polanco.....	34	D3
Hábita Hotel.....	35	E3
W Mexico City Hotel.....	36	E3

EATING

Águila y Sol.....	37	D3
El Bajío.....	38	D3
Izote.....	39	C2
Pujol.....	40	F2

DRINKING

Área.....	(see 35)	
Big Red.....	41	F3
Gogo Lounge.....	42	E3

ENTERTAINMENT

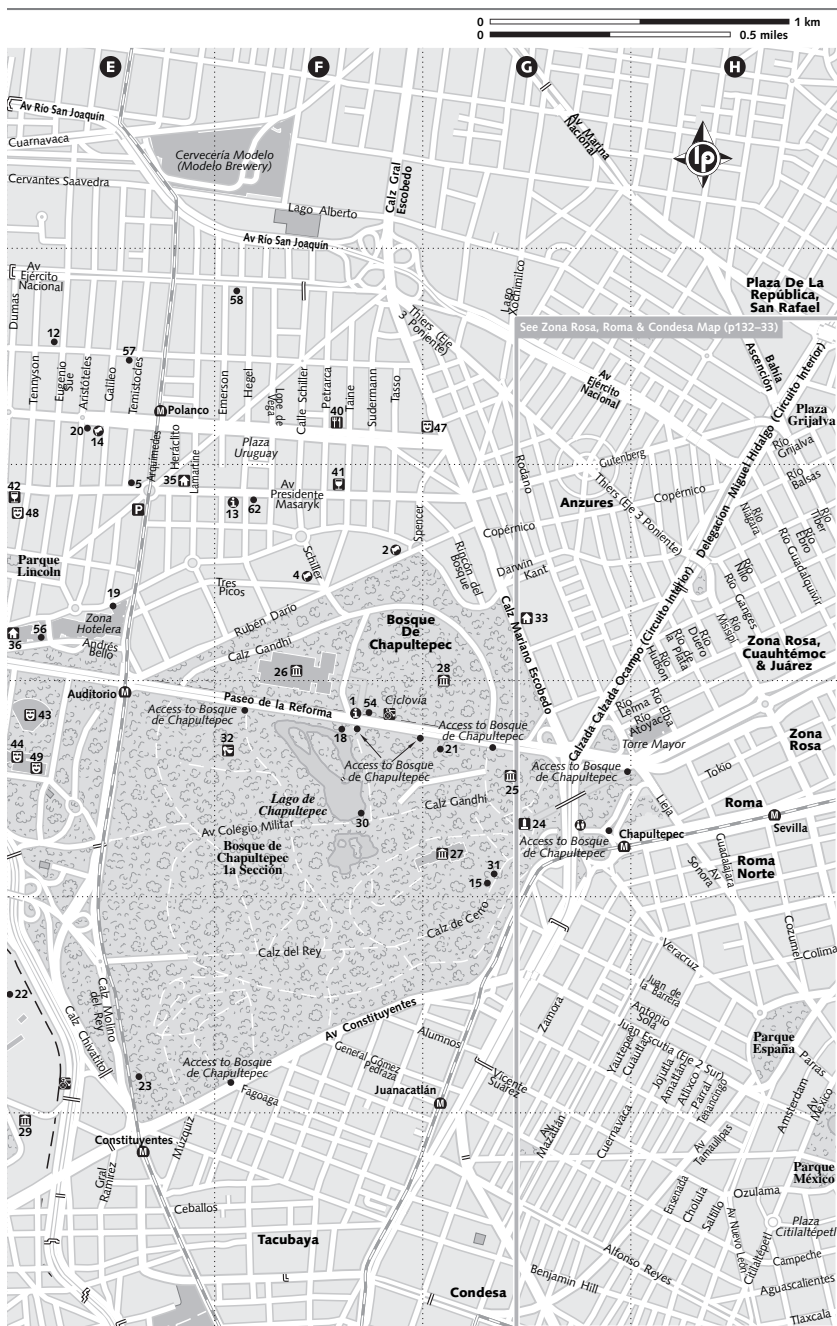
Auditorio Nacional.....	43	E4
Centro Cultural del Bosque.....	44	E4
Cinemex Casa de Arte.....	45	D3
Hard Rock Live.....	46	D3
Liverpool Polanco.....	47	G2
Momma.....	48	E3
Teatro de la Danza.....	49	E4
Vive Cuervo Salón.....	50	D1

SHOPPING

Pasaje Polanco.....	51	D3
Plaza Molière.....	52	D2

TRANSPORT

Air Canada.....	53	C3
Air France.....	(see 55)	
Bicycle Rental.....	54	F4
British Airways.....	55	B2
Continental Airlines.....	56	E3
Cubana.....	57	E2
Iberia.....	58	F2
Interjet.....	59	D2
KLM/Northwest.....	(see 56)	
Lufthansa.....	60	B3
Mexicana.....	61	C2
Ticketbus Polanco.....	62	F3







SAN ÁNGEL

INFORMATION	1 E2	9 D2
Gandhi.....	2 E2	Fonda San Ángel.....10 C3
San Ángel Tourist Module.....	3 C3	Stals.....11 C3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	4 C3	San Ángel Inn.....12 B2
Iglesia de San Jacinto.....	5 D2	Taberna de León.....(see 17)
Monumento a Álvaro Obregón.....	6 C3	ENTERTAINMENT
Museo Casa del Risco.....	7 B1	Café Corazón.....14 C3
Museo de Frida Kahlo.....	8 D3	Centro Cultural Helénico.....15 C1
Museo de El Carmen.....		SHOPPING
EATING		Bazar Sábado.....16 C3
Clunly.....9 D2		Plaza Loreto.....17 C4
Fonda San Ángel.....10 C3		TRANSPORT
Stals.....11 C3		Buses to UNAM.....18 C4
San Ángel Inn.....12 B2		
Taberna de León.....(see 17)		
ENTERTAINMENT		
Café Corazón.....14 C3		
Centro Cultural Helénico.....15 C1		
SHOPPING		
Bazar Sábado.....16 C3		
Plaza Loreto.....17 C4		
TRANSPORT		
Buses to UNAM.....18 C4		

COYOACÁN

See San Ángel Map (p139)

INFORMATION

- Coyoacán Tourist Office.....1 B2
- Papelera Dabo.....2 C2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- Casa de Cortés.....(see 1)
- Centro Cultural Jesús Reyes Heróles.....3 A2
- Ex-Convento de Churubusco.....4 D1
- Iglesia de Santa Catarina.....5 A2
- Museo Frida Kahlo.....6 B1
- Museo León Trotsky.....7 C1
- Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares.....8 C2
- Museo Nacional de las Intervenciones.....(see 4)
- Parroquia de San Juan Bautista.....9 B2

SLEEPING

- Hostal Frida.....10 B1

EATING

- Churrería de Coyoacán.....(see 20)
- El Caracol de Oro.....11 C2
- El Jardín del Pulpo.....12 C2
- El Kiosco de Coyoacán.....13 B2
- Entre Vero.....(see 14)
- Los Danzantes.....14 B2
- Mercado de Antojitos.....15 C2
- Mesón de Los Leones.....16 B1

DRINKING

- Café El Jarochío.....20 C2
- Café El Jarochío.....21 B1
- El Hijo del Cuervo.....22 B2
- La Bipolar.....23 B2
- La Guadalupana.....24 C2

SHOPPING

- Bazar Artesanal de Coyoacán.....28 B2
- Plaza Coyoacán.....29 A1

ENTERTAINMENT

- Bar El Vicio.....25 B1
- Centro Nacional de las Artes.....26 E1
- Cineteca Nacional.....27 B1

TRANSPORT

- Terminal Sur.....30 E3

Travel Agencies

A number of midrange and top-end hotels have an *agencia de viajes* on-site or can recommend one nearby.

Mundo Joven (www.mundojoven.com); ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Airport (Map pp126-7; ☎ 2599-0155; Sala E3, international arrivals); Polanco (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5250-7191; Eugenio Sue 342, cnr Homero); **M** Polanco); Zócalo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1755; República de Guatemala 4; **M** Zócalo) Specializes in travel for students and teachers, with reasonable airfares from Mexico City. Issues ISIC, ITC, IYTC and HI cards. Airport branch also open 10a, to 2pm Sunday.

Turismo Zócalo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 8596-9649; www.turismozocalo.com; Palma 34, Centro; **M** Zócalo) Inside the Gran Plaza Ciudad de México mall; also functions as a Ticketbus outlet.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

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 downplay – four kidnappings, 70 car thefts and 55 muggings a day in 2006 – there is no need to walk in fear. A few precautions greatly reduce any dangers. See p968 for some general hints.

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. 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 or large amounts of cash. If you become a robbery victim, don't resist. Give the perpetrator your valuables rather than risking injury or death.

A more immediate danger is traffic, which statistically takes more lives in the capital than street crime (though things have improved slightly 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 into your path. Take the 'safety in numbers' approach, crossing with other pedestrians.

Taxi Crime

Although they're not as prevalent a danger as in the 1990s, taxi assaults still do occur. 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 p200 for more information on taxis and a list of recommended companies.

SIGHTS

One could spend months exploring all the museums, monuments, plazas, colonial buildings, monasteries, murals, galleries, archaeological finds, statuary, shrines and religious relics this encyclopedia of a city has to offer.

Centro Histórico

Packed with magnificent buildings and absorbing museums, the 34-block area defined as the Centro Histórico is the obvious place to start your explorations. More than 1500 of its buildings are classified as historic or artistic monuments and it is on the Unesco World Heritage list. It also vibrates with modern-day street life and nightlife, and is a convenient area to stay, with hotels in all price categories.

Since 2000, money has been poured into upgrading the image and infrastructure of the Centro. Streets have been repaved, buildings refurbished, lighting and traffic flow improved and security bolstered. New museums, restaurants and clubs have moved into the renovated structures, and festivals and cultural events are staged in the plazas, spurring a real renaissance.

ZÓCALO

The heart of Mexico City is the Plaza de la Constitución, though residents began calling it the Zócalo (Map pp128-9), meaning 'base,' in the 19th century, when plans for a major monument to independence went unrealized, leaving only the pedestal. Measuring 220m from north to south, 240m from east to west, it's one of the world's largest city squares.

The ceremonial center of Aztec Tenochtitlán, known as the Teocalli, lay immediately northeast of the Zócalo. In the 1520s

Cortés paved the plaza with stones from the ruins of the complex. In the 18th century, the Zócalo was given over to a maze of market stalls until it was dismantled by Santa Anna, who placed the unfinished monument in its center.

Today, the Zócalo is home to the powers that be. On its east side is the Palacio Nacional (the presidential palace), on the north the Catedral Metropolitana, and on the south the offices of the city government. Jewelry shops and extravagant hotels line the arcade known as the Portal de Mercaderes on the plaza's west side.

It is the very emptiness of the square that allows it to be adapted and rearranged for multiple uses. It has variously served as a forum for mass protests, a free concert venue, a human chessboard, a gallery of spooky Day of the Dead altars and a great ice-skating rink. It's even been a canvas for photo artist Spencer Tunick, who filled the square with 18,000 nude Mexicans in May 2007 (a record for Tunick, who has staged similar photo shoots in cities around the world).

The huge Mexican flag flying in the middle of the Zócalo is ceremonially raised at 8am by soldiers of the Mexican army, then lowered at 6pm.

PALACIO NACIONAL

Home to the offices of the president of Mexico, the Federal Treasury and dramatic murals by Diego Rivera, this **palace** (National Palace; Map pp128-9; ☎ 9158-1252; Plaza de la Constitución; admission free, ID required; ☎ 9am-5pm; **M** Zócalo) fills the entire east side of the Zócalo.

The first palace on this spot was built by Aztec emperor Moctezuma II in the early 16th century. Cortés destroyed the palace in 1521, rebuilding it as a fortress with three interior courtyards. In 1562 the crown purchased the building from Cortés' family to house the viceroys of Nueva España, a function it served until Mexican independence.

As you face the palace you'll see three portals. On the right (south) is the guarded entrance for the president. High above the center door hangs the **Campana de Dolores**, the bell rung in the town of Dolores Hidalgo by Padre Miguel Hidalgo in 1810 at the start of the War of Independence. From the balcony underneath it, the president delivers the *grito* (shout) – ¡Viva México! – on September 15 to commemorate independence.

Enter the palace through the center door. The **Diego Rivera murals** along the main staircase, painted between 1929 and 1935, depict Mexican civilization from the arrival of Quetzalcóatl (the Aztec plumed serpent god) to the postrevolutionary period. The nine murals covering the north and east walls of the first level above the patio depict indigenous life before the Spanish Conquest.

CATEDRAL METROPOLITANA

Mexico City's most iconic structure, this **cathedral** (Metropolitan Cathedral; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-0440; admission free; ☎ 7:30am-8pm; **M** Zócalo) is a monumental edifice, measuring 109m long, 59m wide and 65m high. Started in 1573, it remained a work in progress during the entire colonial period, and thus displays a catalogue of architectural styles, with successive generations of builders striving to incorporate the innovations of the day.

Original architect Claudio Arciniega modeled the building after Seville's seven-nave cathedral, but after running into difficulties with the spongy subsoil he scaled it down to a five-nave design of vaults on semi-circular arches. The baroque portals facing the Zócalo, built in the 17th century, have two levels of columns and marble panels with bas-reliefs. The central panel shows the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, to whom the cathedral is dedicated. The upper levels of the towers, with unique bell-shaped tops, were added in the late 18th century. The exterior was completed in 1813, when architect Manuel Tolsá added the clock tower – topped by statues of Faith, Hope and Charity – and a great central dome.

The first thing you notice upon entering is the elaborately carved and gilded Altar de Perdón (Altar of Forgiveness). There's invariably a line of worshippers at the foot of the Señor del Veneno (Lord of the Poison), the dusky Christ figure on the right. Legend has it that the figure attained its color when it miraculously absorbed a dose of poison through its feet from the lips of a clergyman, to whom an enemy had administered the lethal substance.

The cathedral's chief artistic treasure is the gilded 18th-century **Altar de los Reyes** (Altar of the Kings), behind the main altar. Fourteen richly decorated chapels line the two sides of the building, while intricately carved late-17th-century wooden choir stalls by Juan de Rojas occupy the central nave. Enormous

THAT SINKING FEELING

Strolling around the Centro Histórico, you can't help but notice a rather worrisome issue – Mexico City is sinking into the ground. The metropolitan cathedral, which appears to be tilting westward, is just the most obvious example. But notice how the facade of the Iglesia de la Santa Veracruz, near the Alameda Central, slouches toward the north. The Palacio de Bellas Artes, an early-20th-century structure, has sunk so far on its right side that you have to go downstairs to pass through what used to be a street-level entrance.

All told, the historic center has dropped some 10m over the past 100 years. But the phenomenon is not exclusive to the center. The entire city has been sinking since colonial times, when the Spaniards got the bright idea of draining the lake that filled the highland basin. The spongy subsoil that remained was hardly the best place to erect churches and palaces, the formidable weight of which was more than the lakebed could handle. The problem has greatly intensified in recent decades, as an increasingly thirsty city sucks water from its underground aquifers faster than they're replenished, thus removing a crucially buoyant counterbalance to the settling subsoil.

To make matters worse, some of the historic buildings are sinking unevenly, causing structural cracks and, in some cases, total collapse. That's because their Aztec predecessors had compacted the earth beneath them. A good example is the Sagrario Metropolitano, next door to the cathedral, which was built upon the site of the Aztec Temple of the Sun.

New technology has addressed the problem to some extent. An ambitious project to prevent the deterioration of the cathedral entails the excavation of underground shafts to remove the subsoil at certain key points. Rather than stopping the sinking process entirely, the higher parts are allowed to sink to the same level as the lower ones, thus ensuring the building's structural integrity. And newly built behemoths like the Torre Mayor are anchored by pilots drilled deep beneath the subsoil to the underlying bedrock.

painted panels by colonial masters Juan Correa and Cristóbal de Villalpando cover the walls of the sacristy, the first component of the cathedral to be built.

Visitors may wander freely, though they're asked not to do so during mass. A M\$10 donation is requested to enter the **sacristy** or **choir**, where docents provide commentary, and you can climb the **bell tower** (admission M\$12; ☎ 10:30am-12:30pm & 3:30-6pm). Mexico's archbishop conducts mass at noon on Sundays.

Adjoining the east side of the cathedral is the 18th-century **Sagrario Metropolitano** (☎ 7:30am-7:30pm). Originally built to house the archives and vestments of the archbishop, it is now the city's main parish church. Its front entrance and mirror-image eastern portal are superb examples of the ultra-decorative Churrigueresque style.

TEMPLO MAYOR

Before the Spaniards demolished it, the Teocalli of Tenochtitlán covered the site where the cathedral now stands and the blocks to its north and east. It wasn't until 1978, after electricity workers happened on an eight-ton stone-disc carving of the Aztec goddess Coyolxauhqui, that the decision was taken to

demolish colonial buildings and excavate the **Templo Mayor** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5542-4943; www.caculta.gob.mx/templomayor; Seminario 8; admission M\$45, free Sun; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 M Zócalo). The temple is thought to be on the exact spot where the Aztecs saw their symbolic eagle, perching on a cactus with a snake in its beak – the symbol of Mexico today. In Aztec belief this was, literally, the center of the universe.

Like other sacred buildings in Tenochtitlán, the temple was enlarged several times, with each rebuilding accompanied by the sacrifice of captured warriors. What we see today are sections of the temple's different phases. At the center is a platform dating from about 1400; on its southern half, a sacrificial stone stands in front of a shrine to Huizilopochtli, the Aztec war god. On the northern half is a *chac-mool* (a Maya reclining figure) before a shrine to the water god, Tláloc. By the time the Spanish arrived, a 40m-high double pyramid towered above this spot, with steep twin stairways climbing to shrines of the two gods.

The entrance to the temple site and museum is east of the cathedral, across the hectic **Plaza del Templo Mayor**, with a model of Tenochtitlán. Authorized tour guides (with Sector ID) offer their services by the entrance. Alternatively,

rent a recorded audio guide available in English (M\$60) inside the museum.

The **Museo del Templo Mayor** houses artifacts from the site and gives a good overview of Aztec civilization. Pride of place is given to the great wheel-like stone of Coyolxauhqui (She of Bells on her Cheek), best viewed from the top-floor vantage point. She is shown decapitated, the result of her murder by Huizilopochtli, her brother, who also killed his 400 brothers en route to becoming top god.

Ongoing excavation continues to turn up major pieces. Just west of the temple, a monolithic stone carved with the image of Tlaltecuhlti, the goddess of earth fertility, was unearthed in October 2006. Archaeologists believe it marks the tomb of Ahuizotl, the Aztec emperor who immediately preceded Moctezuma II and whose military conquests greatly expanded Aztec domains. Excavation of the tomb was proceeding at the time of research.

AROUND THE CATHEDRAL

Facing the cathedral's west side is Mexico's national pawnshop, the **Nacional Monte de Piedad** (Map pp128-9; Monte de Piedad 7; ☎ 8:30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-1pm Sat; **M** Zócalo), founded in 1774 by silver magnate Pedro Romero de Terreros. People pawn their jewelry and other possessions in the central hall for loans at 12% interest; unclaimed items are sold in shops off the central passageway.

Around the back of the cathedral, the **Centro Cultural de España** (Spanish Cultural Center; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-1925; www.ccemx.org; República de Guatemala 18; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue & Wed, 10am-11pm Thu-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun; **M** Zócalo) has a variety of cutting-edge exhibitions going on. The splendidly restored building, which conquistador Hernán Cortés once awarded to his butler, has a rooftop terrace for tapas-munching and, on weekends, late-night DJ sessions.

The recently opened **Museo Archivo de la Fotografía** (Photographic Archive Museum; Map pp128-9; ☎ 2616-7057; www.maf.df.gob.mx; República de Guatemala 34; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; **M** Zócalo) draws from a century's worth of images taken for the *Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal* – the DF public record – to preserve the memory of its streets, plazas, buildings and people.

CALLE MONEDA

Flanked by magnificent *tezontle* (red, volcanic rock) buildings, Calle Moneda, north of the Palacio Nacional, is an unlikely stage for the

never-ending cat-and-mouse antics between *ambulantes* (mobile street vendors) and the city's shock troops. The **Museo de la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público** (Museum of the Finance Secretariat; Map pp128-9; ☎ 9158-1245; Moneda 4; admission M\$8, free Sun; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; **M** Zócalo) shows off its vast collection of Mexican art, much of it contributed by painters and sculptors in lieu of paying taxes. The former colonial archbishop's palace also hosts a full program of cultural events (many free), from puppet shows to chamber-music recitals.

Constructed in 1567 as the colonial mint, the **Museo Nacional de las Culturas** (National Museum of Cultures; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-7452; Moneda 13; admission free; ☎ 9:30am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; **M** Zócalo) exhibits art, dress and handicrafts of the world's cultures. A block further east, then a few steps north, a former convent houses the **Museo José Luis Cuevas** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5522-0156; www.museojoseluiscuevas.com.mx; Academia 13; admission M\$20, free Sun; ☎ 10am-5:30pm Tue-Sun; **M** Zócalo). The museum showcases the works of artist Cuevas, a leader of the 1950s Ruptura movement which broke with the politicized art of the post-revolutionary regime. Cuevas' **La Giganta**, an 8m-tall bronze female figure with some male features, dominates the central patio.

Two blocks further east, the **Templo de la Santísima Trinidad** (Map pp128-9) sports a hyper-baroque facade with cherubs and apostles set into the finely filigreed stonework.

PLAZA SANTO DOMINGO

Two blocks north of the Zócalo is this smaller, less formal plaza. The printers who work beneath the **Portal de Evangelistas**, along its west side, are descendants of the scribes who did the paperwork for merchants using the customs building (now the Education Ministry) across the square. To the north stands the maroon stone **Iglesia de Santo Domingo** (Map pp128-9), a beautiful baroque church dating from 1736. The three-tiered facade merits a close look: statues of St Francis and St Augustine stand in the niches alongside the doorway. The middle panel shows Saint Dominic de Guzmán receiving a staff and the Epistles from St Peter and St Paul, respectively. At the top is a bas-relief of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

Opposite the church, the 18th-century **Palacio de la Inquisición** (Map pp128-9) was headquarters of the Holy Inquisition in Mexico until Spain decreed its closure in 1812. Its official shield shows up at the top of the facade.

MODERN DANCE

As you emerge from Metro Zócalo onto the vast central plaza, you'll invariably hear the booming of drums from the direction of the cathedral – the Aztec dancers are doing their thing. Wearing snakeskin loincloths, elaborately feathered headdresses and shell ankle bracelets, they move in a circle and chant in Náhuatl in what appears to be a display of pre-Hispanic aerobics. At the center, engulfed in a cloud of fragrant copal smoke, drummers bang on the conga-like *huehueltl* (indigenous drum) and the barrel-shaped, slitted *teponaztlil*.

Variouly known as *Danzantes Aztecas*, *Danza Chichimeca* or *Concheros*, the ritual is performed daily near the Templo Mayor, often throbbing on for hours without pause. It is meant to evoke the Aztec *mitote*, a frenzied ceremony performed by pre-Conquest Mexicans at harvest times. Yet scant evidence exists that their moves bear any resemblance to those of their forebears. Prohibited by the Spanish colonists from performing their dances or using the *huehueltl*, indigenous Mexicans fused elements of Christian worship into their rituals, dancing in the atriums of churches and playing mandolin-like instruments backed by an armadillo shell, or *concha* (from which the name *Concheros* derives).

Today's Zócalo dancers, however, reject any association with Christianity, seeking instead a purer connection to their pre-Hispanic roots. Critics mock their representation of a sacred but unknowable past as a pastiche of New Age nonsense. Yet this celebration of Mexica heritage appears to be developing into a movement, as it's embraced by more and more young Mexicans seeking a continuity with their past, many of whom you'll see gyrating along in their street clothes. Stranger still, the dance craze is being taken up by the descendants of the conquistadors, as roots-minded youth in Madrid go Aztec.

MURALS

In the 1920s the post-revolution Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos, commissioned talented young artists – among them Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco – to decorate numerous public buildings with dramatic, large-scale murals conveying a new sense of Mexico's past and future.

One such building was the former monastery that housed the newly established **Secretaría de Educación Pública** (Secretariat of Education; Map pp128-9; ☎ 3003-1000; República de Brasil 31; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Zócalo). The two front courtyards (on the opposite side of the building from the entrance off Plaza Santo Domingo) are lined with 120 fresco panels painted by Diego Rivera in the 1920s. Together they form a tableau of 'the very life of the people,' in the artist's words. Each courtyard is thematically distinct: the one on the east end deals with labor, industry and agriculture, while the interior one depicts traditions and festivals. On the latter's top level is a series on proletarian and agrarian revolution, underneath a continuous red banner emblazoned with a Mexican *corrido* (folk song). The likeness of Frida Kahlo appears in the first panel as an arsenal worker.

A block back toward the Zócalo, then east, is the **Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5702-6378; www.sanildefonso.org.mx; Justo Sierra 16; admission M\$45, free Tue; ☎ 10am-5:30pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Zócalo). Built in the 16th century as a Jeher training institute. In the 1920s, Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros and others were brought in to do murals. Most of the work on the main patio is by Orozco; look for his portrait of Cortés and La Malinche underneath the staircase. The amphitheater, off the lobby, holds Rivera's first mural, *La Creación*, undertaken upon his return from Europe in 1923. Mural tours (in Spanish) are given at noon and 4pm. Nowadays, the San Ildefonso hosts outstanding temporary exhibitions, as well as the Filmoteca of the national university (p183).

More Orozco murals are inside the **Suprema Corte de Justicia** (Supreme Court; Map pp128-9; Pino Suárez 2; admission free, ID required; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Zócalo), south of the Zócalo. In 1940, the artist painted four panels around the first level of the central stairway, two of which deal with the theme of justice. A more contemporary take on the same subject, *Los Siete Crímenes Mayores* (The Seven Worst Crimes), by Rafael Cauduro, unfolds over the three levels of the building's southwest stairwell. Executed in his hyperrealist style, the series catalogues the horrors of state-sponsored crimes against the

populace, including the ever-relevant torture-induced confession. Cauduro's mural is one of four justice-related works recently commissioned by the Supreme Court for each of the building's corner stairwells.

The **Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez** (Map pp128-9; República de Venezuela, cnr Rodríguez Puebla; ☎ 8am-5pm; **M** Zócalo), east of the Zócalo, became a canvas for a group of young international artists under the tutelage of Diego Rivera in the 1930s. Some of the most exuberant (and best-preserved) works, created by the American Greenwood sisters, cover the stairwell leading up to the community center, at the market's northeast corner. On the 1st floor, *Historia de México*, by the Japanese artist Isama Noguchi, is a dynamic three-dimensional mural sculpted of cement and plaster that symbolizes the struggle against fascism. Other murals inside the market's entry corridors are paeans to rural laborers and their traditions, though sadly, some are fading from neglect.

A block south, the **Templo de Nuestra Señora de Loreto** (Map pp128-9) has a remarkable dome. Ringed at the base by stained-glass images, it crowns an unusual four-lobed cross with semi-circular chapels in the lobes. After the 1985 earthquake the building was raided of its treasures, and the murals that covered the underside of the cupola were allowed to deteriorate.

PLAZA TOLSÁ

Several blocks west of the Zócalo is this handsome square, named after the illustrious late-18th-century sculptor and architect who completed the Catedral Metropolitana.

Manuel Tolsá also created the bronze equestrian statue of the Spanish king Carlos IV (who reigned from 1788 to 1808) that is the plaza's centerpiece. It originally stood in the Zócalo, then on Paseo de la Reforma, before being moved here in 1979 ('as a work of art,' a chiseled plaque emphasizes).

King Carlos rides in front of the **Museo Nacional de Arte** (National Art Museum; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5130-3400; www.munal.com.mx; Tacuba 8; admission M\$30, free Sun; ☎ 10:30am-5:30pm Tue-Sun; **M** Bellas Artes). Built around 1900 in the style of an Italian renaissance palace, it holds collections representing every school of Mexican art until the early 20th century. A highlight is the work of José María Velasco, depicting the Valle de México in the late 19th century.

Opposite is the **Palacio de Minería** (Palace of Mining; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5623-2982; Tacuba 5; admission

M\$25; ☎ tours 10am-3pm Sat & Sun; **M** Bellas Artes), where mining engineers were trained in the 19th century. Today it houses a branch of the national university's engineering department. A neoclassical masterpiece, the palace was designed by Tolsá and built between 1797 and 1813. Visits are by guided tour only. The palace contains a small **museum** (admission M\$10; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun) on Tolsá's life and work.

One block east of the plaza, the former hospital of the Bethlehemites (the only religious order to be established in the Americas), has since 2006 been the home of the **Museo Interactivo de la Economía** (Interactive Museum of Economics; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5130-4600; www.mide.org.mx; Tacuba 17; adult/child M\$45/35; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun; **M** Allende). A slew of hands-on exhibits are aimed at breaking down economic concepts. For coin connoisseurs, the highlight is the Banco de México's numismatic collection. Only a few of the exhibits provide English text.

AVENIDA MADERO

This stately avenue west of the Zócalo boasts a veritable catalogue of architectural styles interspersed with opticians and jewelers. Housed in a gorgeous neoclassical building two blocks from the square, the **Museo del Estanquillo** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-3052; www.museodelestanquillo.com.mx; Isabel La Católica 26; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; **M** Allende) contains the vast pop-culture collection amassed over the decades by DF essayist and pack rat Carlos Monsivais. The recently inaugurated museum illustrates various phases in the capital's development by means of the numerous photos, paintings, board games, movie posters, comic strips and so on from the collection.

A few blocks westward you'll encounter the baroque facade of the late-18th-century **Palacio de Iturbide** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 1226-0011; Madero 17; admission free; ☎ 10am-7pm Wed-Mon; **M** Allende). Built for colonial nobility, in 1821 it became the residence of General Agustín Iturbide, a hero of the struggle for independence who was proclaimed emperor here in 1822. (He abdicated less than a year later, after General Santa Anna announced the birth of a republic.) Now known as the Palacio de Cultura Banamex, it hosts exhibits drawn from the bank's vast Mexican art collection, as well as contemporary Mexican handicrafts. Some of the original salons are displayed on the upper level.

Half a block past the pedestrian corridor Gante stands the amazing **Casa de Azulejos** (House

of Tiles; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-9820; Madero 4; ☺ 7am-1am; M Allende). Dating from 1596, it was built for the Condes (Counts) del Valle de Orizaba. Most of the tiles that adorn the outside walls were produced in China and shipped to Mexico on the Manila *naos* (Spanish galleons used up to the early 19th century). The building now houses a Sanborns restaurant in a covered courtyard around a Moorish fountain. The staircase has a 1925 mural by Orozco.

Across the way, the **Templo de San Francisco** (Map pp128-9; Madero 7) is a remnant of the vast Franciscan monastery erected in the early 16th century over the site of Moctezuma's private zoo. In its heyday it extended two blocks south and east. The monastic complex was divvied up under the post-independence reform laws; in 1949, it was returned to the Franciscan order in a deplorable state and subsequently restored. The entrance is reached through a broad atrium where art exhibitions are held. The elaborately carved doorway is a shining example of 18th-century baroque.

Rising alongside the monastery, the **Torre Latinoamericana** (Latin American Tower; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-7423; Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas 2; adult/child M\$50/40; ☺ 9am-10pm; M Bellas Artes) was Latin America's tallest building when constructed in 1956. (It's Mexico City's fifth-tallest tower today.) Thanks to the deep-seated pylons that anchor the building, it has withstood several major earthquakes. Views from the 44th-floor observation deck are spectacular, smog permitting.

MUSEO DE LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO

For a good overview of the megalopolis, visit this **museum** (Museum of Mexico City; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5542-0083; Pino Suárez 30; admission M\$20, Wed free; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; M Pino Suárez). The innovative permanent exhibit, 'It All Fits in a Basin,' presents a concise history of the city with models and maps; one room is devoted exclusively to the Zócalo and its role as a stage for social movements. Upstairs is the former studio of Joaquín Clausell, considered Mexico's foremost impressionist. The artist used the four walls of the windowless room as an ongoing sketchbook during the three decades he worked there until his death in 1935.

Alameda Central & Around

Emblematic of the downtown renaissance, the green rectangle immediately northwest of the Centro Histórico holds a vital place

in Mexico City's cultural life. Surrounded by historically significant buildings, the Alameda Central has been the focus of ambitious redevelopment over the past decade. In particular, the high-rise towers on the Plaza Juárez have transformed the zone south of the park, much of which was destroyed in the 1985 earthquake. Metro stations Bellas Artes and Hidalgo are located on the Alameda's east and west sides, respectively.

ALAMEDA CENTRAL

Created in the late 1500s by mandate of then-vice-roy Luis de Velasco, the Alameda (Map pp128-9) took its name from the *álamos* (poplars) planted over its rectangular expanse. By the late 19th century, the park was graced with European-style statuary and lit by gas lamps. It became the place to be seen for the city's elite. Today the Alameda is a popular refuge, particularly on Sunday when families stroll its broad pathways and gather for open-air concerts.

PALACIO DE BELLAS ARTES

Dominating the east end of the Alameda is this splendid white-marble **palace** (Palace of Fine Arts; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5130-0900; Av Juárez & Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas; admission M\$35, free Sun; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; M Bellas Artes), a concert hall and arts center commissioned by President Porfirio Díaz. Construction began in 1905 under Italian architect Adamo Boari, who favored neoclassical and art nouveau styles. Complications arose as the heavy marble shell sank into the spongy subsoil, and then the Mexican Revolution intervened. Architect Federico Mariscal eventually finished the interior in the 1930s, utilizing the more modern art deco style.

Immense murals dominate the upper floors. On the 2nd floor are two early-1950s works by Rufino Tamayo: *México de Hoy* (Mexico Today) and *Nacimiento de la Nacionalidad* (Birth of Nationality), a symbolic depiction of the creation of the mestizo identity.

At the west end of the 3rd floor is Diego Rivera's famous *El Hombre En El Cruce de Caminos* (Man at the Crossroads), originally commissioned for New York's Rockefeller Center. The Rockefellers had the original destroyed because of its anti-capitalist themes, but Rivera re-created it here in 1934.

On the north side are David Alfaro Siqueiros' three-part *La Nueva Democracia*

(New Democracy) and Rivera's four-part *Carnaval de la Vida Mexicana* (Carnival of Mexican Life); to the east is José Clemente Orozco's *La Katharsis* (Catharsis), depicting the conflict between humankind's 'social' and 'natural' aspects.

The 4th-floor **Museo Nacional de Arquitectura** (☎ 5512-2593; admission M\$30, free Sun; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) features changing exhibits on contemporary architecture.

The Bellas Artes theater (only available for viewing at performances) is itself a masterpiece, with a stained-glass curtain depicting the Valle de México. Based on a design by Mexican painter Gerardo Murillo (aka Dr Atl), it was assembled by New York jeweler Tiffany & Co from almost a million pieces of colored glass.

In addition, the palace stages outstanding temporary art exhibitions and the Ballet Folclórico de México (see p184). A worthwhile bookstore and elegant café are on the premises too.

PALACIO POSTAL

More than just Mexico City's central post office, this early-20th-century **palace** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-1408; Tacuba 1; 📍 Bellas Artes) is an Italianate confection designed by the Palacio de Bellas Artes' original architect, Adamo Boari. The beige stone facade features baroque columns and carved filigree around the windows; inside, the bronze railings on the monumental staircase were cast in Florence. Philatelists can ogle the first stamp ever issued in Mexico in the 1st-floor **postal museum** (admission free; 🕒 10am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1:30pm Sat).

PLAZA DE SANTA VERACRUZ

The sunken square north of the Alameda across Av Hidalgo is named for the slanting structure on the right, the **Iglesia de la Santa Veracruz**. Elaborately carved pillars flank the doorway of the 18th-century church.

On the opposite side of the plaza, the **Museo Franz Mayer** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-2266; www.franzmayer.org.mx; Hidalgo 45; admission M\$35, Tue free; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 10am-7pm Wed; 📍 Bellas Artes) is housed in the old hospice of the San Juan de Dios order, which under the brief reign of Maximilian became a halfway house for prostitutes. The museum is the fruit of the efforts of Franz Mayer, born in Mannheim, Germany, in 1882. Prospering as a financier in his adopted Mexico, Mayer amassed the

collection of Mexican silver, textiles, ceramics and furniture that is now on display. The exhibit halls open off a sumptuous colonial patio with the excellent Cloister Café.

Adjacent to the museum across an alley, the **Museo Nacional de la Estampa** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-2244; Av Hidalgo 39; admission M\$10, free Sun; 🕒 10am-5:45pm Tue-Sun) is devoted to the graphic arts, with thematic exhibits from its collection of more than 10,000 prints.

MUSEO MURAL DIEGO RIVERA

Among Diego Rivera's most famous works is *Sueño de una Tarde Dominical en la Alameda* (Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda), painted in 1947. In the 15m-long mural, the artist imagined many of the figures who walked in the city from colonial times onward, among them Cortés, Juárez, Porfirio Díaz and Francisco Madero. All are grouped around a *Catrina* (skeleton in prerevolutionary women's garb). Rivera himself, as a pug-faced child, and Frida Kahlo stand beside the skeleton. Charts identify all the characters.

Just west of the Alameda, the **Museo Mural Diego Rivera** (Diego Rivera Mural Museum; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-2329; cnr Balderas & Colón; admission M\$15, free Sun; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Hidalgo) was built in 1986 to house the mural, after its original location, the Hotel del Prado, was wrecked by the 1985 earthquake.

LABORATORIO DE ARTE ALAMEDA

As is often the case with museums in the Centro Histórico, the building that contains the **Laboratorio de Arte Alameda** (Alameda Art Laboratory; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-2793; www.artelameda.inba.gob.mx; Dr Mora 7; admission M\$15, free Sun; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Hidalgo) is at least as interesting as its contents. The former church is just a fragment of the 17th-century Convento de San Diego that was dismantled under the post-independence reform laws. As the museum's name suggests, it hosts installations by leading experimental artists from Mexico and abroad, with an emphasis on current electronic, virtual and interactive media.

PLAZA JUÁREZ

Representing the new face of the zone, this modern plaza is opposite the Alameda's **Hemiciclo a Juárez**, a marble monument to post-independence president Benito Juárez, and behind the fully restored **Templo de Corpus Christi**, which now holds the DF's archives. The plaza's

centerpiece is a pair of Tetris-block towers by leading Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta: the 24-story **Foreign Relations Secretariat** and the 23-story **Tribunales** (courts) building. Fronting these monoliths is some interesting art, including a bronze aviary by sculptor Juan Soriano and, near the west entrance, a David Siqueiros mosaic originally designed for a Chrysler factory. Perhaps the most arresting piece is a set of 1034 reddish pyramids in a broad pool, a collaboration between Legorreta and Spanish artist Vicente Rojo. The plaza also hosts excellent photo exhibits.

MUSEO DE ARTE POPULAR

Opened recently (in 2006), this **museum** (Museum of Popular Art; Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-2201; www.map.org.mx; Revillagigedo 11; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, 10am-9pm Thu; **M** Juárez) is a major showcase for Mexico's folk arts and traditions. Contemporary crafts from all over Mexico are thematically displayed on the museum's three levels, including pottery from Michoacán, carnival masks from Chiapas, *alebrijes* (fanciful animal figures) from Oaxaca and trees of life from Puebla. The museum occupies the former fire department headquarters, itself an outstanding example of 1920s art deco by architect Vicente Mendiola. Not surprisingly,

the ground-level shop is an excellent place to look for quality handicrafts.

LA CIUADDELA

The formidable compound now known as 'The Citadel' started off as a tobacco factory in the late 18th century, though it's best known as the scene of the Decena Trágica (Tragic Ten Days), the coup that brought down the Madero government in 1913. Today it is home to the **Biblioteca de México José Vasconcelos** (National Library; Map pp128-9; ☎ 9172-4730; Plaza de la Ciudadela 4; ☎ 8:30am-7:30pm; **M** Balderas), with holdings of over 260,000 volumes and an extensive maps collection. The central halls are given over to art exhibits.

At the Calle Balderas entrance is the **Centro de la Imagen** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 9172-4724; www.caculta.gob.mx/cimagen; admission free; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun; **M** Balderas), the city's photography museum. This innovatively designed space stages compelling exhibitions, often focusing on documentary views of Mexican life by some of the country's sharpest observers.

Plaza de la República & Around

This plaza, west of the Alameda Central, is dominated by the vaguely Stalinist domed Monumento a la Revolución. The grand

MEXICO CITY IN...

Two Days

Day one dawns and you're overlooking the Zócalo from one of the rooftop restaurants on the west side of the grand plaza. Descend into the capital's Aztec underpinnings at the **Templo Mayor** (p143), then admire Diego Rivera's ambitiouscinematic murals at the **Palacio Nacional** (p142). Take the **Turibús** (p165) for a survey of the city's neighborhoods, getting off in **Polanco** (p155) or the **Zona Rosa** (p151) for lunch and shopping. Spend the evening relaxing at a café near your hotel, or if you're up for it, tequila-tasting with the mariachis at Plaza Garibaldi. Day two, delve into Mexico's past at the **Museo Nacional de Antropología** (p153) and **Castillo de Chapultepec** (p153).

Four Days

With a couple more days, head out to the pyramids at **Teotihuacán** (p209). Spend a morning roaming around the **Alameda Central** (p147), making time to acquaint yourself with the **Palacio de Bellas Artes** (p147) and newly minted **Plaza Juárez** (opposite). Have the quintessential Mexican *comida* (lunch) at **El Cardenal** (p173), then do some *artesanías* (crafts) shopping at **La Ciudadela** (above). In the evening plug into the lively nightlife scene in **Condesa** (p186).

One Week

Get to know the southern districts: visit the **Museo Frida Kahlo** (p158) in Coyoacán; hire a *trajinera* (gondola) for a cruise along the ancient canals of **Xochimilco** (p155); shop for quality crafts at San Ángel's **Bazar Sábado market** (p189). Reserve Wednesday or Sunday evening for the **Ballet Folclórico** (p184) at the Palacio de Bellas Artes.

art deco building northeast of the plaza is the Frontón de México, a now-defunct jai-alai arena.

MONUMENTO A LA REVOLUCIÓN

Begun in the 1900s under Porfirio Díaz, this monument (Map pp128–9) was originally meant to be a legislative chamber. But construction (not to mention Díaz' presidency) was interrupted by the Revolution. Though they considered demolishing it, the new regime chose instead to modify the structure and give it a new role. Unveiled in 1938, it contained the tombs of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary heroes Pancho Villa, Francisco Madero, Venustiano Carranza, Plutarco Elías Calles and Lázaro Cárdenas.

Underlying the plaza, the **Museo Nacional de la Revolución** (National Museum of the Revolution; Map pp128–9; ☎ 5546-2115; Plaza de la República; admission M\$15, free Sun; ☞ 9am–5pm Tue–Sun; 🇲 Revolución) covers a 63-year period, from the implementation of the constitution guaranteeing human rights in 1857 to the installation of the post-revolutionary government in 1920. Despite the compelling subject matter, explanatory text remains untranslated.

MUSEO NACIONAL DE SAN CARLOS

This **museum** (Map pp128–9; ☎ 5566-8342; Puente de Alvarado 50; admission M\$25, Mon free; ☞ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon; 🇲 Revolución) exhibits a formidable collection of European art from the 16th to the early 20th century, including works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Goya. Occupying the former mansion of the Conde de Buenavista, the unusual rotunda structure was designed by Manuel Tolsá in the late 18th century.

Paseo de la Reforma

Mexico City's grandest thoroughfare traces a bold southwestern path from Tlatelolco to Bosque de Chapultepec, skirting the Alameda Central and Zona Rosa before heading due west through Bosque de Chapultepec. Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg laid out the boulevard to connect his castle on Chapultepec Hill with the old city center. After his execution, it was given its current name to commemorate the reform laws instituted by President Benito Juárez. Under the López Obrador administration, the avenue was smartly refurbished and its broad, statue-studded medians became a stage for book fairs and art exhibits. It is currently undergoing aggressive development,

with office towers and new hotels springing up along its length.

Paseo de la Reforma links a series of monumental *glorietas* (traffic circles). A couple of blocks west of the Alameda Central is **El Caballito** (Map pp128–9), a bright-yellow representation of a horse's head by the sculptor Sebastián. It commemorates another equestrian sculpture that stood here for 127 years and today fronts the Museo Nacional de Arte (p146). A few blocks southwest is the **Monumento a Cristóbal Colón** (Map pp128–9), an 1877 statue of Columbus gesturing toward the horizon.

Reforma's busy intersection with Av Insurgentes is marked by the **Monumento a Cuauhtémoc** (Map pp128–9), memorializing the last Aztec emperor. Two blocks northwest is the **Jardín del Arte**, site of a lively Sunday art market (p189).

The **Centro Bursátil** (Map pp132–3), an angular tower and mirror-ball ensemble housing the nation's stock exchange (Bolsa), marks the northeast corner of the Zona Rosa. Continuing west past the US embassy, you reach the symbol of Mexico City, the **Monumento a la Independencia** (Map pp132–3; admission free; ☞ 10am–6pm; 🇲 Insurgentes). Known as 'El Ángel,' this gilded Winged Victory on a 45m pillar was sculpted for the independence centennial of 1910. Inside the monument are the remains of Miguel Hidalgo, José María Morelos, Ignacio Allende and nine other notables.

At Reforma's intersection with Sevilla is the monument commonly known as **La Diana Cazadora** (Diana the Huntress; Map pp132–3), a 1942 bronze sculpture actually meant to represent the Archer of the North Star. The League of Decency under the Ávila Camacho administration had the sculptor add a loincloth to the buxom babe, which wasn't removed until 1966.

A 2003 addition to the Mexico City skyline, the **Torre Mayor** (Map pp132–3; Paseo de la Reforma 505) stands like a sentinel before the gate to Bosque de Chapultepec. The green-glass tower soars 225m above the capital, making it Latin America's tallest building. The earthquake-resistant structure is anchored below by 98 seismic shock absorbers. Unfortunately, the building's top tower observation deck was shut in 2006.

Metro Hidalgo accesses Paseo de la Reforma on the Alameda end, while the Insurgentes and Sevilla stations provide the best approach to

DEATH'S NEW FACE

Garbed in a sequined white gown, wearing a wig of dark tresses and clutching a scythe in her bony hand, the skeletal figure bears an eerie resemblance to Mrs Bates from the film *Psycho*. Santa Muerte (Saint Death), as she is known, is the object of a fast-growing cult in Mexico, particularly in the rough Barrio Tepito, where the principal altar (Map pp126-7; **M** Tepito) stands on Alfarería north of Mineros. Possibly rooted in pre-Hispanic ritual, Santa Muerte has been linked to Miclantecuhtli, the Mexican god of death.

On the first day of each month, as many as 5000 followers line up at the Tepito altar to express their devotion and leave candles, bottles of tequila and other tokens of their affection. The proceedings are overseen by the cheerful Enriqueta 'Doña Queta' Romero, who built the shrine herself back in 2001.

At the saint's official home 1km south of the shrine, however, Doña Queta is nowhere to be seen. Instead, the **Santuario Nacional de la Santa Muerte** (National Sanctuary of Saint Death; Map pp126-7; ☎ 5702-8607; Bravo 35; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sun; **M** Morelos) has a new figure of worship, a tall, winged woman with a ghostly pale complexion (though like her predecessor, she bears a scythe). In August 2007, the church substituted this ethereal Angel of Saint Death because, as its bishop explained, Santa Muerte had become associated with drug runners, Satanists and other bad elements, an image, he claimed, that runs counter to her nature.

Some attribute the image change to other factors. The saint's popularity, especially among the lower echelons of society, is feared to be rivaling that of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the Roman Catholic Church has harshly denounced the cult. The Traditional Catholic Mex-USA Church, the cross-border sect's official title, had recently lost its recognition (and associated tax benefits) by Mexico's Board of Religious Associations and is petitioning to regain its former status. But if the new version of Santa Muerte is in fact the church's attempt to demonstrate a more wholesome mission, it runs the risk of losing its more fervent devotees to keepers of the flame like Doña Queta.

While the altar and sanctuary are open to the public, travelers should be aware that the Tepito neighborhood is notorious among Mexicans as a scene of criminal activity and that church members may not welcome the scrutiny of curious onlookers.

the Zona Rosa. From the Insurgentes metro-bus, take the 'Reforma' or 'Hamburgo' stops north and south of the avenue, respectively. Along Reforma itself, any westbound 'Metro Auditorio' bus goes through the Bosque de Chapultepec, while 'Metro Chapultepec' buses terminate at the east end of the park. In the opposite direction, 'Metro Hidalgo' and 'La Villa' buses head up Reforma to the Alameda Central and beyond.

Zona Rosa

Wedged between Paseo de la Reforma and Av Chapultepec, the 'Pink Zone' was developed as an international playground and shopping district during the 1950s, when it enjoyed a cosmopolitan panache. It's been in decline since the installation of Metro Insurgentes on its southern edge, arriving at its current condition as a hodgepodge of touristy boutiques, strip clubs, discos and fast-food franchises. People-watching from its sidewalk cafés reveals a higher degree of diversity than else-

where: it's the city's principal gay and lesbian district and an expat haven, with a significant Korean population. Recently, the Ebrard administration has been busy face-lifting the Calle Génova pedestrian mall in attempts to put the zone back in the pink.

Condesa

Colonia Condesa's architecture, palm-lined esplanades and parks echo its origins as a haven for a newly emerging elite in the early 20th century. Only recently has 'La Condesa' earned its reputation as a trendy area of informal restaurants, hip boutiques and hot nightspots. Fortunately, much of the neighborhood's old flavor remains, especially for those willing to wander outside the valet-parking zones. Stroll the pedestrian medians along Amsterdam, Tamaulipas or Mazatlán to admire art-deco and California colonial-style buildings. A focus is the peaceful **Parque México** (Map pp132-3), with an oval shape that reflects its earlier use as a horse-racing track. It makes for

a delightful ramble, especially in spring when lavender jacaranda blossoms carpet the paths. Two blocks northwest is **Parque España** (Map pp132–3), with a children's fun fair.

Immediately northeast of Parque México, the **Edificio Basurto** (México 187), an aerodynamically streamlined structure from the mid-1940s, is a paragon of the deco style. Ask the doorman to let you peek inside at the amazing snail-shell staircase. Across the way, the **Edificio Tehuacán** (México 188), recently converted into the upscale Hippodrome Hotel (p171), features a typical deco marquee, as well as a Maya-influenced arch around the entryway.

Roma

Northeast of Condesa, Roma is a bohemian enclave inhabited by artists and writers. This is where beat writers William S Burroughs and Jack Kerouac naturally gravitated during their 1950s sojourn to Mexico City. Built at the turn of the 20th century, the neighborhood is a showcase for the Parisian-influenced architecture favored by the Porfirio Díaz regime. Some of the most outstanding examples stand along Calles Colima and Tabasco. When in Roma, browse the secondhand-book stores, linger in the cafés and check out a few art galleries. A stroll down Calle Orizaba passes two lovely plazas – Río de Janeiro, with a statue of David, and Luis Cabrera, which has dancing fountains. On weekends inspect the **antique market** along Av Álvaro Obregón, the main thoroughfare.

GALLERIES

Small, independent art galleries are scattered around Roma – see www.arte-mexico.com (in Spanish) for a map.

Centro de Cultura Casa Lamm (Map pp132–3;

☎ 5511-0899; www.galeriascasalamm.com.mx; Álvaro Obregón 99; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun;

Ⓜ Insurgentes) This cultural complex contains a gallery for contemporary Mexican painting and photography as well as an excellent art library.

Galería Nina Menocal (Map pp132–3; ☎ 5564-7209; www.ninamenocal.com; Zacatecas 93; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat; ☎ Álvaro Obregón) Highlights emerging Cuban and Latin American artists.

MUCA Roma (Map pp132–3; ☎ 5511-0925; Tonalá 51; ☎ 10am–6pm; ☎ Durango) Roma branch of the university museum (p157).

Bosque de Chapultepec

Chapultepec – Náhuatl for 'Hill of Grass-hoppers' – served as a refuge for the wan-

dering Aztecs before becoming a summer residence for their noble class. It was the nearest freshwater supply for Tenochtitlán; in the 15th century Nezahualcōyotl, ruler of nearby Texcoco, oversaw the construction of an aqueduct to channel its waters over Lago de Texcoco to the pre-Hispanic capital.

Today Mexico City's largest park, the Bosque de Chapultepec covers more than 4 sq km, with lakes, a zoo and several excellent museums. It also remains an abode of Mexico's high and mighty, containing the current presidential residence, **Los Pinos** (Map pp136–7), and a former imperial palace, the Castillo de Chapultepec.

Sunday is the park's big day as vendors line the main paths and throngs of families come to picnic, navigate the big lake on rowboats and crowd into the museums. Most of the major attractions are in or near the eastern **1a Sección** (1st Section; Map pp136–7; ☎ 5am–5pm Tue–Sun), while a large amusement park and children's museum dominate the **2a Sección** (2nd Section; Map pp136–7; ☎ 24hr).

A pair of bronze lions overlook the main gate at Paseo de la Reforma and Lieja, across from the Torre Mayor building. Other access points are opposite the Museo Nacional de Antropología and by Metro Chapultepec. The fence along Paseo de la Reforma serves as the **Galería Abierta de las Rejas de Chapultepec**, an outdoor photo gallery extending from the zoo entrance to the Rufino Tamayo museum.

Chapultepec metro station is at the east end of the Bosque de Chapultepec, near the Monumento a los Niños Héroes and Castillo de Chapultepec. Auditorio metro station is on the north side of the park, 500m west of the Museo Nacional de Antropología. See p150 for information on Reforma bus routes.

To get to the 2a Sección and La Feria, from metro Chapultepec take the 'Paradero' exit and catch a 'Feria' bus at the top of the stairs. These depart continuously and travel nonstop to the 2a Sección, dropping off riders at the Papalote Museo del Niño, Museo Tecnológico and La Feria.

MONUMENTO A LOS NIÑOS HÉROES

The six marble columns marking the eastern entrance to the park (Map pp136–7), near Chapultepec metro, commemorate the 'boy heroes,' six brave cadets who perished in battle. On September 13, 1847, more than 8000 American troops stormed Chapultepec Castle,

which then housed the national military academy. Mexican General Santa Anna retreated before the onslaught, excusing the cadets from fighting, but the youths, aged 13 to 20, chose to defend the castle. Legend has it that one of them, Juan Escutia, wrapped himself in a Mexican flag and leapt to his death rather than surrender.

CASTILLO DE CHAPULTEPEC

A visible reminder of Mexico's bygone aristocracy, the 'castle' that stands atop Chapultepec Hill was begun in 1785 but not completed until after independence, when it became the national military academy. When Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlota arrived in 1864, they refurbished it as their residence. It then sheltered Mexico's presidents until 1939 when President Lázaro Cárdenas converted it into the **Museo Nacional de Historia** (National History Museum; Map pp136-7; ☎ 5061-9200; www.castillodechapultepec.inah.gob.mx; adult/under 13yr M\$45/free, free Sun; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Chapultepec).

Historical exhibits chronicle the period from the rise of colonial Nueva España to the Mexican Revolution. In addition to displaying such iconic objects as the sword wielded by José María Morelos in the Siege of Cuautla and the Virgin of Guadalupe banner borne by Miguel Hidalgo in his march for independence, the museum features a number of dramatic interpretations of Mexican history by leading muralists including Juan O'Gorman's panoramic *Retablo de la Independencia* (Panel of Independence) in room 6. Explanatory text is untranslated.

The east end of the castle preserves the palace occupied by Maximilian and Carlota, with sumptuously furnished salons opening onto an exterior deck that affords sweeping city views. On the upper floor, Porfirio Díaz' opulent rooms surround a patio where a tower marks the top of Chapultepec Hill, 45m above street level.

To reach the castle, follow the road that curves up the hill behind the Monumento a los Niños Héroes. Alternatively, a train-like vehicle (M\$10 round trip) runs up every 15 minutes while the castle is open.

Back at ground level, follow the south side of the hill's base to find the formidable **Tribuna Monumental de las Águilas** (Map pp136-7) dedicated to Mexico's WWII veterans. On the left side of the monument, enter the **Audiorama** (Map pp136-7), a pebbly garden with body-

contoured benches where you can enjoy opera or classical music.

JARDÍN BOTÁNICO

Gardening is an ancient pastime in Mexico – Nezahualcóyotl was planting cypresses here six centuries ago for their sheer aesthetic value – and the recently opened **Jardín Botánico** (Botanical Garden; Map pp136-7; ☎ 5553-8114; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm), 300m east of the anthropology museum, carries the tradition forward. Highlighting Mexico's plant diversity, the 4-hectare complex is divided in sections that reflect the country's varied climate zones, with a special emphasis on the plants and trees of central Mexico. Still in a nascent stage, it features a desert-like patch of diminutive cactuses and a greenhouse full of rare orchids.

MUSEO DE ARTE MODERNO

This **museum** (Museum of Modern Art; Map pp136-7; ☎ 5211-8331; cnr Paseo de la Reforma & Gandhi; admission M\$2, free Sun; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Chapultepec) exhibits work by noteworthy 20th-century Mexican artists. The main building consists of four skylit rotundas, housing canvases by Dr Atl, Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco, Kahlo, Tamayo and O'Gorman, among others. *Las Dos Fridas*, possibly Frida Kahlo's most well-known painting, is in the Sala Xavier Villarrutia. Just northwest of the Monumento a los Niños Héroes (access is via Paseo de la Reforma), the museum has a pleasant café beside a sculpture garden.

ZOOLOGICO DE CHAPULTEPEC

Home to a wide range of the world's creatures in large open-air enclosures, the **Chapultepec Zoo** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5553-6263; www.chapultepec.df.gob.mx; admission free; ☎ 9am-4:30pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Auditorio) was the first place outside China where pandas were born in captivity. The zoo has three of these rare bears, descendants of the original pair donated by the People's Republic in 1975. Endangered Mexican species include the Mexican grey wolf and the hairless xoloitzcuintle, the only surviving dog species from pre-Hispanic times. Parrots, macaws, toucans, flamingos and other Mexican species swoop around the Aviario Moctezuma (only 20 visitors allowed in at a time).

MUSEO NACIONAL DE ANTROPOLOGÍA

This **museum** (National Museum of Anthropology; Map pp136-7; ☎ 5553-6381; www.mna.inah.gob.mx; cnr Paseo

de la Reforma & Gandhi; admission M\$48; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun; (M Auditorio) stands in an extension of the Bosque de Chapultepec. The spacious complex, constructed in the 1960s, is the work of Mexican architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez. An immense umbrella-like stone fountain rises up from the center of the courtyard.

Its long, rectangular courtyard is surrounded on three sides by two-level display halls. The 12 ground-floor *salas* (halls) are dedicated to pre-Hispanic Mexico, while upper-level *salas* show how Mexico's indigenous descendants live today, with the contemporary cultures located directly above their ancestral civilizations. The ground-floor exhibits spill out to the surrounding gardens, where replicas of temples stand. Everything is superbly displayed, with much explanatory text translated into English. Audio-guide devices, in English, are available at the entrance (M\$60).

The vast museum offers more than most people can absorb in a single visit. Concentrate on the regions you plan to visit or have visited, with a quick look at some of the other eye-catching exhibits. Here's a brief guide to the ground-floor halls, proceeding counterclockwise around the courtyard.

Culturas Indígenas de México Currently serves as a space for temporary exhibitions.

Introducción a la Antropología Introduces visitors to the field of anthropology.

Poblamiento de América Demonstrates how the hemisphere's earliest settlers got here and survived in their new environment.

Preclásico en el Altiplano Central Focuses on the pre-classic period, approximately 2300 BC to AD 100, and the transition from a nomadic hunting life to a more settled farming life in Mexico's Central Highlands.

Teotihuacán Displays models and objects from the Americas' first great and powerful state.

Los Toltecas y Su Época Covers cultures of central Mexico between about AD 650 and 1250; on display is one of the four basalt warrior columns from Tula's Temple of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli.

Mexica Devoted to the Mexicas, aka Aztecs. Come here to see the famous sun stone, unearthed beneath the Zócalo in 1790, and other magnificent sculptures from the pantheon of Aztec deities.

Culturas de Oaxaca Displays the legacy of Oaxaca's Zapotec and Mixtec civilizations.

Culturas de la Costa del Golfo Spotlights the important civilizations along the Gulf of Mexico including the Olmec, Totonac and Huastec. Stone carvings include two Olmec heads weighing in at almost 20 tons.

Maya Exhibits findings from southeast Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras. A full-scale replica of the tomb of King Pakal, discovered deep in the Templo de las Inscripciones at Palenque, is breathtaking.

Culturas del Occidente Profiles cultures of western Mexico.

Culturas del Norte Covers the Casas Grandes (Paquimé) site and other cultures from northern Mexico, and traces their links with indigenous groups of the US southwest.

In a clearing about 100m in front of the museum's entrance, indigenous Totonac people perform their spectacular *voladores* rite – 'flying' from a 20m-high pole – several times a day.

MUSEO RUFINO TAMAYO

A multilevel concrete-and-glass structure east of the Museo Nacional de Antropología, the **Tamayo Museum** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5286-6519; www.museotamayo.org; cnr Paseo de la Reforma & Gandhi; admission M\$15, free Sun; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; (M Auditorio) was built to house international modern art donated by Oaxaca-born Rufino Tamayo and his wife, Olga, to the people of Mexico. Exhibitions of cutting-edge modern art from around the globe alternate with thematically arranged shows from the Tamayo collection.

SEGUNDA (2A) SECCIÓN

The second section of the Bosque de Chapultepec lies west of the Periférico. In addition to family attractions, there is a pair of upscale lake-view restaurants on the Lago Mayor and Lago Menor.

Kids will enjoy **La Feria** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5230-2121; passes from M\$50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-8pm Sun; (M Constituyentes), an old-fashioned amusement park with some hair-raising rides. A 'Super Ecolin' passport (M\$80) is good for everything but the rollercoaster.

Your children won't want to leave **Papalote Museo del Niño** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5237-1773; www.papalote.org.mx; adult/2-11yr & seniors M\$85/80; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-11pm Thu, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun; (M Constituyentes). At this innovative, hands-on museum, kids can put together a radio program, lie on a bed of nails, join an archaeological dig and try out all manner of technological gadget-games. The museum also features a 3D IMAX movie theater.

About 200m west of the Papalote, turn right to reach the **Fuente de Tlaloc** (Map pp136-7), an oval pool inhabited by a huge mosaic-skinned sculpture of the rain god by Diego Rivera.

There's more Rivera art inside the Chapultepec water works, behind the fountain. The artist painted a series of murals entitled **El Agua, El Origen de la Vida** (Water, Origin of Life; admission M\$10; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat) for the inauguration of the project, constructed in the 1940s to channel the waters of the Río Lerma into giant cisterns to supply the city. Experimenting with waterproof paints, Rivera covered the collection tank and part of the pipeline with images of amphibious beings. Though technically only open Saturdays, the guard can be persuaded to let you in for a tip.

To the north is the beautiful **Fuente de Xochipilli** (Map pp136-7), dedicated to the Aztec 'flower prince,' with terraced fountains around a pyramid in the style of a *talud tablero* (a building style typical of Teotihuacán).

Polanco

The affluent neighborhood of Polanco, north of Bosque de Chapultepec, arose in the 1940s as a residential alternative for a burgeoning middle class anxious to escape the overcrowded Centro. Looking northward for architectural inspiration, builders erected many homes in the California Colonial style, a Hollywood take on Andalusian splendor. Polanco is known as a Jewish enclave though the community has largely migrated further west to Lomas de Chapultepec.

Today the area is known for its exclusive hotels, fine restaurants, nightlife and designer stores, with much of the retail activity along Av Presidente Masaryk. Some of the city's most prestigious art galleries are here, including the **Galería López Quiroga** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5280-1710; Aristóteles 169) and the **Galería Alberto Misrahi** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5281-7456; Campos Elíseos 215), inside the Hotel Nikko. Metro Polanco accesses the center of the neighborhood while Metro Auditorio is on its southern edge.

Xochimilco & Around

Almost at the southern edge of the Distrito Federal, a network of canals flanked by gardens is a vivid reminder of the city's pre-Hispanic legacy. Remnants of the *chinampas* where the indigenous inhabitants grew their food, these 'floating gardens' are still in use today. Gliding along the canals in a fancifully decorated *trajinera* (gondola) is an alternately tranquil and festive experience that should seduce even the most jaded traveler. As if that weren't reason enough for an ex-

ursion, Xochimilco also boasts an endlessly explorable public market, a handful of visitor-friendly *pulquerías*, and one of the city's best art museums.

To reach Xochimilco, take the metro to Tasqueña station, then continue on the Tren Ligerero (M\$2) to its last stop. Upon exiting the station, turn left (north) and follow Av Morelos to the market, plaza and church. If you don't feel like walking, bicycle taxis (M\$30 to M\$50) will shuttle you to the *embarcaderos* (boat landings).

MUSEO DOLORES OLMEDO PATIÑO

Possibly the most important Diego Rivera collection of all belongs to this **museum** (Map p138; ☎ 5555-1221; Av México 5843; admission M\$40, free Tue; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), ensconced in a peaceful 17th-century hacienda 2km west of central Xochimilco.

Dolores Olmedo Patiño, who resided here until her death in 2002, was a socialite and a patron of Rivera. The museum's 144 Rivera works – including oils, watercolors and lithographs from various periods – are displayed alongside pre-Hispanic figurines and folk art. Another room is reserved for Frida Kahlo's paintings. Outside the exhibit halls, you'll see xoloitzcuintles, a pre-Hispanic hairless canine breed, roaming the estate's extensive gardens.

To get there take the Tren Ligerero from metro Tasqueña and get off at La Noria. Leaving the station, turn left at the top of the steps and descend to the street. Upon reaching an intersection with a footbridge, take a sharp left, almost doubling back on your path, onto Antiguo Camino a Xochimilco. The museum is 300m down this street.

CANALS

Xochimilco, Náhuatl for 'Place where Flowers Grow,' was an early target of Aztec hegemony, probably due to its inhabitants' farming skills. The Xochimilcas piled up vegetation and mud in the shallow waters of Lake Xochimilco, a southern offshoot of Lago de Texcoco, to make fertile gardens called *chinampas*, which later became an economic base of the Aztec empire. As the *chinampas* proliferated, much of the lake was transformed into a series of canals. Approximately 180km of these waterways remain today and provide a favorite weekend destination for Chilangos. The *chinampas* are still under cultivation, mainly for garden

plants and flowers such as poinsettias and marigolds. Owing to its cultural and historical significance, Xochimilco was designated a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1987.

On weekends a fiesta atmosphere takes over as the waterways become jammed with boats carrying groups of families and friends. Local vendors and musicians hover alongside the partygoers serving food and drink, playing marimbas and taking photos with old box cameras. (Midweek, the mood is far mellow.)

Hundreds of colorful *trajineras* await passengers at the village's nine *embarcaderos*. Nearest to the center are Salitre and San Cristóbal, both 400m east of the plaza, and Fernando Celada, 400m west on Guadalupe Ramírez. Boats seat 14 to 20 persons; official cruise prices (M\$140 to M\$160 per hour) are posted. On Saturday, Sunday and holidays, 60-person *lanchas colectivos* (boat taxis) run between the Salitre, Caltongo and Nativitas *embarcaderos*, charging M\$20 per passenger round trip.

You can get a taste of Xochimilco in an hour, but it's worth going for longer; you'll see more and get a proper chance to relax. You can arrange for your *trajinera* to stop at Nativitas *embarcadero* for some shopping at its *artesanías* market.

Though the canals are definitely the main attraction, Xochimilco village has plenty to see. East of Jardín Juárez is the 16th-century **Parroquia de San Bernardino de Siena** (Map p138), with elaborate gold-painted *retablos* (altarpieces) and a tree-studded atrium. South of the plaza, the bustling **Mercado de Xochimilco** (Map p138) covers two vast buildings: the one nearer the Jardín Juárez has colorful flower displays and an eating 'annex' for tamales and other prepared foods; the one nearer the train station sells mostly produce and household goods, with a few pottery stalls.

San Ángel

Settled by the Dominican order soon after the Spanish conquest, San Ángel, 12km southwest of the center, maintains its colonial splendor despite being engulfed by the metropolis. It's often associated with the big Saturday crafts market held alongside the Plaza San Jacinto. Though the main approach via Av Insurgentes is typically chaotic, wander westward to experience the old village's cobblestoned soul; it's a tranquil enclave of colonial mansions with

massive wooden doors, potted geraniums behind window grills and bougainvillea spilling over stone walls.

The La Bombilla station of the Av Insurgentes metrobus is about 500m east of the Plaza San Jacinto. Otherwise, catch a pesero from Metro Miguel Ángel de Quevedo, 1km east, or Metro Barranca del Muerto, 1.5km north along Av Revolución.

PLAZA SAN JACINTO

Every Saturday the Bazar Sábado (p189) brings masses of color and crowds of people to this square, half a kilometer west of Av Insurgentes. Midway along the plaza's north side, look for the elaborate fountain inside the courtyard **Museo Casa del Risco** (Map p139; ☎ 5616-2711; Plaza San Jacinto 15; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Miguel Ángel de Quevedo), a mad mosaic of Talavera tile and Chinese porcelain. Upstairs is a treasure trove of Mexican baroque and medieval European paintings.

About 50m west of the plaza is the 16th-century **Iglesia de San Jacinto** (Map p139) and its peaceful gardens.

MUSEO CASA ESTUDIO DIEGO RIVERA Y FRIDA KAHLO

If you saw the movie *Frida*, you'll recognize this **museum** (Diego Rivera & Frida Kahlo Studio Museum; Map p139; ☎ 5550-1518; Diego Rivera 2, Av Altavista; admission M\$10, free Sun; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), 1km northwest of Plaza San Jacinto. Designed by their friend, the architect and painter Juan O'Gorman, the innovative abode was the home of the artistic couple from 1934 to 1940, with a separate house for each of them. Rivera's house preserves his upstairs studio, while Frida's (the blue one) has changing exhibits from the memorabilia archives.

Across the street is the San Ángel Inn (p177). Now housing a prestige restaurant, the former pulque hacienda is historically significant as the place where Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata agreed to divide control of the country in 1914.

MUSEO DE EL CARMEN

A storehouse of magnificent sacred art, this **museum** (Map p139; ☎ 5616-2816; Av Revolución 4; admission M\$39, free Sun; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) occupies a former school run by the Carmelite order, adjacent to its 17th-century Templo de El Carmen. (The village was named for the Carmelite's patron saint, San Ángelo Mártir.)

The collection includes eight oils by Mexican master Cristóbal Villalpando; equally splendid are the polychrome and gilt designs on the ceilings. The big draw, however, is the collection of a dozen mummies in the crypt. Thought to be the bodies of 17th-century benefactors of the order, they were uncovered during the revolution by Zapatistas looking for buried treasure.

JARDÍN DE LA BOMBILLA

In this tropically abundant park spreading east of Av Insurgentes, paths encircle the **Monumento a Álvaro Obregón** (Map p139), a monolithic shrine to the post-revolutionary Mexican president. The monument was built to house the revolutionary general's arm, lost in the 1915 Battle of Celaya, but the limb was cremated in 1989. 'La Bombilla' was the name of the restaurant where Obregón was assassinated during a banquet in 1928. The killer, José de León Toral, was involved in the Cristero rebellion against the government's anti-Church policies.

In July, the park explodes with color as the main venue for FERIA de las Flores, a major flower festival.

Ciudad Universitaria

Two kilometers south of San Ángel, the **Ciudad Universitaria** (University City; Map pp126-7; www.unam.mx) is the main campus of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). With over 280,000 students and 31,000 teachers, it is Latin America's largest university. Five former Mexican presidents are among its alumni, as is Carlos Slim Helú, ranked the world's richest man in 2007.

Founded in 1551 as the Royal and Papal University of Mexico, UNAM is the second-oldest university in the Americas. It occupied various buildings in the center of town until the campus was transferred to its current location in the 1950s. Although it is a public university open to all, UNAM remains 'autonomous,' meaning the government may not interfere in its academic policies. It has often been a center of political dissent, most notably prior to the 1968 Mexico City Olympics (see boxed text, p123).

An architectural showpiece, UNAM was placed on Unesco's list of World Heritage sites in 2007. Most of the faculty buildings are scattered at the north end. As you enter from Av Insurgentes, it's easy to spot the **Biblioteca**

Central (Central Library; Map pp126-7), 10 stories high and covered with mosaics by Juan O'Gorman. The south wall, with two prominent zodiac wheels, covers colonial times, while the north wall deals with Aztec culture. **La Rectoría**, the administration building at the west end of the vast central lawn, has a vivid, three-dimensional Siqueiros mosaic on its south wall, showing students urged on by the people.

South of the Rectoría, the **Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5622-0305; www.muca.unam.mx; admission free, ID required; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) hosts eclectic exhibitions from the university collection.

Across Av Insurgentes stands the Estadio Olímpico (p187), built of volcanic stone for the 1968 Olympics. With seating for over 72,000, it is now home to UNAM's Pumas soccer club, which competes in the national league's Primera División. Over the main entrance is Diego Rivera's dramatic sculpted mural on the theme of sports in Mexican history.

East of the university's main esplanade, the **Facultad de Medicina** (medical school) features an intriguing mosaic mural by Francisco Eppens on the theme of Mexico's *mestizaje* (blending of indigenous and European races).

A second section of the campus, about 2km south, contains the **Centro Cultural Universitario** (see p184), with five theaters and two cinemas, and the **Museo Universitario de Ciencias** (Universum; ☎ 5622-7287; www.universum.unam.mx; adult/child M\$40/35; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), a science museum with kids' activities. Also found here is the university sculpture garden, with a trail leading through volcanic fields past a dozen or so innovative pieces. The most formidable work, an enormous ring of concrete blocks by sculptor Mathias Goeritz, is found just north of the cultural complex.

Student cafés, open to everyone during academic sessions, are in both the architecture and philosophy buildings at the Jardín Central's west end, and in the Centro Cultural Universitario.

To get to the University City, take the metrobus to its southern terminus, where you can catch a 'Villa Coapa' pesero to the west side of the university. For the northern part of the campus, get off at the first yellow footbridge, just before the Estadio Olímpico. For the southern section, get off at the second yellow footbridge after the stadium. Returning, catch any pesero marked

'San Ángel-Revolución,' getting off just after it turns left to catch the metrobus.

Coyoacán

Coyoacán ('Place of Coyotes' in the Náhuatl language), 10km south of downtown, was Cortés' base after the fall of Tenochtitlán. Only in recent decades has urban sprawl overtaken the outlying village, and Coyoacán retains its restful identity, with narrow colonial-era streets, cafés and a lively atmosphere. Once home to Leon Trotsky and Frida Kahlo (whose houses are now fascinating museums), it has a decidedly countercultural vibe, most evident on weekends, when assorted musicians, mimes and crafts markets draw large but relaxed crowds from all walks of life to Coyoacán's central plazas.

The nearest metro stations to central Coyoacán, 1.5km to 2km away, are Viveros, Coyoacán and General Anaya. If you don't fancy a walk, get off at Viveros station, walk south to Av Progreso and catch an eastbound 'M(etro) Gral Anaya' pesero to the market. Returning, 'Metro Viveros' peseros go west on Malitzin; 'Metro Coyoacán' and 'Metro Gral Anaya' peseros depart from the west side of Plaza Hidalgo.

San Ángel-bound peseros and buses head west on Av Miguel Ángel de Quevedo, five blocks south of Plaza Hidalgo.

VIVEROS DE COYOACÁN

A pleasant approach is via the **Viveros de Coyoacán** (Map p140; ☎ 5554-1851; admission free; 🕒 6am-6pm; 🚶 Viveros), the principal nurseries for Mexico City's parks and gardens. The 390,000-sq-meter swath of greenery, 1km west of central Coyoacán, is popular with joggers and great for a stroll, but watch out for belligerent squirrels! From metro Viveros, walk south (right, as you face the fence) along Av Universidad and take the first left, Av Progreso.

A block south of Viveros is the quaint **Plaza Santa Catarina**, with the modest, mustard-colored church that gives the square its name. Across the street, the **Centro Cultural Jesús Reyes Heróles** (Map p140; ☎ 5658-5281; Francisco Sosa 202; 8am-8pm; 🚶 Viveros) is a colonial estate hosting book presentations, dance classes and so on. Take a wander round the grounds, with yuccas and jacarandas springing from carefully tended gardens. The 700m walk east along Av Francisco Sosa to Jardín del Centenario

passes some fine colonial buildings, several of which house cafés.

PLAZA HIDALGO & JARDÍN DEL CENTENARIO

The focus of Coyoacán life, and scene of most of the weekend fun, is its central plaza – actually two adjacent plazas: the **Jardín del Centenario**, with the village's iconic coyotes frolicking in its central fountain; and the larger, cobblestoned **Plaza Hidalgo**, with a statue of the eponymous independence hero.

The **Casa de Cortés** (Map p140; ☎ 5484-4500; Jardín Centenario 16; admission free; 🕒 8am-8pm; 🚶 Viveros), on the north side of Plaza Hidalgo, is where conquistador Cortés established Mexico's first municipal seat during the siege of Tenochtitlán, and later had the defeated emperor Cuauhtémoc tortured to make him divulge the location of Aztec treasure (the scene is depicted on a mural inside the chapel). Cortés resided here until 1523 when the colonial government was transferred to Mexico City. The building now houses Coyoacán's delegation offices.

The **Parroquia de San Juan Bautista** (Map p140) and its adjacent ex-monastery dominate the east side of Plaza Hidalgo. First erected in 1592 by the Franciscans, the single-nave church has a lavishly ornamented interior, with painted scenes all over the vaulted ceiling. Be sure to inspect the cloister, featuring Tuscan columns and a checkerboard of carved relief panels on the corner ceilings.

Half a block east, the **Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares** (Map p140; ☎ 9172-8840; www.culturaspopularesindigenas.gob.mx; Hidalgo 289; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, 10am-8pm Fri-Sun; 🚶 Viveros) stages innovative exhibitions on folk traditions, indigenous crafts and celebrations in its various courtyards and galleries.

MUSEO FRIDA KAHLO

Renowned Mexican artist Frida Kahlo was born in, and lived and died in, the 'Blue House,' now a **museum** (Map p140; ☎ 5554-5999; www.museofridakahlo.org; Londres 247; admission M\$45; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Coyoacán), six blocks north of Plaza Hidalgo. Almost every visitor to Mexico City makes a pilgrimage there to gain a deeper understanding of the painter (and maybe to pick up a Frida handbag).

Built by her father Guillermo three years before Frida's birth, the house is littered with mementos and personal belongings that evoke

her long, often tempestuous relationship with husband Diego Rivera and the leftist intellectual circle they often entertained there. Kitchen implements, jewelry, outfits, photos and other objects from the artist's everyday life are interspersed with art, as well as a variety of pre-Hispanic pieces and Mexican crafts. The collection was greatly expanded in 2007 upon the discovery of a cache of previously unseen items that had been stashed in the attic.

The Kahlo art expresses the anguish of her existence as well as her flirtation with socialist icons: portraits of Lenin and Mao hang around her bed, and in the upstairs studio an unfinished portrait of Stalin stands before a poignantly positioned wheelchair. In another painting, *Retrato de la Familia* (Family Portrait), the artist's Hungarian-Oaxacan roots are fancifully entangled.

MUSEO LÉON TROTSKY

Having come second to Stalin in the power struggle in the Soviet Union, Trotsky was expelled in 1929 and condemned to death in absentia. In 1937 he found refuge in Mexico. At first Trotsky and his wife, Natalia, lived in Frida Kahlo's Blue House, but after falling out with Kahlo and Rivera they moved a few streets northeast, to Viena 45.

The Trotsky home, now a **museum** (Map pp140; ☎ 5658-8732; Río Churubusco 410; admission M\$30; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Coyoacán) remains much as it was on the day when a Stalin agent, a Catalan named Ramón Mercader, finally caught up with the revolutionary and smashed an ice pick into his skull. Memorabilia and biographical notes are displayed in buildings off the patio, where a tomb engraved with a hammer and sickle contains the Trotskys' ashes.

The main entrance is at the rear of the old residence, facing the Circuito Interior.

EX-CONVENTO DE CHURUBUSCO

Scene of a historic military defeat, the 17th-century former Monastery of Churubusco stands within peaceful wooded grounds, 1.5km east of Plaza Hidalgo. On August 20, 1847, Mexican troops defended the monastery against US forces advancing from Veracruz in a dispute over the US annexation of Texas. The Mexicans fought until they ran out of ammunition and were beaten only after hand-to-hand fighting.

The US invasion was but one example in a long history of foreign intervention, as com-

pellingly demonstrated by the **Museo Nacional de las Intervenciones** (National Interventions Museum; Map pp140; ☎ 5604-0699; cnr Calle 20 de Agosto & General Anaya; admission M\$39, free Sun; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun; 📍 General Anaya), inside the former *convento*. Displays include an American map showing operations in 1847, material on the French occupation of the 1860s and the plot by US ambassador Henry Lane Wilson to bring down the Madero government in 1913. (None of the explanatory text is translated.)

The superbly restored exhibit rooms, bordered by original frescoes, surround a small cloister where numbered stations provided instructions for meditating monks. Leaving the museum, you may wander amid the monastery's old orchard which now holds wonderful gardens.

To reach Churubusco, catch an east-bound 'M(etro) Gral Anaya' pesero or bus from Xicoténcatl, a few blocks north of Plaza Hidalgo. Otherwise, walk 500m from the General Anaya metro station.

ANAHUACALLI

Designed by Diego Rivera to house his collection of pre-Hispanic art, this **museum** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5617-4310; www.anahuacallimuseo.org; Calle del Museo 150; admission M\$45; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), 3.5km south of Coyoacán, is a temple-like structure of dark volcanic stone. The 'House of Anáhuac' (Aztec name for the Valle de México) also contains one of Rivera's studios and some of his work, including a study for 'Man at the Crossroads,' the mural that was commissioned for the Rockefeller Center in 1934. In November, elaborate Day of the Dead offerings pay homage to the painter.

The entry fee includes admission to the Museo Frida Kahlo (see opposite).

To get to Anahuacalli, take the Tren Ligeró (from metro Tasqueña) to the Xotepingo station. Exit on the west side and walk 200m to División del Norte; cross and continue 600m along Calle del Museo.

Cuicuilco

One of the oldest significant remnants of pre-Hispanic settlement within the DF, **Cuicuilco** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5606-9758; Insurgentes Sur; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm) echoes a civilization that stood on the shores of Lago de Xochimilco as far back as 800 BC. In its heyday in the 2nd century BC, the 'place of singing and dancing' counted as many as 40,000 inhabitants and rivaled

FRIDA & DIEGO

A century after Frida Kahlo's birth, and 50 years after Diego Rivera's death, the pair's fame and recognition are stronger than ever. In 2007, a retrospective of Kahlo's work at the Palacio de Bellas Artes attracted more than 440,000 visitors. Though attendance at the Rivera survey that followed was not so phenomenal, the show reminded visitors that the prolific muralist had been an international star in his own lifetime. Their memory is inseparably linked, and both artists were frequent subjects in each other's work.

Diego Rivera first met Frida Kahlo, 21 years his junior, while painting at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, where she was a student in the early 1920s. Rivera was already at the forefront of Mexican art; his commission at the school was the first of many semi-propaganda murals on public buildings that he was to execute over three decades. He had already fathered children by two Russian women in Europe and in 1922 he married Lupe Marín in Mexico. She bore him two more children before their marriage broke up in 1928.

Kahlo was born in Coyoacán in 1907 to a Hungarian-Jewish father and Oaxacan mother. She contracted polio at age six, leaving her right leg permanently thinner than her left. In 1925 she was horribly injured in a trolley accident that broke her right leg, collarbone, pelvis and ribs. She made a miraculous recovery but suffered much pain thereafter and underwent many operations to try to alleviate it. It was during convalescence that she began painting. Pain – physical and emotional – was to be a dominating theme of her art.

Kahlo and Rivera both moved in left-wing artistic circles, and they met again in 1928; they married the following year. The liaison, described as 'a union between an elephant and a dove,' was always a passionate love-hate affair. Rivera wrote: 'If I ever loved a woman, the more I loved her, the more I wanted to hurt her. Frida was only the most obvious victim of this disgusting trait.'

In 1934, after a spell in the US, the pair moved into a new home in San Ángel, now the Museo Casa Estudio Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo (p156), with separate houses linked by an aerial walkway. After Kahlo discovered that Rivera had had an affair with her sister Cristina, she divorced him in 1939, but they remarried the following year. She moved back into her childhood home, the Casa Azul, in Coyoacán and he stayed at San Ángel – a state of affairs that endured for the rest of their lives, though their relationship endured too. Kahlo remained Rivera's most trusted critic, and Rivera was Kahlo's biggest fan.

Despite the worldwide wave of Fridamania that followed the hit biopic *Frida* in 2002, Kahlo had only one exhibition in Mexico in her lifetime, in 1953. She arrived at the opening on a stretcher. Rivera said of the exhibition, 'Anyone who attended it could not but marvel at her great talent.' She died at the Blue House the following year. Rivera called it 'the most tragic day of my life... Too late I realized that the most wonderful part of my life had been my love for Frida.'

Teotihuacán in stature. The site was abandoned a couple of centuries later, however, after an eruption of the nearby Xitle volcano covered most of the community in lava.

The principal structure is a huge circular platform of four levels, faced with volcanic stone blocks, that probably functioned as a ceremonial center. Set amid a park studded with cactus and shade trees, the platform can be easily scaled for sweeping views of the southern districts including the formidable Xitle. The site includes a small museum.

To reach Cuicuilco, take the Insurgentes metrobus to the end of the line, cross Dr Gálvez and catch a 'Villa Coapa' pesero south. You'll see the entrance to the archaeological park just south of the Periférico freeway.

Tlalpan

Tlalpan today is 'what Coyoacán used to be' – an outlying village with a bohemian atmosphere coupled with some impressive colonial architecture. The municipal seat of Mexico City's largest *delegación*, Tlalpan sits at the foot of the southern Ajusco range and enjoys a cooler, more moist climate. There are some fine restaurants along the arcades of the cute plaza and a boisterous cantina nearby called **La Jalisciense** (☎ 5573-5586; Plaza de la Constitución 6).

Half a block from the plaza, the **Museo de Historia de Tlalpan** (☎ 5485-9048; Plaza de la Constitución 10; admission free; 🕒 10am-7pm Tue-Sun) hosts compelling historical exhibits in naturally lit galleries off the courtyard.

There's a sublime simplicity about the **Capilla de las Capuchinas Sacramentarias** (☎ 5573-2395; Hidalgo 43; admission M\$50; ☹ 10am-noon & 4-6pm Mon-Thu), the chapel of a convent for Capuchin nuns designed by modernist architect Luis Barragán in 1952. The austere altar, free of the usual iconography, consists only of a trio of gold panels. Visit in the morning to appreciate how light streams through the stained-glass window by Mathias Goeritz.

To get here, take the Insurgentes metrobus to the end of the line, cross Dr Gálvez and catch a 'Villa Coapa' pesero south. Beyond Cuicuilco, this bus turns left on San Fernando. Get off at Calle Juárez, and walk three blocks south to Talpan's main square.

Parque Nacional Desierto de los Leones

Cool, fragrant pine and oak forests dominate this 20-sq-km **national park** (off Map pp126-7; ☹ 6am-5pm) in the hills surrounding the Valle de México. Some 23km southwest of Mexico City and 800m higher, it makes a fine escape from the carbon monoxide and concrete.

The name derives from the **Ex-Convento del Santo Desierto de Nuestra Señora del Carmen** (Camino al Desierto de los Leones; ☎ 5814-1171; admission M\$10; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), the 17th-century former Carmelite monastery within the park. The Carmelites called their isolated monasteries 'deserts' to commemorate Elijah, who lived as a recluse in the desert near Mt Carmel. The 'Leones' in the name may stem from the presence of wild cats in the area, but more likely refers to José and Manuel de León, who once administered the monastery's finances.

The restored monastery has exhibition halls and a restaurant. Tours in Spanish (weekends only) are run by guides garbed in cassock and sandals who lead you through the patios within and expansive gardens around the buildings, as well as some underground passageways.

The rest of the park has extensive walking trails. (Robberies have been reported, so stick to the main paths.)

On Saturdays and Sundays, buses depart from Metro Viveros for the former *convento*. During the week, there's no transportation directly to the monastery, but you can take one of Flecha Roja's frequent 'Toluca Intermedio' buses from the Terminal Poniente bus station and get off at the La Venta toll booth. From there, take the footbridge over the highway and follow signs for the Desierto de Leones road.

Tlatelolco & Guadalupe

PLAZA DE LAS TRES CULTURAS

So named because it symbolizes the fusion of pre-Hispanic and Spanish roots into the Mexican *mestizo* identity, this **plaza** (Plaza of the Three Cultures; Map pp126-7; ☎ 5583-0295; Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas, cnr Flores Magón; admission free; ☹ 8am-5:30pm) displays the architectural legacy of three cultural facets: the Aztec pyramids of **Tlatelolco**, the 17th-century Spanish **Templo de Santiago** and the modern tower that now houses the **Centro Cultural Universitario**. A calm oasis north of the city center, the plaza is nonetheless haunted by echoes of its turbulent history.

Recent archaeological finds have altered long-held views about Tlatelolco's history. According to the conventional version, Tlatelolco was founded by an Aztec faction in the 14th century on a separate island in Lago de Texcoco and later conquered by the Aztecs of Tenochtitlán. But a pyramid excavated on the site in late 2007 actually predates the establishment of Tenochtitlán by as much as 200 years. All agree, however, that Tlatelolco was the scene of the largest public market in the Valle de México, connected by causeway to Tenochtitlán's ceremonial center.

During the siege of the Aztec capital, Cortés defeated Tlatelolco's defenders, led by Cuauhtémoc. An inscription about that battle in the plaza translates: 'This was neither victory nor defeat. It was the sad birth of the mestizo people that is Mexico today.'

Tlatelolco is also a symbol of modern troubles. On October 2, 1968, hundreds of student protesters were massacred by government troops on the eve of the Mexico City Olympic Games (see boxed text, p123). The area subsequently suffered some of the worst damage of the 1985 earthquake when apartment blocks collapsed, killing hundreds.

You can view the remains of Tlatelolco's main pyramid-temple and other Aztec buildings from a walkway around them. Like the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlán, Tlatelolco's main temple was constructed in stages, with each of seven temples superimposed atop its predecessors. The double pyramid on view, one of the earliest stages, has twin staircases which supposedly ascended to temples dedicated to Tláloc and Huitzilopochtli. Numerous calendar glyphs are carved into the outer walls.

Recognizing the significance of the site, the Spanish erected the **Templo de Santiago** here in

1609, using stones from the Aztec structures as building materials. Just inside the main (west) doors of this church is the **baptismal font of Juan Diego** (see below).

Inaugurated in 2007, the **Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco** (☎ 5597-4061; www.tlatelolco.unam.mx; Flores Magón 1; admission M\$20; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) occupies the former Foreign Relations Secretariat building. A component of the UNAM, it contains two interesting permanent exhibits. The **Colección Andrés Blaisten**, on the 1st floor, comprises the largest privately owned collection of Mexican 20th-century art, with paintings, prints and sculptures by both obscure and famed artists such as María Izquierdo and Juan Soriano. Downstairs, the **Memorial del 68** both chronicles and memorializes the 1968 student massacre at Tlatelolco (see boxed text, p123). Through film clips, newspaper articles, photos, posters and numerous taped interviews with leading intellectuals (in Spanish), the exhibit evokes the mood of the times and follows the sequence of events leading up to the government-sponsored slaughter of student protesters on October 2.

Along Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas, northbound 'Central Autobuses del Norte' trolleybuses pass right by the Plaza de las Tres Culturas.

BASÍLICA DE GUADALUPE

In December 1531, the story goes, an indigenous Christian convert named Juan Diego stood on Cerro del Tepeyac (Tepeyac Hill), site of an old Aztec shrine, and beheld a beautiful lady dressed in a blue mantle trimmed with gold. She sent him to tell the bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, that he had seen the Virgin Mary, and that she wanted a shrine built in her honor. But the bishop didn't believe him. Returning to the hill, Juan Diego had the vision several more times. After her fourth appearance, the lady's image was miraculously emblazoned on his cloak, causing the church to finally accept his story, and a cult developed around the site.

Over the centuries Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe came to receive credit for all manner of miracles, hugely aiding the acceptance of Catholicism by Mexicans. Despite the protests of some clergy, who saw the cult as a form of idolatry with the Virgin as a Christianized version of the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, in 1737 the Virgin was officially declared the

patron of Mexico. Two centuries later she was named celestial patron of Latin America and empress of the Americas, and in 2002 Juan Diego was canonized by Pope John Paul II. Today the Virgin's image is seen throughout the country, and her shrines around the Cerro del Tepeyac are the most revered in Mexico, attracting thousands of pilgrims daily and hundreds of thousands on the days leading up to her feast day, December 12 (see Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, p166). Some pilgrims travel the last meters to the shrine on their knees.

Around 1700, the four-towered Basílica de Guadalupe was erected at the site of an earlier shrine to accommodate the faithful flock. But by the 1970s, the old yellow-domed building proved inadequate to the task, so the new **Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe** (Map pp126-7; 📍 La Villa-Basílica) was built next door. Designed by Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, it's a vast, round, open-plan structure with a capacity for over 40,000 people. The image of the Virgin hangs above and behind the main altar, with moving walkways to bring visitors as close as possible.

The rear of the Antigua Basílica is now the **Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe** (☎ 5577-6022; admission M\$5; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), with a fine collection of colonial art interpreting the miraculous vision.

Stairs behind the Antigua Basílica climb about 100m to the hilltop **Capilla del Cerrito** (Hill Chapel), where Juan Diego had his vision, then lead down the east side of the hill to the Parque de la Ofrenda with gardens and waterfalls around a sculpted scene of the apparition. Continue on down to the baroque **Templo del Pocito**, a circular structure with a trio of tiled cupolas, built in 1787 to commemorate the miraculous appearance of a spring where the Virgen de Guadalupe had stood. From there the route leads back to the main plaza, re-entering it beside the 17th-century **Capilla de Indios** (Chapel of Indians).

An easy way to reach the Basílica de Guadalupe is to take the metro to La Villa-Basílica station, then walk two blocks north along Calz de Guadalupe. You can reach the same point on any 'Metro Hidalgo-La Villa' bus heading northeast on Paseo de la Reforma. To return downtown, walk to Calz de los Misterios, a block west of Calz de Guadalupe, and catch a southbound 'Metro Hidalgo' or 'Metro Chapultepec' pesero.

ACTIVITIES

Bicycling

Sunday mornings Paseo de la Reforma is closed to auto traffic from Bosque de Chapultepec down to the Alameda Central, and you can join the legions of Chilangos who happily skate or cycle down the avenue each week.

For a more ambitious trek, the urban cycling group **Bicitekas** (www.bicitekas.org) organizes rides starting from the Monumento a la Independencia at 9pm every Wednesday. Groups of up to 100 cyclists ride to destinations like Coyoacán and Ciudad Satélite. Participants must be sufficiently robust to handle treks of up to 40km. Helmets and rear lights are required.

For information on renting bicycles and around-town routes, see p197.

Gyms

Some top-end hotels, especially those with spas, have day rates available for nonguests. Otherwise there are several city gyms where you can use the equipment and take classes inexpensively.

Centro Caba (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5574-1976; Álvaro Obregón 160, Roma; per day M\$45; 🕒 7am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun; 📍 Álvaro Obregón)

Centro Qi (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5584-4880; www.qi.com.mx; Amsterdam 317, Condesa; per day M\$185; 🕒 6am-11pm Mon-Thu, 8am-6pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun; 📍 Sonora) Stylish Condesa gym with climbing wall, tanning beds and yoga classes.

Ice Skating

As part of Mayor Marcelo Ebrard's campaign to bring fun recreational activities to the city's poorer inhabitants, a huge ice-skating rink is installed in the Zócalo during the Christmas holiday season. Loans of ice skates are provided free of charge, if you don't mind waiting as much as two hours to get them.

Jogging

One popular place for a morning run is the path that skirts the oval Parque México (p151). Runners also use the broad and narrow paths that crisscross Viveros de Coyoacán (p158), the city's botanical gardens. Bosque de Chapultepec (see p152), of course, offers many kilometers of tree-shaded trails; those on the south (Condesa) side tend to be less crowded.

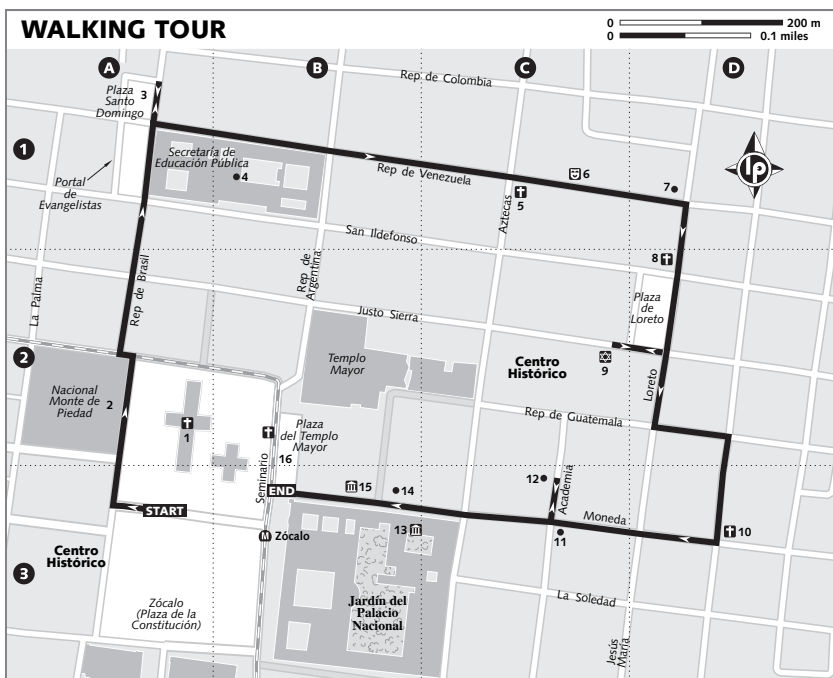
WALKING TOUR

The historical hub of all Mexico, the Centro Histórico is best explored on foot. After getting a bell-tower overview from the **Catedral Metropolitana** (1; p142), pop into the **Nacional Monte de Piedad** (2; p144), the national pawn shop, across the way – you might find a bargain. Take República de Brasil north two blocks to the **Plaza Santo Domingo** (3; p144). On your left, printers ply their trade beneath the Portal de Evangelistas. On the right, the **Secretaría de Educación Pública** (4; p145) houses Diego Rivera's dramatic murals on Mexican life and culture. Exiting on the far side of the building, go left, then right at the corner into República de Venezuela. A block east, the building on your right is the ancient **Templo de San Pedro y San Pablo** (5), which today houses the interactive Museo de Luz (Museum of Light; entrance one block south). Just beyond, the tall arcade on the left fronts the **Teatro del Pueblo** (6) – inside, the theater is decorated with art deco and indigenous motifs. Enter the adjacent **Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez** (7; p146) to admire numerous murals painted by Rivera's students in the 1920s. Turn right at the corner (Rodríguez Puebla). A block south, the **Templo de Nuestra Señora de Loreto** (8; p146) has a magnificent cupola, best viewed from inside. Across the eponymous plaza on Justo Sierra stands Mexico City's first **synagogue** (9), built by the Syrian Jews who formerly populated this zone. Follow Calle Loreto one block south, turn left, then go right on Santísima. The below-street-level walkway follows the course of an earlier waterway for produce from the southern community of Xochimilco. On the next corner is the hyper-baroque **Templo de la Santísima Trinidad** (10; p144).

Now head west on Calle Zapata, which becomes Moneda. Two blocks along, on your left, stands the **Academia de San Carlos** (11), where Mexico's 19th-century painters learned their skills. Strike half a block north on Academia to stand face-to-ankle with José Luis Cuevas' **La Giganta** (12; p144), an 8m-tall figure.

WALK FACTS

Start Catedral Metropolitana
Finish Plaza del Templo Mayor
Distance 2.2km
Duration 2½ hours



Return to Moneda and continue west. Just past Correo Mayor on your left is the building that Calle Moneda was named for, the old colonial mint, now the **Museo Nacional de las Culturas** (13; p144). A bit further west, the building at the corner of Licenciado Primo Verdad housed the Americas' **first printing press** (14). Across the way is the former archbishop's palace, now the **Museo de la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público** (15; p144), now the Museo de la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, a showcase for the tax bureau's vast art collection. Celebrate the conclusion of the tour by joining the Aztec dancers at the **Plaza del Templo Mayor** (16; p143).

COURSES

Centro Cultural Tepeticpac Tlahtolcalli (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-2020; www.tepeticpac.com; Dr Mora 5; 📍 Hidalgo) If you'd like to brush up on your Nāhuatl – or Mixtec or Otomí – this cultural center offers courses in indigenous languages. On Saturdays you can join workshops on Aztec dance, codex reading or *huehuetl* (indigenous drum) playing.

Centro de Enseñanza Para Extranjeros (Foreigners Teaching Center; ☎ 5622-2467; www.cepe.unam.mx; Uni-

versidad 3002, Ciudad Universitaria) The national university (p157) 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.

MEXICO CITY FOR CHILDREN

As elsewhere in Mexico, kids take center stage in the capital. Many theaters stage children's plays and puppet shows on weekends and during school holidays, including the **Centro Cultural del Bosque** (p184). Cartoons are a staple at cinemas around town, with weekend matinees at the **Cineteca Nacional** (p183) and the hotel **Condesa df** (p171), though keep in mind that children's films are often dubbed in Spanish. Consult the Niños sections of *Tiempo Libre* and *Donde Ir* magazines for current programs.

Museums often organize hands-on activities for kids. Both the **Museo Nacional de Arte** (p146) and **Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares** (p158) offer children's art workshops Saturday and Sunday.

Mexico City's numerous parks and plazas are usually buzzing with kids' voices. Bosque

de Chapultepec is the obvious destination, with the **Papalote Museo del Niño** (p154), **La Feria** (p154) and the **Chapultepec zoo** (p153), not to mention several lakes with rowboat rentals. But also consider Condesa's **Parque México** (p151), where Sunday is family activities day. **Plaza Hidalgo** (p158) in Coyoacán is another fun-filled spot with balloons, street mimes and cotton candy.

In **Xochimilco** (p155), kids find the sensation of riding the gondolas through the canals as magical as any theme park. Also in this part of town is the **Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiño** (p155), where a pack of pre-Hispanic dogs roam the gardens, and children's shows are performed in the patio on Saturday and Sunday at 1pm.

QUIRKY MEXICO CITY

Anyone who's spent time in Mexico will understand why French poet André Breton called it 'the surrealist country par excellence.' Something strange lurks beneath the surface of everyday life.

Isla de las Muñecas (Map pp126-7) For a truly surreal experience, head for Xochimilco (p155) and hire a *trajinera* to the Island of the Dolls, where thousands of dolls, many partially decomposed or missing limbs, hang from trees and rafts. The installation was created by an island resident who fished the playthings from the canals to mollify the spirit of a girl who had drowned nearby. The best departure point for the four-hour round trip is the Cuemanco landing, near the Parque Ecológico de Xochimilco (pp126-7).

La Faena (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5520-4427; Venustiano Carranza Tacuba 49B; ☎ 11am-midnight; 📍 San Juan de Letrán) This forgotten relic of a bar doubles as a bullfighting museum, with matadors in sequined outfits glaring intently from dusty cases and bucolic canvases of grazing bulls.

Mercado de Sonora (Map pp126-7; cnr Fray Servando & Rosales; 📍 Merced) Has all the ingredients for Mexican witchcraft. Aisles are crammed with stalls hawking potions, amulets, voodoo dolls and other esoterica. Located south of Mercado de la Merced, this is also the place for a *limpia* (spiritual cleansing), a ritual that involves clouds of incense and a herbal brushing.

Pemex Kid (Map pp128-9; González Martínez, cnr Orozco y Berra; 📍 San Cosme) Opposite the Museo Universitario del Chopo (closed for renovations at time of research), a sneaker-wearing youth sits upon the roof staring dejectedly down at the adjacent Pemex station. Even after you realize it's just a dummy, perhaps placed there as an artistic statement, his brooding presence makes an eerie and unforgettable impression.

Virgen del Metro (Map pp128-9; cnr Paseo de la Reforma & Zarco; 📍 Hidalgo) Housed in a tiled shrine is

this evidence of a recent miracle. Metro riders in June 1997 noticed that a water leak in Hidalgo station had formed a stain in the likeness of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Following the discovery, thousands flocked to witness the miraculous image. The stone section was removed and encased in glass at the Zarco entrance to metro Hidalgo.

TOURS

Journeys Beyond the Surface (☎ 5922-0123; www.travelmexicocity.com.mx) Offers personalized walking tours on aspects of the DF experience, with an off-the-beaten-track attitude.

Mexico Soul and 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.

Tranvía (Map pp128-9; ☎ 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 (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5133-2488; www.turibus.com.mx; adult/4-12yr 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. Buses pass every 30 minutes or so, stopping at the west side of the cathedral among other places. The fare includes headphones for recorded explanations in six languages.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Mexico City celebrates some unique local events in addition to all the major nationwide festivals (see p970), which often take on a special flavor in the capital.

Festival de México en el Centro Histórico (www.fchmexico.com) In late March the Centro Histórico's plazas, temples and theaters become venues for a slew of international artists and performers.

Semana Santa The most evocative events of Holy Week (late March or early April) are in the Iztapalapa district, 9km southeast of the Zócalo, where a gruesomely realistic Passion Play is enacted. The most evocative scenes are performed on Good Friday.

Foundation of Tenochtitlán Held on August 13, this is a major summit for *conchero* dancers on Plaza de las Tres Culturas (p161) in Tlatelolco to celebrate the foundation of the Mexico capital.

Grito de la Independencia Thousands gather in the Zócalo for this September 15 (the eve of Independence Day) celebration to hear the Mexican president's version of the Grito de Dolores (Cry of Dolores), Hidalgo's famous call to rebellion against the Spanish in 1810, from the central balcony of the Palacio Nacional at 11pm. Afterwards, there's a spectacular fireworks display over the cathedral.

Día de Muertos In the lead-up to the Day of the Dead (November 2), elaborate *ofrendas* (altars) show up everywhere from public markets to metro stations. Some of the best are at the Anahuacalli (p159) and the Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiño (p155), while a contest for the most creative *ofrenda* is held at the Zócalo. Major vigils take place in the Panteón Civil de Dolores cemetery, in the Bosque de Chapultepec's 2a Sección, and at San Andrés Mixquic, in the extreme southeast of the Distrito Federal.

Fiesta de Santa Cecilia The patron saint of musicians is honored with special fervor at Plaza Garibaldi (Map pp128-9) on November 22.

Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe At the Basílica de Guadalupe (p162), the Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe caps 10 days of festivities honoring Mexico's religious patron. The numbers of pilgrims reach the millions by December 12, when groups of indigenous dancers perform nonstop on the basilica's broad plaza and religious services go on almost round the clock.

SLEEPING

As a frequent destination for both Mexican and foreign visitors, the DF overflows with lodging options – everything from no-frills guesthouses to top-flight hotels. Some of the most reasonable places are in the Centro Histórico, while more luxurious accommodations, including branches of some major international chains, are concentrated in Polanco and the Zona Rosa. Midrange lodgings, most featuring restaurants and bars, abound in the Alameda and Plaza de la República areas; they tend to trade character for neutral modern comfort. (Note that places with the word *garage* on the sign generally cater to short-term trysting guests.) Those on a tight budget will find an increasing number of low-cost hostels, particularly in the center of town.

Centro Histórico

For non-business travelers, the historic center is the obvious place to stay. Ongoing renovations of its infrastructure and preservation of its numerous historic edifices have boosted the zone's appeal, but it remains one of the more affordable areas.

BUDGET

Our pick **Mexico City Hostel** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-3666; www.mexicocityhostel.com; República de Brasil 8; dm incl breakfast from M\$100, s/d M\$200/300; **M** Zócalo; ☑) Steps from the Zócalo, this colonial structure has been artfully restored, with original wood beams and stone walls as a backdrop for modern, energy-efficient facilities. For instance, the halls and bathrooms are equipped with movement-activated sensor lights. Spacious dorms have three or four sturdy bunk beds on terracotta floors. Immaculate bathrooms trimmed with *azulejo* tiles amply serve around 100 occupants.

Hostal Virreyes (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-4180; www.hostalvirreyes.com.mx; Izazaga 8; dm M\$120, s/d M\$320/370; **M** Salto del Agua; ☑) Once a prestigious hotel, the Virreyes has naturally morphed into a hostel-student residence. Dorms are spacious if bare bones and the retro lobby lounge hosts hip events.

Hostal Moneda (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5522-5803; www.hostalmoneda.com.mx; Moneda 8; dm incl breakfast & dinner M\$120-155, d M\$355; **M** Zócalo; ☑) An altogether more modest affair than the nearby Hostal Catedral, the Moneda remains a favored stop on the international backpackers circuit. Chief among its assets are a well-informed, bilingual staff and a terrific multipurpose rooftop.

Hostel Mundo Joven Catedral (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1726; www.hostelcatedral.com; República de Guatemala 4; dm incl breakfast M\$140, d with shared bathroom M\$380; **M** Zócalo; ☑) Backpacker central, the capital's only HI affiliate is abuzz with a global rainbow of young travelers. Every facility you might need is here, the location couldn't be more central and the place is cordially managed. Off the guest kitchen, a delightful deck overlooks the cathedral.

Hostel Isabel (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1213; www.hotel-isabel.com.mx; Isabel la Católica 63; s/d with shared bathroom M\$150/220, s/d/tr with private bathroom M\$220/320/460; **M** Isabel la Católica; ☑) Just a few blocks from the Zócalo, the Isabel is a long-time budget-traveler's favorite, offering large, well-scrubbed rooms with old but sturdy furniture, high ceilings and great balconies, plus a hostel-like social scene.

Hotel San Antonio (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1625; fax 5512-9906; 2a Callejón 5 de Mayo 29; d with shared/private bathroom M\$200/220, tr M\$320; **M** Allende) Inside an L-shaped passage linking Av 5 de Mayo to Palma, the San Antonio remains slightly aloof from the bustle. Smallish rooms face either the little-used alley or whitewashed interior court.

Hotel Principal (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-1333; www.hotelprincipal.com.mx; Bolívar 29; s/d/tr M\$225/315/410; **M** Allende) A longtime favorite with frugal travelers, the Principal boasts enormous rooms with high ceilings surrounding a plant-draped central hall. Cafés and clubs dot this revitalized section of the Centro.

Hotel Azores (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-5220; www.hotelazores.com; República de Brasil 25; s/d from M\$300/360; **M** Zócalo; **P**) Just off the fascinating Plaza Santo Domingo, the modern Azores boasts a cheerily designed and scrupulously maintained interior. Of the 65 rooms, eight overlook the street through picture windows.

The following bargains are in the thick of it all:

Hotel Rioja (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-8333; Av 5 de Mayo 45; s/d from M\$220/250; **M** Allende) Front rooms (slightly pricier) have balconies overlooking 5 de Mayo.

Hotel Washington (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-3502; Av 5 de Mayo 54; s/d/tr M\$240/300/340; **M** Allende) Try to snag a balcony room; airless interior units are best avoided.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Canadá (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-2106; www.hotelcanada.com.mx; Av 5 de Mayo 47; s/d M\$420/500; **M** Allende; **P**) This longstanding local has redone its smallish rooms, adding new carpets, peach-toned headboards and sepia photos of old Mexico. Affable staff cater to a primarily business clientele who may unwind in the TV amphitheater downstairs or quaff fresh-squeezed juices next door.

Hotel Gillow (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1440; www.hotelgillow.com; Isabel la Católica 17; s/d M\$468/600; **M** Allende; **P** **Q**) A historic building with standard midrange facilities, the Gillow boasts old-fashioned service and spacious carpeted rooms around a sunlit central courtyard. For views, request an Av 5 de Mayo or Isabel la Católica unit.

Hotel Catedral (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-5232; www.hotelcatedral.com.mx; Donceles 95; s/d M\$475/660; **M** Zócalo; **P** **Q**) Though short on colonial charm, this comfortable lodging has clearly considered its location, directly behind the cathedral. Even if you get an interior room, you can lounge on the rooftop terraces with impressive cityscape views.

TOP END

Holiday Inn Zócalo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5130-5130, 800-5521-2122; www.hotelescortes.com; Av 5 de Mayo 61; r from M\$1264; **M** Zócalo; **P** **X** **Q** **Q**) The northernmost of three upper-echelon hotels facing the

Zócalo, this seems the least pretentious, eschewing colonial trimmings for contemporary comfort. And its rooftop-terrace restaurant ranks with those of its neighbors.

NH Centro Histórico (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5130-1850; www.nh-hotels.com; Palma 42; r/ste incl breakfast M\$1551/1693; **M** Zócalo; **P** **Q** **Q**) Riding the downtown development wave, Spanish chain NH planted a branch in the center. Lounges and rooms get a Euro-minimal treatment normally associated with pricier digs. Spacious suites occupy the curved corners of the aerodynamically designed 1940s structure.

Gran Hotel Ciudad de México (Map pp128-9; ☎ 1083-7700; www.granhotelciudaddemexico.com.mx; Av 16 de Septiembre 82; r/ste M\$1636/2691; **M** Zócalo; **P** **Q** **Q**) The Gran Hotel flaunts the French art-nouveau style of the pre-revolutionary era. Crowned by a stained-glass canopy crafted by Tiffany in 1908, the atrium is a fin de siècle fantasy of curved balconies, wrought-iron elevators and chirping birds in giant cages. Rooms do not disappoint in comparison.

Hotel Majestic (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-8600; www.hotelmajestic.com.mx; Madero 73; r US\$135, ste from US\$172; **M** Zócalo; **P** **X** **Q**) This Best Western franchise has an attractive colonial interior, an unbeatable location and perhaps the most panoramic terrace restaurant on the Zócalo. Rooms, however, are less fabulous than you'd expect at these prices.

Alameda Central & Around

Like the Centro Histórico, this section is undergoing major renovations, though pockets of neglect are reminders of the 1985 earthquake that devastated the zone. Though by day the neighborhood bustles with shoppers, after dark it quiets down considerably and, apart from its small Chinatown district, offers little incentive to wander.

BUDGET

Hotel San Diego (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-3523; Luis Moya 98; s/d M\$250/400; **M** Balderas) This generic option two blocks east of La Ciudadela should appeal to peso-pinchers. Above the lobby's imitation leather sofas and plastic plants are bright, decent-sized rooms with furniture of recent vintage and newly tiled bathrooms.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Marlowe (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-9540; www.hotelmarlowe.com.mx; Independencia 17; s/d/tr M\$480/600/740; **M** San Juan de Letrán; **P** **Q** **Q**) The

peach-concrete Marlowe stands across from Chinatown's pagoda gate. Above a bright, airy lobby are spacious rooms with good carpet, colorful bedspreads, soothing art and inset lighting. Fitness freaks will appreciate the gym-with-a-view.

Hotel Mónaco (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5566-8333; www.hotel-monaco.com.mx; Guerrero 12; s/d M\$485/520; 📄 Hidalgo; 📄 📄) Steps from the metro and opposite cute Plaza de San Fernando, this refurbished older hotel is poised between run-down Colonia Guerrero and the Reforma business corridor. Bellboys in blue suits proudly escort you down marble-floored hallways with piped-in muzak to your neatly furnished, color-coordinated room.

Hotel San Francisco (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5533-1032; sanfrancisco@hotelesdelangel.com; Luis Moya 11; s/d/tr M\$700/760/818; 📄 Juárez; 📄) Popular with European groups, this 14-story stepped tower boasts big rooms with old-fashioned furniture and dated lobby decor. The best Alameda views are from the north-facing units above the 11th floor.

Similarly unremarkable but perfectly comfortable places with decent restaurants abound in this zone.

Hotel Fleming (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-4530; www.hotelfleming.com.mx; Revillagigedo 35; s/d/tr M\$360/430/490; 📄 Juárez; 📄 📄)

Hotel Monte Real (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-1150; www.hotelmontereal.com.mx; Revillagigedo 23; s/d/tr M\$650/700/800; 📄 Juárez; 📄 📄 📄) Opposite the new Museo de Artes Populares.

TOP END

Hotel Sheraton Centro Histórico (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5130-5300; www.sheraton.com.mx; Juárez 70; r from US\$220; 📄 Hidalgo; 📄 📄 📄 📄 📄) A cornerstone in the downtown redevelopment, the sleek Sheraton towers above quaint Alameda Central. Most guests are here on business, but anyone desiring a dose of comfort and sublime cityscapes should be satisfied. The 6th-floor terrace features an open-air leisure complex, with saunas, massage clinic and 'comfort food' restaurant.

Hotel de Cortés (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-2181; www.hoteldecortes.com.mx; Hidalgo 85; r M\$1385-2398, ste M\$1962-2992; 📄 Hidalgo; 📄 📄) Once a hospice for Augustinian pilgrims, this World Hotels property has a long history of sheltering travelers, with rooms encircling a lovely 18th-century patio. If you don't mind the price tag, staying here will give you a genuine taste of colonial Mexico.

Plaza de la República & Around

Further from the Zócalo, the area around the Monument to the Revolution is awash with hotels, with a number of dives interspersed amid the business-class establishments. Unaffected by the wave of development sweeping the Centro and Reforma corridor, the semi-residential zone offers glimpses of neighborhood life.

BUDGET

Casa de los Amigos (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5705-0521; www.casadelosamigos.org; Mariscal 132; dm M\$100, r with shared bathroom M\$290; 📄 Revolución; 📄 📄) The Quaker-run Casa is primarily a residence for NGOs, researchers and others seeking social change, but welcomes walk-in travelers. Meditation sessions, discussions with community members and Spanish conversation are available to guests, who may volunteer to help run the Casa for a reduced rate. A hearty breakfast (M\$15) is served Monday to Friday in the ground-floor dining room. There's a two-night minimum stay.

Hotel Édison (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5566-0933; Édison 106; s/d/tr M\$219/299/359; 📄 Revolución; 📄) Beyond the bunker-like exterior, accommodations face a rectangular garden surrounded by pre-Hispanic motifs. Despite faded wallpaper and dated fixtures, rooms are enormous with massive marble washbasins and closets. There's a bakery and laundry across the street.

MIDRANGE

All of the following places have on-site restaurants serving 'international' cuisine.






Hotel Sevilla (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5566-1866; www.sevilla.com.mx; Serapio Rendón 124; s M\$276-495, d M\$445-573; 📄 Reforma; 📄 📄 📄) Opposite the Jardín del Arte this oft-recommended business hotel is divided into 'traditional' and 'new' sections. Those in the latter are more slickly appointed with air-conditioning and hair dryers.

Hotel New York (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5566-9700; Édison 45; s/d M\$310/520; 📄 Revolución; 📄) A few blocks northeast of Plaza de la República, this is a stylish option in a zone crammed with cut-rate hotels. Rates include breakfast and wireless internet.



Palace Hotel (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5566-2400; fax 5535-7520; Ignacio Ramírez 7; s/d M\$351/409; 📄 Revolución; 📄) Run by gregarious Asturians, the Palace has large, neatly maintained rooms in an appealing range of blues. Broad balconies give terrific views down palm-lined Ramírez to the





domed monument. Cash-paying guests get substantial discounts.

Hotel Mayaland (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5566-6066; www.hotelmayaland.com.mx; Antonio Caso 23; s/d M\$430/560;  Juárez;  ) A business-oriented hotel on a sterile street, this has well-maintained facilities with a Maya motif. Typically neutral-modern rooms feature textured pink walls, flowery canvasses and inset lighting.





Hotel Jena (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5097-0277; www.hoteljena.com.mx; Jesús Terán 12; s/d/ste M\$667/761/1287;  Hidalgo;    ) Not as tall as it looks (the black tower is strictly for show), but the giant rooms are among the most luxurious in this range. Just 1½ blocks from Reforma.




The following two lodgings are just above the Jardín del Arte. What they lack in character they make up for in convenience and comfort.

Hotel Compostela (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5566-0733; Sul-livan 35; s M\$299-410, d M\$320-475;  Reforma; ) 'Modern' rooms are more luxurious.

Hotel Astor (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5148-2644; hotel.astor@mexico.com; Antonio Caso 83; s/d M\$440/580;  Reforma;   ) Sleek and sterile, with discreet reception; near classic Café Gran Premio.

TOP END

Hotel Misión Reforma (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5141-0442; www.hotelesmision.com.mx; Morelos 110; r/ste M\$1300/2303;  Reforma;   ) One of several business hotels around the Columbus circle, this terracotta monolith is a branch of a Mexican chain. Spacious rooms get liberal doses of color and comfort and afford fine views of the grand boulevard below.



Hotel Imperial (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5705-4911; www.hotelimperial.com.mx; Paseo de la Reforma 64; r/ste M\$1521/2457;  Reforma;  ) Dictator Díaz unwrapped this cake wedge of a building in 1904. Spacious suites occupy the upper levels, while 50 standard rooms line the Paseo de la Reforma and Av Morelos sides. Unfortunately, room decor fails to match the building's Porfiriato splendor.

Zona Rosa & Around





Foreign businesspeople and tourists check in at the glitzy hotels in this international commerce and nightlife area. Less expensive establishments dot the quieter streets of Colonia Cuauhtémoc, north of Reforma, and Juárez, east of Insurgentes.

MIDRANGE

 **our pick** **Casa González** (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5514-3302; casa.gonzalez@prodigy.net.mx; Río Sena 69; s/d from M\$428/588;

 Insurgentes; ) A family-run operation for nearly a century, the Casa is a perennial hit with mature travelers. Set around several flower-filled patios and semi-private terraces, it's extraordinarily *tranquilo*. Original portraits and landscapes decorate the rooms, apparently done by a guest in lieu of payment. Guests meet over breakfast, which is served on old china in the dining room.

Hotel Del Principado (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5233-2944; www.hoteldelprincipado.com.mx; Londres 42; s/d/tr incl breakfast M\$500/650/750;  Insurgentes;   ) Conveniently poised between the Zona Rosa and Colonia Roma, this friendly little place makes a nice cocoon. Its carpet was recently replaced with faux wood floors, installed light stained furniture and they keys have been updated to cards. A breakfast buffet includes fruit, *chilaquiles* and much more. Look for weekend discounts.

Hotel Bristol (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5533-6060; www.hotelbristol.com.mx; Plaza Necaxa 17; s/d M\$563/656;    ) A good-value option in the pleasant but central Cuauhtémoc neighborhood, the Bristol caters primarily to business travelers, offering quality carpet, soothing colors and an above-average restaurant. Take a 'La Villa' or 'Metro Chapultepec' pesero.

6M9 Guest House (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-8347; www.purple.roofs.com/6m9-mx.html; Marsella 69; s/d M\$640/950;  Insurgentes; ) Oriented toward a gay male clientele, the 6M9 occupies a Porfiriato-era building within walking distance of Pink Zone bars. The fun-filled facilities include a small pool, sun deck, tiled steam room and complimentary bar. There are nine spacious, well-maintained rooms (reservations online only).

Hotel María Cristina (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5703-1212; www.hotelmariacristina.com.mx; Río Lerma 31; s/d from M\$695/775;  Insurgentes;   ) Dating from the 1930s, this facsimile of an Andalusian estate makes an appealing retreat, particularly the adjacent bar with patio seating. Though lacking the lobby's colonial splendor, rooms are generally bright and comfortable.

Hotel Del Ángel (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5533-1032; www.hotelesdelangel.mexico-hoteles.com; Río Lerma 154; s/d/tr M\$761/878/995;   ) Nearby construction has blocked views of the iconic monument it's named after, but rather than brood, the hotel is jazzing up its facilities from the top down, adding postmodern furniture and fixtures to the uppermost units. Take a 'La Villa' or 'Metro Chapultepec' pesero.

Hotel Cityexpress (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-1717; www.cityexpress.com.mx; Havre 21; r incl breakfast M\$807; 🚗 🚗 🚗 🚗 🚗) The new Cityexpress emphasizes comfort and functionality – a place to crash between deals. But decor outshines the neutral-modern favored by most hotels in this price category, with captivating views of the nearby towers springing up in this transitional zone.

TOP END

Hotel Geneve (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5080-0800; www.hotelgeneve.com.mx; Londres 130; r from M\$1355; 🇲🇵 Insurgentes; 🚗 🚗 🚗 🚗 🚗) Celebrating its centennial, this Zona Rosa institution strives to maintain a belle époque ambience despite the globalized mishmash around it. Rooms get the colonial treatment, with handsome carved wood headboards and colonial dressers and nightstands. The classy lobby connects to a skylit Sanborns café.

Four Seasons Hotel (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5230-1818; www.fourseasons.com/mexico; Paseo de la Reforma 500; r US\$370; 🇲🇵 Sevilla; 🚗 🚗 🚗 🚗 🚗) One of the city's most elegant lodgings, the Four Seasons was designed to resemble a French-Mexican late-19th-century structure, with aristocratically furnished rooms facing a beautifully landscaped central courtyard.

Roma

BUDGET

Versalles 104 (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5705-3247; www.versalles104.com; Versalles 104; dm/d from M\$115/240; 🇲🇵 Cuauhtémoc; 🚗) Managed by a friendly binational couple, this 'boutique hostel' is a hit with young, mostly European travelers. Two rooms facing a small patio are outfitted as mixed-gender dorms sharing a tiny bathroom. Much of the interaction takes place in the front-end café/theater.

Hostel Home (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-1683; www.hostelhome.com.mx; Tabasco 303; dm M\$120; 🚗 Álvaro Obregón; 🚗) Housed in a fine Porfirato-era building, this 20-bed hostel is on narrow tree-lined Calle Tabasco, a gateway to the Roma neighborhood. Managed by easygoing staff, the Home is a good place to meet other travelers and find out what's happening.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Milán (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5584-0222; www.hotelmilan.com.mx; Álvaro Obregón 94; s/d M\$390/500; 🇲🇵 Insurgentes; 🚗 🚗) The Milán makes a good place to land in Mexico City. Though lacking in character,

it's comfortable and well maintained and sits on the main corridor of bohemian Roma.

Hotel Stanza (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-0052; www.stanza.com; Álvaro Obregón 13; r M\$564-702; 🇲🇵 Cuauhtémoc; 🚗 🚗 🚗) A business travelers' block on the east end of Álvaro Obregón, the Stanza makes a cushy, relatively inexpensive landing pad or reentry chamber. The recently renovated hotel offers two categories of accommodations: 'executive' (with air-con) and 'standard' (cheaper furniture and smaller bathrooms).

Casa de la Condesa (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5574-3186; www.extendedstaymexico.com; Plaza Luis Cabrera 16; ste from M\$643; 🇲🇵 Insurgentes) Right on the delightful Plaza Luis Cabrera, the Casa makes a tranquil base for visitors on an extended stay, offering 'suites' that are essentially studio apartments with kitchens.

TOP END

Quality Inn (Map pp132-3; ☎ 1085-9500; www.choicehotelsmexico.com; Álvaro Obregón 38; r M\$1222; 🇲🇵 Cuauhtémoc; 🚗 🚗 🚗) Facing Álvaro Obregón's leafy median, Roma's newest hotel resembles its pricier downtown counterparts. Equipped with iPod hookups and softly illuminated desk nooks, its 91 ultra-comfortable units surround a skylight-capped central atrium.

La Casona (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-3001; www.lacasona.com.mx; Durango 280; r incl breakfast US\$217; 🇲🇵 Sevilla; 🚗) This stately mansion was restored to its early-20th-century splendor to become one of the capital's most distinctive boutique hotels. Each of the 29 rooms is uniquely appointed to bring out its original charm.

Condesa

Thanks to the recent appearance of several attractive lodgings, this neighborhood south of Bosque de Chapultepec can make an excellent base, with plenty of after-hours restaurants and cafés.

Hotel Roosevelt (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-6813; www.hotelroosevelt.com.mx; Insurgentes Sur 287, cnr Yucatán; s/d M\$450/630; 🚗 Álvaro Obregón; 🚗) On the eastern edge of Condesa and within easy reach of the Cuban club district, this friendly if functional hotel should appeal to nocturnally inclined travelers.

Our pick Red Tree House (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5584-3829; www.theredtreehouse.com; Culiacán 6, cnr Amsterdam; s with shared/private bathroom US\$50/70, plus per additional person US\$15, penthouse US\$150; 🇲🇵 Chilpancingo; 🚗) Just off the delightful Plaza Citaltépétl, the

area's first B&B has all the comforts of home, if your home happens to be decorated with exquisite taste. Each of the three bedrooms on the middle level is uniquely furnished, and the top-floor apartment has its own terrace. Downstairs, guests have the run of a cozy living room with fireplace and lovely rear garden, the domain of friendly pooch Abril.

Condesa df (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5241-2600; www.condesadf.com; Veracruz 102; r from US\$182; **M** Chapultepec; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔) Setting Condesa hipness standards since its 2005 opening, this is where Paris Hilton and U2 stayed during recent visits. The 1920s structure opposite Parque España has been quirkily made over and furnished with an array of specially designed objects. Rooms encircle an atrium/bar that draws scenemakers nightly.

Hippodrome Hotel (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5512-2110; www.thehippodromehotel.com; Av Mexico 188; r from US\$230; **M** Chilpancingo; **P** ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔) North of Parque México, this new boutique hotel occupies one of the neighborhood's art deco gems, with the interior restored to a contemporary Mexican aesthetic. Original modern art complements stylish furniture, all designed in-house. With just 16 rooms, it's a smaller, more businesslike affair than Condesa df and features a similarly subdued restaurant, Hip Kitchen (see p175).

Polanco

North of Bosque de Chapultepec, Polanco has some of the best business accommodations and one excellent boutique hotel.

Hotel Polanco (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5280-8082; www.hotelpolanco.com; Edgar Allan Poe 8; s/d M\$1395/1455; **M** Auditorio; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔) This resembles a European guesthouse of the sort Basil Fawlty runs, complete with Italian bistro and snippy desk manager. The 71 rooms eschew hipness for a sober ambience. It's in a quiet, leafy quarter with easy access to the National Auditorium.

Camino Real México (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5263-8888; www.caminoreal.com; Calz Mariano Escobedo 700; r/ste US\$135/340; **M** Chapultepec; **P** ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔) With over 700 rooms and covering 33,000 sq meters, the Camino Real is a monumental endeavor. It's also a national architectural landmark, boldly designed by Mexican Ricardo Legorreta, whose trademark geometric solids and great swathes of color lend it a refreshing simplicity. Off the broad arc of the reception desk lie the main garden and pool, surrounded by honeycombed structures that house the guest rooms. Accommodations are

certainly luxurious, though other than a bold color scheme the Camino has fairly standard business-class design and amenities.

Hábita Hotel (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5282-3100; www.hotelhabita.com; Av Presidente Masaryk 201; s/d US\$228/310; **M** Polanco; **P** ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔) Architect Enrique Norton turned a functional apartment building into a smart boutique hotel. Decor in the 36 rooms is boldly minimal, and the rooftop bar, Área (p182), is a hot nightspot.

W Mexico City Hotel (Map pp136-7; ☎ 9138-1800; www.whotels.com; Campos Elíseos 252; r US\$445; **M** Auditorio; **P** ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔) One of the four sentinels opposite the Auditorio Nacional, Latin America's first W is a 25-floor business hotel that's determined to break away from the stodginess of its neighbors.

Coyoacán & Ciudad Universitaria

Despite Coyoacán's appeal, the southern community has only one central place to stay. Check with the Coyoacán tourist office (p135) about short-term home stays.

El Cenote Azul (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5554-8730; www.elcenoteazul.com; Alfonso Prunedá 24; dm M\$100; **M** Copilco) This laid-back hostel near the UNAM campus has just four neatly kept four- or two-bed rooms sharing two Talavera-tiled bathrooms. The downstairs café is a hangout for university students.

Hostal Frida (Map p140; ☎ 6569-7005; www.hostalfridayb.com.mx; Mina 54; d M\$500; **M** Viveros) Run by an English-speaking couple whose kids have moved on, this 'empty nest' is being refilled with international travelers. Each of the five wood-floored doubles occupies its own level in adjacent towers, and most include kitchens. It's four blocks west of Frida's place and around the corner from a branch of Café El Jarocho.

Airport

Besides the two upscale hotels linked to the terminal, these more economical lodgings are across the street. Turn left outside the domestic terminal; beyond the metro, take a left onto Blvd Puerto Aéreo and cross via the pedestrian bridge.

Hotel Aeropuerto (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5785-5851; fax 5784-1329; Blvd Puerto Aéreo 380; s/d M\$500/600; **M** Terminal Aérea; **P**) Not as bleakly functional as the aluminum facade portends, the only non-chain in the zone has helpful reception staff and neutral modern rooms, some overlooking the airport runway through soundproof windows.

Fiesta Inn (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5133-6600; www.fiestainn.com; Blvd Puerto Aéreo 502; r M\$1538; **M** Terminal Aérea; **P** ☒ ☑ ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) This securely enclosed branch of the business chain offers rooms with balconies around a pool. Transportation to or from your flight is included, and rates are about 20% cheaper on weekends.

EATING

The capital offers eateries for all tastes and budgets, from taco stalls to exclusive restaurants. In recent years, the city has emerged as a major destination for culinary travelers, as Mexican chefs win the sort of praise formerly reserved for their counterparts in New York and Paris. Most of the hottest venues for contemporary cuisine show up in Polanco and Condesa.

Budget eaters will find literally thousands of restaurants and holes in the wall serving *comida corrida* (set lunch) for as little as M\$25. Market buildings are good places to look for these while *tianguis* (weekly street markets) customarily have an eating section offering tacos, *barbacoa* (roasted mutton) and quesadillas (cheese folded between tortillas and fried or grilled). See also the boxed text on p176.

Certain items can be found all over town. In the evening *tamales* are delivered by bicycle, their arrival heralded by an eerie moan through a cheap speaker. You'll know the *camote* (sweet potato) man is coming by the shrill steam whistle emitting from his cart, heard for blocks around.

The city is also peppered with modern chain restaurants, the predictable menus of which make a sound, if unexciting, fallback. Branches of VIPS, Sanborns, Wings and California restaurants serve US-style coffeeshop fare and Mexican standards. International chains, from KFC to Starbucks, are well represented, too.

Centro Histórico

The historic center is a great place to enjoy traditional Mexican dishes in elegant surroundings at places like El Cardenal and Café de Tacuba. In general, though, it's more of a daytime place than an evening destination, with many places only open for breakfast and lunch. Restaurant options tend to be sparse after dark.

QUICK EATS

Tacos de Canasta Chucho (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-0280; Av 5 de Mayo 17A; tacos M\$5; ☒ ☑ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm

Sat; **M** Allende) These bite-sized tacos are filled with things like refried beans, *chicharrón* and *mole* (just the sauce), and arranged in a big basket. A couple of pails contain the garnishes: spicy guacamole and marinated carrot chunks and chilies.

Taquería Los Paisás (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5542-8139; Jesús María 131; tacos M\$10; ☒ ☑ 8am-midnight; **M** Pino Suárez) Run by three goateed brothers, this corner taco stand east of the Zócalo offers overstuffed steak, sausage and *pastor* tacos – or *campechano*, all mixed up. Help yourself from the heaping trays of garnishes: mashed potatoes, *pico de gallo*, cactus paddles and *habanero*-spiked onions, among others.

BUDGET

Café El Popular (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-6081; Av 5 de Mayo 52; dishes M\$40-60; ☒ ☑ 24hr; **M** Allende) So popular was this tiny round-the-clock café that they opened another more amply proportioned branch next door to catch the considerable overflow. Fresh pastries and good combination breakfasts (fruit, eggs, frijoles – beans – and coffee) are the main attractions. *Café con leche* (coffee with milk) is served *chino* style (ie you specify the strength).

Costillas El Sitio (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-1545; República de Uruguay 82D; ribs M\$55; ☒ ☑ 9am-7:30pm; **M** Zócalo) Lunchtime crowds squeeze into booths or share tiny red tables at this volume-oriented steak place. Grilled and brushed with salsa verde, the cuts are tasty if not the most tender in town. Add black beans, grilled green onions and sopes, and you've got a gut-stuffing meal. For dessert there's homemade flan.

Vegetariano Madero (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-6880; Madero 56; set lunch from M\$63; ☒ ☑ 8am-7pm; **M** Allende; **V**) Despite the austere entrance, there's a lively restaurant upstairs where a pianist plinks out old favorites. The meatless menu includes a range of tasty variations on Mexican standards. Balcony seating lets you observe the street activity. A nearby street-level branch, the Restaurante Vegetariano (Filomena Mata 13), displays the day's offerings out front.

MIDRANGE

Hostería de Santo Domingo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5526-5276; Domínguez 72; dishes M\$70-180; ☒ ☑ 9am-10pm; **M** Allende; **P**) Whipping up classic Mexican fare since 1860, this hugely popular (though not touristy) restaurant has a festive atmosphere, enhanced by chamber music. It's

famous for its enormous *chiles en nogada* (M\$180), an Independence Day favorite, served here year-round.

Café de Tacuba (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-4950; Tacuba 28; mains M\$70-150, 5-course lunch M\$180; **M** Allende) Before the band there was the restaurant. Way before. A fantasy of colored tiles, brass lamps and oil paintings, this mainstay has served *antojitos* (tortilla-based snacks like tacos and gorditas) since 1912. Never mind the tourists, the atmosphere is just right for a plate of *pambazos* (filled rolls fried in chili sauce) or *tamales* with hot chocolate.

Al Andalus (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5522-2528; Mesones 171; dishes M\$90-125; ☎ 8am-6pm; **M** Pino Suárez) Al Andalus caters to the capital's substantial Lebanese community, serving shawarma, kebabs, kibbe (spiced lamb fritters), felafel and so on in a superb colonial mansion in the Merced market district.

Casino Español (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-2967; Isabel la Católica 29; 4-course lunch M\$93; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri; **M** Allende) The old Spanish social center, housed in a fabulous Porfiriato-era building, has a popular cantina-style eatery downstairs and an elegant restaurant upstairs. Stolid execs loosen their ties here for a long leisurely lunch, and the courses keep coming. Spanish fare, naturally, highlights the menu though *tacos dorados* (chicken tacos, rolled and deep fried) and *chiles en nogada* are equally well prepared.

TOP END

our pick **El Cardenal** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-8815; La Palma 23; dishes M\$90-280; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun; **M** Zócalo; **P**) Possibly the finest place in town for a traditional meal, El Cardenal occupies three floors of a Parisian-style mansion with a pianist sweetly playing in the background. Breakfast is a must, served with a tray of just-baked sweet rolls and a pitcher of frothy, semi-sweet chocolate. For lunch, go for the oven-roasted veal breast, Oaxaca-style *chiles rellenos*, or in summer, *escamoles* (ant larvae, a much coveted specialty).

Los Girasoles (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-0630; Plaza Manuel Tolsá; mains M\$120-150; ☎ 1pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 1-9pm Sun & Mon; **M** Allende; **P**) This fine restaurant boasts an encyclopedic range of Mexican fare, from pre-Hispanic (ant larvae), to colonial (turkey in tamarind *mole*), to innovative (snapper fillet in rosehip salsa). Try to get a table overlooking the grand Plaza Tolsá, or on the terrace adjacent to it.

Restaurante Chon (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5542-0873; Regina 160; mains M\$180; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat; **M** Pino Suárez) Pre-Hispanic fare is the specialty of this cantina-style restaurant. Sample maguey worms (in season), grasshoppers, wild boar and other delicacies.

Alameda Central & Around

Though places on the immediate perimeter of the Alameda cater to an upscale clientele, head down Luis Moya or along Ayuntamiento, south of the Alameda, for pockets of the neighborhood's rustic heritage in the form of *torta* stands and chicken-soup vendors. Mexico City's modest Chinatown covers a single paper-lantern-strung block of Calle Dolores, a couple of blocks south of the park.

Both the Cloister Café at the Museo Franz Mayer (p148) and the more upscale Café del Palacio at Bellas Artes (p147) offer sandwiches, salads and pastries between exhibits.

Churrería El Moro (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-0896; Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas 42; hot chocolate with 4 *churros* M\$25; ☎ 24hr; **M** San Juan de Letrán) A fine respite from the Eje Central crowds, El Moro manufactures long, slender deep-fried *churros* (doughnut-like fritters), just made to be dipped in thick hot chocolate. It's a popular late-night spot, perfect for winding down after hours.

Café Colón (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-6343; Colón 1; breakfast combos M\$30-49, 4-course lunch M\$40; **M** Hidalgo) Dishing out traditional fare from this location for almost half a century, Café Colón remains popular with local office workers who pour in mid-morning for coffee or mid-afternoon for the filling *comida*.

Mi Fonda (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-0002; López 101; paella M\$35; ☎ lunch; **M** San Juan de Letrán) Working-class Chilangos line up for their share of *paella valenciana*, made fresh daily and patiently ladled out by women in white bonnets. Jesús from Cantabria oversees the proceedings. Space is limited but you can share a table.

El Cuadrilátero (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-3060; Luis Moya 73; tortas M\$35-70; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat; **M** Juárez) Owned by *luchador* (wrestler) Super Astro, this shrine to *lucha libre* features a wall of wrestlers' masks. Not just wrestlers, but also ordinary denizens of the Centro frequent the joint for its gigantic tortas, versions of which are displayed at the entrance. If you manage to consume a 1.3kg cholesterol-packed *Torta Gladiador* in 15 minutes, it's free.

SQUARE MEALS

Perhaps the quintessential Mexico City experience is dining or sipping cocktails overlooking the vast Zócalo with the Mexican *tricolor* waving proudly over the scene. The three upscale hotels on the plaza's west side offer abundant buffet breakfasts, although the food isn't as spectacular as the vista. (If it's not too busy you can enjoy the view for the price of a drink.) Two recently inaugurated restaurants on the same side and one longtime establishment north of the cathedral promise more enticing culinary experiences.

Puro Corazón (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-0300; Monte de Piedad 11; breakfast combos M\$65-95; ☎ 8am-9pm)

On the plaza's northwest corner, offering heart-thumping views of the cathedral from its 6th-floor perch, along with exciting contemporary Mexican dishes that incorporate native ingredients like pulque (a fermented maguey beverage) and *flor de calabaza* (squash blossoms).

La Terraza del Zócalo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-7934; Plaza de la Constitución 13, 6th fl; dishes M\$110-150; ☎ 1-8pm Sun-Thu, 1pm-midnight Fri & Sat) Has a broad balcony opposite the National Palace with tables built into the railing or on a raised platform behind them. Oaxaca-style enchiladas and *cecina de Yecapixtla* (thinly sliced salted meat) highlight a menu of regional classics. Enter at ground level through the jewelry arcade and look for the elevator.

Casa de las Sirenas (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5704-3345; República de Guatemala 32; mains M\$160; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Thu, 8am-2am Fri & Sat, 8am-7pm Sun) Housed in a 17th-century relic, Sirenas has a top-floor terrace that looks toward the Zócalo via the Plaza del Templo Mayor. It's an ideal perch to nibble on stuffed chilies laced with walnut sauce or other Oaxaca-influenced fare – along with a shot of tequila from the downstairs cantina's extensive selection.

Zona Rosa & Around

While the Zona Rosa is packed with places to eat and drink, it's dominated by uninspiring 'international' fare and fast-food franchises. Notably outside this stream are the numerous restaurants catering to the neighborhood's growing Korean community.

BUDGET

Café Mangia (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5533-4503; Río Sena 85; paninis M\$65, salads M\$65; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri; ☎ Insurgentes) This bohemian, white-brick space has an uncomplicated menu of paninis stuffed with pesto and smoked cheese, roast beef and herbs, or smoked salmon with cream cheese.

MIDRANGE

Yug Vegetariano (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5333-3872; Varsovia 3; buffet lunch M\$75, dishes M\$60-75; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-8pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Insurgentes; ☎) The menu is gastro-heaven for vegetarians and vast enough for most carnivore folk to find something they fancy – even if it is a soy-substitute burger. Choose from specialties like squash-flower crepes and chop suey with brown rice, or go the buffet route.

ourpick Young Bin Kwan (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-9399; Av Florencia 15; soups M\$80, mains M\$120-150; ☎ 9:30am-11pm; ☎ Insurgentes; ☎) This two-level dining hall is straight out of Seoul with large-screen TVs providing continuous Asian

programming. Enormous portions of *bulgogi* (marinated beef grilled at your table) are complemented by a fabulous array of side dishes (sesame leaves, bean sprouts, kimchi, etc.).

Fonda El Refugio (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5525-8128; Liverpool 166; dishes M\$110; ☎ 1-11pm Mon-Sat, 1-10pm Sun; ☎ Insurgentes; ☎) Amid a collection of colorful pots, paintings and whimsical ceramic ornaments, the family-run *fonda* serves regional dishes like *mole poblano* (breast of chicken drenched in a rich chocolate-based sauce) and *albondigas chipotle* (meatballs laced with spicy chili).

TOP END

Tezka (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5228-9918; Amberes 78; dishes M\$195-275; ☎ Insurgentes; ☎) Contemporary Basque cuisine is the specialty: try sea bass and red snapper in a green chili sauce or codfish in a garlic and red pepper marinade.

Condesa

La Condesa has become the hub of the eating-out scene, and dozens of informal bistros and cafés, many with sidewalk tables, compete for space along several key streets. The neighborhood's culinary heart is at the convergence of Calles Michoacán, Vicente Suárez and Tamaulipas; other good restaurants and cafés ring Parque México. After 8pm the following places are often filled to

capacity and getting a table means waiting around for a while.

QUICK EATS

El Tizoncito (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-7321; Tamaulipas 122, cnr Campeche; tacos from M\$8; ☎ noon-3:30am Sun-Thu, noon-4:30am Fri & Sat; **M** Patriotismo) The original branch of the citywide chain has been going for nearly 40 years. It claims to have invented *tacos al pastor* (ie cooked on a spit, shepherd style), and half the fun is watching the grill-men deftly put them together. If there are no seats, try the bigger location two blocks east on Campeche.

ourpick Taquería Hola (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-4495; Ámsterdam 135, cnr Michoacán; tacos M\$11; ☎ 9am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) Mid-morning, local snackers crowd this friendly hole in the wall for a stand-up chomp. Choose from a remarkable array of taco fillings, all temptingly displayed in clay dishes. Tacos are served on two tortillas, the second to catch the overflow, and garnished on request with guacamole or crumbly white cheese.

Nevería Roxy (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-1258; Mazatlán 81, cnr Montes de Oca; scoop M\$12, banana split M\$45; ☎ 11am-8:30pm; **M** Chapultepec) The old-fashioned Roxy makes its own ice cream and sherbet on-site, including such tropical flavors as *zapote* (sapodilla) and guava. Another branch is at Tamaulipas 161 at Alfonso Reyes, close to metro Patriotismo.

El Califa (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5271-7666; Altata 22, cnr Alfonso Reyes; tacos M\$30; ☎ 1:30pm-3:30am; **M** Chilpancingo; **P**) This popular *taquería* on Condesa's southern edge puts its own spin on the classic snack, grilling slices of beef and tossing them on handmade tortillas. Tables are set with a palette of savory salsas in sturdy clay bowls.

BUDGET

Orígenes Orgánicos (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-6678; Plaza Popocatepetel 41A; salads M\$40-85, 3-course lunch M\$120; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun **V**) More than just a place to buy soy milk and certified organic produce, this store/café facing one of Condesa's loveliest plazas prepares tasty meals with an emphasis on fresh, seasonal, organic ingredients.

La Rauxa (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5211-2927; Parras 15; 4-course lunch M\$70; ☎ 1-6pm Mon-Sat; **S** Sonora; **V**) Here's an interesting twist on the *comida corrida* concept, featuring uniquely created Catalan-influenced fare by chef/owner Quim Jardí. Instead of a printed menu, Quim de-

scribes what's being served, with at least one vegetarian main-course option daily. Pleasant terrace seating under a big tree is usually filled by 2:30pm.

MIDRANGE

El Diez (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5276-2616; Benjamin Hill 187; steaks M\$88, pizzas from M\$60; ☎ 1pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 1pm-1am Fri & Sat; **M** Patriotismo; **P**) The popularity of this unpretentious steak place might be attributed to its prices. Quality Argentine cuts, served on a cutting board with zesty dressed salad alongside, average under M\$100, and Malbec wines are similarly reasonable. Those with less carnivorous appetites can order pizza by the square meter.

Café La Gloria (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5211-4180; Vicente Suárez 41; dishes M\$85-100; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 1-11pm Sun; **M** Patriotismo; **P**) A hip bistro in the heart of the zone, La Gloria remains a popular meeting place for both Chilangos and foreigners, thanks to the generous salads, zesty pastas and surprising blackboard specials, not to mention the quirky art on display.

Fonda Garufa (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-8295; Av Michoacán 93; pasta M\$85, steaks M\$140-200; ☎ 8am-midnight Tue & Wed, 8am-1am Thu-Sat, 8am-11pm Sun; **M** Patriotismo; **P**) One of the first in the zone to put tables on the sidewalk and fire up a grill, La Garufa owes its longevity to the quality of its Argentine cuts and better-than-average pastas, as well as a romantic candlelit ambience.

Rojo Bistrot (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5211-3705; Ámsterdam 71; mains M\$90-150; ☎ 2pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun; **S** Sonora) On a leafy corner near Parque México, this eatery is popular as much for its vibrant social scene as for the French-inspired cuisine. Regulars recommend the duck in passion fruit sauce and octopus risotto.

TOP END

Hip Kitchen (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5212-2110; Av México 188; starters M\$85-120, mains M\$165-270; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Sat; **S** Sonora; **P**) At the stylish bistro of Condesa's Hippodrome Hotel (p171), star chefs fuse Mexican and Asian ingredients in exciting ways: miso-glazed salmon gets brushed with *chipotle*, and *pico de gallo* is served alongside your saku tuna. Dining is in a narrow, romantic space with a wall-length sofa and art deco fixtures. Reservations are highly recommended.

Lampuga (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-1525; Ometusco 1, cnr Av Nuevo León; mains M\$135-160; ☎ 2pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun; **M** Chilpancingo) Fresh seafood is the

MEXICO CITY'S TOP MARKET FARE

Some of the best eating in Mexico City is not found in any restaurant but in the covered *mercados* and the *tianguis* (weekly street markets).

- Mercado San Camilito** (Map pp128-9; Plaza Garibaldi; pozole M\$44; ☎ 24hr; 📍 Garibaldi) The block-long building contains over 70 kitchens serving Jalisco-style *pozole*, a broth brimming with hominy kernels and pork, served with garnishes like radishes and oregano. (Specify *maciza* if pig noses and ears fail to excite you.)
- Mercado Medellín** (Map pp132-3; Coahuila, btwn Medellín & Monterrey; 📍 Campeche) Features an extensive eating area with cheap and filling *comidas corridas*, as well as several excellent seafood restaurants.
- Parrillada Bariloche** (Map pp132-3; Bazar de Oro; ☎ Wed, Sat & Sun; 📍 Durango) This stall along the southern aisle of an upscale street market grills some of the least-expensive Uruguayan-style steaks and sausages in town, along with excellent side salads.
- Tianguis de Pachuca** (Map pp132-3; Melgar; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue; 📍 Chapultepec) The food section at the north end of the weekly Condesa street market offers many tempting options, but none so mouthwatering as the *mixiotes*, steamed packets of seasoned mutton, whose contents may be rolled into thick tortillas and garnished with fiery *chiles de manzana* (very hot, yellow chili peppers).
- Mercado de Antojitos** (Map p140; Higuera, cnr Plaza Hidalgo & Caballo Calco; 📍 Coyoacán) Near Coyoacán's main plaza, this busy spot has all kinds of snacks, including deep-fried *quesadillas*, *pozole*, *esquites* (boiled corn kernels served with a dollop of mayo) and *flautas* (chicken tacos, rolled long and thin then deep-fried).
- Tostadas Coyoacán** (Map p140; ☎ 5659-8774; Allende btwn Malitzin & Xicoténcatl; tostadas M\$20-30; ☎ noon-6pm 📍 Viveros) Inside Coyoacán's main market, these tostadas are piled high with things like ceviche, marinated octopus and pig's feet, mushrooms and shredded chicken.

focus of this French-bistro style restaurant where a blackboard over the bar announces the daily specials. Tuna tostadas make great starters, as does the Greek-style octopus; for a main course, have the catch of the day grilled over coals. It may be hard to find a table at lunchtime.

Roma QUICK EATS

An unassuming street stall labeled **hamburguesas** (Map pp132-3; cnr Morelia & Colima; burgers M\$20; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 10am-1:30am Fri-Sun; 📍 Cuauhtémoc) does a roaring trade in hamburgers *al carbón* (charcoal-broiled), garnished with lettuce, tomatoes and chilies. Look for superb *tamales oaxaqueños* at the corner of Álvaro Obregón and Tonalá in the morning.

BUDGET

Taquitos Frontera (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-4546; Frontera 120; tacos M\$19; ☎ 1:30pm-4am Mon-Thu, 1:30pm-6am Fri & Sat; 📍 Insurgentes) One of several late-night *taquerías* along Roma's main drag, this humble alternative has cheerful staff, a smoky open

grill and leather tables and chairs. In addition to the main attraction, there are great sides like *frijoles charros* (cowboy beans) and *cebollitas* (grilled green onions).

Los Bisquets Obregón (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5584-2802; Álvaro Obregón 60; breakfast M\$45, antojitos M\$50; 📍 Insurgentes; 📍 📍) The flagship branch of this nationwide chain overflows most mornings; fortunately there are a couple more nearby. Chilangos flock here for the *pan chino* (Chinese pastries) and *café con leche*, dispensed from two pitchers, Veracruz style.

Non Solo Panino (Map pp132-3; ☎ 3096-5128; Plaza Luis Cabrera 10; sandwiches M\$50-70; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Sat; 📍 Insurgentes; 📍) The dancing fountains make a lovely backdrop for Italian sandwiches with things like mozzarella, pesto and smoked salmon stuffed into fresh-baked baguettes.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Contramar (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5514-9217; Durango 200; starters M\$60-100, mains M\$130-150; ☎ 1:30-6:30pm; 📍 Durango; 📍) Fresh seafood is the star attraction at this stylish dining hall with a seaside ambience. The specialty is tuna fillet

Contramar style – split, swabbed with red chili and parsley sauces, and grilled to perfection.

Il Postino (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-3644; Plaza de la Villa de Madrid 6; dishes M\$100-165; 🚗 Durango; 📍) Run by a pair of chefs from Rome and Milan, this superior Italian restaurant features terrace dining along an arc of the Plaza Cibeles (aka Plaza Villa de Madrid). You might start off with an octopus carpaccio, followed by sea bass wrapped in calzone. Otherwise, ask chef Claudio for his inspiration of the day.

Tierra de Vinos (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-5133; Durango 197; dishes M\$120-240; 🕒 1-8pm Mon & Tue, 1pm-midnight Wed-Sat; 🚗 Durango; 📍) The focus is on the wine, with hundreds of vintages lining the cellar-like walls, but there's also fine Spanish cuisine to complement your chosen tippie. Sit at the front bar and nosh on tapas while sampling the month's featured vintage or take a table in the lively rear dining room. Waiters gladly suggest what to have with, say, a plate of paprika-laced *patatas bravas* (florals such as a shiraz), or sea bream over black rice (go with a barrel-aged *tempranillo*).

Polanco & Bosque de Chapultepec

Polanco is home to the signature restaurants of several of Mexico City's internationally hot chefs. These places present some of Mexico's best local ingredients in unique combinations to create meals that are well worth the price.

El Bajío (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5281-8246; Alejandro Dumas 7; dishes M\$70-120; 📍 Auditorio) Owner Carmen 'Titita' Ramirez has built a reputation on producing down-home Veracruz-style food, though sumptuous regional dishes from all over Mexico are served in this folksy setting. Meaty meals like *barbacoa* (mutton cooked in maguay leaves) are El Bajío's signature fare, but the sea bass in banana leaves is equally satisfying.

Izote (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5280-1671; Av Presidente Masaryk 513; dishes M\$230-300; 🕒 1-11pm Mon-Sat 📍 Polanco; 📍) Patricia Quintana is the celebrated owner of this fashionable upbeat restaurant with an innovative menu. Simple yet superbly presented dishes include *tamales* filled with *huitlacoche* (corn fungus) or squash blossoms. For a main course, the shrimp in spicy *adobo* sauce get a top rating.

Pujol (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5545-4111; Petrarca 254; dishes M\$250-350; 🕒 1-11pm Mon-Sat 📍 Polanco; 📍) Classic Mexican recipes with a soupçon of Europe and Asia are served in this smartly minimalist room. Delectable seasonal offerings include

cactus salad garnished with oregano sherbet and rack of lamb with a rich *mole* sauce from the Veracruz mountain village of Xico. Indecisive eaters can sample seven of chef Enrique Olvera's signature dishes by ordering the *menu degustación*.

Águila y Sol (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5281-8354; Castelar 127; dishes M\$250-375; 🕒 1-11pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Polanco; 📍) A culinary goddess in these parts, owner Martha Ortiz takes truly traditional dishes and ingredients to a new level. Start off with a tropical fruit margarita, then slide into the dynamic taste of pork loin in yellow *mole* accompanied by gingered mango, or try cornmeal-encrusted salmon.

San Ángel

MIDRANGE

Cluny (Map p139; ☎ 5550-7350; Av de la Paz 57; dishes M\$75; 🕒 12:30pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 12:30pm-11pm Sun; 🚗 La Bombilla; 📍) For unpretentious French cuisine, this bistro in a shopping arcade hits the spot. Quiche, salads, crepes, decadently delicious desserts and generous portions are the order of the day.

Saks (Map p139; ☎ 5616-1601; Plaza San Jacinto 9; dishes M\$75-120; 🕒 7:30am-6pm Sun-Thu, 7:30am-midnight Fri & Sat; 🚗 La Bombilla; 📍) Hang out on Saks' sunbathed terrace, with live music, and choose from meatless specialties like *poblano* chilies stuffed with truffle-like corn fungus, Camembert soufflé, huge salads and squash-blossom crepes.

Fonda San Ángel (Map p139; ☎ 5550-1641; Plaza San Jacinto 3; dishes M\$90; 🚗 La Bombilla; 📍) On weekends, this attractive restaurant by the plaza does an abundant brunch buffet (M\$120), with all kinds of egg dishes, pastries and fresh-squeezed juices, plus great quesadillas.

TOP END

Taberna de León (Map p139; ☎ 5616-2110; Plaza Loreto 173; dishes M\$155-270; 🕒 2-11pm Mon-Thu, 2pm-midnight Sat, noon-6pm Sun; 🚗 Doctor Gálvez; 📍) Chef Monica Patiño is one of the new breed of female stars who are stirring up traditional cuisine in innovative ways. This is her original, and most popular, restaurant. Seafood is the specialty with the likes of Baja California stone crab and corn blinis with Norwegian salmon and caviar.

San Ángel Inn (Map p139; ☎ 5616-1402; Diego Rivera 50; mains M\$200-350; 🕒 1pm-1am Mon-Sat, 1-10pm Sun; 📍) Classic Mexican meals are served in the various elegant dining rooms of this historic

estate next to the Museo Casa Estudio Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo (see p156). Even if you don't splurge for dinner, have one of their renowned margaritas in the garden. Walk or take a taxi 1km northwest from Plaza San Jacinto.

Coyoacán QUICK EATS

Supertacos Chupacabras (Map p140; Av Río Churubusco, cnr Av México; tacos M\$8; ☎ 7am-3am; 🍷 Coyoacán) Named after the mythical 'goat sucker' (something like the Loch Ness monster), this mega taco stall stands beneath a freeway overpass, but true mavens should not be deterred. The beef and sausage tacos (with 'a secret ingredient of 127 spices') can be enhanced by availing yourself of the fried onions, *nopales* and other tasty toppings that fill half a dozen huge clay casseroles in front.

Churrería de Coyoacán (Map p140; Allende 38; bag of 4 churros M\$8; 🍷 Viveros) Coyoacán's best deep-fried snacks. Get in line for a bag – cream-filled or straight up – then stroll over to Café El Jarocho (p182) for coffee.

El Kiosko de Coyoacán (Map p140; Plaza Hidalgo 6; 1 scoop M\$15; 11am-11pm Sun-Wed, 1pm-1am Thu-Sat; 🍷 Viveros) This obligatory weekend stop has homemade ice cream and popsicles in flavors ranging from mango with chili to *tuna* (cactus fruit).

BUDGET

Mesón de Los Leones (Map p140; ☎ 5554-5916; Allende 161; dishes M\$60; ☎ 11am-6pm Sun-Fri; 🍷 Viveros) This longtime family-run restaurant satisfies diners with its unwaveringly authentic menu and genial atmosphere. Dig into specialties like *carne asada estilo de León* – roasted meat with *mole* sauce accompanied by guacamole and beans.

MIDRANGE

El Caracol de Oro (Map p140; ☎ 5658-9489; Higuera B16; dishes M\$65-80; 🍷 Viveros) Coyoacán's alternative set occupy the jazzy painted tables here, munching on nouveau natural fare like apple curry with chicken, and goat's cheese and mango-stuffed chilies.

El Jardín del Pulpo (Map p140; cnr Allende & Malitzin; fish dishes M\$75; ☎ 11am-5pm; 🍷 Viveros) Weekends, visitors descend on the communal tables at this market-corner locale to devour shrimp tacos, fried whole fish, shrimp and oyster cocktails, *caldos* (broths) and the namesake *pulpo en su tinta* (octopus cooked in its own ink).

Los Danzantes (Map p140; Jardín del Centenario 12; dishes M\$75-150; 🍷 Viveros) Los Danzantes puts a contemporary spin on Mexican cuisine with dishes like salmon enchiladas and chrysanthemum salad. You'll also find *mezcal* from its own distillery (see boxed text, p183) and cigars from San Andrés in Veracruz.

Entre Vero (Map p140; ☎ 5659-0066; Jardín Centenario 14C; pizza M\$80, dishes M\$80-150; 🍷 Viveros) Here's another nice plaza-side spot where the grilled meats from the Southern Cone are well regarded. Non-meat options include tuna steaks, a grilled vegetable platter and thin-crust pizzas.

Other Neighborhoods

El Borrego Viudo (Map pp126-7; Revolución 241, Tacubaya; tacos M\$5-8; ☎ noon-3am) At this busy neighborhood *taquería* just below the Viaducto freeway (take a 'San Ángel-M BARRANCA DEL MUERTO' pesero), the menu announces the taco variations in sparkly type: *suadero* (beef), *longaniza* (sausage), tender tongue and their specialty, *pastor*, sliced off a huge cone by the entrance. The tacos are small but substantial, bathed in a potent salsa verde, and are best washed down with a mug of *tepache*, a pineapple drink fermented in a wood barrel.

Fonda Margarita (Map pp126-7; Adolfo Prieto 1364; mains half/full portion M\$21/32; ☎ 5:30-11:30am Mon-Sat; 🚗 Parque Hundido) Possibly the capital's premier hangover-recovery spot – witness the line down the street on Saturday mornings – the humble eatery under a tin roof whips up batches of comfort food for the day ahead. Soulful fare like pork back in *chile guajillo* sauce is doled out of giant clay dishes. The *fonda* is beside Plaza Tlacoquemécatl, six blocks east of Av Insurgentes.

DRINKING

Cafés, bars and cantinas are all key social venues on the capital's landscape. The traditional watering holes are, of course, cantinas, no-nonsense places with simple tables, long polished bars and serious waiters in formal white jackets. A humbler kind of drinking establishment rooted in ancient Mexican tradition, *pulquerías* serve pulque, a slightly alcoholic pre-Hispanic beverage. These places are lately experiencing a resurgence, with young Chilangos rediscovering the joys of sharing a pitcher of the milky quaff. Another drink that is being 'taken back' by Mexican youth is *mezcal*, the rustic mother of tequila.

AROUND MEXICO IN A DAY

The capital has long attracted opportunity-seekers from all over the republic. Fortunately these ex-Oaxacans, Yucatecans and Sinaloans strive to keep their traditions alive, first and foremost in the kitchen. This means Mexico City is the perfect place to try out authentic regional cuisines just as they're prepared back home.

Coox Hanal (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5709-3613; Isabel La Católica 83, 2nd fl; dishes M\$40-60; ☎ 10:30am-7pm; **M** Isabel la Católica) Started in 1953 by boxer Raúl Salazar from Mérida, this establishment over a billiard hall prepares Yucatecan fare just as it's done in Don Raúl's hometown. The *poc chuc* (grilled pork marinated in sour orange juice), *papadzules* (tacos stuffed with chopped hard-boiled egg and laced with pumpkin-seed sauce) and *cochinilla pibil* (pit-cooked pork) are of a high standard. Tables are set with the obligatory four-alarm *habanero* salsa.

El Regiomontano (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-0196; Luis Moya 115; grilled goat M\$187; ☎ 11am-10pm; **M** Balderas) Lettered on the window is the message, BABY GOATS VERY YOUNG KIDS, and there they are, splayed on stakes and grilling over a circle of coals, just as they're done in Monterrey or Saltillo. A single platter serves two.

La Polar (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5546-5066; Guillermo Prieto 129, San Rafael; birria M\$85; ☎ 8am-1am; **M** San Cosme; **P**) Run by a family from Ocotlán, Jalisco, this boisterous beer hall has essentially one item on the menu: *birria*, a soulfully spiced goat stew. Their version of this Guadalajara favorite is considered the best in town. Spirits are raised further by mariachis and *norteña* combos who work the half-dozen salons here.

La Sabia Virtud (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-6480; Tamaulipas 134B, Condesa; mains M\$100; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun; **M** Patriotismo; **P**) Nouvelle cuisine from Puebla is lovingly presented at this cozy Condesa spot. *Mole* is prepared in the classic Santa Clara convent style or the restaurant's own *verde* version.

María del Alma (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5553-0403; Cuernavaca 68, Condesa; starters M\$60, mains M\$100-165; ☎ 1:30-11pm Mon-Fri, until 1:30am Sat, until 6pm Sun; **M** Patriotismo; **P**) A culinary escape to the state of Tabasco in a leafy patio among tweeting birds and a romantically inclined pianist. Enjoy a guanabana margarita before digging into regional favorites like *tamales de chipilín* and *uliche*, a chicken stew thickened with cornmeal and seasoned with fiery *mashita* chilies.

Pozolería Tixtla (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5233-2081; Hernández y Dávalos 35; pozole M\$50; ☎ 11am-9pm; **M** Lázaro Cárdenas) East of Roma, in working-class Colonia Algarín, this old-fashioned dining hall specializes in Guerrero-style green *pozole*, a soulful variation on the classic pork and hominy broth, garnished with crackling *chicharrón* and creamy avocado slices.

Tamales Chiapanecos María Geraldine (Map p140; ☎ 5608-8993; Plaza Hidalgo; tamales M\$24; ☎ noon-9pm Sat, 8am-9pm Sun) At the passageway next to the arched wing of San Juan Bautista church, look for these incredible *tamales* by Chiapas native Doña María Geraldine. Wrapped in banana leaves, stuffed with ingredients like olives, prunes and almonds, and laced with sublime salsas, they're a meal in themselves.

Beer is generally cheap, with bottles of Corona or Victoria going for around M\$20 (M\$30 in Condesa or Polanco). Expect to pay M\$70 or M\$80 for a shot of top-shelf whiskey or tequila.

Centro Histórico

CAFÉS

Café Jakemir (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5709-7038; Isabel la Católica 88; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat; **M** Isabel la Católica) Run by a family of Lebanese coffee traders from Orizaba, this old distribution outlet, now transformed into a popular café, has excellent and inexpensive cappuccinos.

Café La Habana (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5546-2555; Av Morelos 62; **M** Juárez) This grand coffee house is a traditional haunt for writers and journalists, who linger for hours over a *café americano*. Legend has it that Fidel

and Che plotted strategy here prior to the Cuban revolution.

La Selva Café (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-4111; Bolívar 31; **M** Allende) Branch of the Chiapas coffee distributor in the stunning patio of a colonial building.

Café Cordobés (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-5545; Ayuntamiento 18; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; **M** San Juan de Letrán) Good spot for a stand-up *cortado* (espresso with a little foamed milk) amid a busy shopping district; bulk coffee from Veracruz at reasonable prices.

BARS & CANTINAS

Bar Mancera (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-9755; Venustiano Carranza Tacuba 49; cover Fri & Sat night M\$50; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat; **M** San Juan de Letrán) This atmospheric gentlemen's salon seems preserved in amber, with ornate carved paneling,

flowery upholstered armchairs and well-used domino tables. Lately it's been adopted by young clubbers, who set up turntables Friday night from around 9pm.

Hostería La Bota (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5709-1117; www.casavecina.com; Callejón de Mesones 7; ☎ 11am-8pm Tue, 11am-1:30am Wed-Sat; **M** Isabel la Católica) This fun and funky bar is one component of the Casa Vecina community arts center, a cultural beachhead in the Centro's rough southern fringe. Tapas and tequilas are served amid a profusion of warped bullfighting bric-a-brac and mismatched furniture.

La Gioconda (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5518-7823; Filomena Mata 18; ☎ 4-11pm Mon-Thu, 4pm-2am Fri & Sat; **M** Allende) Dark and light draft beer are poured in this happening little pub off a pedestrian thoroughfare.

La Ópera Bar (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-8959; Av 5 de Mayo 10; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun; **M** Allende) With booths of dark walnut and an ornate tin ceiling (said to have been punctured by Pancho Villa's bullet), this late-19th-century watering hole remains a bastion of tradition.

Las Duelistas (Map pp128-9; Aranda 30; ☎ 9am-9pm; **M** Salto del Agua) Now graffitied with pre-Hispanic psychedelia, this classic *pulquería* alongside the Mercado San Juan has been rediscovered by young Chilangos. Despite the new look, the pulque is still dispensed straight from the barrel in a variety of flavors like mango and coconut.

Salón Corona (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-5725; Bolívar 24; ☎ 8am-midnight Sun-Wed, 8am-2am Thu-Sat; **M** Allende) Punks and suits crowd this boisterous, no-nonsense beer hall, running since 1928. Amiable staff serve up *tarros* (mugs) of light or dark *cerveza de barril* (draft beer) and bottles of almost every known Mexican beer.

Zona Rosa & Around

The Pink Zone, the capital's international party center, boasts the highest concentration of bars and clubs in town, and prices at the numerous venues along Londres and Florencia reflect its tourist orientation. Calle Amberes has become the hub of the gay- and lesbian-oriented bar scene.

CAFÉS

Sanborns Café (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-9760; Londres 149; ☎ 24hr; **M** Insurgentes) By day a popular business breakfast locale, after hours this round-the-clock coffeshop makes a convenient port of call between clubs.

Cafetería Gabi's (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-7637; Nápoles 55, cnr Liverpool; ☎ Mon-Sat; **M** Insurgentes) Cluttered with caffeine-related paraphernalia, this family-run coffeehouse buzzes with conversation midmornings and early evenings, when the occupants of neighboring offices pour in for a rich *café con leche* and a crispy *banderilla* (stick-like glazed pastry).

BARS

Bar Milán (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5592-0031; Milán 18; ☎ 9pm-midnight Tue & Wed, 9pm-3am Thu-Sat; **M** Cuauhtémoc) Tucked away on a quiet backstreet, this cave-like hangout overflows most weekends with a youthful mixed-nationality crowd. Purchase beer tickets (*milagros*), then make your way over to the cactus-trimmed bar. The soundtrack ranges from classic rock to Café Tacuba.

Papa Bill's Saloon (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-6669; Río Guadalquivir 88; ☎ 1pm-midnight or 1am Mon-Sat, 1-8pm Sun; **M** Insurgentes) For those who need their sports fix, this sprawling gringo-style parlor has plenty of flat-screen TVs showing the big game. Happy hours (two-for-one drinks) are from 2pm to 9pm.

Condesa

CAFÉS

Café Bola de Oro (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-5659; Av Nuevo León 192-B; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat; **M** Chilpancingo) An outlying branch of the Xalapa coffee purveyor, this is a good place to score a bag of Coatepec beans or simply enjoy a cup of Veracruz' fine, full-bodied blends.

Pastelería Maque (Map pp132-3; ☎ 2454-4662; Ozulama 4; ☎ Campeche) Condesa sophisticates gather in the mornings and evenings at this Parisian-style café-bakery near the south end of Parque México. Waiters bring around trays of fresh-baked croissants and *conchas* (round pastries sprinkled with sugar) – point to your preference.

BARS

Condesa's bar scene continues to thrive, and new places are popping up (and shutting down) all the time. The following are relatively well established and filled beyond capacity Thursday through Saturday evenings. The confluence of Tamaulipas and Nuevo León has emerged as a major bar zone, earning a reputation as a haven for *fresas* (literally 'strawberries,' a derogatory term for upper-class youth).

Black Horse (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5211-8740; Mexicali 85, cnr Tamaulipas; ☎ 6pm-2am Tue-Sat; (M) Patriotismo) Besides preparing bangers and mash and screening the soccer match, this authentic British pub boasts an international social scene and has excellent bands playing the back room mid-week.

El Centenario (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5553-5451; Vicente Suárez 42; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat; (M) Patriotismo) Laden with bullfighting memorabilia, this cantina is an enclave of tradition amid the modish restaurant zone.

Malafama (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5553-5138; Av Michoacán 78; tables per hr M\$80; (M) Patriotismo) As trendy as its bars and cafés, Condesa's sleek billiard hall doubles as a gallery of photo art. The well-maintained tables are frequented by both pool sharks and novices.

Hookah Lounge (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5264-6275; Campeche 284; ☎ 1pm-12:30am Mon-Wed, 1pm-2am Thu-Sat; (M) Chilpancingo) The fun revolves around the water pipes (from M\$100), available in a bewildering array of flavors. Wednesday to Saturday nights, DJs produce an eclectic mix of electronica and Arabic rhythms, with no fewer than four turntables.

Pata Negra (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5211-5563; Av Tamaulipas 30; ☎ 1:30pm-2am; (M) Patriotismo) Nominally a tapas bar, this oblong salon draws a friendly, clean-cut crowd of 20-something Chilangos and expats. There's live music on both levels, with the upper Salón Pata Negra striking a more bohemian tone.

T-Gallery (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5211-1222; www.tgallery.design.com; Saltillo 39; ☎ 5pm-2am Mon-Sat; (M) Patriotismo) A low-key, conversant crowd kicks back with cocktails in the various salons of this lovely old Condesa home, each appointed with a splendid array of kitschy sofas, coffee tables and mirrors. Jazz, blues and bossa nova combos jam downstairs nightly.

Rexo (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5553-5337; Saltillo 1; ☎ 1:30pm-1am Sun-Tue, 1:30pm-2am Wed-Sat; (M) Patriotismo) A minimalist, triple-deck supper club, the perennially popular Rexo really packs them in toward the weekend. There's dining on the upper levels but the revelry converges on the bar at the bottom, which serves *mezcaltinis* and other unusual cocktails.

The bar of the fashionable Condesa df (p171) has become an essential stop on the Condesa circuit. Action focuses on the triangular atrium and wackily decorated alcoves around it. Up on the roof, guests lounge on big-wheel wicker sofas, nibble on sushi and

enjoy views of verdant Parque España across the way.

Roma

CAFÉS

Enanos de Tapanco (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5564-2274; Orizaba 161, cnr Querétaro; ☎ 8am-11:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11:30pm Sat, 3:30-10:30pm Sun; (M) Centro Médico) Possibly Mexico City's coolest café, the 'Dwarves of the Loft' also functions as an art gallery and storytelling den (Tuesday evening). Cappuccinos and quiches are served along with an eclectic music selection.

Maison de Thé Caravanserai (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-2877; Orizaba 101; ☎ 10am-9:30pm Mon-Fri, 12:30pm-9:30pm Sat, 3:30-9:30pm Sun; (M) Insurgentes) This French-managed tea room has over 100 blends. They are categorized by their intended use or effects (Tokyo Springtime is 'a subtle tea for the afternoon'). Visitors relax on comfortable sofas to enjoy their chosen brews, which are ceremoniously served on silver trays.

Café Villa de Madrid (Map pp132-3; Plaza Villa de Madrid; ☎ 8:15am-6:30pm Mon-Sat; ☎ Durango) With just a few sidewalk tables at the top of Plaza Villa de Madrid (aka Plaza Cibeles), this long-time storefront operation roasts beans from the family *finca* (farm) in Chiapas (they also roll their own cigars).

BARS

La Bodeguita del Medio (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5553-0246; Cozumel 37; ☎ 2pm-2am Tue-Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun & Mon; (M) Sevilla) The walls are scribbled with verses and messages at this animated branch of the famous Havana joint. Have a *mojito*, a Cuban concoction of rum and mint leaves, and enjoy the excellent *son cubano* combos that perform here.

Cantina Covadonga (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5533-2922; Puebla 121; ☎ 1pm-3am Mon-Fri; (M) Insurgentes) Echoing with the sounds of clacking dominoes, the old Asturian social hall is a traditionally male enclave, though hipsters of both sexes have increasingly moved in on this hallowed ground.

Travazares Taberna (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5264-1142; Orizaba 127; ☎ 1pm-2am; ☎ Álvaro Obregón) The downstairs adjunct of a cultural center, this popular Roma hangout strikes a suitably bohemian tone. Recycled objects furnish a series of cozy, candlelit salons where artistically inclined youth sip wine or Cerveza Cosaco (a Mexican microbrew).

Tiki Bar (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5584-2668; Querétaro 227; ☎ 6pm-3am Wed-Sat; 📺 Sonora) Amid the salsa dance clubs, this South Pacific spree spreads on the kitsch with bamboo-fringed walls and teak floors. The wacky cocktails are the real draw: not just mai tais but *chocotikis*, *mojotikis* and various other rum creations thrill a celebrity-studded crowd.

Bengala (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5211-4690; Sonora 34A; ☎ 9pm-4am Thu-Sat; 📺 Chapultepec) This low-lit concept bar evokes a desert trek, with decor influenced by *Casablanca* and *The Sheltering Sky*. Its slightly out-of-the-way location only adds to the conspiratorial air. Have a 'Module' (a green cocktail of cucumber, Pernod and *mezcal*) and mingle with the film and TV personalities who customarily pop up here.

Polanco

Though not as cutting-edge as Condesa, this well-heeled neighborhood gets quite lively after dark.

Área (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5282-3100; Av Presidente Masaryk 201; ☎ 7-11pm Mon-Wed, 7pm-2am Thu-Sat; 📺 Polanco) Atop the Hábita Hotel, this open-air roof lounge does a brisk trade in exotic martinis, with sweeping city views as a backdrop and videos projected on the wall of a nearby building.

Big Red (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5255-5277; Av Presidente Masaryk 101; ☎ 8:30am-2am Mon-Sat; 📺 Polanco) A volume dealer, with drinks priced by the ounce (M\$14 for Bacardi, M\$16 for Centenario tequila), plus whatever mixer you choose. Thus the place attracts a broader cross-section of the populace than the usual Polanco *antro* (bar). And rather than the icy electronica favored by such places, Big Red dares to blare banda.

Xochimilco

Pulquería El Templo de Diana (Map p138; ☎ 5653-4657; Madero 17, cnr Calle 5 de Mayo; ☎ 9am-9:30pm; 📺 Xochimilco) This classic *pulquería*, a block east of the main market, has a cheerful sawdust-on-the-floor vibe, with a mixed-age crowd enjoying giant mugs of the maguey-based beverage behind the swinging doors. Even a few females may pop in. Pulque is delivered fresh daily from Hidalgo state, and expertly blended with flavorings like mango, tomato and pine nut.

Pulquería La Botijona (Map p138; Morelos 109; ☎ 9am-9:30pm; 📺 Xochimilco) Possibly the cleanest pulque dispenser in town, this institutional-green hall near the train station is a

friendly family-run establishment, with big plastic pails of the traditional quaff lining the shelves.

Coyoacán

Café El Jarcho (Map p140; ☎ 5658-5029; Cuauhtémoc 134, cnr Allende; ☎ 6am-1am; 📺 Coyoacán) This immensely popular joint churns out M\$8 cappuccinos for long lines of java hounds. As there's no seating inside, people have their coffee standing in the street or sitting on curbside benches. Another branch (Map p140; ☎ 5659-9107; Av México 25-C) is convenient to Viveros park.

La Guadalupana (Map p140; ☎ 5554-6253; Higuera 2; ☎ noon-12:30am Mon-Sat; 📺 Viveros) Serving drinks for over seven decades, this rustic tavern breathes tradition down to the blasé waiters in white coats. There are *botanas* and *tortas* as well as heartier fare.

El Hijo del Cuervo (Map p140; ☎ 5658-7824; www.elhijodelcuervo.com.mx; Jardín Centenario 17, Coyoacán; ☎ 4pm-midnight Mon-Wed, 1pm-1:30am Thu, 1pm-2:30am Fri & Sat, 1-11:30pm Sun; 📺 Viveros) A Coyoacán institution, this enormous stone-walled hall on the Jardín Centenario is a thinking man's drinking man's habitat. Assorted musical ensembles perform Wednesday and Thursday nights in a small theater toward the back.

La Bipolar (Map p140; ☎ 5484-8230; Malintzin 155; ☎ 1pm-2am; 📺 Viveros) Owned by Mexican heartthrob Diego Luna of *Y Tu Mamá También* movie fame, this popular new cantina plays up the kitschier elements of Mexican popular culture, with wall panels fashioned from plastic crates and sliced tin buckets as light shades. Besides the Coronas and *mezcal* shots, it has revamped versions of classic Mexican snacks.

ENTERTAINMENT

There's so much going on in Mexico City on any given evening, it's hard to keep track. *Tiempo Libre*, the city's comprehensive what's-on magazine, helps you sort it all out. Published Thursday, it covers live music, theater, movies, dance, art and nightlife. Other useful guides include the comprehensive monthlies *Donde Ir* and *Chilango*, the latter with a *Time Out* supplement. *Primera Fila*, a Friday section of the *Reforma* newspaper, has lots of entertainment listings, too.

Ticketmaster (☎ 5325-9000; www.ticketmaster.com.mx) sells tickets for all the major venues via internet, phone or at any of these outlets:

MEZCAL RENAISSANCE

Mezcal, known erroneously as ‘that drink with the worm in it,’ is finally getting the respect it deserves. (The worm was a marketing gimmick for gullible American consumers.) Many think of it as a rustic relative to the more refined tequila, when in fact tequila is just one form of *mezcal* derived from a particular plant that grows in the state of Jalisco, the blue agave. But *mezcal*s are produced from many varieties of agave (or maguey) throughout Mexico, including the states of Durango, Zacatecas, Michoacán, Guerrero and, most famously, Oaxaca. It is estimated there are some 136 varieties of the succulent plant, and each one produces a different version. New laws now require *mezcal*s from the various regions to be labeled with an appellation of origin, as wines from regions of Spain and France are denominated. Many small-scale *mezcal* makers still produce the drink in limited, handcrafted batches.

Straight up, *mezcal* is typically served with slices of orange and an orangey salt blended with chili and – old myths die hard – a powder made from maguey worms, and chased by a Victorita mini bottle of beer. And like a fine single-malt scotch, it’s meant to be savored slowly rather than knocked back.

A number of venues around Mexico City now serve *mezcal* to the new breed of discerning aficionados.

Mestizo Lounge (Map pp132-3; ☎ 2454-1662; Chihuahua 121, Roma; 🕒 6pm-2am Tue-Sat; 📍 Insurgentes) This highly social hole in the wall is at the heart of the *mezcal* renaissance. Taste a smoky *cenizo* (a Zacatecas variety) or have a *mezcal* martini. They make excellent sandwiches, too.

La Botica (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5212-1167; Alfonso Reyes 120; 🕒 5pm-midnight Mon & Tue, 5pm-1:30am Wed-Sat; 📍 Patriotismo) Like an old apothecary, La Botica dispenses its elixirs from squat bottles lined up on the shelf. Available varieties are suitably scribbled on pieces of cardboard – try the *cuesh*, distilled from a wild maguey in Oaxaca. La Botica has been such a roaring success, it’s opened other branches with similar hours at Campeche 396 in Condesa and Orizaba 161 in Colonia Roma.

Taberna Red Fly (Map pp132-3; ☎ 1054-3616; Orizaba 143; 🕒 6pm-midnight Mon-Wed, 6pm-2am Thu-Sat; 📍 Álvaro Obregón) An elegantly furnished space in a typical Porfiriato-era residence, the Red Fly organizes monthly tastings, where *mezcal* fans can appreciate the subtle gradations in flavor based on where the beverage is distilled.

Los Danzantes (Map p140; ☎ 5658-6054; Jardín del Centenario 12; 📍 Viveros) This contemporary Mexican restaurant on Coyoacán’s main square serves *tobalá*, a white *mezcal* extracted from a rare mountain agave and produced at its own distillery in Santiago Matatlán, Oaxaca.

Auditorio Nacional (Map pp136-7; Paseo de la Reforma 50; 🕒 11am-6pm; 📍 Auditorio)

Liverpool Centro (p190); Polanco (Map pp136-7; Mariano Escobedo 425; 🕒 11am-8pm; 📍 Polanco)

Mixup Centro (Map pp128-9; Madero 51; 🕒 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-8pm Sun; 📍 Zócalo); Zona Rosa (Map pp132-3; Génova 76; 🕒 9am-9pm; 📍 Insurgentes)

Cinemas

Mexico City is a banquet for moviegoers. Almost everything is screened here and ticket prices are around M\$40, with many places offering discounts on Wednesday. Except for children’s fare, movies are in original languages, with Spanish subtitles. *El Universal* and *La Jornada* have daily listings.

Multiplexes showing mostly Hollywood fare, with the odd Mexican hit, include **Cine Diana** (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-3236; Paseo de la Reforma 423; 📍 Sevilla), **Cinemex Palacio** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-0348; www.cinemex.com; Iturbide 25; 📍 Juárez)

and **Cinemex Real** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-7718; www.cinemex.com.mx; Colón 17; 📍 Hidalgo).

There are other theaters offering a more eclectic program, such as **Cinemex Casa de Arte** (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5280-9156; www.cinemex.com; France 120; 📍 Polanco) and **Lumiere Reforma** (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5514-0000; Río Guadalquivir 104; 📍 Sevilla).

In addition, several repertory cinemas cater to film buffs:

Filmoteca de la UNAM (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5665-0709; Insurgentes Sur 3000; tickets M\$30) The two cinemas at the Centro Cultural Universitario screen films from a collection of over 35,000 titles. Programming for this and other UNAM-system cinemas can be found at www.filmoteca.unam.mx. See p157 for directions.

Cinematógrafo del Chopo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5702-3494; Dr Atl 37, Colonia Santa María La Ribera; tickets M\$30; 📍 San Cosme)

Cineteca Nacional (Map p140; ☎ 1253-9390; www.cinetecanacional.net; Av México-Coyoacán 389; tickets M\$40; 📍 Coyoacán) Thematically focused film series

are shown on six screens, with at least one for Mexican cinema. There are cafés and bookstores at the center of the complex, 700m east of metro Coyoacán. In November the Cineteca hosts the Muestra Internacional de Cine, Mexico City's international film festival.

Contempo Cinema (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-4044; Londres 161; www.contempocinema.com; **M** Insurgentes) Emphasis on gay and erotic themes; inside the Zona Rosa's Plaza Ángel shopping center.

Salon Cinematográfico Fósforo (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5702-3494; San Ildefonso 43; tickets M\$30; **M** Zócalo) Inside the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso (p145).

Dance, Classical Music & Theater

Orchestral music, opera, ballet, contemporary dance and theater are all abundantly represented in the capital's numerous theaters. Museums, too, serve as (often free) performance venues, including the **Museo de la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público** (p144) and the **Museo de la Ciudad de México** (p147). The national arts council (Conaculta) provides a rundown on its Spanish-language website (www.cnca.gov.mx) and in Friday's *La Jornada*.

Palacio de Bellas Artes (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-2593; www.bellasartes.gov.mx; Av Hidalgo 1; box office ☎ 11am-7pm; **M** Bellas Artes) The Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional and prestigious opera and dance companies perform in the palace's ornate theater, while chamber groups appear in the recital halls. It's most famous, though, for the **Ballet Folclórico de México** (tickets M\$360-600; ☎ 8:30pm Wed, 9:30am & 8:30pm Sun), a two-hour festive blur of costumes, music and dance from all over Mexico. Tickets are usually available the day of the show at the Palacio or from Ticketmaster (p182).

Centro Cultural Universitario (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5665-0709; www.difusion.cultural.unam.mx; Av Insurgentes Sur 3000) Ensclosed in the woody southern section of the national university campus, the complex comprises five theaters, including the Sala Nezahualcōyotl, home of the UNAM Philharmonic; the Teatro Alarcón, a dramatic stage; and the Sala Miguel Covarrubias, a contemporary dance venue. See p157 for directions.

Centro Nacional de las Artes (CNA; Map p140; ☎ 4155-0000; www.cenart.gov.mx; Río Churubusco 79; **M** General Anaya) This sprawling art institute near Coyoacán has events across the artistic spectrum, many of them free. Exit metro General Anaya (Línea 2) on the east side of Calz de Tlalpan, walk north to the corner and turn right.

Centro Cultural del Bosque Map pp136-7; ☎ 5280-6228; cnr Paseo de la Reforma & Campo Marte; ☎ box office noon-3pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri & prior to events; **M** Auditorio) This complex behind the Auditorio Nacional features six theaters, including the Teatro de la Danza, dedicated to modern dance. On weekend afternoons, children's plays and puppet shows are staged.

If your Spanish is up to it, you might sample Mexico City's lively theater scene. The Spanish-language website **MegorTeatro** (www.mejorteatro.com.mx) covers the major venues. Performances are generally Thursday to Sunday evenings with weekend matinees.

Other cultural options:

Centro Cultural Helénico (Map p139; ☎ 4155-0919; www.helenico.gov.mx; Av Revolución 1500, Guadalupe Inn; tickets M\$250; ☎ Altavista) Complex includes 450-seat Teatro Helénico for major productions and cabaret-style *La Gruta* theater.

Foro Shakespeare (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5553-4642; Zamora 7, Condesa; tickets M\$120-250; **M** Chapultepec) Small independent theater with eclectic program.

Teatro Blanquita (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-8264; Eje Central Lázaro Cardenas 16, Centro; tickets M\$100-175; **M** Bellas Artes) Classic variety theater across from Plaza Garibaldi.

Live Music

The variety of music here is impressive, with traditional Mexican, Cuban, folk, jazz, rock and other styles being played in concert halls, clubs, bars, museums, on public transportation and on the street. The 'Conciertos' and 'Noche' sections in *Tiempo Libre* cover events.

Free concerts take place most weekends on the Zócalo. Coyoacán is another good bet most evenings and all day Saturday and Sunday: musicians, comedians and mimes turn its two central plazas into a big open-air party.

Additionally, a number of Roma and Condesa bars and restaurants turn into live-music venues after dark (see p180).

CONCERTS

Auditorio Nacional (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5280-9250; www.auditorio.com.mx; Paseo de la Reforma 50; **M** Auditorio) Major gigs by Mexican and visiting rock and pop artists take the stage at the 10,000-seat Auditorio Nacional (National Auditorium). The adjoining **Lunario del Auditorio** (www.lunario.com.mx) is a large club for jazz and folk acts.

Vive Cuervo Salón (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5255-5322; Andrómaco 17, cnr Moliere) A warehouse-sized

venue for touring rock, world and salsa stars. With excellent sound, wall-length bar and dance floor for thousands, this is one of Mexico's most cutting-edge clubs. The cover price varies.

Teatro de la Ciudad (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-2942; Donceles 36; (M) Allende) Built in 1918, this lavishly restored 1300-seat hall gets some of the more interesting touring groups.

MARIACHIS

Five blocks north of the Palacio de Bellas Artes, Plaza Garibaldi (Map pp128-9) is where the city's mariachi bands gather. Outfitted in fancy costumes, they toot their trumpets, tune their guitars and stand around with a drink until approached by someone who'll pay for a song (about M\$100) or whisk them away to entertain at a party.

Plaza Garibaldi gets going by about 8pm and stays busy until around midnight. For food, try the Mercado San Camilito north of the plaza.

El Tenampa (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5526-6176; ☎ 1pm-3am; (M) Garibaldi), graced with murals of the giants of Mexican song and enlivened by its own songsters, is a festive cantina on the north side of the plaza; a visit here is obligatory.

ROCK

The street market Tianguis Cultural del Chopo (p189) has a stage at its north end every Saturday afternoon for young and hungry alternative, metal and punk bands.

Dada X (Map pp128-9; ☎ 2454-4310; www.recia.org/dadax; Bolívar 31, cnr Calle 16 de Septiembre; admission free-M\$200; ☎ from 9pm Thu-Sat; (M) San Juan de Letrán) Black-clad youth gravitate toward this space on the upper floor of a magnificent colonial building. The varied program includes club films, poetry readings and live music, which might be anything from ska to electronica.

Multiforo Alicia (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-2100; www.myspace.com/foroalicia; Av Cuauhtémoc 91; cover M\$70; ☎ 9pm-2am Fri & Sat; (M) Cuauhtémoc) Behind the graffiti-scrawled facade is Mexico City's premier rock club. A suitably smoky, seatless space, the Alicia stages up-and-coming punk, surf and ska bands, who hawk their music at the store downstairs.

Pasagüero (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-6624; www.pasaguero.com; Motolinía 33; cover M\$100; ☎ 10pm-2:30am Thu-Sat; (M) Allende) Some visionary developers took a historic building and transformed its stonewalled ground level into a space for vari-

ous cultural happenings, especially rock and electronica gigs.

Hard Rock Live (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5327-7101; cover from M\$220; Campos Eliseos 290; (M) Auditorio) Occupying a superb old Polanco mansion near the Auditorio Nacional, this branch of the international club hosts the cream of *rock en español*, with groups like La Cuca, the Nortec Collective, La Gusana Ciega, Zoe and Molotov on stage.

Cultural Roots (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-6622; Tacuba 81; cover M\$25; ☎ 4-11pm Fri & Sun, 9pm-2am Sat; (M) Allende) Portraits of Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie and Emiliano Zapata glare down over the throngs of skanking youth who fill this warehouse-sized room where DJs pump out a heady blend of contemporary reggae.

JAZZ & BLUES

Papa Beto (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5592-1638; www.papabeto.com; Villalongin 196, Colonia Cuauhtémoc; cover M\$80-100; ☎ 1st/2nd set 9:30pm/11pm Tue-Sat; (M) Insurgentes) Run by a Japanese expatriate to highlight the impressive wealth of local talent, this club remains the city's top jazz venue. Tuesday night is reserved for jam sessions with surprise guests.

Zinco Jazz Club (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-3369; www.zincojazz.com; Motolinía 20; cover M\$100-200; ☎ 9pm-2am Wed-Sat; (M) Allende) A vital component in the Centro's rebirth, Zinco is a subterranean supper club featuring local jazz and funk outfits and occasional big-name touring artists. The intimate room fills up fast, so reserve ahead.

Ruta 61 (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-7602; Baja California 281; cover M\$60-200; ☎ music from 10pm Thu-Sat; (M) Chilpancingo) Catering to the denim-clad blues cult, this split-level venue stages electric blues artists in the Buddy Guy/Howlin' Wolf mold. About once a month there's a direct-from-Chicago act, though you're more likely to see one of the many local cover bands.

LATIN DANCE

The city's many aficionados have a circuit of clubs and *salones de baile* (dance halls) to choose from. At the clubs listed here, it's customary to go in a group and share a bottle of rum or tequila (from around M\$600, including mixers).

You might learn a few steps at the Plaza de Danzón (Map pp128-9), northwest of La Ciudadela near metro Balderas. Couples crowd the plaza every Saturday afternoon to do the *danzón*, an elegant and complicated

Cuban step that infiltrated Mexico in the 19th century. Lessons in *danzón* and other steps are given from around 3:30pm to 5:30pm.

Cuban dance clubs abound in Roma, particularly near the intersection of Insurgentes and Medellín.

El Gran León (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5564-7110; Querétaro 225, Roma; cover M\$60; 🕒 9pm-3:30am Thu-Sat; 🚗 Sonora) Two or three top-notch Cuban *son* ensembles take the tropical stage nightly at this old-school club. Unescorted (and escorted) women should expect to be invited up onto the tightly packed dance floor.

Mamá Rumba (Map pp132-3 ☎ 5564-6920; Querétaro 230, cnr Medellín, Roma; cover M\$70-80; 🕒 9pm-3:30am Wed-Sat; 🚗 Sonora) Managed by a Havana native, Mamá Rumba features contemporary salsa, with music by the house big band. Instructors will get you started Wednesday and Thursday evenings. On alternate Saturday nights the invariably packed club hosts reggaeton DJs and cabaret acts.

Salón Los Ángeles (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5597-5181; Lerdo 206; cover M\$40; 🕒 6-11pm Tue & Sun; 🚗 Tlatelolco) Cuban-music fans shouldn't miss the outstanding orchestras, nor the graceful dancers who fill the vast floor of this atmospheric ballroom. Particularly on Tuesday evening, when an older crowd comes for *danzón*, it's like the set of a period film. It's in the rough Colonia Guerrero so take a taxi.

CABARET

La Casa de Paquita la del Barrio (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5583-8131; Zarco 202; cover M\$150; 🕒 8:30pm Fri & Sat; 🚗 Guerrero) Located in the rough-and-tumble Guerrero district, this bastion of popular culture is the frequent venue for TV and recording star Paquita la del Barrio. The corpulent chanteuse customarily performs a sublime set of plaintive ballads, almost all of which express disdain for her suitors – her asides are deliciously bitter. Phone ahead to see if Paquita is performing.

El Batadán (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-7390; www.labodega.com.mx; Popocatepetl 25, cnr Amsterdam; cover M\$100-200; 🕒 9pm Tue-Sat; 🚗 Álvaro Obregón) A theater within a club (La Bodega), this intimate cabaret showcases some of Mexico's more offbeat performers, with frequent appearances by the wonderfully surreal Astrid Haddad. Afterwards, catch top-notch Cuban *son* combos in La Bodega's various salons.

Bar El Vicio (Map p140; ☎ 5659-1139; www.lasreinaschulas.com; Madrid 13; cover M\$100-200; 🚗 Coyoacán) With

liberal doses of politically and sexually irreverent comedy and a genre-bending musical program, this alternative cabaret is appropriately located in Frida Kahlo's old neighborhood.

TROVA & TRADITIONAL

Cafebrería El Péndulo (Map pp132-3; www.pendolo.com; cover varies; 🕒 shows at 9pm) Condesa (☎ 5286-9493; Av Nuevo León 115; 🚗 Chilpancingo); Zona Rosa (☎ 5208-2327; Hamburgo 126; 🚗 Insurgentes) Leading Mexican singer-songwriters play both branches of this café-bookstore.

El Balcón Huasteco (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5341-6762; www.elbalconhuasteco.com; Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz 248, Colonia Agricultura; cover M\$40; 🕒 from 6pm Thu-Sat; 🚗 Normal) This center for the preservation of the Huastec culture of Hidalgo and Veracruz stages performances by fiery trios. There are wooden platforms for traditional *zapateando* dancing and snacks from the area.

Cafe Corazón (Map p139; ☎ 5550-8854; Frontera 4; cover M\$60-80; 🕒 9:30pm Fri & Sat; 🚗 La Bombilla) Folk singers in the Silvio Rodríguez mold take the stage at this temple of *trova* near San Ángel's Plaza San Jacinto.

Nightclubs

The capital's thriving club scene has become an obligatory stop on the international DJ circuit. To find out what's going on, pick up flyers at Condesa's Malafama billiard hall (p181).

Cibeles (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-2029; Plaza Villa de Madrid 17; 🕒 7pm-2am Tue-Sat; 🚗 Durango) This fashionable new *antro* is a low-ceilinged, L-shaped living room with a perversely eclectic array of mismatched sofas, armchairs and coffee tables. The mood swings throughout the week from quiet and conversational (Tuesday) to loud and raucous (Friday, when DJs mix '80s hits with loungey beats). Reservations are a must on weekends.

Cream (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5292-6114; Versalles 52; cover M\$120; 🕒 from 10pm Thu-Sat; 🚗 Cuauhtémoc) The longstanding El Colmillo club has been spruced up and reborn as one of the city's premier electronica venues. Beyond the ghoulishly red narrow front room, steps lead down to a hallucinatory party lounge where internationally renowned DJs work from a catwalk above a laser-lashed dance floor.

Gogo Lounge (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5281-8974; Dumas 105; cover M\$100; 🕒 10pm-5am Thu-Sat; 🚗 Polanco) The honeycombed decor in this Polanco *antro* over a sushi bar seems lifted from

the movie *Kill Bill*, with what is supposedly the largest mirror ball in Latin America. Merengue, reggaeton and pop keep a just post-pubescent crowd bouncing in a series of packed salons.

Momma (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5281-1537; Tennyson 102; ☎ 10pm-2am Mon-Sat; 📍 Polanco) Currently Polanco's hottest *antro*, Momma attracts hordes of party people. Beyond a chic, minimalist restaurant, the brightly lit hall of mirrors resounds with pop *en español* and hits from past decades. As elsewhere in Polanco, expect a discretionary admission policy. Cover prices vary.

Pervert Lounge (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-4457; República de Uruguay 70; cover M\$100; ☎ 10:30pm-5am Thu-Sat; 📍 Isabel la Católica) A pioneering electronica venue in the heart of the center, the narrow stonewalled Pervert routinely hosts DJs of the stature of Luca Ricci and Satoshi Tomiie.

Young hipsters pack the roof terrace of the Centro Cultural de España (p144) each weekend (free admission, open 10pm till 2am Thursday to Saturday) for its excellent DJ sessions. Located directly behind the cathedral, the rebuilt colonial structure is usually quaking by midnight.

Sports

Most of the daily newspapers, including the *News*, have a generous sports section where you can find out who is kicking which ball where. True enthusiasts should look for *La Afición* (www.laaficion.com), a Spanish-language daily devoted to sports.

SOCCER

The capital stages two or three *fútbol* (soccer) matches in the national Primera División almost every weekend of the year. Mexico City has three teams: América, nicknamed Las Águilas (the Eagles), Las Pumas of UNAM, and Cruz Azul. The newspaper *Esto* has the best coverage. There are two seasons: January to June and August to December, each ending in eight-team playoffs and eventually a two-leg final to decide the champion.

The biggest match of all is El Clásico, between América and Guadalajara, filling the Estadio Azteca with 100,000 flag-waving fans. This is about the only game of the year when you should get tickets in advance.

The newspapers *La Afición* and *Esto* have good soccer coverage and there are plenty of websites related to Mexican soccer, includ-

ing the comprehensive www.futmex.com and www.femexfut.org.mx. Tickets (M\$80 to M\$450 for regular season games) are usually available at the gate right up to game time, or from Ticketmaster (see p182). There are several stadiums that host games:

Estadio Azteca (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5617-8080; www.esmas.com/estadioazteca; Calz de Tlalpan 3665) The country's biggest stadium (capacity 114,000) is home to the América club. Games are played on weekend afternoons; check the website for kickoff times. Take the Tren Ligero from metro Tasqueña to Estadio Azteca station.

Estadio Azul (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5563-9040; www.cruz-azul.com.mx; Indiana 260, Colonia Nápoles; 📍 Ciudad de los Deportes) The stadium is next door to the Plaza México bullring. Cruz Azul home games kick off at 5pm on Saturday.

Estadio Olímpico (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5522-0491; www.pumasunam.com.mx; Insurgentes Sur 3000, Ciudad Universitaria) Home of the Pumas; games start at noon on Sunday. See p157 for directions.

BASEBALL

Mexico City has one team in the Liga Mexicana de Béisbol, the Diablos Rojos (www.diablos.com.mx). During the regular season (March to July) they play every other week at the **Foro Sol** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5639-8722; cnr Av Río Churubusco & Viaducto Río de la Piedad; tickets M\$25-90; ☎ 7pm Mon-Fri, 4pm Sat, noon Sun; 📍 Ciudad Deportiva). From the metro, it's a five-minute walk to the ballpark.

BULLFIGHTS

If you're not put off by the very concept, a *corrida de toros* is quite a spectacle, from the milling throngs and hawkers outside the arena to the pageantry and drama in the ring itself.

One of the largest bullrings in the world, **Monumental Plaza México** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5563-3961; Rodin 241, Colonia Nápoles; 📍 Ciudad de los Deportes) is a deep concrete bowl holding 48,000 spectators. It's a few blocks west of Av Insurgentes.

From November to March, professional fights are held on Sunday from 4pm. From June to October, junior matadors fight young bulls. Six bulls are fought in an afternoon, two each by three matadors.

The cheapest seats are in the Sol General section – the top tiers on the sunny side of the arena. Seats in the Sombra General section, on the shaded side, cost slightly more. The best seats are in the Barreras, the seven front rows, and cost M\$175 to M\$300. Between the Barreras and General sections are the Primer (1er) Tendido and Segundo (2o) Tendido.

GAY & LESBIAN MEXICO CITY

Now that the DF assembly has passed an initiative sanctioning same-sex partnerships, Mexico City is perceived as a bastion of tolerance in an otherwise conservative country, and this new openness has created a special energy in the capital. The long-time heart of gay life is the Zona Rosa – in particular, Calle Amberes has seen a recent explosion of bars, discos, nightclubs, restaurants and cafés – but pockets of activity also exist in Roma and the Centro Histórico. *Homópolis* magazine, available free in some clubs, and www.zonagayonline.com.mx (in Spanish) have useful information.

BGay BProud Café México (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5208-2547; www.bgaybproud.com; Amberes 12B; ☎ 11am-11pm; **M** Insurgentes) A good place to start your explorations, this casual café functions as a sort of nerve center for DF gay life, particularly among a younger crowd.

Black Out (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-9973; www.black-out.com.mx; Amberes 11; ☎ 5pm-2am; **M** Insurgentes) The new hotspot on the Zona Rosa's hottest street is mostly male but frequented by buff clubbers of every persuasion. Designed by *Frida* art director Felipe Fernández del Paso to evoke the cosmopolitan New York theater world, the narrow space is draped in black velvet, with a sky-high bar of status liquors.

Bar Oasis (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-9740; República de Cuba 2G; ☎ 3pm-1am Sun-Thu, 3pm-3am Fri & Sat; **M** Bellas Artes) Next door to El Viena, this packed disco cuts across class lines, with both cowboys and businessmen dancing against a Day-Glo cityscape. Stick around past midnight for shows featuring lip-synching trannies.

El Viena (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-0929; República de Cuba 2E; ☎ 1pm-3am; **M** Bellas Artes) The city's only gay cantina is a friendly if nondescript place, attracting a varied male crowd, from truck drivers to journalists. And the jukebox is terrific.

Living (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-0671; www.living.com.mx; Paseo de la Reforma 483, Cuauhtémoc; cover M\$150-170; ☎ 10pm-4am Fri & Sat; **M** Sevilla) Housed in a magnificent Italianate mansion near the Torre Mayor, Living is a temple of ecstatic nightlife for the 20-something set, both gay and straight. On the enormous main dance floor, world-class DJs cook up high-volume house sessions as sculpted performance artists/exotic dancers gyrate on an overhead catwalk. Other scenes unfold in other lounges.

La Perla (Map pp128-9; ☎ 1997-7695; República de Cuba 44; cover M\$120; ☎ shows 11:30pm & 1:30am Fri & Sat; **M** Bellas Artes) Once a red-light venue, this cabaret has been reborn in the age of irony as a cradle of kitsch, with hilarious drag shows featuring traditional Mexican songstresses. It attracts a mixed crowd, perhaps more straight than gay, in the mood to slum it. Be sure to arrive by 10:30pm to get in.

Tom's Leather Bar (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5564-0728; www.toms-mexico.com; Insurgentes 357; cover M\$120; ☎ 9pm-4am Tue-Sun; ☎ Sonora) For those who dare to get medieval, Tom's provides the props, with heraldic shields, crossed swords and candelabras highlighting a decidedly decadent decor. When the fat lady sings, the show's about to begin.

Except for the biggest *corridos*, tickets are available up to the killing of the third bull, though the best seats may sell out early. You can buy advance tickets from 9:30am to 1pm and 3:30pm to 7pm Saturday, and from 9:30am onward Sunday.

For more on bullfights, see p72.

LUCHA LIBRE (MEXICAN WRESTLING)

Mexico City's two wrestling venues, the 17,000-seat **Arena de México** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5588-0266; www.arenamexico.com.mx; Dr Lavista 197, Colonia Doctores; tickets M\$45-200; ☎ 8:30pm Fri; **M** Cuauhtémoc) and the smaller **Arena Coliseo** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5526-1687; República de Perú 77; ☎ 7:30pm Tue, 5pm Sun; **M** Lagunilla) are taken over by a circus atmosphere each week, with flamboyant *luchadores* (wrestlers) like Shocker and Tarzan Boy

going at each other in teams or one-on-one. There are three or four bouts, building up to the most formidable match-ups.

SHOPPING

Shopping can be a real joy here, with *artesanía* vendors, quirky shops and street markets competing for your disposable income.

Markets

Mexico City's markets are worth visiting not just for their varied contents but also for a glimpse of the frenetic business conducted within. Besides the major ones listed here, neighborhood markets (indicated by 'Mi Mercado' signs) also make for an interesting wander.

Mercado Insurgentes (Map pp132-3; Londres, cnr Florencia, Zona Rosa; ☎ 9:30am-7:30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm

Sun; **M** Insurgentes) Packed with crafts – silver, pottery, leather, carved wooden figures – but you'll need to bargain to get sensible prices.

Centro de Artesanías La Ciudadela (Map pp128-9; Balderas, cnr Dondé; ☎ 10am-6pm; **M** Balderas) A favorite destination for good stuff from all over Mexico. Worth seeking out are Oaxaca *alebrijes*, whimsical painted animals (local 6, northernmost aisle, near Balderas entrance); guitars from Paracho (local 61 along Pasillo 4); and Huichol beadwork (local 163, off Dondé at parking entrance). Prices are generally fair even before you bargain.

La Lagunilla (Map pp128-9; cnr Rayón & Allende; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun; **M** Garibaldi) This enormous complex comprises three buildings: building No 1 contains clothes and fabrics, No 2 has food, and No 3 sells furniture.

Mercado de La Merced (Map pp126-7; Anillo de Circunvalación, cnr General Anaya; ☎ 8am-7pm; **M** Merced) This occupies four whole blocks dedicated to the buying and selling of daily needs, with photogenic food displays.

Mercado de Jamaica (Map pp126-7; cnr Guillermo Prieto & Congreso de la Unión, Colonia Jamaica; ☎ 8am-7pm; **M** Jamaica) Huge, colorful flower market, featuring both baroque floral arrangements and exotic blooms.

Tianguis Dominical de la Lagunilla (Map pp128-9; cnr González Bocanegra & Paseo de la Reforma; ☎ Sun; **M** Garibaldi) Hunt for antiques, old souvenirs and bric-a-brac; books and magazines are alongside La Lagunilla building.

STREET MARKETS

In most neighborhoods, you'll find a *tianguis* (from the Nahuatl *tianquiztli*) at least once a week selling the freshest fruits and vegetables, with vendors shouting out '¿Que le damos?' (What can we give you?). *Tianguis* generally set up by 10am and break down around 5pm.

Bazar Artesanal de Coyoacán (Map p140; Plaza Hidalgo, Coyoacán; ☎ Sat & Sun; **M** Viveros) Has handmade hippie jewelry and indigenous crafts, jugglers, fortune-tellers and incense.

Bazar de la Roma (Map pp132-3; Jardín Dr Chávez & Álvaro Obregón, Roma; ☎ Sat & Sun; **M** Cuauhtémoc) East of Av Cuauhtémoc, this market has used and antique items, large and small: books, beer trays, posters and furniture. A similar antiques and art market runs along Álvaro Obregón on the same days.

Bazar del Oro (Map pp132-3; Calle de Oro, Roma; ☎ Wed, Sat & Sun; **M** Durango) This upscale street market between Insurgentes and Plaza Cibeles

has clothing, gifts and an excellent eating section (see boxed text, p176).

Jardín del Arte (Map pp132-3; btwn Sullivan & Villalongín; ☎ Sun; **M** Reforma) Paintings by local artists, plus art supplies, and some food.

Plaza del Ángel (Map pp132-3; Londres btwn Amberes & Florencia, Zona Rosa; ☎ Sat & Sun; **M** Insurgentes) Flea market within a mall of high-end antique shops selling silver jewelry, paintings, ornaments and furniture.

Tepito (Map pp128-9; Héroe de Granaditas; ☎ Wed-Mon; **M** Lagunilla) The mother of all street markets: maze of semipermanent stalls spreading east and north from La Lagunilla, with miles of clothes, pirated CDs and DVDs and electronics. Also known as the Thieves Market for its black-market goods and pickpockets.

Tianguis Cultural del Chopo (Map pp126-7; Calle Juan Nepomuceno; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat; **M** Buenavista) Gathering place for the city's various youth subcultures, with most of the hundreds of vendor stalls devoted to music CDs. At the far end is a concert stage for young-and-hungry bands, plus a trading post where people bring crates of CDs to swap.

Shops

Chilangos increasingly shop in modern malls with designer-clothing stores, cosmeticians and Starbucks franchises, and more of these shrines to consumerism are popping up all the time. Among the more accessible are **Plaza Loreto** (Map p139) in San Ángel; the futuristic **Plaza Molière** (Map pp136-7), at Molière and Horacio in Polanco; and the spanking new **Plaza Reforma 222** (Map pp132-3), on Insurgentes at the east end of the Zona Rosa.

Fonart Alameda (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-0171; Av Juárez 89; ☎ 10am-7pm; **M** Hidalgo); **Mixcoac** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5093-6000; Patriotismo 691; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun; **M** Mixcoac); **Reforma** (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5328-5000; Paseo de la Reforma 116; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat; **M** Cuauhtémoc) The government-run handicrafts store sells quality wares from around Mexico, from Olinalá lacquered boxes to Teotitlán del Valle blankets, as well as pottery and glassware; the Mixcoac branch has the largest selection. Prices are fixed and fair.

Bazar Sábado (Map p139; Plaza San Jacinto 11, San Ángel; ☎ 11am-6pm Sat; **M** La Bombilla) The Saturday bazaar showcases some of Mexico's best handcrafted jewelry, woodwork, ceramics and textiles. Artists and artisans also display work in Plaza San Jacinto itself and adjacent Plaza Tenanitla.

CENTRO HISTÓRICO

Mexico City's smartest department store chains, **El Palacio de Hierro** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5728-9905; Av 20 de Noviembre 3; **M**) Zócalo) and **Liverpool** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5133-2800; Venustiano Carranza 92) both maintain their original 1930s stores downtown.

The streets around the Zócalo are lined with stores that specialize in everyday goods; you'll find plenty of shops selling similar items along the same street. To the west, photography supplies and used books show up on Donceles, sports gear on Venustiano Carranza, and perfumes along Tacuba. Jewelry and gold outlets, as well as numismatists shops, are found along La Palma, while opticians are along Madero. To the south, shoes are available on Pino Suárez and Av 20 de Noviembre, and electric guitars along Bolívar. To the north, there's costume jewelry on Repúblicas de Colombia and Venezuela and beauty products along Calle del Carmen. Going east, there are tons of tools along Corregidora. Look for bicycles on San Pablo west of Mercado La Merced.

Hundreds of computer stores huddle in the **Plaza de la Computación y Electrónica** (Map pp128-9; Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas; **M**) San Juan de Letrán), south of Uruguay.

Tucked away in the backstreets are some special items.

Dulcería de Celaya (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5521-1787; Av 5 de Mayo 39; ☎ 10:30am-7pm; **M**) Allende) Candy store operating since 1874 with candied fruits and coconut-stuffed lemons; worth a look just for the ornate building.

La Bodeguita del Habano (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5510-1750; Bolívar 43; **M**) San Juan de Letrán) Cigar shop featuring Cuban brands like Montecristo and Quintero; one *habano* will cost you M\$70, a box of 25 is around M\$500.

La Europea (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5512-6005; Ayuntamiento 21; **M**) San Juan de Letrán) Reasonably priced tequilas and wines.

Palacio de las Máscaras (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5529-2849; Allende 84; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Sat; **M**) Garibaldi) More than 5000 masks from all over the country; Lagunilla market area.

CONDESA & ROMA

Condesa presents an enticing array of trendy boutiques and quirky shops scattered around the neighborhood. In Roma, by contrast, much of the retail activity is along central Álvaro Obregón, with several voluminous secondhand bookstores.

Milagro (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5286-5764; www.collection-milagro.com; Atlxco 38; **M**) Patriotismo) Designer

Sandra Gutierrez works with local artisans to create a natty line of tightly woven raffia and embroidered bags in brilliant colors and designs and all shapes and sizes.

NaCo Miscelánea (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5255-5286; Yautepec 126B; **M**) Patriotismo) This cheeky little streetwear store in the heart of Condesa carries the NaCo line of T-shirts, emblazoned with edgy or graphic messages relating to Mexican pop culture.

Chic by Accident (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5514-5723; Colima 180; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat; **M**) Insurgentes) French owner Emmanuel Picault has a fascinating collection of 20th-century furniture and objects here. The adjacent Sex By Accident concentrates on the erotica in art and sculpture.

LeMur (Map pp132-3; ☎ 3547-2182; Jalapa 85; **M**) Insurgentes) This funky store sells original toys, clothes and accessories, plus a streetwise range of slogan T-shirts, shiny bags and made-to-stand-out shoes and boots.

POLANCO

Polanco's Av Presidente Masaryk, lined with designer shops, has a global anonymity, especially when compared to the street-market bustle of the center. Pop into the **Pasaje Polanco** (Map pp136-7), just west of Dumas, a classy courtyard complex flanked by sophisticated boutiques as well as a handicrafts store.

ZONA ROSA

The Zona Rosa and surrounding neighborhoods are home to a potpourri of tacky, expensive and quality shops. The tree-lined streets west of Génova are a good place to start your shopoholic strolling.

Dione (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5514-5907; Hamburgo 124; **M**) Insurgentes) This designer from Guadalajara creates classic shoes for women in the softest of leather. Bags and wallets are also top notch.

Miniaturas Felguérez (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5525-8145; Hamburgo 85; **M**) Insurgentes) This is one souvenir you can fit in your luggage: tiny figurines in amusing scenes ranging from a group of mariachis to a cheerful family of naturalists!

Somos Plata (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-8281; Amberes 24; **M**) Insurgentes) All the silver jewelry on display here is by Mexican designers, including a good choice of earring and necklace sets.

GETTING THERE & AWAY**Air**

Aeropuerto Internacional Benito Juárez (Map pp126-7; ☎ 2482-2424; www.aicm.com.mx), 6km east of the

Zócalo, is Mexico City's only passenger airport, and Latin America's largest, with a capacity for about 24 million annual passengers.

A new terminal is expected to expand the airport's capacity. Located 3km away from the main terminal, Terminal 2 is connected by monorail, supposedly a five-minute ride. By the time it is fully operational in 2008, Delta, Aeroméxico, Continental, Lan Chile, Aeromar and Copa Airlines are expected to use the terminal, which will include a hotel, parking garage and shops.

See p983 for information on international flights and airlines serving Mexico. See the boxed text on p990 for information on domestic flights.

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

Below is what each is for:

Sala A Domestic arrivals.

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

Sala C Check-in for Aviacsa.

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 easily found.

Card phones and internet terminals abound; cards are available from shops and machines. Car-rental agencies and luggage lockers are in Salas A and E2.

Direct buses to Cuernavaca, Querétaro, Toluca, Puebla and Córdoba depart from platforms adjacent to Sala E (see the table on p194). Ticket counters are on the upper level, off the food court.

AIRLINE OFFICES

Aero California (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5785-1162; Paseo de la Reforma 332, Zona Rosa; **M** Insurgentes)

Aeromar (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5133-1111, 800-237-66-27; Torre Mayor, Paseo de la Reforma 505; **M** Chapultepec)

Aeroméxico (☎ 5133-4010) Juárez (Map pp128-9; Paseo de la Reforma 80; **M** Reforma); Zona Rosa (Map pp132-3; Paseo de la Reforma 445; **M** Sevilla)

Air Canada (Map pp136-7; ☎ 9138-0280, ext 2228, 800-719-28-27; 13th fl, Blvd Ávila Camacho 1, Colonia Lomas de Chapultepec)

Air France (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5571-6150, 800-123-46-60; 8th fl, Jaime Balmes 8, Colonia Los Morales; **M** Polanco)

Alitalia (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5533-1240, 800-012-59-00; 6th fl, Río Tíber 103, Colonia Cuauhtémoc; **M** Insurgentes)

American Airlines (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5209-1400; Paseo de la Reforma 300, Zona Rosa; **M** Insurgentes)

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

British Airways (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5387-0300; 14th fl, Jaime Balmes 8, Colonia Los Morales; **M** Polanco)

Continental Airlines (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5283-5500, 800-900-50-00; Andrés Bello 45, Polanco; **M** Auditorio)

Cubana (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5250-6355; Sol y Son Viajes, Homero 613, Polanco; **M** Polanco)

Delta Airlines (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5279-0909, 800-123-47-10; Paseo de la Reforma 381; **M** Sevilla)

Iberia (Map pp136-7; ☎ 1101-1515; Av Ejército Nacional 436, 9th fl, Colonia Chapultepec Morales; **M** Polanco)

Interjet (Map pp136-7; ☎ 1102-5555, 800-011-23-45; Centro Comercial Antara, Av Ejército Nacional 843-B)

Japan Air Lines (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5242-0150; 36th fl, Torre Mayor, Paseo de la Reforma 505; **M** Chapultepec)

KLM/Northwest (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5279-5390; 11th fl, Andrés Bello 45, Polanco; **M** Auditorio)

Lufthansa (Map pp136-7; 5230-0000; Paseo de las Palmas 239, Colonia Lomas de Chapultepec)

Magnicharters (Map pp128-9; ☎ 5679-1212; Donato Guerra 9, cnr Bucareli; **M** Juárez)

Mexicana (☎ 5448-0990, 800-502-20-00) Juárez (Map pp128-9; Av Juárez 82, cnr Balderas; **M** Juárez);

Polanco (Map pp136-7; ☎ 5395-1211; Ejército Nacional 980, Centro Comercial Pabellón Polanco; **M** Polanco);

Zona Rosa (Map pp132-3; Paseo de la Reforma 312; **M** Insurgentes)

United Airlines (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5627-0222; Hamburgo 213, 10th fl, Zona Rosa; **M** Sevilla)

Volaris (☎ 1102-8000)

Bus

Mexico City has four long-distance bus terminals serving the four compass points: Terminal Norte (north), Terminal Oriente (called TAPO, east), Terminal Poniente (west) and Terminal Sur (south). All terminals have baggage-check services or lockers (M\$5 to M\$12 per hr), as well as tourist information modules, newsstands, card phones, internet, ATMs and snack bars. For directions to the bus stations, see p196.

There are also buses to nearby cities from the airport (see the table, p193).

For trips of up to five hours, it usually suffices to go to the bus station, buy your ticket and go. For longer trips, many buses leave in the evening and may well sell out, so buy your ticket beforehand.

You can purchase advance tickets 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 listed here, a couple more are 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, mornings only on Saturday. Ticketbus also offers purchase by phone with Visa or Mastercard.

Buenavista (Map pp128-9; Buenavista 9; 🚇 Revolución)

Centro Histórico (Map pp128-9; Isabel la Católica 8E;

🚇 Isabel la Católica)

Condesa (Map pp132-3; Iztaccíhuatl 6, cnr Insurgentes;

🚇 Chilpancingo)

Polanco (Map pp136-7; Av Presidente Masaryk, cnr Hegel;

🚇 Polanco)

Reforma (Map pp132-3; Paseo de la Reforma 412;

🚇 Sevilla) Across from La Diana Cazadora.

Roma Norte (Map pp132-3; Mérida 156; 🚇 Hospital General)

Zócalo (Map pp128-9; Turismo Zócalo, Palma 34;

🚇 Zócalo)

See the table on p194 for a list of daily services from Mexico City. More information can be found in other town and city sections of this book. It's all subject to change, of course.

Check schedules by phoning the bus lines or by visiting their websites.

ADO Group (☎ 5133-2424, 800-702-80-00; www.ticketbus.com.mx) Includes ADO, ADO GL, UNO, OCC and AU.

Autovías, Herradura de Plata (☎ 5567-4550)

Estrella Blanca Group (☎ 5729-0707; www.estrella blanca.com.mx) Includes Futura, Elite and Turistar.

Estrella de Oro (☎ 5649-8520; www.autobus.com.mx)

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

ETN (☎ 5089-9200, 800-800-0386; www.etn.com.mx)

Omnibus de México (☎ 800-765-66-36; www.odm.com.mx)

Primera Plus, Flecha Amarilla (☎ 800-375-7587; www.flecha-amarilla.com.mx)

Pullman de Morelos (www.pullman.com.mx)

TERMINAL NORTE

Largest of the four terminals, the **Terminal de Autobuses del Norte** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5587-1552; www.centraldelnorte.com.mx; Av Cien Metros 4907, Colonia Magdalena de las Salinas) serves points north, including cities on the US border, plus some points west (Guadalajara, Puerto Vallarta),

east (Puebla, Veracruz) and south (Acapulco, Oaxaca). Deluxe and 1st-class counters are mostly in the southern half of the terminal. Luggage-storage services are at the far south end and in the central passageway; the latter section contains a hotel-booking agency.

TERMINAL ORIENTE

Terminal de Autobuses de Pasajeros de Oriente (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5762-5894; Calz Ignacio Zaragoza 200, Colonia Díez de Mayo), usually called TAPO, serves points east and southeast, including Puebla, Veracruz, Yucatán, Oaxaca and Chiapas. Bus-line counters are arranged around a rotunda with a restaurant and internet terminals at the center. There's an ATM outside the AU counters and left-luggage service in Tunnel 3 beside Estrella Roja.

TERMINAL PONIENTE

Central de Autobuses del Poniente (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5271-0149; Sur 122, Colonia Real del Monte) is the point for buses heading to Michoacán and shuttle services running to nearby Toluca. In addition, ETN offers service to Guadalajara.

TERMINAL SUR

Terminal Central del Sur (Map p140; ☎ 5689-9745; Av Taxqueña 1320, Colonia Campestre Churubusco) serves Tepoztlán, Cuernavaca, Taxco, Acapulco and other southern destinations, as well as Oaxaca, Huatulco and Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo. Estrella de Oro (Acapulco, Taxco) and Pullman de Morelos (Cuernavaca) counters are on the right side of the terminal, while OCC and Estrella Roja (Tepoztlán) are on the left. In Sala 1, you'll find a left-luggage service, agents booking Acapulco hotels and an ATM.

Car & Motorcycle 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 can often do better by booking online. For a list of rental agencies, check www.mexicocity.gov.mx, then click 'Transporte' and 'Renta de Autos.'

Avis (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5511-2228; Paseo de la Reforma

308; 🚇 Insurgentes)

Thrifty (Map pp132-3; ☎ 5207-1100; Paseo de la Reforma 322; 🚇 Insurgentes)

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

The *Ángeles Verdes* (Green Angels) can provide assistance from 8am to 8pm. Phone

☎ 078 and tell them your location. For more information, see the boxed text on p994.

ROUTES IN & OUT OF THE CITY

Whichever way you come in, once you're past the last *caseta* (toll booth) you enter a no-man's-land of poorly marked lanes and chaotic traffic. These *casetas* are also the points from which 'Hoy No Circula' rules take effect (see p200).

East

From Puebla, the highway eventually feeds traffic left into Ignacio Zaragoza. Stay on Zaragoza for about 10km, then move left and follow signs for Río de la Piedad (aka Viaducto Miguel Alemán), exiting left after the metro crosses the highway. From the Viaducto, exits access all the key areas. Get off at Viaducto Tlalpan to reach the Zócalo, and Av Monterrey to Roma and the Zona Rosa.

Coming out of the airport, keep left to head south along Blvd Puerto Aéreo. After you cross Zaragoza, watch for signs to Río de la Piedad and Viaducto Alemán.

Heading for Puebla, Oaxaca or Veracruz, take the Viaducto Alemán east. This is most conveniently accessed off Av Cuauhtémoc (Eje 1 Poniente). Immediately after crossing over the Viaducto – by the Liverpool department store – turn left for the access ramp. Take the Viaducto to Av Zaragoza, then follow the signs for Oaxaca until you join the Puebla highway.

North

From Querétaro, the last toll booth as you approach the city is at Tepetzotlán. Continue south, following signs for Cd Satélite and Toreo. Move into the lateral at the first signs indicating the 'Río San Joaquín' exit, which appears just north of the giant dome of the Toreo arena. Take this exit; the ramp curves left over the Periférico. Keep right as you go over, then follow signs for 'Circuito Interior.' After passing the Corona factory, take the Thiers exit. Keep left, following signs for Reforma, and you'll end up on Río Misisipi, which intersects Reforma at the Diana roundabout. Turn left on Reforma to get to the Centro Histórico, or continue straight ahead for Roma.

Leaving the city, the simplest option is to take Reforma to the west end of Bosque de Chapultepec, then a right exit to pick up the Periférico northbound.

Coming from Pachuca, Hidalgo and northern Veracruz, the highway feeds into Av Insurgentes. Follow the signs for the Centro Histórico and Zona Rosa. Leaving the city, take Insurgentes north (also the route to Teotihuacán).

South

After the last *caseta* on the autopista from Cuernavaca, continue straight, taking a right exit for Calz Tlalpan (some signs are hidden behind trees). Calz Tlalpan eventually feeds into Av 20 de Noviembre, which ends at the Zócalo. Leaving town, turn right (south) at the Zócalo onto Pino Suárez, which becomes Calz Tlalpan. About 20km south, signs indicate a left exit for the *cuota* (toll highway) to Cuernavaca.

West

Coming from Toluca, about 4km past the high-rises of Santa Fe, keep left and follow signs for Paseo de la Reforma. Go straight down Reforma, past the Fuente de Petróleos and Bosque de Chapultepec to reach downtown. Heading west out of the city, take Paseo de la Reforma, which feeds right into the *cuota* to Toluca.

GETTING AROUND

Mexico City has an inexpensive, easy-to-use metro and an equally cheap and practical bus system plying all the main routes. Taxis are plentiful, but some are potentially hazardous (see p141).

To/From the Airport

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.

BUSES FROM MEXICO CITY

Destination	Fare	Duration	Terminal in Mexico City	Bus company	Departures
Acapulco	executive M\$475	5hr	Sur	Estrella de Oro	7 daily
	deluxe M\$315	5hr	Sur	Estrella de Oro	every 30 min
	1st-class M\$315	5hr	Sur	Futura	every 30 min 5am-8pm
	1st-class M\$315	5hr	Norte	Futura	hourly
Bahías de Huatulco	deluxe M\$678	14-15hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	1 daily
	1st-class M\$598	14-15hr	Norte	OCC	1 daily
	1st-class M\$525	14-15hr	Sur	Futura	2 daily
Campeche	deluxe M\$1016	17hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	1 daily
	1st-class M\$892	17hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO	5 daily
	1st-class M\$892	17hr	Norte	ADO	5 daily
Cancún	deluxe M\$1350	24hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	1 daily
	1st-class M\$1186	24hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO	5 daily
	1st-class M\$1186	24hr	Norte	ADO	5 daily
Chetumal	1st-class M\$916	19hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO	4 daily
Chihuahua	1st-class M\$1052	20hr	Norte	Ómnibus de México	8 daily
Ciudad Juárez	1st-class M\$1319	24hr	Norte	Ómnibus de México	10 daily
Cuernavaca	executive M\$72	1¼hr	Sur	Pullman de Morelos	every 30 min to 9:30pm
	deluxe M\$63	1¼hr	Sur	Pullman de Morelos	every 15 min to midnight
	1st-class M\$125	1¼hr	Airport	Pullman de Morelos	every 30 or 40 min to 12:30am
Guadalajara	deluxe M\$570	7hr	Norte	ETN	20 daily
	deluxe M\$570	7hr	Poniente	ETN	7 daily
	1st-class M\$470	7hr	Norte	Primera Plus	28 daily
Guanajuato	deluxe M\$371	5hr	Norte	ETN	10 daily
	1st-class M\$305	5hr	Norte	Primera Plus	11 daily
Matamoros	1st-class M\$710	14hr	Norte	Futura	5 daily
	executive M\$968	14hr	Norte	Turistar	2 daily
Mazatlán	1st-class M\$808	15½hr	Norte	Elite	hourly
Mérida	deluxe M\$1194	20hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	1 daily
	1st-class M\$1006	20hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO	6 daily
	1st-class M\$1006	20hr	Norte	ADO	5 daily
Monterrey	deluxe M\$828	11½hr	Norte	Turistar	7 daily
	1st-class M\$687	11½hr	Norte	Futura	13 daily
Morelia	deluxe M\$290	4-5hr	Poniente	ETN	every 30 min
	1st-class M\$255	4-5hr	Norte	Primera Plus	hourly
Nuevo Laredo	deluxe M\$1060	16hr	Norte	Turistar	5 daily
	1st-class M\$815	16hr	Norte	Futura	10 daily
Oaxaca	deluxe M\$614	6½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	UNO	3+ daily
	deluxe M\$432	6½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	4+ daily
	deluxe M\$432	6½hr	Norte	ADO GL	1 daily
	deluxe M\$432	6½hr	Sur	ADO GL	1 daily
	1st-class M\$362	6½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO	17+ daily
	1st-class M\$362	6½hr	Norte	ADO	5+ daily
Palenque	1st-class M\$706	13½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO	2 daily
	1st-class M\$706	13½hr	Norte	ADO	1 daily

BUSES FROM MEXICO CITY (CONTINUED)

Destination	Fare	Duration	Terminal in Mexico City	Bus company	Departures
Papantla	1st-class M\$220	5hr	Norte	ADO	4 daily
Pátzcuaro	1st-class M\$286	5hr	Norte	Primera Plus	2 daily
	1st-class M\$270	5hr	Norte	Autovías	5 daily
	1st-class M\$270	5hr	Poniente	Autovías	13 daily
	deluxe M\$170	2hr	Airport	Estrella Roja	hourly
Puebla	deluxe M\$112	2hr	Oriente (TAPO)	Estrella Roja	every 40 min
	1st-class M\$120	2hr	Norte	ADO GL	every 30 min
	1st-class M\$96	2hr	Oriente (TAPO)	Estrella Roja	every 20 min
	1st-class M\$604	14hr	Norte	OCC	1 daily
Puerto Escondido	1st-class M\$568	14hr	Sur	OCC	2 daily
	1st-class M\$514	14hr	Sur	Futura	3 daily
	1st-class M\$772	12½hr	Norte	Futura	4 daily
Puerto Vallarta	deluxe M\$225	3hr	Norte	ETN	every 20 or 30 min
	1st-class M\$235	3hr	Airport	Primera Plus	hourly
	1st-class M\$173	3hr	Poniente	Primera Plus	5 daily
	1st-class M\$138	3hr	Norte	Primera Plus	every 20 min
San Cristóbal de Las Casas	deluxe M\$896	13hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	2 daily
	deluxe M\$896	13hr	Norte	ADO GL	1 daily
	1st-class M\$770	13hr	Norte	OCC	4 daily
San Luis Potosí	deluxe M\$410	5hr	Norte	ETN	hourly
	1st-class M\$300	5hr	Norte	Primera Plus	hourly
San Miguel de Allende	deluxe M\$276	4hr	Norte	ETN	4 daily
	deluxe M\$225	4hr	Norte	Primera Plus	3 daily
Tapachula	deluxe M\$1144	16-18hr	Oriente (TAPO)	UNO	1 daily
	deluxe M\$916	16-18hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	1 daily
	1st-class M\$782	16-18hr	Oriente (TAPO)	OCC	6 daily
Taxco	deluxe M\$105	2½hr	Sur	Estrella de Oro	8 daily
	1st-class M\$105	2½hr	Sur	Estrella Blanca	hourly
Teotihuacán	2nd-class M\$28	1hr	Norte	Autobuses Teotihuacán	every 15 min 6am-6pm
	1st-class M\$64	1¼hr	Sur	OCC	every 40 min
Tepoztlán	1st-class M\$63	1¼hr	Sur	Estrella Roja (to Caseta)	every 20 min 7:20am-10pm
	1st-class M\$1400	41hr	Norte	Elite	hourly
Toluca	deluxe M\$100	1hr	Airport	TMT Caminante	hourly
	deluxe M\$49	1hr	Poniente	ETN	every 20 or 30 min
	2nd M\$34	1hr	Poniente	Flecha Roja	every 10 min to 11:30pm
Tuxtla Gutiérrez	deluxe M\$1090	12hr	Oriente (TAPO)	UNO	1 daily
	deluxe M\$876	12hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	2 daily
	1st-class M\$760	12hr	Oriente (TAPO)	OCC	6 daily
	1st-class M\$760	12hr	Norte	OCC	4 daily
Uruapan	deluxe M\$430	6hr	Poniente	ETN	7 daily
	1st-class M\$360	6hr	Norte	Primera Plus	5 daily
	1st-class M\$335	6hr	Poniente	Autovías	11 daily
Veracruz	deluxe M\$526	5½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	UNO	4+ daily
	deluxe M\$372	5½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	8 daily
	deluxe M\$348	5½hr	Sur	ADO GL	3+ daily
	1st-class M\$314	5½hr	Sur	ADO	hourly
	1st-class M\$314	5½hr	Norte	ADO	6+ daily
	2nd-class M\$244	7hr	Sur	AU	hourly

BUSES FROM MEXICO CITY (CONTINUED)

Destination	Fare	Duration	Terminal in Mexico City	Bus company	Departures
Villahermosa	executive M\$998	10½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	UNO	1 daily
	deluxe M\$698	10½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	3 daily
	deluxe M\$698	10½hr	Norte	ADO GL	1 daily
	deluxe M\$698	10½hr	Sur	ADO GL	1+ daily
	1st-class M\$618	10½hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO	6 daily
	1st-class M\$618	10½hr	Norte	ADO	4 daily
Xalapa	deluxe M\$380	5hr	Oriente (TAPO)	UNO	5+ daily
	deluxe M\$264	5hr	Oriente (TAPO)	ADO GL	6+ daily
	1st-class M\$222	5hr	Norte	ADO	4 daily
Zacatecas	1st-class M\$491	8hr	Norte	Ómnibus de México	14 daily
Zihuatanejo	executive M\$550	9hr	Sur	Estrella de Oro	1 daily
	deluxe M\$440	9hr	Sur	Estrella de Oro	3 daily
	1st-class M\$440	9hr	Sur	Futura	5 daily
	1st-class M\$420	9hr	Poniente	Autovías	6 daily

Note: + indicates additional departures on weekends

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.

At the time of writing, there was no convenient metro link to Terminal 2, for Delta, Aeroméxico and Continental flights. You'll need to go to the main terminal and take the monorail, departing every five minutes from above Puerta 5, in the domestic arrivals area.

TAXI

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 A (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 Salas 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.

To/From the Bus Terminals

The metro is the fastest and cheapest way to any bus terminal, but it's tricky to maneuver through crowded stations and cars. Taxis are an easier option: all terminals have ticket booths for secure *taxis autorizados*, with fares set by zone (M\$20 surcharge from 10pm to 6am). An agent at the exit will assign you a cab.

TERMINAL NORTE

Metro Línea 5 (yellow) stops at Autobuses del Norte, just outside the terminal. To the center, follow signs for 'Dirección Pantitlán,' then change at La Raza for Línea 3 (green) toward 'Dirección Universidad.' (The La Raza connection is a six-minute hike through a 'Tunnel of Science.')

The taxi kiosk is in the central passageway; a cab for up to four people to the Alameda or Zócalo costs M\$85.

TERMINAL ORIENTE (TAPO)

This bus terminal is next door to metro station San Lázaro. To the center or Zona Rosa, take Línea 1 (pink) toward 'Dirección Observatorio.'

The authorized taxi booth is at the top (metro) end of the main passageway from

the rotunda. The fare to the Zócalo is M\$60; to the Zona Rosa, M\$70.

TERMINAL PONIENTE

Observatorio metro station, the eastern terminus of Línea 1 (pink), is a couple of minutes' walk across a busy street (the pedestrian bridge has been closed until further notice). A taxi ticket to Colonia Roma costs M\$70; to the Zócalo it's M\$98.

TERMINAL SUR

Terminal Sur is a two-minute walk from metro Tasqueña, the southern terminus of Línea 2 which stops at the Zócalo. For the Zona Rosa, transfer at Pino Suárez and take Línea 1 to Insurgentes (Dirección Observatorio). Going to the terminal, take the 'Autobuses del Sur' exit, which leads upstairs to a footbridge. Descend the last staircase on the left, then walk through a street market, to reach the building.

Authorized taxis from Terminal Sur cost M\$95 to the Zona Rosa or Centro Histórico. Ticket booths are by the main exit and in Sala 3.

Bicycle

Bicycles can be a viable way to get around town and are often preferable to 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. Mexico City's Mayor Marcelo Ebrard has encouraged bicycle use, and though it still isn't a common mode of transportation in the capital (except by delivery boys), cycling does seem to be catching on slowly.

Bikes are loaned free from a module on the west side of the Catedral Metropolitana daily from 9am to 6pm. Leave a passport or driver's license for two hours of riding time. Otherwise, you can rent a bicycle from a **module** (Map pp128-9; ☎ 8am-6pm; per hr/day M\$50/150) on Paseo de la Reforma, just outside the Museo de la Antropología.

The *ciclovía* is an extensive bike trail that follows the old bed of the Cuernavaca railroad as far as the Morelos border. It extends 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.

Another 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 – they drive or even park on it. A third route runs along Paseo de la Reforma from the Auditorio Nacional to the Museo Rufino Tamayo. Follow the red stripe.

Bus, Pesero & Trolleybus

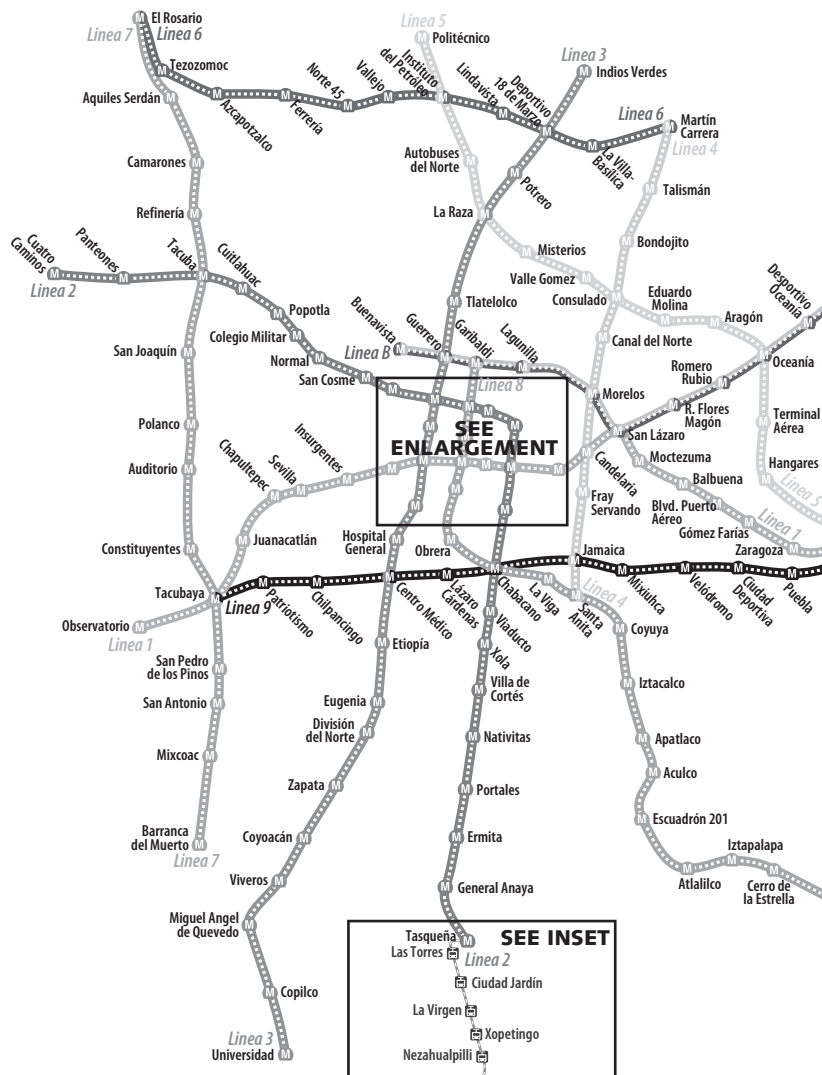
Mexico City's thousands of buses and peseros (also called minibuses or combis) operate from around 5am till 8pm or 9pm daily; electric trolleybuses until 11:30pm. Only a few routes run all night, notably those along Paseo de la Reforma and the metrobus along Av Insurgentes. This means you'll get anywhere 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. 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.

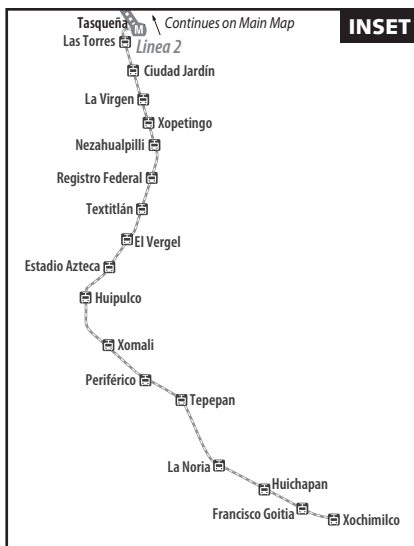
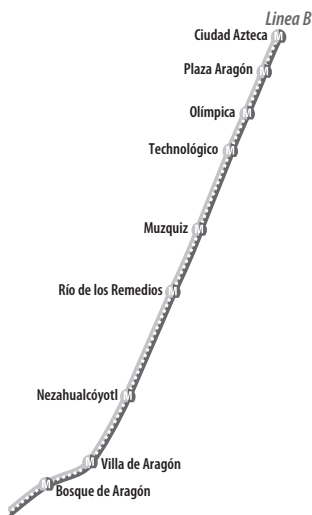
A recently installed alternative to peseros, the metrobus plies a dedicated lane along Av Insurgentes from Metro Indios Verdes in the northern DF down to the southern end of San Ángel, near the national university (at the time of research, construction was under way to extend the line 8.5km further south 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 entrance to the platforms, and rides cost M\$3.50. 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 trolleybuses follow a number of the key *eyes* (priority roads) throughout the rest of the city.

MEXICO METRO



MEXICO METRO



Some useful routes:

Autobuses del Sur & Autobuses del Norte (trolley-bus) 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).

Car & Motorcycle

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 the 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.

DRIVING RESTRICTIONS

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 numbers determine 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

Metro

The metro system offers the quickest way to get around Mexico City. Ridden by about 4.6 million passengers on an average weekday, it has 175 stations and more than 200km of track on 11 lines. Trains arrive every two to three minutes during rush hours. At M\$2 a ride, it's one of the world's cheapest subways.

All lines operate from 5am to midnight weekdays, 6am to midnight Saturday and 7am to midnight Sunday. Platforms and cars can become alarmingly packed during rush hours (roughly 7:30am to 10am and 3pm to 8pm). At these times the forward cars are reserved for women and children, and men may not proceed beyond the 'Solo Mujeres y Niños' gate.

With such crowded conditions, it's not surprising that pickpocketing occurs, so watch your belongings.

The metro is easy to use. Lines are color-coded and each station is identified by a unique logo. Signs reading 'Dirección Pantitlán,' 'Dirección Universidad' and so on name the stations at the ends of the lines. Check a map for the direction you want. Buy a *boleto* (ticket), or several, at the *taquilla* (ticket window), feed it into the turnstile, and you're on your way. When changing trains, look for 'Correspondencia' (Transfer) signs. Maps of the vicinity around each station are posted near the exits.

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 p141). If you must hail a cab off the street, check that it has actual taxi license plates: numbers begin with the letter L (for *libre*, or free), and a green stripe runs along the bottom. Check that the number on them matches the number painted on the bodywork. Also look for the *carta de identificación* (also called the *tarjetón*), a postcard-sized ID that 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 *libre* cabs, 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 about two or three times as much as the others, but this extra cost adds an immeasurable degree of security, which may not be such a bad thing. Their plates begin with S – for *sitio* (taxi stand) – and bear an orange stripe. When you phone, the dispatcher will tell you the cab number and the type of car.

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

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

RET (☎ 8590-6720, 8590-6721)

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

Taxi-Mex (☎ 9171-8888, 5634-9912)

Taxis Radio Unión (☎ 5514-8124)