

Mexico City's Cultural Bucket List: Not-to-Miss Landmarks, Attractions and Experiences

A vibrant, contemporary culture that combines modern, colonial and pre-Hispanic influences dating back to 1325, Mexico City is a thriving arts and cultural metropolis, offering a multitude of rich experiences for visitors of varying interests. The city's creative class of artists, architects and designers is alluring for travelers from around the world as they explore the enriching neighborhoods and rapidly growing contemporary art events.

The capital city is the hometown of art legends Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo and boasts more than 100 art galleries, 150 museums and 30 distinct architectural and historic sites telling the story of its ancient origins. Interested in planning a visit to explore Mexico City? Here is a list of some of not-to-miss cultural landmarks, attractions and experiences to check off on your travels:

Museums, Cultural & Historical Sites

- **Chapultepec Castle:** Situated on a hill in the middle of Chapultepec Park, Chapultepec Castle was built from 1778 to 1788 and has served as a Military Academy, residence of Emperor Maximilian, Astronomical Observatory and residence for all Mexico's presidents from 1872 until 1939. Now functioning as the National History Museum inaugurated in 1944, visitors can get a glimpse into the lives of the Second Empire and the presidents by viewing many priceless historical objects. The castle also has one of the most beautiful views of Mexico City, and Aztecs believed a cave nearby provides one of the two entrances to the Mictlán, the Aztec underworld.
- **Zócalo:** Known as the historic center of Mexico City, the Zócalo is typically a place of celebration for Mexico City. Around the zone you can appreciate: the city's pre-hispanic past by walking through archeological site of Templo Mayor; colonial highlight buildings as the Catedral Metropolitana, and some of the buildings that host the art movement product of the Revolution: Muralism. At Zócalo you can feel the strength of the city.
- **Coyoacan:** Coyoacan offers beautiful tree-lined cobblestone streets with colonial-era estates hidden behind high walls. Museo Frida Kahlo, the former home of Frida Kahlo – or, The Blue House – serves as a museum in her honor since 1958, established shortly after her passing in 1954. The museum houses several pieces of artwork as well as many of the artist's personal possessions, including clothing, jewelry, collections of folk and pre-Hispanic art that once belonged to Frida and her husband, famed Mexican muralist, Diego Rivera.
- **Museo Casa Estudio Luis Barragán:** The only private residence in Latin America to be named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Casa Luis Barragán was constructed in 1948 and former residence of architect Luis Barragán. The house serves museum and as a representation of 20th-century architecture with maximum use of natural light, strong non-harmonic color schemes, geometric forms and differentiating room heights.
- **National Museum of Anthropology:** The National Museum of Anthropology is one of the few museums in the world to showcase *objets d'art* from one country including the Sun's Stone and the treasure of King Pakal's grave.

Visual and Performing Arts, Cultural Events

- **Conservatorio Nacional de Música:** Located in the cosmopolitan Polanco neighborhood, the Conservatorio Nacional de Música was designed and built by famous Mexico City architect and urbanist Mario Pani in 1946. Characterized by its formal innovation and functional resolution, the building also hosts the oldest symphonic orchestra in the country.
- **Mexican Wrestling:** One of Mexico City's most authentic experiences is to be a spectator at the dramatic, humorous *Lucha Libre*, or Mexican wrestling. Watch masked superheroes (*técnicos* or good guys) take on villains (*rudos*) inside the ring as you sip tequila and take home your own mask. Tour guides offer packages including pickup and drop off at your hotel, souvenirs and tickets, or you can venture to Arena México on your own easily by public transportation or taxi.
- **Palacio de Bellas Artes:** One of the most beautiful and recognizable landmarks in the city, Palacio de Bellas Artes is a hub for visual and performing arts working as a museum presenting major national and international exhibitions, besides preserving the Mural heritage they hold. The theater is entitled to present the top expressions of national and international scene.
- **Teatro Telcel:** The underground Teatro Telcel is an avant-garde theater staging Broadway and original artistic performances.

Architectural Attractions and Landmarks

- **Camino Real** (Architect: Ricardo Legorreta): Camino Real Polanco boasts a unique architectural concept, created by highly-regarded architect Ricardo Legorreta who built the hotel for the Mexico City 1968 Olympics. Legorreta is known for his use of bright colors—pink, purple, yellow, blue—the interplay of light and shadow, and bold geometric shapes. The five-star hotel is one of the best examples of Mexican modern architecture and is considered a Hotel-Museum for its beauty and art collection.
- **Centro Cultural Elena Garro** (Architects: Fernanda Canales + Arquitectura911SC): Transforming a 20th century home into an open space cultural center respecting the original building, Centro Cultural Elena Garro is one of the most successful bookstores across the country with three sections comprising it. Inaugurated in 2012, the structure features a transparent wall greeting visitors from the sidewalk and a series of gardens surrounding it and built inside. The actual within serves as transition space and library uniting all areas of the cultural center.
- **Conjunto Arcos Bosques** (Architects: Teodoro González de León, Francisco Serrano, Carlos Tejeda): Conjunto Arcos Bosques (Architects: Teodoro González de León, Francisco Serrano, Carlos Tejeda): When the first, twin-legged tower of the Arcos Bosques office complex was inaugurated in 1996, it quickly became known as “The Pants.” The second building, completed in 2008, has two separate twin towers linked by a central walkway. Located in the middle of one of Mexico City's most upscale residential neighborhoods, both the Bosques de las Lomas and the Conjunto Arcos Bosques have become one of Mexico City's instantly recognizable landmarks.
- **Torre BBVA Bancomer** (Architect: Rogers, Stirk Harbour Partners, and Legorreta + Legorreta): When it's completed, Torre BBVA Bancomer will become the tallest building in Mexico, standing at 781 feet high next to the Torre Mayor, the current tallest building in the country. Its design draws on Mexican architectural traditions and optimizes natural daylight. It also gives the building a texture that evokes traditional lattice screens or ‘celosias’.

- **Torre Mayor** (Architect: Zeidler Partnership Architects and Adamson Associates Architects): Currently the tallest building in Mexico, the Torre Mayor (which translates to “Major Tower”) rises 738 feet above Mexico City's most important avenue, Paseo de la Reforma. Built by Toronto developer Paul Reichmann and inaugurated in 2003, it was downtown Mexico City's first important skyscraper since the devastating 1985 earthquake. The green-glass and stone tower features 98 mammoth shock absorbers, making it one of the strongest buildings on Earth for earthquake resistance.

These are only a few of the many areas to explore in Mexico’s capital. Visitors will find that Mexico City is a treasure chest of cultural gems to experience, with new discoveries around every turn. For more information, visit <http://mxcity.mx/en/>.