

The Eye

The background of the magazine cover is a photograph of the Mexico City skyline. In the foreground, there are purple jacaranda trees. Behind them, the Cathedral of Mexico is visible, featuring a large dome with orange and yellow stripes and a statue of the Virgin of Luján on top. To the right of the cathedral is the Torre Latinoamericana, a tall skyscraper with a glass facade and a spire. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Beach, Village + Urban Living in Mexico

February 2025

Issue 145

FREE

The CDMX Issue



Layne Ulmer Karla Mendez Mike Leon Lindsay Harder Erin May Brent May Leah Guzmán Hector Cisneros Bryan Paschke Mario Devcic

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Editor's Letter

"Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends." – Maya Angelou

There are a few questions I hear all the time from people traveling to Mexico that drive me absolutely crazy. I get it: people have questions, and the media has done its part to paint a very specific, often inaccurate picture of what to expect in Mexico. But still, these questions speak to outdated assumptions and biases that need to be addressed.

The first one: Can I drink the water? Is the ice safe? We tackled this topic in our water issue back in November, but here's the short answer—yes, you'll be fine if you stick to bottled or filtered water, which is the norm. This isn't the mystery it used to be. Restaurants and hotels understand their clientele, and they've adapted accordingly.

The second one, and maybe the most infuriating: How much should I expect to pay for something? Specifically, the cost of a ride from the airport. Whenever I've traveled—whether it's Paris, Chicago, or anywhere else—I've never thought to research what a taxi ride should cost to my hotel. The mere act of asking seems rooted in the assumption that you'll be scammed in some way, which is not only offensive but also highlights a lack of trust and understanding of local culture.

And finally: Is Mexico City safe? Whether I'm talking about how much I love CDMX, how my daughter is thriving there, or asking if someone managed to visit, the knee-jerk response is often a concern for safety. Let's be clear: Mexico City is one of the most dynamic, exciting, and culturally rich cities in the world. Of course, like any large city, it has its issues—use your street smarts, just as you would in New York, Toronto, or Berlin.

In this issue, we're diving into all the reasons Mexico City is so special, there are so many things to see, do, and experience. So, if you've ever hesitated to explore this extraordinary city, let this be the nudge you need. Plan a layover in CDMX the next time you travel or even a weekend getaway - you won't be disappointed and may even discover your new favorite destination.

See you next month,

Jane



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Where the Locals Hang Out: The Unsung Treasures of CDMX

By Carole Reedy

The comfortably trite expression “There’s no place like home” perfectly describes my emotion when, upon arrival, the airplane descends through the smog that covers my home of 15 years, and the hazy image of the Mexico City megalopolis comes into view. I’m a traveler whose favorite destination is a city, large or small, elite like Paris or scruffy like Naples. But with each trip and in my advanced years I appreciate returning to the wonder that is my chosen residence.

The lure of a large city is that things are ever changing, but one thing that doesn’t shift is the secure feeling I get while roaming the cracked sidewalks of my home city. (Mexico City was built on an ancient lake bed, into which it is gradually sinking, hence the *craquelure* of my walkways.)

Other sources of joy are the places I frequent, from street cafes and *puestos* (food stalls) to bookshops that haven’t changed much over the years. Here’s a sampling.

True Napolitana pizza

Come to Anahuac 38, Colonia Roma Sur, to San Giorgio Pizzeria for true Italian pizza. It was started by three friends who wanted to bring the authentic taste of Italian pizza to Mexico City.



The mozzarella cheese is made fresh daily and only high-quality, 100% Italian products are used in the restaurant. Great variety in the topping ingredients will please all taste buds. The lasagna and cannelloni also will satisfy a taste for old-country cuisine.

The owners and employees work long hours to please their clientele. The restaurant is open daily from 1 pm until 11 pm. Take-out and delivery are also available.

Carnitas in a shopping center?

It’s not my habit to eat in a shopping center (I can hardly bear to shop in one). REFORMA 222 is the exception. Located on the city’s most famous avenue, where a select number of stores provide the familiarity of constancy, *El Bajío* restaurant on the ground floor is actually one of 18 locations in the city. It always surprises me that this eatery isn’t listed among the city’s best restaurants in the many tourist articles that crowd the internet.



For 52 years, starting with one location, the Degollado family has been cooking Mexican food that mostly hails from the states of Michoacán, Puebla, Veracruz, and Oaxaca.

The signature dish, *carnitas* (literally “little meats”), is pork, Michoacán style, which you can order by the kilo, with or without the fat (*maciza*), appropriately served with tortillas and garnishes. Be sure to ask about the spiciness of the sauces (*¿Qué tan picante es esto?*). Even if the server tells you it is *un poquito picante* continue to beware if you have a tender palate.

The rest of the menu is filled with Mexican specialties to suit all tastes. Another favorite of mine is *tacos de lengua* (tongue tacos). There are soups, main meat dishes, and a breakfast menu also. You will find many of your favorite traditional Mexican ingredients used here. You can’t go wrong in your choice.

Forego street tacos for the ambiance of Mexico in this attractive well-established restaurant, whose main publicity is word of mouth. Hours daily: 8 am to 11 pm.

Only duck tacos served here

Manila restaurant has a couple locations in the city, but I’m most familiar with the one in the Condesa neighborhood at Culiacán 91 (close to the major avenue Insurgentes). The small locale seats a few people inside at the counter and a couple of tables, as well as a few tables on the sidewalk in front. Nothing fancy here, just good food.



Only two varieties of tacos are served, but a side order of wontons is available. Beer and soft drinks are your beverage choices.

The tacos: the first variety is duck meat in a flour tortilla with cucumber and hoisin sauce. The other is shredded duck on a warm corn tortilla, with cilantro and chopped onion (my preference).

Like the other eateries mentioned here, the establishment is open many hours a week, beginning at 1 pm and closing as late as 11 pm on the weekends.

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Gypsy Pizza

Fifteen years ago while *flaneuring* in my new neighborhood, Cuauhtémoc, I stumbled across a tiny Italian restaurant on Calle Rio Neza 30 called *Mezzo Mezzo*. I returned with a friend who was enthusiastic about trying an unusual pizza on the menu called "Gypsy Pizza."



Truthfully, it sounded awful to me, but wanting to please my friend I agreed to order it, figuring I could pick off the parts I didn't like. To my surprise, the flavors of Brie cheese and figs blended perfectly. Now I take guests there as a routine part of the city tours I enjoy providing.

It's not just the Gypsy Pizza that's the lure, but a warm feeling of security that returning to a familiar restaurant or place provides. Now, 15 years later, I still recognize one of the servers. The wine list remains the same, and the prices have not increased as much as in the other, greedier establishments of this popular neighborhood.

The restaurant is quite busy between 2 pm and 5 pm on weekdays due to a hungry lunch crowd. Not to worry, as with several of my other favorite establishments here, the owners are accommodating, with hours seven days a week noon to midnight.

The most sumptuous dessert ever

This dessert is called *El Mil Hojas de Frutos Rojos* (Mille Feuille with Red Berries) and it is found at one of the most popular bakeries in Mexico City, Rosetta Bakery.



No doubt you have seen the publicity for the Rosetta restaurant (Calle Colima in trendy Roma Norte) and its renowned award-winning chef Elena Reygadas. The bakery is located just down the street.

First, it is a bakery where you can carry out the most interesting croissants, breads, and desserts, or you can simply enjoy them at the counter with a cappuccino. But there's also a small outdoor cafe where excellent sandwiches are served. Only the highest quality meats, cheeses, and other ingredients are used in a Rosetta establishment.

The outstanding item here, however, is the dessert, *Mil Hojas*, available both by the slice or whole for special occasions according to the number of people you are serving. The cream and fresh raspberries nestled between layers of puff pastry and pastry cream combine to create a heavenly, not too sweet, taste.

Mil Hojas is French in origin. In 1651, chef François Pierre de la Varenne published the recipe for *mille-feuille* in *Le Cuisinier François*. Don't confuse it with a Napoleon. Napoleon has layers of almond paste instead of cream. Traditional *mille-feuille* consists of three layers of puff pastry alternating with two layers of pastry cream.

The Rosetta Bakery is open mornings starting between 7:00 to 7:30am. It closes between 9:30 and 10 pm.

The only criticism I've read on TikTok of this marvelous treat is the cost. Too expensive? Worth every peso, in my view.

Rio Lerma: The street of *comida corrida*

This is the street to visit to learn the true meaning of *comida corrida*, which is literally Mexico's *fast food*. Don't be fooled by the name. This is no McDonald's or Burger King, but rather a healthy well-balanced meal usually consisting of four parts: soup, rice or pasta, meat or fish, and a simple dessert. There's always a fixed menu, changed daily to accommodate nearby workers who frequent these restaurants.



Apparently the tradition of *comida corrida* started with the urbanization of the city during the "reign" of Porfirio Díaz. Workers traveled far from home for their employment and had little time to eat. The *comida corrida* satisfied with a healthy and filling meal.

Sprinkled all along Rio Lerma starting at Rio Marne and ending at Rio Elba you will find several of these establishments serving traditional Mexican meals. Should your taste buds yearn for something other than Mexican, there's also a selection of foreign food restaurants, from Uruguayan and Japanese to Italian. It's a wonderful street for the curious traveler!

The most reliable recommendations usually originate by word of mouth or are discovered via *flaneuring*. Walking aimlessly is the manner in which I found these gems. I hope you'll discover even more on your journey through this awe-inspiring city.



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Three Thrilling Days in Mexico City

By Marcia Chaiken and Jan Chaiken

We can't quite imagine having only three days to explore the wonders of Mexico City. Even during decades of long-term visits when we enjoyed so many parks, museums, music venues, restaurants and theaters, it was sometimes difficult to select from the next available offerings. But realizing that you may not have the luxury of an extended vacation, we have selected two walkable sectors and a bus tour in CDMX as a possible limited three-day deep taste of the richness the city has to offer.

Centro Historico

The historic center of Mexico should not be missed. Almost all forms of transportation can bring you to the central zocalo (plaza) area (see the article by Julie Etra elsewhere in this issue). We suggest beginning at the beginning – the archeological Aztec site of the Templo Mayor (main temple, or *Huēyi Teōcalli* in Nahuatl). Walking through the remains and the museum that is run by the federal agency INAH (*Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*) will help you appreciate the magnificence of the empire that existed in the 1300s. It was governed from the city of Tenochtitlan that was centered on this very spot – two hundred years before the Spanish invasion in the 1500s.



Leap ahead several centuries after the Spanish demolished this thriving empire – primarily through diseases brought from Europe – and across the zócalo visit the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, aka The CDMX Metropolitan Cathedral. This magnificent baroque structure, which opened in 1813, is a prime example of the persistent attempt of the Spanish invaders to supplant every aspect of the indigenous culture with their own, while using the wealth and physical strength of those whom they conquered to do so. The project began in 1524 as a more modest church but over the following decades the plans for a cathedral developed with the involvement of the Pope. As you'll no doubt find out on your tour, over the centuries, the architecture and furnishings became more and more elaborate.



We suggest then stopping by the ticket office at the National Palace to buy tickets for an afternoon entrance and tour. You might then spend some time exploring the handicrafts being sold by vendors in the zocalo. You're likely to find some unique souvenirs. But perhaps more importantly, you'll find that both the people and the crafts are a fine mix of the DNA and culture of both the indigenous and European people with modern ingenuity.

Once you've had enough of deciding which vendors deserve your pesos, we suggest walking the few blocks to the incredible cultural center Palacio de Bellas Artes. This is the home of the Ballet Folklórico, and if you've never seen them and your visit coincides with a performance, we urge you to purchase tickets at the box office on the first floor. Or find out what other musical performances are being presented that night either in the main auditorium (itself worth a tour) or upstairs in the small but acoustically perfect Sala Manuel M. Ponce. After purchasing entrance tickets to the upstairs art gallery, climb the stairs to continue your Mexican history education by studying the striking 1934 mural by Diego Rivera, *Man at the Crossroads*. Rivera basically incorporates his own view of the development of modernity in the details of this masterpiece. The other murals and art in the gallery are all deserving of discovery, but we urge you to spend sufficient time scrutinizing the Rivera mural until it becomes a permanent part of your memory.



You must be getting hungry by now, so head to the nearby *Sanborns de los Azulejos* (Sanborns in the House of Tiles, at Madero 4). You will probably need to put your name on a list to sit in the main dining room, but there is plenty to explore while you wait. One of the oldest restaurants in CDMX, and formerly an 18th Century palace, the architecture and artwork are enchanting. (And if your feet are beginning to blister, as in almost all Sanborns, there's a pharmacy). After being seated, enjoy the ambiance, including many families with well-behaved children enjoying the dishes Sanborns has served for generations.



After you're rested, watered and fed, wander slowly back to the zocalo, enjoying the sights and musical sounds of the area, and arrive the National Palace to view another Rivera masterpiece depicting the history of Mexico and other murals. In addition to the building, which has functioned as the seat of government for centuries since the time of Cortez, there is a garden within the walls which provides a quiet place for enjoying the plants and flowers and perhaps even a quick siesta. Had enough history? You might head over to the Museum of Modern Art – and stop by the always busy restaurant El Cardinal (next to the museum) to put your name on a list for a table for an early dinner before your evening performance at Bellas Artes. Or choose to visit the National Museum of Popular Arts and dine at the El Cardinal Alameda (in the Hilton Hotel Reforma, Avenida Juárez 70).



Chapultepec Park

You haven't been to Mexico City if you haven't been to the Park. Plan to spend the whole day. But before you enter the Park check out the National Auditorium ticket office to buy tickets for an evening performance either in the Auditorium or on the grounds of the Chapultepec Castle in the park. Begin your day in the park at the Museum of Anthropology (Paseo de la Reforma Avenue and Gandhi Street in the Polanco neighborhood). After buying your ticket, head right to the visitors' services desk and ask about tours. The place is enormous and covers thousands of years, so a knowledgeable guide is useful for a first visit. If no tours are scheduled during your visit – don't worry. Ask for a map of the museum and a suggested route. There will be videos and written explanations along your way. You are about to have an immersive experience of the many cultures that developed in Mexico while the Europeans were still painting themselves blue and literally living a hand-to-mouth existence. The artwork and crafts are remarkable, the religious practices well before the Aztecs are notable, and the opulent lifestyles of the royal classes rival those of today's celebrities. And the variations between different times and geographical regions are well worth paying close attention to. If your head starts swimming and you need a break, there is a cafeteria with decent food and a lovely garden setting featuring, of course, huge artifacts from digs around the country. You could certainly spend the whole day in this museum, but most visitors find that four hours is the very most they can absorb.



Another rewarding visit in the park for plant lovers is the Botanical Gardens. There are over 300 botanical species, and whether you are a fan of cacti, orchids or dahlias, you will be delighted by the display. If you are more a lover of art than orchids, you have a decision to make. The Park's Museum of Modern Art (MAM) has an interesting permanent collection, including works by Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco. Our many trips to the museum have been for temporary exhibitions that have been serendipitously fascinating. On the other hand, you can head to the Tamayo Museum of Contemporary Art and blow your mind with over 300 paintings, sculptures and photographs by 170 artists that were collected by Olga and Rufino Tamayo.



Once you've seen almost more than your mind can take, we suggest a quiet stroll around the lake in the park. If you've selected an evening performance at the Chapultepec Castle, there are restaurants and carts with vendors selling a quick bite to eat before you climb the hill or take the trolley up to your performance. If you're heading back to the National Auditorium, we suggest nearby El Bajío, always delicious and always busy – so call first to reserve.



Turibus

So ... in two days you've walked your feet off and filled your brain with some of the best of Mexico City. For your third day, we urge you to take the Hop-on Hop-off Turibus around the city. We avoided taking the bus for years based on sheer snobbery, but broke down when one of our granddaughters joined us



in CDMX for a week. The views of the different neighborhoods are lovely, the audio patter both educational and amusing, and places that are accessible (including the central historic area and the National Auditorium/Chapultepec Park) are a taste for your next trip to Mexico City. You might consider winding up your bus tour at the Soumaya Museum stop. The lovely little Degas miniatures on the top floor are alone worth a visit. If you are planning to do that, buy tickets for a performance at the Telcel Theater a block away. We've seen superb performances there of Broadway shows including Les Miz and the Lion King – in Spanish of course, but you already know the words. And for dinner before the performance, the mall Telcel Plaza Carso has a plethora of great restaurants.

Selecting places to visit in Mexico City in just three days is a challenge. We've had years of exploration and weren't able to hit all the high spots. Still, we hope that, if you must curtail your time in the city, we've provided suggestions you will enjoy and will entice you to return.

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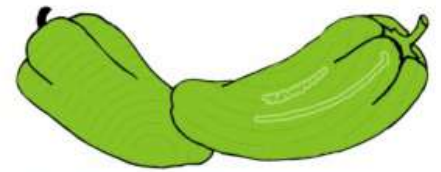
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5 Things: Coyoacán, CDMX

By Frances López

1. Stay: H21 Hotel Boutique

This boutique hotel offers a modern yet cozy retreat in the heart of Coyoacán. With only five uniquely designed rooms, H21 provides a peaceful escape while still being within walking distance of the neighborhood's attractions. Its blend of comfort and style ensures guests feel at home while exploring this historic area.



2. Eat: Los Danzantes Coyoacán

Located in a colonial-style building, this restaurant serves Mexican cuisine with a modern twist. Known for its innovative takes on traditional dishes, Los Danzantes is the perfect spot to enjoy mole, mezcal, and seasonal ingredients. Be sure to pair your meal with one of their expertly crafted cocktails.



3. Eat: El Jarocho Café

A Coyoacán institution, El Jarocho Café has been serving some of the best coffee in Mexico City since 1953. Locals and visitors flock here for their strong, aromatic brews and fresh pastries. The simple charm of this spot makes it a great place to start your day in the neighborhood.



4. See: Mercado de Coyoacán

Take a stroll through this bustling market. The food stalls are the star of the show, with a variety of mouth-watering dishes like freshly made quesadillas stuffed with flor de calabaza (squash blossoms), huitlacoche (corn fungus), and chicharrón. Don't miss the tostadas stand, where you can try toppings like shrimp, ceviche, or cochinita pibil. Beyond the food, the market has traditional crafts, handmade jewelry, and souvenirs. Brightly colored piñatas dangle overhead, and the aroma of spices and fresh produce fills the air. Take your time exploring the aisles and chatting with friendly vendors, who are often happy to share their stories or recommend their favorite items. Whether you're hunting for a unique gift or simply soaking up the lively atmosphere, the Mercado de Coyoacán is an unforgettable experience.



5. See: Jardín Centenario and Fuente de los Coyotes

The heart of Coyoacán, Jardín Centenario is a square surrounded by cafés and shops. The central fountain, featuring bronze coyotes, pays homage to the neighborhood's name (Coyoacán translates to "place of coyotes" in Nahuatl). Spend some time here enjoying the atmosphere or catching a glimpse of a street performance.



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INQUIRIES: www.alma-huatulco.com

A Walk on the Weird Side: Way, WAY off the Beaten Track in Mexico City

By Deborah Van Hoewyk

Elsewhere in this issue, you will find great hints for how to see Mexico City at its best. But ... suppose you've done all that? Or maybe ... suppose you want to see what's not so "best"? One of my sharpest memories of Mexico City is inveigling my hubby into an open front oyster bar (I'm a big fan of oysters on the half-shell) that had lively, loud music and cheap oysters. His memory is that it was a prostitute joint, the oyster shuckers were all drunk, and a few had cuts dripping blood onto the oysters. Oh, well. (No one got sick.)

If you're in search of your own unusual experience in Mexico City, here are four such diversions.

1. How about **The Island of the Dolls** (*La Isla de las Muñecas*)?

Xochimilco is a borough in southeastern Mexico City famous for its lakes and canals that run among those famous floating gardens, or *chinampas*. At its Aztec height, the Valley of Mexico was filled with lakes and canals connecting various settlements – Xochimilco was a city in its own right. *The Eye* has published articles on the chinampas, notably the Chaikens' July 2024 piece on "Aztec 'Farm to Table' Cuisine."



On one chinampa in Laguna Teshuilo, sometimes called "Tequila," there is no food grown. Once owned (or taken care of) by Don Julián Santana Barrera, who died in 2001, the island is now covered in "dead dolls" – disfigured, discolored, dismembered, dolls. Legend has it that Don Julián discovered on the shore of the island (or maybe floating in the canal) the body of young girl, drowned, and he was frantic with dismay that he could not restore her to life. A day later, he discovered a doll floating in the canal, assumed it was hers, and hung it on a tree to appease her spirit. A day later, another doll, another tree. Her spirit apparently not appeased, Don Julián began a life-long search for abandoned dolls to be placed throughout the island.

In 2001, when Don Julián was 80, he was fishing with his nephew off the shore of the island. He started to sing, telling his nephew that mermaids were calling him into the water. The nephew went ashore for something, and when he came back, Barrera was floating in the canal, dead, in the same place he had found the girl. There is no confirmation that the drowning victim ever existed, but Don Julián's family saw an opportunity and opened the island to tourists.

You can visit the island by *trajinera*, the colorful flat-bottomed boats that ply the canals of Xochimilco. Go by Metro to the boat launch **Embarcadero Cuemanco**, in the southeast part of the city, and rent a trajinera – same price for all who will fit, about four hours, expect to pay about \$100 USD and up, plus tip. Make sure of the price, and that the destination is Island of the Dolls before you leave. You can also rent a kayak at Embarcadero Cuemanco, go in a group with a guide, and expect to pay about \$65 USD, plus tip.

2. Speaking of Xochimilco, how about its most famous denizen, **the axolotl**?

When the Aztecs developed their lake-basin city, the axolotl thrived in its waters; the Spanish eventually drained everything but Xochimilco, which became the axolotls' sole habitat. While your chances of seeing an axolotl in the wild from your trajinera are limited (they're not that big, much of the water is pretty dirty), they are fascinating creatures worth the effort to see up close and personal. *The Eye* has run articles on this cutie amphibian (see "I ♥ Axolotls," by Julie Etra, February 2024).



Axolotls are amphibians, but they're "paedomorphic" – they stay little kids, i.e., they don't really metamorphose into land animals. Although they can walk on the ground like their relatives the salamanders, like Melville's Bartleby, they would "prefer not to." They keep their gills and stay in the water for life. They can be small (6 inches fully grown) to large (18 inches); some are pink and cute, others are an uninspired mottled brown. They've made it into feature films, cartoons, documentaries, the computer game Minecraft, and Diego Rivera's paintings, not to mention onto Mexican money and a postage stamp.

Axolotls are an indicator species for amphibians, that is, their health and the health of their environment tell us a lot about the fate of amphibians in general – from flourishing to on the edge of extinction. Axolotls are of great interest in terms of medical research, as they are extremely good at regenerating missing body parts.

Unfortunately, pollution and competing invasive species in the Xochimilco canals have decimated the axolotl populations. Despite funding cuts for research and support programs under Mexico's last president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), researchers at the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) have undertaken restoration efforts. Working with the *chinamperos* (farmers), they have set up bamboo cages in the canals as "refuges" for axolotls, where their growth and health are monitored.

You can learn more about the axolotls at a couple of places. In the Chapultepec Zoo, you will find **Anfibium**, the *Museo del Axolote y Centro de Conservación de Anfibios*, a museum and preservation center devoted to preserving Mexican amphibians, especially the axolotl. Very *Science Friday*, for fans of U.S. public radio. Both the Zoo and the Anfibium are free; the Anfibium is closed Mondays, otherwise open from 10 AM to 3:30 PM.



There is also *Axolotitlán*, the Museum of the Axolotl, located in Parque Tarango, also called El Segundo Parque de las Águilas. The park is southwest of the city center – a taxi or UBER will take you out *Prolongación* 5 de Mayo to the park; the museum is at # 521. The museum is closed Mondays, otherwise open from 9 AM to 4 PM; apparently there are tours to Xochimilco to see the work being done there, although you would have to inquire.



On February 1 and 2, the Museo celebrates the Día Nacional del Axolote, with everything from academic conferences and documentaries to kids' activities and *muchas mas sorpresas!* In this case, adults pay \$100 MXN and kids \$50 MXN to get in.

3. As we all know, Mexico's politics are intertwined with violence. Early babyboomers may remember the **Tlatelolco Massacre**.

The year 1968 saw worldwide protests driven by left-wing politics aimed at reducing social inequality, upholding racial civil rights, supporting workers' rights, and expressing anti-war and anti-military sentiment. Combined with the rise of a youth counterculture, demonstrations broke out across the western world (in the US, France, England, Italy, and elsewhere).

In 1968, Mexico was preparing to host the Olympics, and there was great concern about whether protests, ongoing since early summer, against the repressive PRI government would disrupt the event. On October 2, students from UNAM, the National Polytechnic Institute, and other universities, gathered in the Plaza of Three Cultures in the Tlatelolco section area of the Cuauhtémoc borough in what was supposed to be another peaceful protest against the government. While it took years for the official documents to be released, there is now general agreement that the Olympia Battalion, organized by then-president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz for Olympic security, was signaled to close off the square by flares shot into the square from helicopters. There is less agreement on whether the Olympia Battalion had been instructed to fire covertly on Mexican soldiers, thus causing them to fire on the demonstrators. But fire they did, killing anywhere from 28 to 300-400 demonstrators and onlookers.

Memorial 68 is a museum that tells the story of any number of protests by the Mexican people, but it emphasizes 1968 and the Tlatelolco Massacre.



The museum is located at Avenida Ricardo Flores Magón 1, in Tlatelolco, near the site of the massacre. It is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Admission is free on Sundays; otherwise, it's \$40 MXN, half price for students, teachers, and members of INAPAM (seniors), IMSS, and ISSSTE.

There's also **La Piedra del '68** (The Stone of '68), which commemorates the student protests of 1968. Unveiled in 1998, 30 years after the event, it incorporates a volcanic rock from the UNAM campus, with quotes from student leaders. You can find it at Eje 7 Sur Extremadura, in the Insurgentes Mixcoac neighborhood of the borough of Benito Juárez.

4. Are you into **ruin porn**?

“Ruin porn” is shorthand for the capture – by photographing, writing about, or observing – of urban decay. While travelers, writers, and painters have been “doing the ruins” since the Renaissance, this go-round is devoted to cataloging the decline of cities as they abandon various areas in favor of something new. Basically, it's an over-enthusiastic taste for detritus left behind when cities don't clean up after themselves.



Mexico, of course, is rife with ancient ruins, and LIDAR (light detection and ranging) technology is finding more hidden in Mexico's jungles every day. These are not the stuff of ruin porn. But, oh, the Desert of the Lions – no desert, no lions – is definitely ruin porn.

Ex Convento del Desierto de los Leones is the name of a ruined monastery – in this case, called a convent – and of Mexico's first national park, where the convent's remains are located. Built by barefoot Spanish Carmelite monks in 1606, the monastery was christened “desierto” for its distance from the center of Mexico City (although it lies entirely within today's CDMX, in the borough of Cuajimalpa de Morelos), and “leones” because the Spanish were surprised at how many pumas, which they called “lions,” there were in the area. It might also have been called “de los Leones” because there is evidence that the Leon family financed at least some, if not all, of its construction. (It is referred to as a convent in part because the Carmelites were an order of both friars and nuns, although there is no evidence that there were ever nuns in residence.)

By 1810, the barefoot monks (think of the rattlesnakes, the scorpions, the tarantulas!) had abandoned the monastery. Already starting to decay from excessive humidity, and the monks' desire to avoid being involved in the just-started War of Independence against Spain, El Desierto de los Leones served briefly as a military barracks, and then was left to what engineers call “graceful degradation.” There are those, however, who say the monks never left, and their spirits haunt the buildings and grounds.

President Lerdo de Tejada declared the area a national reserve in 1876, and President Venustiano Carranza named it a national park in 1917.



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There are any number of ways to reach the national park and/or the monastery, but you will need to be resourceful. The best way to is to take an UBER – it should be less than \$10 USD and take about 45 minutes, depending on where you start. Be sure to specify you are going to the **Ex** Convento del Desierto de los Leones (the Convento del Desierto de los Leones is on the north side of CDMX), that you want to be picked up to return, and what time. It is possible to get there by public transportation, but the end stages are ever-changing. Take the metro to Barranca del Muerto station (line 7), whence you can take a bus to Santa Rosa, and then a taxi or walk – Internet reports say the number of the bus to Santa Rosa changes, where it goes changes, and sometimes it goes right to the park so no need for a taxi. There are other metro stations fairly close by, then use the taxi technique. Getting BACK by public transportation is an iffy proposition, make sure you find out how to do that when you are dropped off. There are organized tours that visit the convent, and hiking tours that include the convent and hiking in the park – they tend to be on the pricey side.

The former monastery is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The admission fee is 20 pesos per person and allows access to the building and its outer grounds. There are food stalls at the entrance, so you won't go hungry or thirsty. Watch your step to avoid rattlesnakes, and do not sample the mushrooms – the ones here are all toxic!



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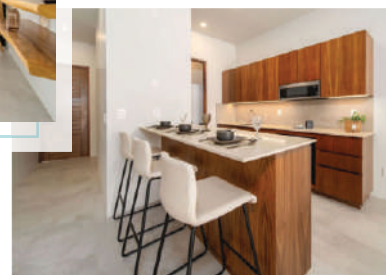
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From Sea to Market: The Fishing Industry in Huatulco

By Randy Jackson

There is one foundational pillar of the economic prosperity of the Huatulco area on which everything rests: the sea. Its beauty, vastness, and potential for recreation are the central reasons for virtually all development here. Yet beneath its glittering surface, the sea is a living, breathing ecosystem – a source of sustenance, inspiration, and balance that has shaped the lives and cultures of people here for millennia. Among its many gifts, the fishing industry stands as both a testament to the sea's generosity and a reminder of the delicate relationship between human activity and the natural world. A kind of reverence for the sea lies in seeking a deeper understanding of its ecosystem. To that end, I offer some information about the local features of this portion of the Pacific and the fishing industry that depends upon it.

Local Ocean Features

The continental shelf off the coast of Huatulco is relatively narrow, especially when compared to the much broader fishing grounds found further north. It extends about 5 to 10 nautical miles (9 to 18 kilometers) from the shore, whereas the shelf near Mazatlán can stretch as far as 80 to 100 kilometers. The steep drop-off at the edge of the shelf facilitates “upwelling,” a process where deeper, nutrient-rich waters rise to the surface, fostering abundant marine life. This abundance attracts larger fish, which feed on smaller species and create opportunities for local fishermen. The proximity of deep waters to the coast further benefits local fishermen, granting them easier access to rich fishing grounds.

Seasonal ocean currents significantly influence fishing near Huatulco. The Costa Rica Coastal Current, most active from November to May, brings nutrient-rich waters that enhance fish abundance during fishing seasons. In contrast, the North Equatorial Countercurrent introduces warmer, nutrient-poor waters from June to October, shifting species availability and fishing patterns. Other currents, while less direct, can also impact local conditions. Additionally, large-scale climate phenomena like El Niño, which warms ocean waters, and La Niña, which cools them, further amplify variability, adding unpredictability to fishing conditions for local fishermen.

Puerto Ángel is the primary fishing port in the region. Located approximately 60 km (37 miles) west of Huatulco, it lies near the western boundary of the Gulf of Tehuantepec. This area marks a transition between the open Pacific coast of Oaxaca and the waters of the Gulf of Tehuantepec. The convergence of these two ocean ecosystems fosters rich biodiversity and supports highly productive fishing grounds.



Fishing Regulations

Mexico's fishing industry is federally regulated. CONAPESCA (*Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca*) is the agency responsible for licensing, regulating, monitoring, and promoting aquaculture and the fishing industry. Overall, there are two general categories of fishing licenses: large and small vessels. Small vessels (less than 10 meters) dominate the local fishing industry near Huatulco. Although there are regulations that cover the smaller boats, there is virtually no enforcement of any regulations for these vessels on the Oaxacan Coast. CONAPESCA has one inspector to cover the contiguous coasts of Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Chiapas, a shoreline of about 1,400 kilometers. There is closer monitoring of the larger fishing vessels. However, only a small number of these vessels operate in Oaxacan waters, primarily commercial shrimp and shark boats operating out of Salina Cruz.

I could not determine the number of small fishing vessels operating in the Huatulco area. CONAPESCA reported 2,097 licensed smaller boats on the Oaxacan coast in 2023. However, there are significant numbers of unlicensed vessels, and subsistence fishing is allowed without a license. It is safe to say that most smaller vessels (pangas) fishing off the coast of Huatulco and more broadly in Oaxaca are not licensed and do not report their catch.

The Huatulco Fish Market

There is no central market for fish in Huatulco. Instead, small independent fishermen from various locations along the coast sell their catch directly or through intermediaries. Local buyers include small stores that sell both local and imported fish and seafood, as well as a variety of restaurants. While some stores and restaurants maintain direct relationships with individual fishermen, most transactions involve middlemen. These intermediaries are sometimes referred to as “coyotes,” a term that can carry a derogatory connotation but often does not reflect the services they provide. Middlemen act as ready cash buyers for fishermen. They also represent reliable suppliers for buyers by working with a diverse network of fishermen. Additionally, they sometimes offer loans to fishermen and credit to buyers, thus playing an important role in the local fishing economy.

The people selling fish from coolers along the street in La Crucecita are usually not fishermen. Like local street sellers of many things, these vendors are trying to make a living by buying fish from middlemen and reselling for a profit. This shouldn't dissuade anyone from buying from these vendors as it supports their livelihood and can be a convenient way to buy fish and seafood.



Current Fishing Conditions

With the plethora of oceanic variables, it is difficult to determine why fishing in the Huatulco area is poor this year. The water, for whatever reason, is warmer, not favoring a productive fishery, particularly for dorado (mahi mahi) and tuna. Fishermen have been forced to go much farther from shore to try their luck, up to 20 - 30 kilometers, making fishing more expensive, time-consuming, and risky.



Sustainability Efforts

Despite the challenges of overfishing and lack of enforcement facing the local fishing industry, some efforts are being made towards the sustainability of the fishery. In some cases, a group of local fishermen have initiated actions to move from net to hook fishing and for fishermen to agree to restrict the catch of some species to a specific calendar period. The region's extraordinary marine biodiversity highlights the importance of such efforts. Huatulco's waters are part of a migration route for humpback whales, sea turtles, and other species, offering a reminder of the interconnectedness and abundance of marine life. These seasonal migrations and the area's rich ecosystems highlight the need to balance human activity with conservation to ensure the sea's enduring abundance.

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Things to See and Do in Mexico City

By Jane Bauer

1. Soumaya Museum

One of the best museums in the world, its iconic, futuristic design, covered in hexagonal aluminum tiles, houses over 66,000 artworks. The museum features diverse collections, including pre-Hispanic artifacts, European art, and modern Mexican works. Admission is free, making it accessible to all. Named after Carlos Slim's late wife, it's a must-visit destination for art, history, and design enthusiasts.



2. National Museum of Anthropology

Considered one of the finest museums in the world, this is an essential stop to truly understand Mexico's rich cultural and historical tapestry. Its impressive architecture leads to exhibits that showcase pre-Columbian civilizations, such as the Aztecs, Mayans, Olmecs, and Toltecs. The iconic Aztec Sun Stone and intricate Mayan artifacts are highlights. Set aside plenty of time to wander through its spacious halls and lush courtyards..



3. Zócalo (Plaza de la Constitución)

The heart of Mexico City, the Zócalo, is one of the largest city squares in the world and a hub of Mexican history and culture. Visit the Metropolitan Cathedral, which blends baroque and neoclassical styles. Don't miss the National Palace, home to Diego Rivera's monumental murals depicting Mexico's history. The square comes alive during festivals and events, such as Día de los Muertos and Independence Day celebrations.



4. Frida Kahlo Museum (La Casa Azul)

Located in the charming neighborhood of Coyoacán, this museum is a tribute to the life and work of iconic Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. The "Blue House," where she was born and later lived with Diego Rivera, is filled with her personal belongings, artwork, and fascinating memorabilia. The lush garden and bright blue walls create an intimate setting that provides insight into her artistic and personal world.



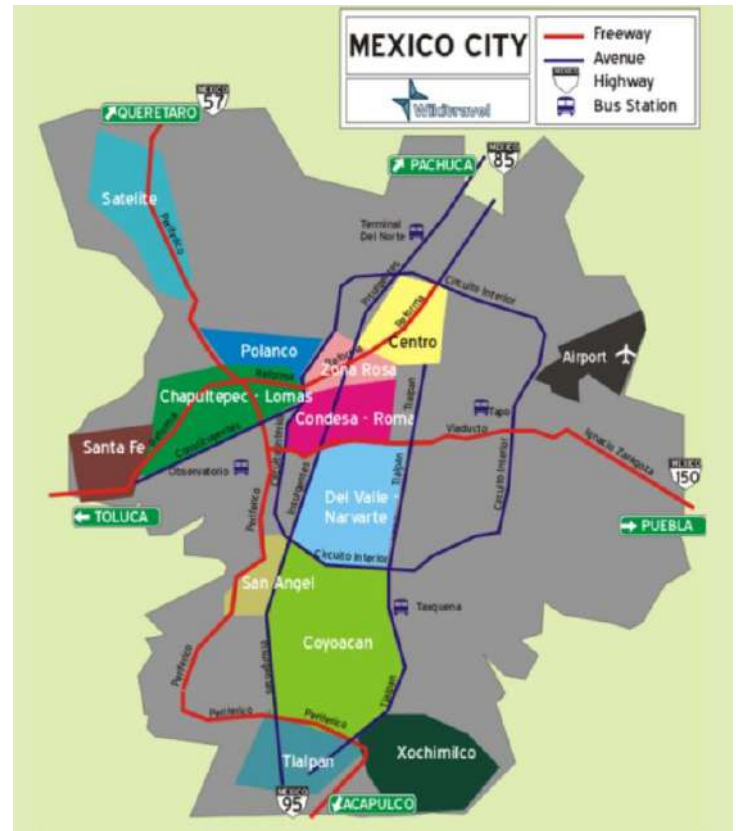
5. Teotihuacán Pyramids

Just a short drive from the city, the ancient city of Teotihuacán is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most significant archaeological sites in Mexico. Walk along the Avenue of the Dead, climb the Pyramid of the Sun for a breathtaking view, and explore the Pyramid of the Moon. The site's history remains mysterious, with roots that predate the Aztecs, who later adopted and revered it.



6. Roma and Condesa Neighborhoods

Known for their bohemian vibe, these trendy areas offer charming streets, Art Deco architecture, boutique shops, art galleries, and excellent restaurants and cafes.



7. Vasconcelos Library

This "Megabiblioteca," is a stunning blend of architecture and literature. Designed by Alberto Kalach, its futuristic structure features floating bookshelves, lush gardens, and open spaces that inspire creativity. Housing over 600,000 volumes, it's both a cultural and architectural marvel. Named after philosopher José Vasconcelos, it's a haven for book lovers and a symbol of Mexico's dedication to knowledge and innovation.



8. Palacio de Bellas Artes

This cultural gem is an architectural masterpiece, combining Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles. Inside, the main hall is adorned with a Tiffany stained-glass curtain, and the upper levels house murals by renowned Mexican artists like Diego Rivera. The venue hosts performances ranging from ballet to opera, making it an epicenter for the arts. Even if you don't catch a show, the building is worth visiting for its beauty alone.



9. San Juan Market (Mercado de San Juan)

Food lovers won't want to miss this iconic market, famous for its wide variety of gourmet and exotic foods. You'll find everything from fresh seafood and high-quality meats to exotic ingredients like edible insects. It's a great place to try authentic Mexican dishes or even sample international flavors. The lively atmosphere and bustling stalls make it a feast for the senses.



10. Torre Latinoamericana

Once the tallest building in Mexico City, this iconic skyscraper is a testament to the city's resilience, having withstood several major earthquakes. Head to the observation deck for stunning panoramic views of the sprawling metropolis, especially beautiful at sunset or after dark when the city lights twinkle. There's also a café and a small museum to enjoy while you take in the sights.



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Tuesday, February 11

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Public Transportation in Mexico City

By Julie Etra

Pre-Hispanic Transportation

The original form of transportation in the pre-conquest city of Tenochtitlán, now modern Mexico City, was by flat-bottomed canoes called *trajineras*. It is unclear if there was any form of “public” transportation through the canal systems surrounding the island. Some of these canals persisted until about 1920 and continued to be used for commerce—particularly for transporting food and flowers—as well as for personal transportation. At the time, these canals and aqueducts connected the heart of the city to areas like Chalco and Xochimilco in the south. Xochimilco, and to a lesser extent Lago Nabor Carrillo, are existing remnants of the pre-conquest wetland system. Lago Nabor Carrillo, an artificial rectangular lake, is what remains of Lake Texcoco. It is hydrologically isolated, contains numerous wells, and serves as a water storage system for Mexico City.



The 20th Century

Electric trams, or *tranvías* as they are known in Spanish, began operating in the historic central part of the city in the 1900s. These streetcars were initially horse-drawn but were later modernized with overhead electrical lines while still using the original rail system. The *Compañía de Tranvías Eléctricos de México* took ownership of the city's public transportation network in 1901. As automobiles became more popular in the 1930s, public transportation expanded to include an extensive bus system that served what were then considered the outskirts of the city, such as Coyoacán.



The newer *Servicio de Transportes Eléctricos* was organized in 1947 but did not completely take control of the system until 1952. Following the activation of the Metro system (see below), tram routes were gradually abandoned until the last urban tram—including the *círculo histórico* (historic district route)—closed in 1979.

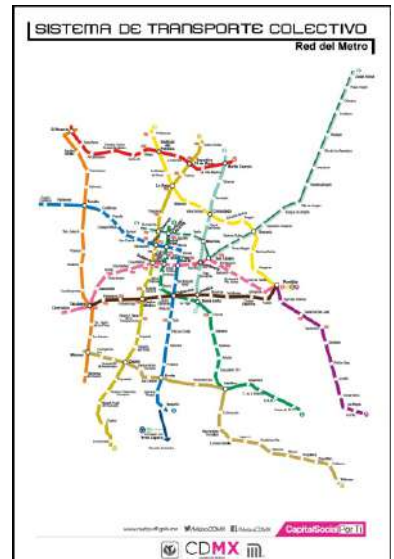
In 1925, the wooden bus in which Frida Kahlo was traveling back to her home in Coyoacán was hit by a heavier metal tram, resulting in the severe accident that crippled the artist when she was only 18 years old.



The Metro System

After decades of relying on color-coded buses, the Mexico City Metro was first conceived in 1967. The first line opened in 1969, covering an initial route of 12.7 kilometers (7.9 miles). The system was built in response to the ever-increasing traffic of the mid-1950s, particularly in the downtown historic center, where it was often said to be faster to walk than to drive.

This rapid transit system is the second-largest in North America, following the New York City subway. As of 2015, it included 12 lines and 195 stations, with 115 of those stations underground. The deepest station lies 35 meters (115 feet) below ground. The Metro uses pneumatic (rubber) tires, which ensure a quieter and smoother ride compared to steel wheels. Many stations are named after historical figures or events, providing an educational experience along with transportation.



Engineering assistance for the Metro was provided by France, including the pneumatic technology. Construction occurred in seven phases, with the last phase completed in 2015. The design also accounted for earthquakes; rectangular structures were used instead of arches, which helped the system withstand the 8.0 earthquake of 1985 with minimal damage. During that event, the Metro was shut down to avoid electrocution and to allow for debris removal.

Excavation for the Metro yielded more than 20,000 archaeological findings, as well as fossils, including mammoth bones. During the construction of Stage 1 in the late 1960s, the Mexica Temple of Ehécatl was discovered near the future Pino Suárez station, requiring a complete redesign of the project.



You can buy a Metro Card at ticket booths and vending machines in the Metro station, from the machines in a Metrobús station, or from the ticket windows in the light rail stations. The Metro Card is rechargeable at those locations. If you have a Metro Card, you can use it for the Ecobici public bicycles – there are other ways to use the bikes, check them out on <https://mexicocity.cdmx.gob.mx/e/getting-around/ecobici/>.

Cablebús

Construction of an alternative public transportation system, *Sistema de Transporte Público* (also known as Cablebús), was announced on February 7, 2019, by then-Mayor of Mexico City and current President Claudia Sheinbaum. It began operation on July 11, 2021. This aerial cable car system features three lines and 19 stations, spanning a total of 24.75 kilometers (15.4 miles). It was developed primarily to relieve traffic congestion in high-density neighborhoods, although Line 3 offers scenic views of Chapultepec Park. The system is operated by *Servicio de Transportes Eléctricos*, the same agency that manages other branches of public transportation.

The fare is seven pesos (\$0.34 USD), and children under five and adults over 70 ride for free. Tickets and prepaid passes are available at stations. Line 1 consists of 377 gondolas, each seating up to 10 people (weighing 75–80 kg or 165–176 lbs per person). The ride takes about 33 minutes at a speed of 21.6 kilometers (13.4 miles) per hour. Line 3 conveniently connects to Line 7 of the Metro system.



The detachable gondolas, manufactured by the Swiss company CWA Construction, feature foldable wooden seats that allow entry for bicycles and walkers. Ventilation systems are located in the lower part of the cabin, eliminating the need for air conditioning during the summer. Additionally, the gondolas include interior and exterior lighting, Wi-Fi, surveillance cameras, and anti-vandalism technology.

We plan to visit Mexico City in late February 2025 and will share our personal experience of using the Cablebús system. The views of the city from this modern, rapid, and efficient mode of transportation should be spectacular, especially on a clear day.

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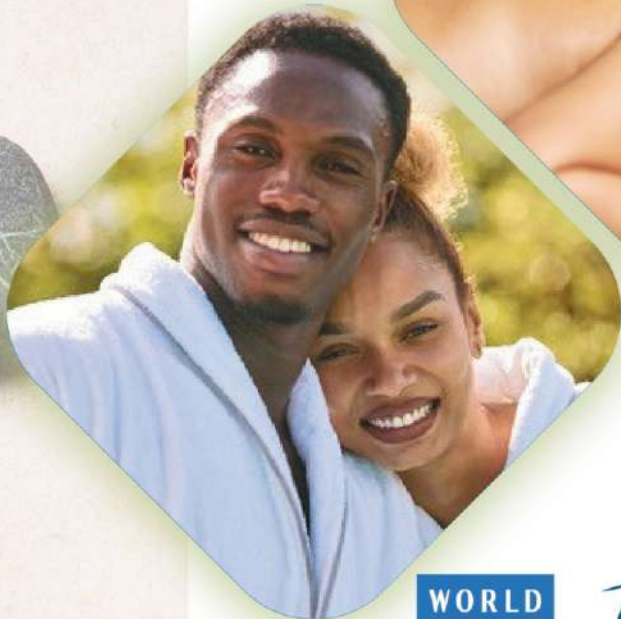
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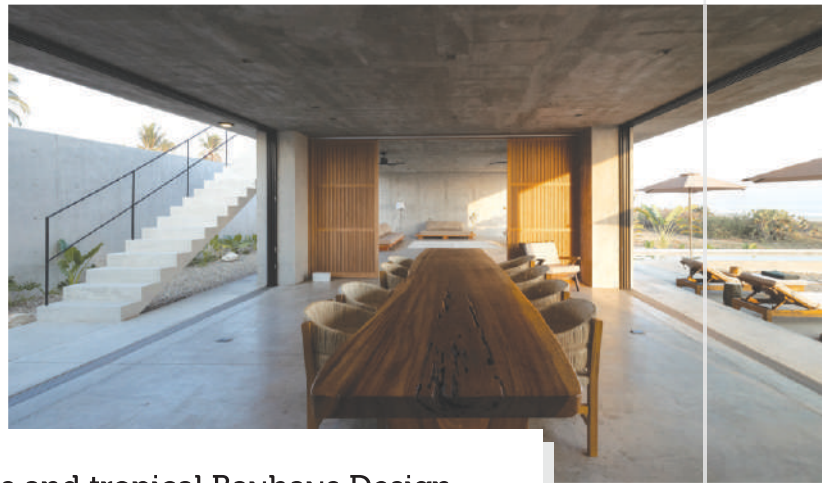
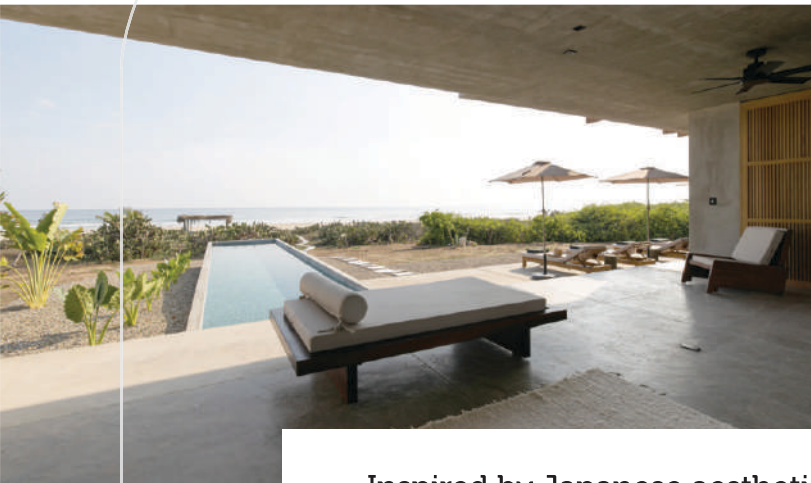


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