

* MEX *

BRIEF: GO



BY TIM LEFFEL



CAPITAL CULTURE:

DOWNTOWN México (from top): **Palacio de Bellas Artes**; local souvenirs are available at **FONART**; chef Enrique Olvera at **Pujol**

are arranged by time period, from giant Olmec stone heads to Mayan artifacts to items recovered from the original capital city here. The delightful **Museum of Popular Art** is fun for all ages, with whimsical Day of the Dead skeletons, masks and fantastical *alebrije* creatures from Oaxaca. Explore the historic center and cross the **Zócalo** (Constitution Plaza) to see the giant cathedral, remainders of the pyramids it was built on and buildings that date back to the founding of New Spain. If the national **Ballet Folklórico** is in town, enjoy a colorful performance in the gorgeous **Palacio de Bellas Artes** performance hall.

EAT: Mexico City has a well-deserved reputation as a great food city, from street carts and taco stands to some of the world's finest restaurants. **Pujol** has long been hailed as one of the best, and it helped make chef Enrique Olvera a culinary star. **Dulce Patria** in Polanco is the latest challenger for gourmet plates with a sense of place. For a more

 Find contact information for all of the places mentioned in this story on aa.com/americanway; search keyword **Mexico City**. To learn more about Mexico City, visit www.visitmexico.com/en/mexico-city

A WEEKEND IN:
Mexico City

REVIVED AND ALIVE, Mexico's capital city is brimming with culture, art and food — and a new attitude.

FRIDA AND DIEGO, tacos and tasting menus: There are two sides to every aspect of Mexico City. The old perception of the city still hangs on for many who haven't visited since the mid-1990s, when crime was high and the smog count was higher. Now, the air and streets are cleaner and blue skies are the new metaphor. Along with the clanging of rising skyscrapers, there's an electric feeling in the air of a city on the move.

The foodie capital of Latin America can also credibly claim to be the museum capital of the

world. There are more than 170 official museums in the city, ranging in subject from tequila to the art collection of the world's richest man. Mexico City, or Distrito Federal, is huge, but many of the city's attractions are close to the center. If you visit on a Sunday, you can explore some of them on a bicycle or take a traffic-free walk, as the main Paseo de la Reforma avenue is closed to traffic.

DO: The museum choices here are overwhelming, but for a true understanding of Mexico's pre-Columbian history, start with the **National Museum of Anthropology**. Extensive exhibits

down-home option, grab a stool at **El Tizoncito** after a stroll in the leafy Condesa neighborhood and dribble your choice of salsas on tacos al pastor.

SHOP: Cheap and kitschy souvenirs are easy to find, but for good quality items at a fixed price, the best bet is **FONART**, a government-sponsored handicraft-promotion cooperative with five locations. Another reliable option is the **Tienda MAP** in the Museum of Popular Art. In the historic center, browse the eclectic **Shops at Downtown** for something more contemporary.

STAY: The best luxury chain hotels are a few blocks from each other on Paseo de la Reforma: the prestige-address **Four Seasons Hotel Mexico, D.F.** and the newer **St. Regis**. For tricked-out rooms on top of two of the city's best restaurants, choose 35-room **Las Alcobas** in the chic Polanco district. **DOWNTOWN México** in the historic center houses both a hostel and an upscale hotel under the same roof.

AMERICAN AIRLINES offers 10 daily flights to **Mexico City (MEX)** from **Chicago (ORD)**, **Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW)** and **Miami (MIA)**, and three daily flights operated by **US AIRWAYS** from **Charlotte (CLT)** and **Phoenix (PHX)**.

FROM TOP: COURTESY DOWNTOWN MEXICO; GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY FONART; FIAMMA PIACENTINI