

LIFE IS GOOD

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CAPITAL OF COOL

D.F. MIGHT BE A MIX OF CROWDS AND BIG CITY BUSTLE, BUT BENEATH IT ALL LIES CHARMING COLONIAS WHERE HISTORIC MEETS HIP VIA ART, DESIGN, FOOD, AND CULTURE.

BY AMANDA CARGILL



Palacio de Bellas Artes

MEXICO CITY IS EN FUEGO. On the travel trend scale, wherein one equals “Don’t bother” and ten equals “Get there before the college kids come,” Mexico City is currently an 11.

Why? Mexican artists like Frida Kahlo and Rufino Tamayo are figuring prominently in everything from films to museum exhibits (L.A.’s LACMA has been expanding its collection of Latin American art since 1997 when it was gifted more than 2,000 works by mostly Mexican modernists); Mexican cuisine is

the second most popular “ethnic” food in the U.S.; direct flights to Mexico City are quicker and cheaper than flights to cities in Asia and Europe; and the emphasis on immigration and trade during the 2016 presidential election made Mexico a hot topic.

But the real reason for the city’s emergence is simple: It’s cool. Once merely an afterthought for sun-seekers en route to Cabo and Cancún, Mexico City is now trendier than all its neighboring beach hotspots combined.



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LA CONDESA, a vibrant enclave marked by colorful homes and tree-lined streets—**AVENIDA AMSTERDAM** the most notable among them—buzzes with activity, in restaurants and cafes during the day and clubs and bars at night. **CONTRAMAR**, famous for its rapid-fire service and celebration of the Mexican *sobremesa* tradition—it officially closes at 6 p.m., but patrons often remain seated until well past midnight—is one of the neighborhood's best-loved eateries.



Merengue con Fresas, Contramar

El Palacio de Hierro



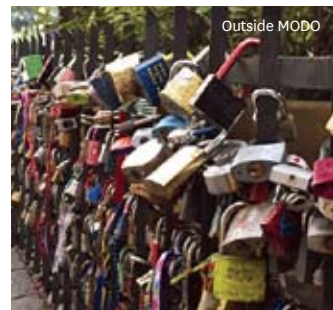
Prendes Restaurant

IN POSH POLANCO, Mexico City's elite collect in world class restaurants after a workday spent negotiating business deals or a Saturday spent shopping at the city's upscale mall, **PALACIO DE LAS HIERRAS**. (There's a heliport on Palacio's rooftop and one of the city's oldest restaurants, **PRENDES**, on its ground floor.)



Las Alcobas Luxury Collection Hotel, Polanco

IN NEARBY LA ROMA, young Chilangos dressed in the latest hipster gear gather at art cafes and galleries. Outside the MODO Museum, well-known for its modern-day collectibles (think Iron Maiden cassettes and hats from the 1920s) a smaller scale version of Paris' Love Locks lives on.



Outside MODO

ON PASEO DE LA REFORMA, tourist-filled taxis en route to the **ZOCALO** and **LA CASA AZUL** mix with school buses trundling towards the **ANTHROPOLOGY MUSEUM** and commuters dashing to work. Dotted with statues depicting Mexico's most historic figures and pulsing on any given day with parades, protesters, and traffic jams, this enormous thoroughfare is the beating heart of Mexico City, a central artery where 21st century challenges meet the simultaneously laid back and urgent energy that is unique to Mexico City.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE: ANANDA CARGILL; COURTESY OF LOS ALCOBAS; ANANDA CARGILL; PRENDES; PALACIO DE HIERRO.