



MEXICO CITY BOTANICAL TOUR

AUGUST 18 to 25, 2024

FAQS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: Will I be met at the airport?

A: You will be met by a tour leader to facilitate ground transportation to the hotel.

For those on flights arriving after 5:30 PM, you can book a taxi at one of the kiosks inside the terminal. You pay at the kiosk for a ticket and then go outside to the taxi stand's line to wait for the next taxi. The city controls the kiosks, and the rate is set depending on the city zone you travel to. The cost for a sedan taxi to the tour Hotel in Zone 5 is \$325--350 Pesos (\$20-\$25 USD). There are various companies to choose from, including Yellow Cab and Sitio 300, all of which are reputable and safe. **ADVISORY:** Be cautious of some vendors who may try to lure you to a much pricier executive van or luxury taxi. The tour will reimburse you for the cost of the sedan taxi. Tell them you want a sedan (SAY-DAN) at the time of purchase; if you do not, they may put you in a mid to large-sized executive van, which costs much more. We recommend tipping the driver a dollar U.S. per bag.

The booths accept credit cards or USD. If you pay in USD, they will give you change in Pesos. You will need to provide the person at the counter with the name and address of your destination for them to plug in the details to determine your zone and fare. Be sure to have the hotel address ready for the attendant. See Q2: for hotel name and address.

You will be given two receipts; one ticket is your receipt, and the other is to give to your taxi driver.

Q2: What is the name of the hotel the tour group will be staying at?

A: Hotel Casa González, Rio Sena #69, Ciudad de México 06500, Tel. +(52 55) 5514-3302. It is well situated in the Colonia Cuauhtémoc neighborhood, with the U.S. Embassy 2 blocks away and the nearby Zona Rosa, known for its shopping, cafés, and nightlife is within walking distance. The neighborhood is considered to be safe. Hotel Casa Gonzalez was recommended as one of the three "Where to Stay" hostellers in the NYT's November 17, 2022, "36 Hours in Mexico City."

Q3: How much future validity do I need on my passport to travel to Mexico? Do I need a visa? Should I make a copy of my passport?

A: U.S. Passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay in Mexico, with blank pages for immigration stamps. Visitors remaining in Mexico for less than 180 days are not required to have a Mexican visa. It is advisable to make a copy of your passport. It can be a digital copy to store on your smartphone, or you can have a photocopy to keep with you. A copy will facilitate obtaining an emergency replacement if it should be lost.

Q4: What immunizations are required or recommended?

A: No immunizations are currently required to visit Mexico. For the most current information, you may wish to consult your medical doctor or check the Center for Disease Control website.

Q5: How much cash should I bring?

A: You don't need to travel with much cash in the form of USD while in Mexico City. With ATMs and Casas de Cambio (Exchange Houses) readily available at the airport and near the Hotel, \$50-\$200 in USD cash should suffice. Mexico City's ATMs are a convenient alternative. You can also easily replenish funds at one of the three banks with multiple ATMs within walking distance of the Hotel. Purchasing Pesos at a U.S. bank may result in a lower exchange rate.

Q6: How can I get Mexican Pesos?

A: Using an ATM/Debit card in Mexico City is an easy and convenient way to withdraw money in Pesos (often limited to a few hundred dollars daily). There are ATMs at the airport and banks throughout the city. You can easily get cash in Pesos before leaving the airport and replenish your funds at ATMs around town. You will likely get a better exchange rate in Mexico City than in a U.S. bank.

If you plan to convert USD to Pesos, we recommend you do so at one of the exchange kiosks at the airport. The rates can differ slightly, so you can compare before deciding which offers the better deal. Purchasing Pesos at a U.S. bank may result in a lower exchange rate.

Q7: Are credit cards accepted?

A: Credit cards are accepted in most stores, large shopping areas, and museum shops. It is important to see if your bank/credit card company requires foreign travel notification to alleviate the situation of having cards "suspended" until they can verify the legitimacy of the "suspicious" charges.

Q8: Should I notify my bank/credit card company of my foreign travel plans?

A: Yes; if you plan to use your bank Debit Card or your Credit Card while in Mexico, it is important to check with the bank and/or your credit card company to see if they require notification before using the cards in Mexico. This will alleviate having cards "suspended" until they can verify the legitimacy of the "suspicious" charges.

Q9: Should I get travel insurance?

A: Travel insurance is highly recommended. U.S. News & World Report's online "11 Best Travel Insurance Companies" at <https://travel.usnews.com/features/the-best-travel-insurance-companies>, lists and compares multiple providers, each offering various coverages. You may also wish to consider **minimum medical emergency & evacuation insurance**.

Q10: What is Mexico City weather like in August?

A: The temperatures will be in mid-70s to the mid-80s during the day and in the mid-40s to mid-50s in the evening. The evening temperatures are quite pleasant. There are ceiling fans in each of the rooms. A lightweight pullover or jacket may be useful in the evenings. A hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen would be helpful for our outdoor excursions to the pyramids at Teotihuacán, exploring the Centro Histórico and the Sabado Bazaar. With Mexico City's rainy season starting in late May to early June with an average rainfall of 2.2 inches, you may wish to pack an umbrella for occasional late afternoon rain. It may also be a good idea to have a lightweight water bottle to carry around, which can be refilled at the Hotel or at locations along the way that offer filtered water.

Q11: What to Pack/What to Wear

A: Mexico City is much like the U.S. The general rule is to dress comfortably with a light jacket, windbreaker, or shawl for the morning or evening chill. For women, blouses, T-shirts, dresses, skirts, and long pants/jeans are appropriate. T-shirts, collared shirts, and polos paired with long pants are proper for men. Shorts are considered resort wear or for children. Sunglasses and a hat can be helpful. Shoes should be c-o-m-f-o-r-t-a-b-l-e and designed for walking.

Q12: What is the altitude in Mexico City?

A: You will be at an altitude of over 7,000 feet, so the first few days will require some adjustment. You may feel dizzy if you do not keep hydrated. If you have an alcoholic beverage, you will notice the effect, particularly at the higher altitude. The Hotel has bottled water in the rooms. You should fill up your water bottles every morning before departure.

Q13: Are there pharmacies and medical offices readily available near our hotel?

A: Yes.

PHARMACY: Farmacia San Pablo, at Calz. Manuel Villalongín 160, Cuauhtémoc, 06500 Ciudad de México, CDMX, Mexico is four blocks from the hotel and is open 24 hours.

MEDICAL CARE: Hotel Casa Gonzalez has a DOCTOR "ON CALL" 24 hours per day. He will come to the Hotel to assist guests who have become ill. The guest would arrange payment with the nurse.

URGENT CARE CLINIC: Hospital General De Mexico Urgencias, Dr. Pasteur 96, Cuauhtémoc, 06720 Ciudad de México, CDMX, Mexico, 25 minutes by taxi from the Hotel. Open 24 hours, Tel: (52) 55 2789-2000.

HOSPITAL: Hospital San Ángel Chapultepec, Av Chapultepec 489, Juárez, 06600 Ciudad de México, 15 minutes by taxi from the Hotel. Tel: (52) 55 5241-1700. Open 24 hours PHARMACY: Farmacia San Pablo, at Calz. Manuel Villalongín 160, Cuauhtémoc, 06500 Ciudad de México, CDMX, Mexico is four blocks from the hotel and is open 24 hours.

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Q14: What is Mexico's national emergency number?

A: Like in the U.S., you can call 911 in Mexico and connect with an emergency operator.

Q15: Is internet service available at the hotel?

A: Yes, our hotel provides free WiFi, as do many restaurants and cafes.

Q16: Do I need a special plug/adaptor or transformer to use or charge my smartphone, laptop, etc?

A: The power plugs in Mexico City are the same as in the U.S. You will not need an adapter. Mexico operates on a 127V supply voltage and 60Hz, which is very similar to the U.S.'s 110V and 60Hz. There should be no issues using electronic devices while traveling in Mexico.

Q17: Can I use my cell phone in Mexico?

A: Many cell phone companies include Mexico in their plan's service. You can check with your carrier to see if Mexico is included in your plan; if not, you may wish to look into purchasing a "travel pass" for Mexico for the duration of the trip.

Q18: How do I make an international call to the U.S.?

A: For international mobile long-distance calls originating in Mexico, first dial + 1 (area code) and 7-digit number (on an Apple iPhone, touch and hold the number 0 on the keypad until the plus sign (+) appears).

Q19: Is the hotel room equipped with a hairdryer and an iron?

A: Yes, each room is equipped with a hairdryer. No, the rooms are not equipped with irons. The Hotel can press your clothes for \$20 MXN per kilo. You can drop them off at the front desk, and they will be ready in the afternoon. A "rush" pressing is \$30 MXN per kilo. They also provide laundry service for \$30 MXN per kilo (2.2lbs). The laundry turned into the front desk before 10:00 AM and should be ready by 4:00 PM.

Q20: Can I drink water from the tap?

A: Tap water is generally unsafe to drink in Mexico City and throughout Mexico. The hotel will provide two bottled waters in your room daily. They can be refilled at the filtered water dispenser in the lobby at no cost. Bottled or filtered water is readily available at tourist sites, hotels, and restaurants. Do not forget to use bottled water when brushing your teeth as well.

Q21: Can I drink beverages served with ice in restaurants?

A: Generally, yes, all the good restaurants use purified water for their ice, but if you are concerned, drink refreshments without ice.

Q22: Is it safe to eat in the local restaurants?

A: Yes, but eating from street vendors or in the open markets can come with some risks.

Q23: Is tipping expected, and how much?

A: Yes, it is appropriate to tip servers, housekeepers, drivers, etc. The rate is similar to the U.S. at 10-15%.

Q24: What is the pace and activity level of the tour?

A: The tour is moderately active. On a scale of 1 to 10, it would be a level 5 to 6. Travelers should be able to walk 2 to 3 miles, which includes climbing one or two flights of stairs and walking over uneven pavement or cobblestones. In addition, standing up for one to two hours may be required at some of the sites. The pace is moderate or level 5-6, on a scale of 1 to 10. Our itinerary includes two to three sites daily, allowing for a 90-minute lunch/rest break. Most venues offer benches or seating should you need to rest for a few minutes or catch your breath. Throughout each day, with regular restroom breaks at venues and restaurants. There are also opportunities to purchase bottled water at tour sites, kiosks, and mini-marts.

Q25: Does my hotel room have a security safe to secure travel documents, currency, valuables, etc?

A: Yes, each room is equipped with a security safe.

Q26: Should I be concerned about safety in Mexico City?

A: Although some of the states in Mexico are under a U.S. State Department "do not travel" or "reconsider travel" advisories, Mexico City is not. It has the same "exercise caution" warnings as France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and other countries in the EU. According to Travel and Leisure, Mexico City has become a top destination for foreign travelers. However, travel in Mexico may make some visitors (or their relatives) anxious. Once in beautiful Mexico City, you will soon see is not an inherently dangerous place, and your concerns will soon melt away. Granted, as with any city, there are spots you should probably avoid, especially as a tourist. However, in the tourist-traversed areas, the most prevalent danger is petty theft.

To avoid being a target of crime, tourists need to be cautious, keeping a low profile and watching out for pickpockets. It is advisable not to carry your passports while we are out during the day. We suggest a backpack or tote bag to put things in that is lightweight and easy to carry. Typically, carrying a wallet for men is not recommended. Consider putting any

necessary credit or debit cards or small amounts of pesos in an easily accessible place. Carrying these in your front pocket or possibly using a money belt.

The best thing is to use the same common sense you would use anywhere by taking reasonable precautions to keep yourself safe, being aware of your surroundings, dressing inconspicuously, and not carrying excessive amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry.

Q27: Should I enroll in the U.S. State Department Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)?

A: The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service that allows U.S. citizens traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Enrollment will enable you to **1.)** Receive important information from the State Department about safety conditions in your destination country; **2.)** Helps the U.S. Embassy or Consulate contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency, and **3.)** It allows family and friends to get in touch with you in an emergency. You can create an account and enroll at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

Q28: What is the best way to get around Mexico City?

A: The best way for visitors to get around in Mexico City is by Uber, Taxi, bus, or metro in that order.

Uber: Is super easy to use in Mexico City and is often cheaper than a regular taxi. For example, a trip from the Hotel to the Centro Histórico will cost about 60 Pesos (roughly \$3). Please consider downloading the UBER application (LYFT is not available) on your smartphone. UBER transportation is safe, secure, and comfortable. You do not need to negotiate a price or exchange money if you have it set up from the U.S. It is a global application that will automatically charge your credit card directly. You can calculate the fare generally by dividing the fare cited by 19 or 20 to get a general sense of the cost in dollars.

Taxi: Use sitio (stationed) taxis at stands or call for one. Do not hail taxis on the street under any circumstances. Two reliable radio taxi companies are Servitaxi and Taximex, which accept credit cards. If you need a cab but do not speak the Spanish necessary to call one yourself, have a hotel concierge or waiter call you a sitio taxi.

Buses: Within Mexico City, buses are a cheap and convenient way to travel, particularly the city's modern bus rapid transit system, the Metrobus. The fleet's red buses travel along fixed routes in their own dedicated lanes and pick up passengers at designated stations, just like a metro. Transportation cards can be purchased with pesos at automated machines located at each station, then loaded up with credit that can also be used for the city's fast, cheap, and frequently sardine-packed subway. Metrobus rides cost 6 Pesos; the metro is 5 Pesos. Buses often take longer than the underground metro. It is always wise to be conscious of your surroundings and belongings.

Metro: On the upside, the metro in Mexico City is convenient, completely avoids the city's chaotic traffic, it is easy to use, and cheap 5 pesos or 25¢ paid by rechargeable card only. On the downside, it is by far the most crowded method of transportation in the city. If possible, avoid using the metro during rush hour between 6 AM and 9:30 AM and between 5 PM and 7 PM. During these times, the carriages can be jam-packed and overwhelming as you find yourself pressed against fellow passengers like sardines, likely with someone's armpit in your general facial area. Otherwise, taking the metro in Mexico City is relatively safe, but you should always be very conscious of your whereabouts and belongings.