

SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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REEL MAINE COMPANY PHOTOS

The recently refurbished Nevada hotel in York, Maine.



A room at the Nevada in York Beach. The hotel reopened this month as a posh, boutique hotel.

From run-down to *retro*

After a complete makeover, the Nevada in York is a sleek 21-room escape by the sea



Photos of the Nevada motel in York, Maine, from a 2021 real estate advertisement.

CHRISTOPHER MUTHER



YORK, Maine — The future wasn't looking bright for the Nevada motel. In fact, it was thread-bare and cracking at the plywood seams.

Built in 1951 and owned and operated by the de la Pena family for 70 years, the Nevada motel was on its last legs when the family decided to sell it in 2021. Even the website Dead Motels USA, which tracks the demise of old roadside motels, assumed that the motel was no longer operating and hastily posted an entry about its

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ALLY RZESA/GLOBE STAFF

Are you willing to do nothing on a plane?

By Christopher Muther
GLOBE STAFF

I enjoy looking down my nose at TikTok trends as much as the next guy. Heck, I'm even keeping my fingers crossed that the platform will eventually be banned in the United States so kids can be spared from electrocution (the Penny Challenge), salmonella (the Raw Chicken Challenge), and death (the Fire Challenge, the Blackout Challenge, and any other TikTok trend ending in "challenge").

However, a new inane TikTok fad emerged last month, and I'm secretly hoping this one will spread as quickly as bed-bugs in Paris.

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NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A serene Sunday morning in one of the walkable neighborhoods of Mexico City.

Exploring Mexico City, a few days at a time

By Niece Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

MEXICO CITY — "All the cool kids call it CDMX," said my friend Arthur, a globe-trotting pal who lives in Munich and is my go-to source for all things cool.

Preparing for my first trip to Mexico City a few years ago, I asked Arthur for some tips. Shorthand for Ciudad de Mexico, the sprawling capital city of CDMX sits at an altitude of 7,350 feet, about a mile-and-a-half above sea level. There's a vitality to this city,

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Hotel Volga in Mexico City is like an urban cenote

By Necee Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

MEXICO CITY — We were sitting in Elora Restaurant, in a city of 21 million people, when I realized just how small the world can be.

CHECK-IN To explain: My husband and I had checked into the Hotel Volga in Mexico City. The newly built, nine-story structure boasts a hulking brutalist exterior and sleek modern interior whose soaring atrium extends upward from the basement restaurant to the roof deck.

“We think of it as an urban cenote,” explained our bartender, as we peered down from the rooftop lounge to the tables below. Indeed, the basement-level restaurant’s textured concrete wall, sporting air plants and dripping with moss, evokes a cenote in the Yucatan, a below-ground sinkhole usually illuminated by a circle of sky above.

This interior atrium is the focus of the hotel, and all 49 rooms and suites have windows and a doorway to a private patio overlooking the dramatic space. With no street-facing windows, we felt cocooned in our stylish, elegant room (with marble bathroom and rainfall shower), protected

from bustling city sounds. As we were out exploring the city most of the day, we didn’t use the room’s sitting area, though we took advantage of the Nespresso machine. (I always need room coffee to get me to the breakfast coffee.)

The narrow roof deck lap pool was a favorite amenity, best used for swimming before late afternoon when cocktail-sipping guests loll in the water and on sunbeds. Additional amenities include a concept store with clothes and gifts by local designers, a small workout space, and morning yoga and mat pilates sundeck sessions. A sub-sub-basement space houses Minos, a late-night, intimate bar and music space playing electronic house DJ sets and special programming three nights a week. You know when a place is “cool” when A. There’s no outside signage; B. Reservations are required; and C. It’s often sold out.

Located on a one-way street off another one-way street, the hotel is adjacent to Avenida Paseo de la Reforma in Colonia Cuauhtémoc, a walkable, eclectic borough home to historic sites and modern skyscrapers, within walking distance to the museums and gardens in Cuauhtémoc Park.

But I digress. Our dinner at Elora surprised us

— in a good way — though if I had done five minutes of research beforehand I wouldn’t have been so surprised. A collaboration between renowned Mexico City restaurateur Edo Kobayashi and chef Juan Manuel González, the menu offers cuisine with Spanish, French, Italian, and Greek influences crafted with Mexican ingredients. For example: shrimp tartar blended with jocoque (a Mexican fermented dairy product), dill, red onion, and capers, was squeezed through a tube in concentric circles, topped with salmon roe and served with warm pita. Strangely beautiful. Tasted amazing.

At the end of the meal, we sent kudos to the chef, who unexpectedly bounded from the kitchen to say hello. After answering questions about where he cooked before Elora (in many, many distinguished restaurants in Mexico, it seems), he asked if this was our first visit to Mexico City. (No.) And where were we going next? (Mazatlan.) “Mazatlan! That’s my wife’s hometown.” We offered that our favorite restaurant there was NAO Kitchen & Bar, with chef Andrea Lizzaraga. “My wife’s best friend!” he said. He whipped out his cell phone to take a selfie with us, then texted the image to Andrea, who immediately wrote back. “Ne-



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Looking down the central atrium to see Elora Restaurant at the new Hotel Volga in Mexico City.

cee and Jim! Tell them I hope to see them soon.”

And that’s when a city of millions felt like a cozy living room.

Hotel Volga, Calle Río Volga 105, Col. Cuauhtémoc. +52-55-4359-9021, www.hotelvolga.mx/en. Rates from \$315, includes a la carte breakfast.

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Explore Mexico City a few days at a time

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a combination of its extraordinary cultural institutions, almost 700-year history, top-notch dining (both high and low), extensive parks and green space (at almost 7,000 acres, Chapultepec Forest and Park is eight times the size of New York’s Central Park), colorful food and craft markets, and, perhaps the glue that holds it all together, the warmth of the people living there.

With such a large area to explore, Mexico City can be daunting for first-time visitors. In a city of neighborhoods, many quite walkable, I’ve learned it’s best to experience the city in small bites. Since most flights to and within Mexico often connect through Mexico City’s International Airport, I often add a few days’ stopover to discover new experiences. If you plan your visit to sites relatively near each other, you can avoid spending time traversing the city in what can sometimes be horrific traffic.

By no means a comprehensive list (how could it be?) here are my suggestions for some must-see destinations for a first-time visitor, as well as those for returning a second or third time.

Centro Historico

Often referred to as the heart of the city. The Plaza de la Constitución, a.k.a. the Zócalo, is a sprawling plaza surrounded by monumental buildings dating back to the 16th century, including the National Palace and the Metropolitan Cathedral. Stay as long or short as time and interest allow. I was happy to simply stroll the perimeter and take in the grandeur of the square and lively street action.

Allow time to go inside the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts), an early 20th-century domed concert hall and arts center with art nouveau exterior and Art Deco interior. Immense murals, surrounding a soaring central atrium, feature works by celebrated Mexican artists including Rufino Tamayo, David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, and Diego Rivera, whose iconic and enormous “Man at the Crossroads” was re-created here after the original Rockefeller Center commission was destroyed in 1933 because of its anti-capitalist political message. Have fun spotting Leon Trotsky, Charles Darwin, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Marx in the mural. If you’re in town when the impressive opera, symphony, or Ballet Folklórico de Mexico perform at the theater, make sure to snag an advance ticket, if only to swoon over the Tiffany-made opalescent glass curtain.

Wandering side streets, I had the best street tacos ever (roasted pork cut off a spit), and enjoyed rooftop cocktails overlooking the plaza. Worth seeking: Azul Histórico, one of acclaimed chef Ricardo Muñoz Zurita’s three restaurants, serves upscale Mexican classics in

a courtyard. Reservations recommended (www.azul.rest/en). Or check out the old-timey restaurants within the Sanborn’s Department Store.

National Museum of Anthropology (Museo Nacional de Antropología)

Prepare to have your mind blown at the National Museum of Anthropology. Located within the grounds of Chapultepec Park, the sprawling museum houses the world’s largest collection of ancient Mexican art. The first floor Anthropology section features 11 galleries accessed from a grand central courtyard, with artifacts from various cultures such as the Maya, Aztec, Olmec, Teotihuacan, Toltec, Zapotec, and Mixtec. Get your camera ready for the great Aztec Sun Stone, a calendar stone recovered from the ruins of Tenochtitlan. The museum’s second-floor galleries display ethnographic exhibits about present-day Indigenous groups. It’s easy to spend an entire day here, so wear comfortable shoes and pace yourselves, or visit some of the galleries and return another day.

There’s an onsite restaurant at the museum, though I prefer taking a break for more satisfying fare. It’s a twisting drive through the park to arrive at LagoAlgo, a restaurant and contemporary art and cultural center that opened in 2022. Occupying a striking, restored modernist structure overlooking Lake Chapultepec, where paddle and rowboats glide serenely by, this was one of Arthur’s early tips, and I’ve returned twice for the sophisticated menu and challenging exhibitions. Reservations recommended. The art exhibits are free (www.lago-algo.mx).

Teotihuacan

It’s possible to tour the Templo Mayor, the remains of an Aztec Temple in the Centro Histórico, but your time would be better spent taking a half-day trip to the pre-Hispanic city of Teotihuacan, home to the Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, located about 30 miles outside the city. A good hotel concierge can easily arrange a private tour with an English-speaking guide, worth every peso, rather than enduring a large bus experience. Early morning travel is best to avoid the heat of the day and crowds. More adventurous souls can schedule a hot-air balloon ride just after dawn. This height-phobic traveler prefers watching them glide above the ancient monuments. A second-visit choice, unless pyramids are your passion.

Soumaya Museum

From a distance, the Soumaya Museum glints in the sun like a circular cooling tower gone twisted and wonky. Up close, its thousands of silver hexagon tiles are bedazzling. A private collection of more than 66,000 artworks by leg-



PHOTOS BY NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



From top: Fountain of Diana the Huntress in Mexico City’s Chapultepec district, the Soumaya Museum, and hot-air balloons float over Teotihuacan.

endary Mexican artists as well as European works from the 15th to 20th centuries are housed in the six-story building, designed by Mexican architect Fernando Romero. If you’re wowed by Auguste Rodin’s “The Thinker” in the lobby, head up the spiral walkway to the top floor’s open exhibition space displaying an impressive number of sculp-

tures and casts by the French sculptor. Admission is free.

Neighborhoods: Roma, Condesa, and Polanco

On second or subsequent trips, it’s fun to stroll the city’s neighborhoods. You’ll find shops, restaurants, bars, galleries, churches, residential buildings, parks, and more in the trendy Roma and adjacent Condesa areas where Art Nouveau and neoclassical architecture mixes with midcentury and contemporary structures. In a preserved 1906 Art Nouveau home, I discovered MODO, an “ob-

ject museum” with changing exhibitions that examine the life of objects and lives of the people who used them (www.elmodo.mx/en). Throw a stick in any direction to find a wonderful place to eat. However, if you only eat one tuna tostada in Mexico City, may it be from the kitchen at Contramar, a legendary seafood spot for lunch and early supper. Reservations fill quickly at this stylish, noisy, and fast-paced restaurant. I’ve never seen waiters hustle so quickly (www.contramar.com.mx/english.html). Or seek out Mog Bistro, a hip, young, local hangout serving Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, and Chinese food.

The more upscale Polanco is divided into five neighborhoods. I love strolling Parque Lincoln, a manicured oasis in Polanco III with sculptures, pond, and trees filled with noisy and sweet-singing boat-tailed grackles. Named for Abraham Lincoln, who opposed the US invasion of Mexico in 1846, the park has a statue of Lincoln (a gift from President Lyndon Johnson) and another of Martin Luther King Jr. The north side of the park is lined with fancy-pants eateries, and leads to a semicircular enclave of streets with enticing bakeries, restaurants, and shops that cater to all price points. Half the fun is wandering the twisting streets to choose a place to eat. Suggestions: Bistro BÈC (French); Le Pain Quotidien (bakery/café); and Batta Sushi. Don’t miss the Pasaje Polanco, an architecturally striking open-air shopping court, built in 1938, that’s home to boutique shops, Mexican crafts, and more cafes and restaurants.

Rest and rejuvenation

There are many things to consider when choosing a hotel, including location, price and amenities. After a full day of walking and exploring, my priorities involve a place to comfortably relax and rejuvenate. A good choice for a first-time visitor, The St. Regis Mexico City (sadly, no relation!) is located along the tree-lined Paseo de la Reforma, walking distance to Chapultepec Park with the Chapultepec Castle, Museum of Anthropology, Rufino Tamayo Museum, a zoo, and more. This hotel is worth the splurge, offering an indoor swimming pool — large enough for truncated laps, a plus for a swimmer like me — fitness center, spa, concierge and butler services, and multiple dining options including the just opened Mentor (Greek) and Animal (steak, seafood, sushi, fusion tacos). The St. Regis hotels worldwide have a tradition — they call it a ritual — of afternoon tea. On a whim, we arranged a late afternoon ritual in the outdoor Bloom Garden, and found it the perfect interlude between a busy day and heading out for the night. Prices vary by season. As a Marriott Bonvoy property, members can save money by booking the hotel, restaurant, and spa with points (www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/mexxr-the-st-regis-mexico-city/overview).

For more information about the city including an essential visitor’s guide: <https://mexicocity.cdmx.gob.mx>

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Are you tough enough to try doing nothing on an airplane flight?

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It’s called rawdogging, and it entails sitting on a flight doing absolutely nothing. Unlike most TikTok trends, which involve wrapping your head in a plastic bag or swallowing a vial of fire ants, rawdogging is easy. It requires participants to endure a flight without entertainment, sleep, water, food, headphones, the bathroom, or anything else that might make the experience more humane.

Before TikTok, I called no water, sleep, or entertainment on a plane “Flying on Spirit Airlines” or “the RyanAir experience.” But a DJ in London who goes by the handle West gave it a new name. He called it “barebacking” (yes,

the term for sex without a condom). Commenters adapted the term to rawdogging (which also means having sex without a condom). I guess not doing anything during a flight makes people think about unprotected sex.

“POV: You successfully completed another 7h flight only watching the maps,” West wrote on the now-viral post.

“Bareback flight on maps, no sleeping, seatbelt on whole flight, no toilet break, no food consumed, no conversations with fellow passengers,” one commenter added, just in case the concept wasn’t clear.

While some women have posted about rawdogging, the practice is most popular among men who can be categorized as bros or dudes. They talk about

it as if they’re training for a triathlon or doing Cross-Fit. Some TikTokers say they’re engaging in the practice as a digital detox, but that doesn’t explain the need to abstain from food, water, or using the washroom during a several-hour flight. Rawdogging is like a weird hazing ritual that people are forcing themselves to do for no reason other than to post about it.

I am all for rawdogging, and I encourage as many of these bros and dudes to try it as possible. If it means no one is reclining their seat in my face, clipping their toenails, or getting drunk and fighting, then let’s get raw! I will not be rawdogging, but please know you have my full support, particularly if you are seated in the row in front of me.

There is plenty of historical precedent for this trend. Before laptops, tablets, cellphones, and inflight entertainment, you’d find yourself rawdogging if you forgot to bring a book or someone swiped the SkyMall catalog from your seatback pocket.

The godfather of rawdogging is Seinfeld’s David Puddy (Patrick Warburton), who drove his girlfriend Elaine Benes (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) crazy by staring at the back of his seat on a flight with no intention of napping or reading in a season 9 episode of “Seinfeld.”

More recently, Idris Elba has been cited as an influential forefather of rawdogging. In his Apple+ series “Hijack,” the actor boards a seven-hour flight with nothing but a gift for his wife.

Spoiler alert: The hijackers take all the passengers’ phones and other devices, but Elba was ready to rawdog his flight even before it was kidnapped.

But there’s a big difference between television and real life. On TikTok, rawdogging is neither funny nor suspenseful. It’s just dull. We see a dude sitting in a seat, and we see the flight map in the seat in front of him. The brosephs and brobots filming their experience think it’s as exciting as competitive cornholing. The rest of us know better. It’s more like a rehash of 2016’s Mannequin Challenge but set on an airplane and doused in Axe Body Spray.

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