



Postcard

Bosque de Chapultepec, Mexico City

It ranks among the world's largest metropolises, a seemingly infinite cityscape where 20 million people buzz about skyscrapers, souvenir shops, *mercados*, and Michelin-starred restaurants. But behind a fence in the heart of town, Mexico City catches its breath at **Bosque de Chapultepec**, a 1,695-acre park (twice the size of New York's Central Park) and the country's centuries-old playground.

Long considered sacred by inhabitants such as the Toltecs, Acolhua, and Aztecs—who erected altars, palaces, and temples here—the park has such a rich pre-Columbian history that archaeologists are still excavating parts of it. Glimpse that history at the Moctezuma Baths, a set of stone pools where the 15th-century emperor once entertained. To dive deeper into the past, head north to the National Museum of Anthropology. One of the park's nine museums, it is home to intricate Maya murals and 50-ton Olmec stone heads.

History lives outside, too: Ahuehuete trees planted by the Aztecs still shade the trails, which wend their way through the woods to the botanical gardens, amusement park, and zoo. Trek uphill to the 18th-century Castillo de Chapultepec (above), a palace with marble staircases and arched entryways, to snag a sweeping view of the park and the surrounding city in all its glory. —marie salcido

Planning a trip? AAA Travel can help you put together the perfect itinerary. Visit AAA.com/travel or call (877) 835-2233.

City smarts

“Navigating a big city can be tough, but with a little preparation, there’s so much you can do.”

—AAA TRAVEL COUNSELOR MARINA AXLINE

CONSULT A MAP Before you start planning, take time to get your bearings. Go to AAA.com, and download the AAA International Destination Guide for the city you’re visiting. In it, you’ll find street maps—plus information on lodging, dining, and transit.

CHOOSE A HOTEL BY LOCATION Pick your activities first, then find a hotel nearby. “I’ll see people booking cheaper hotel rooms far from all the action,” Axline says. “Then they spend more time and money just getting back and forth.”

USE PUBLIC TRANSIT Save the stress of negotiating traffic and street parking by taking public transit. If you research subway, bus, and train routes, Axline says, “You’ll have a much easier time getting around.”

DIVIDE AND CONQUER The truth is, you can’t see everything, so pick the sights that interest you the most, and then explore everything in the same neighborhood at once.

HIRE A LOCAL GUIDE No one knows a place like someone who lives there. AAA Travel counselors can help you arrange tours led by expert guides, who will show you the city from an insider’s perspective. —JOSH SENS



TOP: CHON KIT LEONG / ALAMY; BOTTOM: EDUARD BONNIN / STOCKSY