

Mexico City: An Opinionated Guide for the Curious Traveler

Jim Johnston

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Thinking of traveling internationally to a place rich with cultural and historical heritage that also offers the hustle and bustle of city life? Mexico City is a destination that can satisfy explorers of art music food and artifacts according to Jim Johnston.

In Johnston's travel book Mexico City is explored through historical artistic and cultural lenses. He takes readers to the "real" city where the sights sounds and flavors are local and honest rather than suggesting the more modern and slick side of the city. In his introduction he says "Mexico City is not for the faint-hearted traveler....You come to be seduced by a flourishing 700-year-old culture by people whose hearts are easily opened and by the sheer audacity of it all."

While slim this travel book packs a lot of punch offering listings for lodging food attractions and events. The book get the nitty-gritty out of the way such as transportation documents safety and other travel tips then gets to the core topic: things to see and do.

Johnston begins by suggesting the Centro Historico of Mexico City which is the oldest area of the city. He writes that this lively area is the "hub of government religion and commerce." Johnston provides three detailed walking tours which include stops at museums theaters historical buildings and restaurants. The rest of the book follows in a similar fashion with sections about specific *barríos* or neighborhoods and the attractions to be found in those areas.

While not native to Mexico City Jim Johnston lives and works there. Over the years he has written and compiled notes on his favorite places to visit and eat so he decided to put together a travel guide that would show his view of the city. He writes with the goal of getting travelers to experience the local flavors and true culture of the city.

Mexico City is a book that not only includes great personalized tips from a local but is also full of cultural examples that entice the reader such as photos of local markets and sidebars with commentary on local customs or notable locations. Johnston also includes background information on food music architecture cinema and more.

While *Mexico City* touches on only a few aspects of the city it is comprehensive enough to make for a fulfilling and flavorful trip. Johnston truly believes that despite its noise pollution and population issues Mexico City is a place worthy of exploring; a place that can be richly rewarding to those willing to visit.

CHRISTINA CLAASSEN (April 15, 2009)

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