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MICROGUIDES

How to get under the skin of Mexico City's coolest neighbourhood, Roma

It spawned a nostalgic film that was nominated for Best Picture at the Oscars – but how should we spend a day in elegant, foodie Roma? **Alexandra Pereira** shares her top picks



There are towering listed buildings, sparkling parks of palms and jacarandas, galleries, traditional markets, boutiques, world-class restaurants and places to stay. There are tacos you can try everywhere, and mezcal bars to unwind in. Roma is teeming with hip Mexican creative types and expats, with most streets spilling over with restaurants, bars and cafes.

Here's how to make the most of a day here.

On the southwesterly edge of Mexico City's historical bustling centre of sprawling architecture lies more of the same. One of 21 *barrios mágicos* (magic neighbourhoods) in the city, La Roma nestles within the city's wider Cuauhtémoc borough and contains all a minibreak needs. More often though, this spot is just called Roma. It's at once quaint and grandiose, and it's still changing.

Until the late Noughties, this dilapidated area was recovering from large bouts of crime. A city clean-up and heavy investment saw old buildings come to life and now the facades are a famed feature of the capital.



Do

Wander and take photos

Mexico City's Roma neighbourhood is no secret: you may have seen the **2018 Oscar-winning film** named after it. The area is made up of Roma Norte and Roma Sur (both gloriously walkable and close to major metro stops). An earthquake in 1985 almost flattened a lot of Spanish colonial buildings here, but fortunately, many of the area's elegant old townhouses are preserved. Wander, get your bearings and peer through wrought iron gates.

Museo del Objeto del Objeto

Reminiscent of the Hunterian Museum in London or the bizarre Museum of Things in Berlin, this object museum is a sight for curious eyes. Sometimes tactile, often mindbending, this space charts the history of everything from food and drink to scientific instruments in conversation-sparking exhibitions.

Go to market

Mexico City's liveliest food markets, though wonderful, may feel a tad overwhelming because of the crowds. But **Mercado Roma** is a delight: it is indoors, clean, and curated a little more for tourists and families. Be sure to say yes to the *chapulines*, or fried grasshoppers, often served as a crunchy garnish for quesadillas or as a nut alternative with a cold beer. Lightly tossed in hot oil and seasoned with garlic and lemon, they're a must-try.

Learn about Leonora

Dive into the world of the British-Mexican Surrealist, Leonora Carrington, at her **home and studio-turned-museum** on Calle Chihuahua, which opened in 202, a decade after her passing. Divine contrasts between light and dark are poured into this bijou museum. It's a botanist's dream, too: plants spill over white floors and walls, nestled between some 8,000 works. Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* was filmed just two streets away, close to where the filmmaker himself resides.

Por Siempre Vegana

At Por Siempre Vegana, the almighty taco is reimaged as vegan, by Luis Rodríguez and Melissa Ayal. It hits all the right flavour points: chillies, fresh herbs, spices and vegan cheese stacked on marinated mushrooms and other proteins. Delicious.

Maximo Bistrot

There are plenty of fancy dining rooms across Mexico City. The aforementioned Rosetta, fish specialist Contramar and Maximo Bistrot are just three of the most sought-after options in Roma (all three were raved about by popstar Dua Lipa in her recent newsletter). But Maximo's tasting menu puts it ahead of the pack for a spendy dinner – book ahead, but select bar dining for a more raucous feel. The full dinner including wine is under £200. Expect decadent dishes such as gratinated comté, octopus ceviche and wagyu beef tongue.

Eat

Mercado de Medellín

This minimarket in Roma Sur is not to be missed. Alongside its Cuban bites (the ice cream is dreamy), it's also a haven for Colombian cuisine. It also has plenty of Mexican offerings you won't find anywhere else.

Medellín #20, Cuauhtémoc, 06760

Panadería Rosetta

This bakery is the little sister of Mexico City's fine dining establishment Rosetta, created by world-renowned chef Elena Reygadas. Try the cheese and guava pastries and then take some more with you for your journey home. *Colima 179, Roma Nte*

Drink

Licorería Limantour

Sip your mezcal margaritas with chilli-worm salt in hand at the streetside tables of this Roma hangout – it has heating lamps for rare colder nights. Go with the house recommendations – the best and smokiest mezcals are from Oaxaca – and don't skimp on the salt. On Thursdays, head to Mama Rumba for a dance class afterwards.

Supra Rooftop

With an industrial exterior like establishments found in Berlin or Brooklyn, Supra is drastically unornate in comparison to the Baroque and Bauhaus facades seen elsewhere in Roma. Londoners will recognise the car park-turned-cocktails vibe from Frank's in Peckham, accompanied by sunshine, DJs, plants and twinkling lights.



Shop

Carla Fernández

This fashion house is not just set on producing ethical clothing (employing people from indigenous and mestizo communities and dedicated to preserving textile legacies), but it also creates work entirely influenced by national culture and history. The designs first came to notoriety for their clear homage to architect Luis Barragán. The clothes are gender-fluid and mostly one-size-fits-all.

Piezas Unicas

Beautiful wardrobes, chests, chaise lounges and antiques can be found at Piezas Unicas. The treasures here are next level, while the people-watching is unbeatable. You can chat interiors, art and design with the sellers from dawn till dusk. An abundance of books, trinkets and glassware fit for taking home with you awaits.



In La Valise's Terazza suite, you can scoot your bed out under the stars
(La Valise)

Stay

La Valise

Request the terazza suite, with a bed on rails so you can shift it to the balcony and sleep under the stars. Or book la luna with its giant spinning moon installation separating the living room and bedroom. A marbled bathroom can be found down a long corridor, with a roll-top bathtub and all amenities. Whichever exclusive room you bag, the vibe at this unassuming townhouse is low-key and private. It includes a continental breakfast that is brought to your room. Doubles from £208, B&B.

lavalise.com

Book here

MX Roma

Close to the metro and Colonia Roma, this not-quite-hostel is decidedly no-frills, with none of the Art Deco opulence of its surrounding buildings. But its cubic cuteness is bright and clean, with fast wifi, a good gym, strong air con and even cheap suite upgrades. Doubles from £33, room only. *hotelesmx.com*

