

# •LA ROMA•

---

MEXICO CITY STREETS

#### CONTACT

Lydia@MexicoCityStreets.com

---

#### TEXT & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Lydia Carey

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Anais Martinez

#### EDITION

Christopher Wait

#### TRANSLATION

Ercilia Sahores

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Lydia Carey

#### MAPS

Anais Martinez  
Jewel CartoGrafx  
Dennis Harvey and Yi Li

#### OTHER COLABORATORS

Erik Zavala, Jack & Cecelia Carey, Monica Carey, Jaime Whaley

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to every person that helped make this book possible including all the people who donated their money, time, and skills to my project, as well as my favorite editor, Chris Wait, my excellent graphic designer Anais Martinez who saved me in the final hour, my consistent partner-in-crime Tamar Hayrikyan, who joined me in eating my way through the Roma, and my partner-in-life Ercilia Sahores, who never let me consider throwing in the towel.

I would also like to thank all my neighbors in La Roma who made this book worth writing.

# INTRODUCTION

*This book is the result of my 3 years moving into, getting to know and falling in love with La Roma, one of Mexico City's best neighborhoods. When I first arrived I knew nothing about La Roma's history, had no context for its architecture, and no idea where to find the best carnitas. As I set out to figure each of those things out, I discovered that I was writing a mental guide long before I put anything on paper – compiling lists of favorite restaurants, noting the quietest cafes for working, and researching B&Bs for visiting friends. I started my blog, [www.MexicoCityStreets.com](http://www.MexicoCityStreets.com), as a permanent memory bank for all those facts – and as a place to gush about my discoveries.*

---

In this book La Roma is divided into 7 sections, each composed of a dozen or so blocks. Each section has its own chapter, and every chapter starts with a map of the section. Following each section map is a list of my own suggestions – or those of trusted friends – for hotels, eating, drinking, dancing, local services, shopping, and culture.

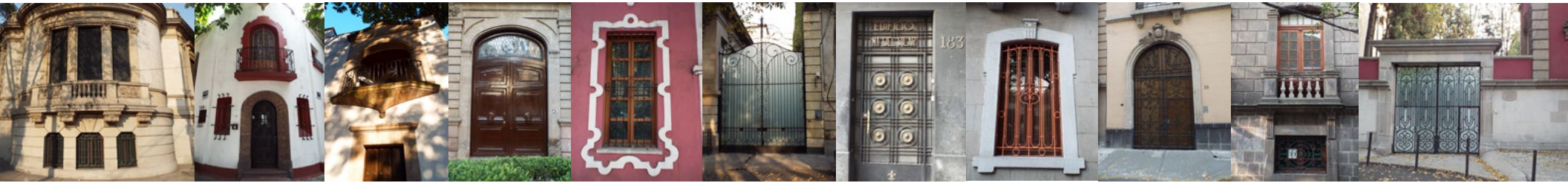
Life in Colonia Roma, and Mexico City in general, is best enjoyed (and understood) on foot and in neighborhoods. La Roma, like much of Mexico City, has distinct areas known for different kinds of services – doctors, mechanics, flower shops, etc. – but you will find a little bit of everything everywhere, and always an *abarrotes*, or small convenience store, around the corner. I have tried to highlight services that I think are most useful in or most particular to each individual section.

A few disclaimers: I am sure that there are some great businesses or cultural standouts that I have missed. If you have a suggestion that you think should be included in the next version of

this guide, please let me know and I would be happy to check it out. I have tried to present locales that work for a variety of price ranges, lifestyles and preferences. I have done my very best to check and recheck business hours, but many small, owner-operated shops don't stick to their official hours.

My guide seeks to highlight local places that have become invaluable to my everyday existence here. Businesses and housing are constantly in flux in La Roma. I have tried to include both the well-established and the recent arrivals, but by the time of this guide's printing there will likely be new things to add and old things to scratch off the list. It's my hope to turn this guide into a regularly updated interactive app. In this guide readers will find ways to quickly get settled, informed and involved, with the hopes that they will reach out to their neighbors, frequent local shops and parks and not simply live here but fully integrate into this amazing place I call home.





## Table of Contents

### Introduction..... 4

Getting to know La Roma.....	10
Transportation map .....	14
Roma Real Estate.....	16
Overview map .....	20

### Section 1 ..... 22

Map .....	24
Sleeping .....	26
Eating / Drinking .....	27
Services .....	30
Shopping.....	31
Culture.....	33

### Section 2 ..... 36

Map .....	38
Sleeping .....	40
Eating / Drinking .....	41
Services .....	45
Shopping.....	46
Culture.....	48

### La Romita..... 50

### Section 3 ..... 54

Map .....	56
Eating / Drinking .....	58
Services .....	65
Shopping.....	67
Culture.....	69

### Section 4 ..... 72

Map .....	74
Sleeping .....	76
Eating / Drinking .....	77
Services .....	80
Shopping.....	81
Culture.....	82

### Section 5 ..... 84

Map .....	86
Eating / Drinking .....	88
Services .....	91
Shopping.....	94
Culture.....	95

### Mercado Medellín..... 96

### Section 6 ..... 98

Map .....	100
Eating / Drinking .....	102
Services .....	105
Shopping.....	107
Culture.....	109

### Section 7 ..... 110

Map .....	112
Sleeping .....	114
Eating / Drinking .....	116
Services .....	120
Shopping.....	123
Culture.....	125

### Inspiring Roma ..... 128

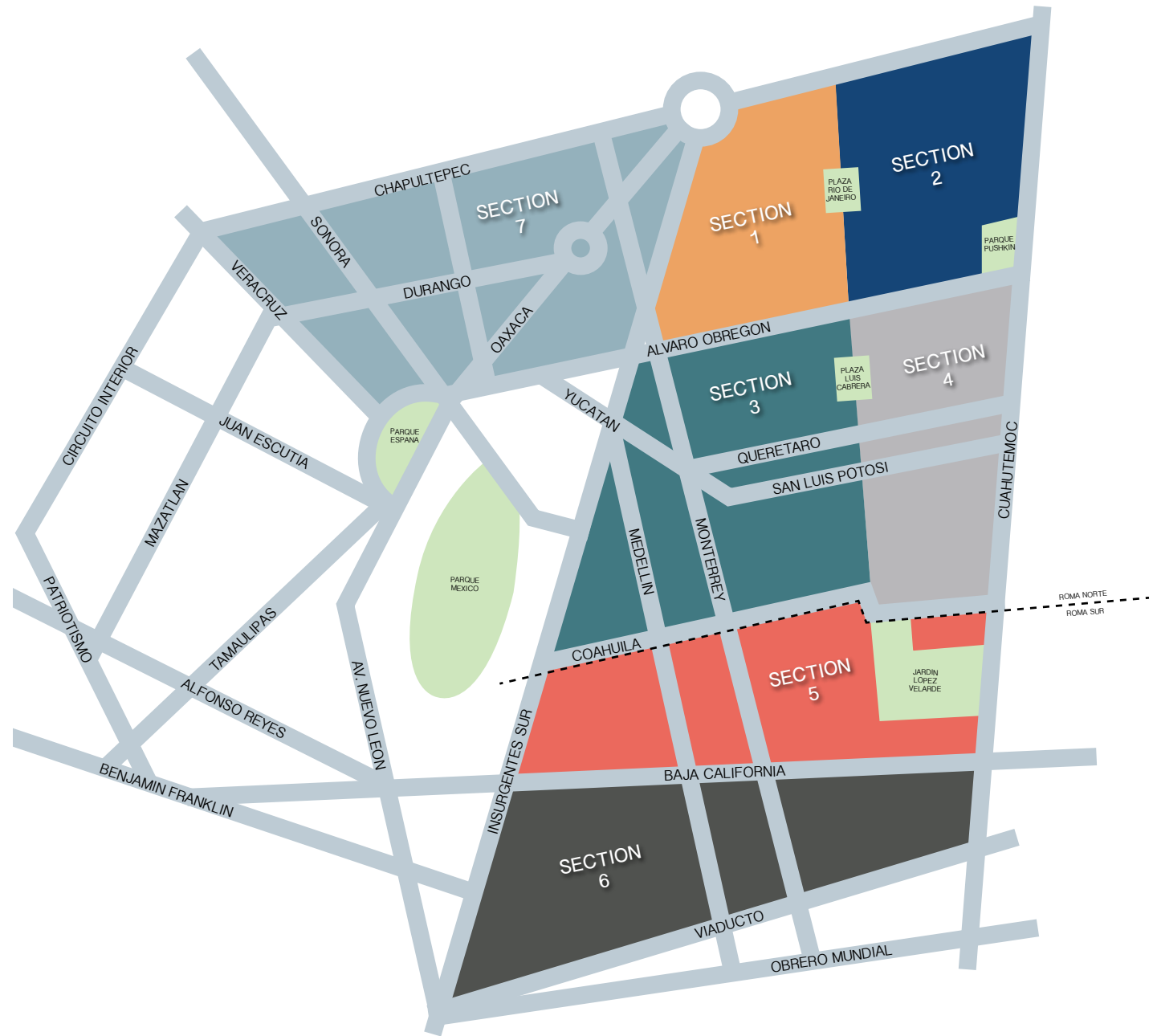
Getting Involved.....	130
-----------------------	-----

MÉXICO, D.F.

## OVERVIEW MAP

This map is composed of 7 sections to help divide the colonia into approachable pieces. In the following pages you will find each separate section headed with its own map, listing the highlights in that area.

La Roma is one of the 33 colonias that make up Delegación Cuauhtémoc (similar to a city borough). The neighborhood is bordered by the following colonias: Doctores to the east, La Condesa to the west, Juárez to the north, and Narvarte and Del Valle to the south. There are around 30,000 permanent residents living in the Colonia Roma and a whopping 5 million people that pass through the colonia every day to work, shop, eat and drink.



# SECTION 5



I often refer to this area of La Roma as home to the neighborhood's forgotten streets. Tepic, Tlaxcala, Aguascalientes, Campeche and the meters-long streets that crisscross them form a residential area of single-story homes that has enough restaurants and shops to make it lively during the day and friendly but tame at night.

The Mercado Melchor Ocampo (known locally as the Mercado Medellín) is one of the area's undeniable landmarks. This market is a meeting point for neighbors from all over the world, with its Peruvian soda, Argentine *yerba mate* (a strong, bitter tea), Cuban beer, and Colombian white-corn flour. It's one of the many markets that was built by the city government in the 50s, and was once the center of Jewish life

in this community. For the full story and a special market map take a look at page 96.

There's lots of great street food to be found in this section; the stands along Jalapa, Manzanillo and Tepic are all popular with locals. During the day, office workers and hospital visitors amble down Manzanillo or head to one of the area's various hospitals. At around noon school kids flood Jalapa in front of the Benito Juárez public school, and every afternoon you can find lovers kissing on benches in the Ramón López Velarde Park next to the Centro Médico metro stop.

This area's history is stained with many deaths resulting from a massive earthquake that struck in 1985. Surrounding the Ramón López Velarde Park (popularly known as Centro Médico) is a massive apartment complex, some of whose buildings collapsed during the earthquake. Now kids play soccer and the neighbors shoot hoops where the buildings used to stand, on the dirt fields and cement courts along Orizaba. These spaces' status as public or private property is still disputed among the neighbors. When the buildings fell, hundreds of residents died and many were forced to live temporarily at the Club Deportivo Hacienda on Jalapa while their buildings were inspected after the quake. While the López Velarde Park can be on the dirty side, it was just renovated with lots of new streetlamps, making it much safer and more pleasant in the evening. And it's still the neighborhood's largest green space.

The Hermanos Zavala, a family of 13 singers that are some of the neighborhood's musical stars, once lived on the corner of Aguascalientes and Champotón. Nequib Simón, the first owner of Mexico's *plaza de toros* (the bullfighting arena), once lived at Campeche #131.

# SECTION 5



 METRO

 METROBUS

## EATING / DRINKING

- 1 El Habanerito
- 2 Las Karnitas
- 3 La Reina de la Roma
- 4 Carnitas Stand
- 5 El Comal Asesino
- 6 Sunday Barbacoa
- 7 Mercado Melchor Ocampo
- 8 Tortillería Molina de La Fe
- 9 La Hidalguense
- 10 Tamales Doña Emi
- 11 Las Peras del Olmo
- 12 La Troje
- 13 Patita La Vaca
- 14 El Sazón de Mongo
- 15 Helados Palmeiro
- 16 Trescielos
- 17 Repostería Lafayette

## SERVICES

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| Hospital Ángeles Metropolitano           | 1  |
| Tonino Bike Repair                       | 2  |
| Marcos y Molduras Roma                   | 3  |
| Laboratorio Médico Polanco Centro Médico | 4  |
| Wash & Press Drycleaning                 | 5  |
| Lumen                                    | 6  |
| Centro Quiropráctico Wilson              | 7  |
| Ecobici Customer Service                 | 8  |
| Dirección Territorial Roma-Condese       | 9  |
| Civil Registry                           | 10 |
| Key Maker                                | 11 |
| Bancomer                                 | 12 |
| Scotiabank                               | 13 |
| HSBC                                     | 14 |

## SHOPPING

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Woolworth                   | 1 |
| La Tiendita de la Nostalgia | 2 |
| La Naval                    | 3 |

## CULTURE

- |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Cine Tonalá                     |
| 2 Huerto Roma Verde               |
| 3 Escuela de Gastronomía Mexicana |



### 1 El Habanerito

Manzanillo #38 / 55 2742-3699 (cell) / Mon to Sat 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.

Good *cochinita pibil* (Yucatán-style suckling pig) is hard to find. I keep coming back to this tiny place for its half-dozen sauces (including fiery jalapeño peanut), outdoor tables and lively location on Manzanillo. On Sunday the restaurant is closed, but you can order *cochinita* by the kilo.

### 2 3 4 5 6 Carnitas and Street Food

This area has La Roma's best *carnitas* stands. My picks are the north-eastern corner inside the Mercado Medellín for crispy, deep-fried *carnitas* (only on Saturdays and Sundays), Las Karnitas (Campeche #125) for slightly softer and juicier tacos, and La Reina de La Roma (Campeche #106) for the softest and pinkest meat of all. The ideal *carnitas* – perfectly crispy on the outside and juicy in the middle – can be found at a nameless stand on the corner of Jalapa and Yucatán across from the Pemex. I'm also fond of the *barbacoa* stand on

the corner of Campeche and Manzanillo that sets up on Sunday and El Comal Asesino, a *quesadilla* and *gordita* stand on the corner of Tlaxcala and Manzanillo.

### 7 Mercado Melchor Ocampo

(popularly called Mercado Medellín) – Campeche between Monterrey and Medellín

This market is good for eating, shopping, people-watching and running into your neighbors. Along with all the regular fare you expect at a Mexican market, the Melchor Ocampo provides a vast array of local and international culinary products and has some of my favorite eateries in the neighborhood. See page 96 for the whole story and a special map of the market.

### 8 Molino y Tortillería La Fe

Medellín #213 / 5584-2543 / Everyday 6:30 a.m.-6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

One of the only remaining corn mills in the city still practicing *nixtamalización* – the process of soaking corn kernels in water and limestone to soften them and break



down their niacin, making them more digestible and malleable. This mill is well-known in the neighborhood for its quality tortillas.

### 9 La Hidalguense

Campeche #155 / 5564-0538 / Thurs to Sun 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

El Hidalguense is an institution in Mexico City. Its *barbacoa* (roasted lamb) is brought in daily from Hidalgo, where it's wrapped in agave leaves and cooked in an underground pit. Come early if you want a seat on Sunday and try the flavored *pulque curados* (fermented

agave sap flavored with fruit juice) if Saturday night is still haunting you.

### 10 Tamales Doña Emi

Jalapa #278 B / 2013-2014 / Mon to Fri 8:00 a.m., Sat 9:00 a.m.

Don't even think about coming late, because most days by 10:00 a.m. Doña Emi has been raided and hardly a tamal remains. You can get tamales as big as your arm and *atole* (a traditional corn drink) by the liter. They have all the usual suspects, along with sweet pineapple tamales or savory pork with olives.

### 11 Las Peras del Olmo

Manzanillo #52C / 6650-3085 /  
Mon to Fri 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.,  
Sat & Sun 9:00 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Las Peras del Olmo sells a little bit of everything. They have sandwiches, Mexican cheeses, Bicicleta Roja brand coffee from Veracruz, coconut water and balls of tamarindo. It's a pleasant stop to sit and enjoy a Mexican candy or fresh juice.

### 12 La Troje

Coahuila #96a / 5574-5967 /  
Mon to Sat 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

La Troje's 20-odd tables are packed Mon to Sat for their *comida corrida* menu (an inexpensive set meal). The bread is oven-warm, the consommé has real chicken chunks – not necessarily a given – and the home-style main plates are dependably good.

### 13 Patita La Vaca

Coahuila #172-B / 4756-1266 /  
Mon to Fri 9:15 a.m.-9:00 p.m.,  
Sat 9:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Sun  
11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

The banana cream tart is worth the trip to this bakery. The other tarts and sweet pastries are also delightful but the coffee is just above drinkable, so get your dessert to go.

### 14 El Sazón de Mongo

Mercado Medellín (stalls 203-204) / 5564-8440 / Sun to Mon  
10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Located inside the Medellín market, this Cuban lunch counter sells incredible rice and beans, fried plantains, and chicken smothered in hearty tomato sauce. It's a draw for the international crowd that packs its handful of seats.

### 15 Helados Palmeiro

Mercado Medellín (stall 507) / 5574-4811 / Everyday 10:00  
a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Famous throughout the city, owner Eugenio serves some of the best ice cream and milkshakes I've ever tasted. Regulars come by for a toasty caramel

cone, a joke from Eugenio and their daily sugar fix.

### 16 Trescielos

Manzanillo #45 / 6552-8900 /  
Mon to Thurs 2:00 p.m.-10:00  
p.m., Fri & Sat 2:00 p.m.-11:00  
p.m., Sun 2:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

The number one pizza place in this area. Offering great thin-crust pizza combos like pear and gorgonzola or turkey and pineapple. Be sure to try the homemade lavender-vanilla ice cream. This is one of the few restaurants in the area that stays open late.

### 17 Repostería Lafayette

Tuxpan #21-1 / 5574-1818 /  
Mon - Sat 7:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.

The only place in the neighborhood I go for Mexican sweetbreads, *conchas*, or fried, sugary churros. If you're lucky the cd vendor in front of this corner sweet shop will provide you with a salsa soundtrack for contemplating the decadence of Lafayette's coconut donuts. —



### 1 Hospital Ángeles Metropolitano

Tlaxotalpan #59 / 5265-1800 (Emergencies 5265-1801[2])

This hospital and its various annexes dominate the streets between Baja California, Medellín and Insurgentes. The Grupo Empresarial Ángeles hospital network has a strong reputation for being one of the city's best – and most expensive – health-care providers.

### 2 Tonino Bike Repair

Tonalá #223 / 5264-5610 / Mon to Sun 12:00 p.m.-6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Gabriel and Fernando, our local bike guys, run this small and no-frills bike shop where you won't be charged an arm and a leg just to change a flat tire. The hours vary, and they're closed on the 1st and the 25th of every month.

### 3 Marcos y Molduras Roma

Coahuila #113 / 5574-1158 / Mon to Fri 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Sat 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

This frame shop does very professional work for reasonable prices and can usually have your order ready within just a few days.



#### 4 **Laboratorio Médico Polanco**

Cuauhtémoc #379 / 5564-8409 / Mon to Fri 6:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Sat 6:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Sun 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

The Polanco lab has comprehensive medical testing services. Whether you have a personal doctor or not, it's a convenient way to get tested for parasites, amoebas or Moctezuma's revenge.

#### 5 **Wash and Press**

Tonalá #202 (corner with Coahuila) / 5564-9596 / Mon to Fri 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Sat 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

These dry cleaners provide quality, fast service at reasonable prices.

#### 6 **Lumen**

Coahuila #163 / 5574-6105 / Mon to Fri 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m., Sat 10:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m., Sun 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Lumen is the Office Depot for artists. They have hundreds of varieties of paper, pens, brushes, and paint, as well as supplies for or-

ganizing your life. Just walking in makes you feel creative.

#### 7 **Centro Quiropráctico Wilson**

Tepic #139 Office 102 / 5574-6604 / Mon to Fri 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Sat 7:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Dr. Brian Wilson and his partners can fix any ache or pain, from long-standing issues to sports injuries and the wear-and-tear from too many hours in front of a computer. They'll even adjust your dog.

#### 8 **Ecobici**

Campeche #175 / 5005-2424 / Mon to Fri 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Sat 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

At Ecobici's newest office in Roma Sur, you can sign up for the city's bike-sharing service. There are strategically-located stations all over the neighborhood – near public transportation, parks and popular eating and shopping areas – and it's one of the easiest and most pleasant ways to get around.

#### 9 **Dirección Territorial Roma-Condesa**

Antonio Anza no number, corner with Orizaba / 4335-8030 / Mon to Fri 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

This office will receive citizen complaints and answer questions, as well as provide contact information for local Comités Ciudadanos or other elected representatives.

#### 10 **Civil Registry**

Antonio Anza no number (corner with Orizaba) / 4335-8053 / Mon to Fri 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Here Mexicans and foreigners alike register marriages, births, adoptions, divorces, and deaths. The central registry offices are in Colonia Doctores, one neighborhood over.

#### 11 **Key Maker**

Jalapa no number (opposite its corner with Aldama de los Leones) / No phone / Mon to Sat 10:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.

These guys have never made me a bad key, unlike lots of other places I've tried, and they're open until 7:30, a plus for folks who work all day.

#### 12 13 14 **Banks**

Three banks in this area are relatively close to one another: Bancomer (Coahuila #216 / Mon to Fri 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.), HSBC (Insurgentes Sur 452 – 5721-2222 – Mon to Fri 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.) and Scotiabank (Tlaxcala #146 / 5728-1900 / Mon to Fri 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.)



### 1 Woolworth

*Insurgentes #376 / 5564-1469 / Mon to Sun 10:00 a.m. -9:00 p.m.*

Woolworth's is one of the neighborhood's larger department stores. Although the goods leave something to be desired, it's the place to go if you need an ice tray, a shower curtain liner or a cheap set of wine glasses.

### 2 La Tiendita de la Nostalgia

*Tonalá #359 / No phone / Mon to Sat 12:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.*

This tiny antique store has trouble sticking to its "official hours," but if the Cine Tonalá next door is open, they're probably open too, selling 20 peso books on a table outside, antique furniture arranged on the sidewalk, old postcards, and a telephone shaped like a piano.

### 3 La Naval

*Insurgentes Sur #373 / 5584-3500 / Mon to Sat 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m., Sun 11:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.*

La Naval, though technically in Colonia Hipódromo, has the biggest selection of wines and spirits around, along with roasted red peppers, French cheeses, imported pastas and other specialty foods.

### 1 Cine Tonalá

*Tonalá #261 / 5264-4101 / Tues to Sun 1:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m., closed Monday*

Cine Tonalá shows art flicks, documentaries, and a few mainstream movies. They also host film festivals, stand-up comedy nights, and the occasional concert. Their bar-lounge, with its mix of cocktails, mezcals and craft beers draws the non-movie goers just as much as film buffs.

### 2 Huerto Roma Verde

*Jalapa #234 / 5564-2210 / Tues, Wed, and Thurs 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.*

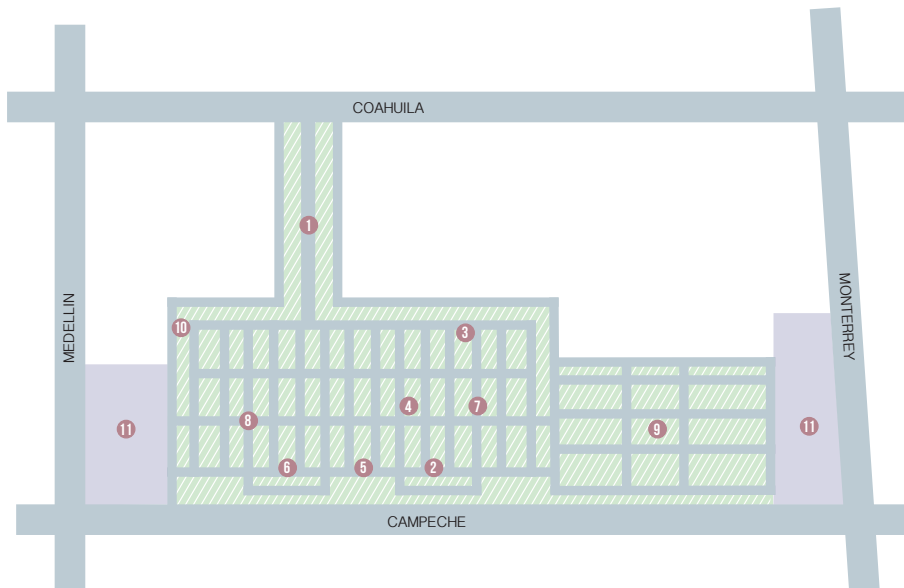
At this urban garden you can purchase organic soil, compost, and veggies. They also host food truck rallies and organic farmers markets, offer workshops and courses and rent their garden out for events.

### 3 Escuela de Gastronomía Mexicana

*Cahuila #207 / 5264-2484, 4737-9495 / Mon to Sat 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.*

Dominated by the personality of chef Yuri de Gortari, the Escuela de Gastronomía offers courses on everything from tortilla-making to classical Mexican cuisine and Christmas breads. Though not accredited, the culinary school has a solid reputation and many people praise the classes they have taken there.

# MERCADO MEDELLIN



- Comida corrida 1
- Dairy products & Sausages 2
- Meat & Chicken 3
- Food Court 4
- Flowers 5
- Wheat flour tortillas 6
- Dried chillies 7
- Regional products from Yucatán 8
- Houseware 9
- Dry goods 10
- Parking 11

Mercado Medellín is by far one of the best places for eating and shopping in the colonia. It's not only a historic treasure and an integral part of buying, selling, and cooking in this neighborhood, but also a unique experience. This market, which was once an outdoor tianguis with simple tarps covering vendors as they sat or stood selling their wares, has been central to the community life of La Roma for over 100 years. Most vendors are old-timers, folks who remember when everyone in the neighborhood shopped here instead of the supermarket and when it was a magnet for the local Jewish community.

Unlike the monstrous Mercado Merced or Central de Abasco, Mercado Medellín is manageable, and though you could probably spend an entire gluttonous day here, you can most definitely get through it in an hour and a half. That is, of course, if you don't get into a recipe swap with José at the Miramar Pescadería, start trading jokes with Helados Palmeiro owner Eugenio, or sit for a spell at Sazón de Mongo to devour some Cuban black beans and rice.

The market has all the regular wares you would expect. There are stands selling fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, paper goods, and dairy products; plenty of general convenience items line the perimeter of the main market building. On the Monterrey side of the market, you will find four or so rows of shops selling plastic containers, electrical equipment, cleaning supplies, and hardware. Interspersed among them are a few beauty shops and some tailors, a shoe-repair place, and even a photo studio along the outside edge. On the Campeche side of the market are the inexpensive lunch counters and juice stands that fill up with workers and residents from all over the colonia in the afternoon.

One of the market's most interesting characteristics is its sheer quantity of imported products from across Central and South America. Not surprisingly, you'll find a healthy number of Central and South Americans shopping there. You can buy good Colombian coffee, *yerba mate* from Argentina (a strong, bitter tea), Peru's Inca Kola, and Bucanero beer from Cuba. Beyond pre-packaged goods are all the ingredients you need for a South American feast – green plantains, arepa flour, yucca and lots of spices.

This market doesn't really get going until 9:00 a.m. and most vendors are packing up by 5:30 p.m. Medellín is my top choice for flowers and flower arrangements in La Roma. It's also essential for fresh fish, meat, spices, and chiles. If you take the time to look around you will discover gourmet coffee, farm-fresh eggs, and exotic fruits and vegetables. It's an adventure that soon becomes a daily ritual.