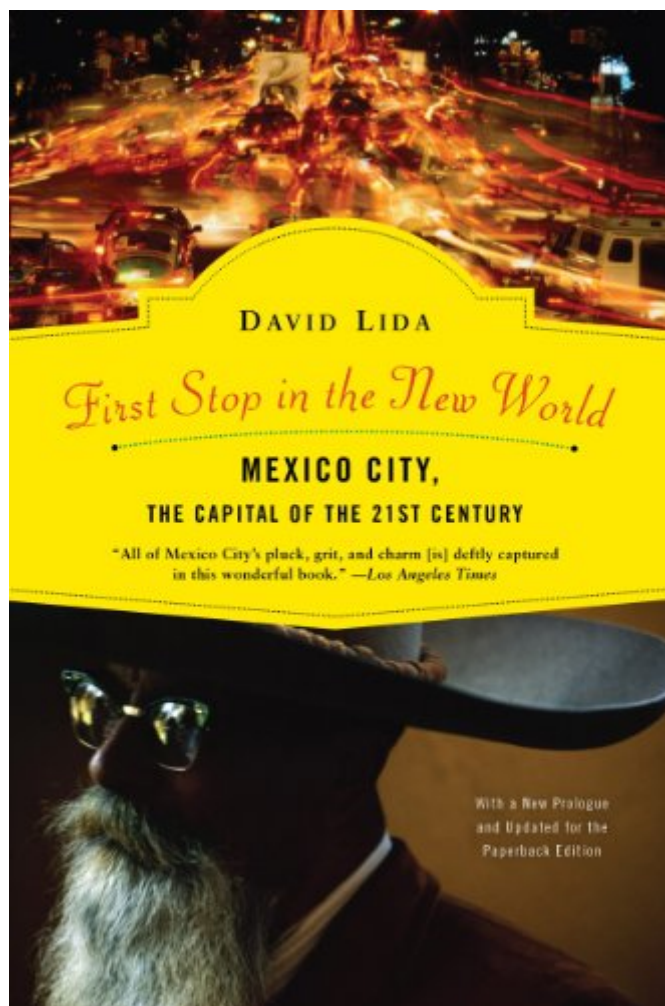


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First Stop In The New World



Synopsis

The definitive book on Mexico City: a vibrant, seductive, and paradoxical metropolis-the second-biggest city in the world, and a vision of our urban future. *First Stop in the New World* is a street-level panorama of Mexico City, the largest metropolis in the western hemisphere and the cultural capital of the Spanish-speaking world. Journalist David Lida expertly captures the kaleidoscopic nature of life in a city defined by pleasure and danger, ecstatic joy and appalling tragedy-hanging in limbo between the developed and underdeveloped worlds. With this literary-journalist account, he establishes himself as the ultimate chronicler of this bustling megalopolis at a key moment in its-and our-history.

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Customer Reviews

The masterful Irish writer Colm Toibin provided a blurb for the cover of this book that is too good not to repeat: "From now on, anyone who goes to Mexico City without David Lida's book is mad. *First Stop in the New World* is that fascinating. Even someone not travelling to the "cultural capital of the Spanish-speaking

world. You will find David Lida's examination of the city he was once too scared to enter challenging and enthralling. This book offers a far better preparation for a visit to Mexico City than any of the tourist guides available. Lida immerses his readers in the everyday lives of Mexicans from the various social divisions in the city, as pronounced, he believes, as any to be found in England or India. He is especially insightful in presenting the city's poor and working class and how they function with so little monthly income and remain seemingly invisible to the upper classes. But Lida spans all facets of city life: the mania for wrestling matches among the populace, the preponderance of Wal-Marts, the furtiveness of sex as a cultural reality, the search to obtain the fine dining that many tourists seek, and what makes various neighborhoods distinctive. Especially important is the author's take on the steep difference between reported and real crime in the city (much less than visitors fear). Mexico City can be chaotic and overwhelming, but *First Stop in the New World* makes it much less so. Reading it allows you to become an insider on some of the forces at play. Michael Helquist, author, *MARIE EQUI: Radical Politics and Outlaw Passions*

This is an excellent book. Very well documented and written. I bought this book because I wanted to learn more about the culture of my country. Because I am Mexican, many behaviors we have in Mexico city are completely "normal" to me. This "normalization" very often hides the specificities of the culture. The view from outside always helps to highlight the differences. David Lidia's book helped me to realize some of these specificities. He has been living in Mexico city for decades. So he knows quite well what he is talking about. I have even learnt some details about my city that I didn't know. He picked up some views of different social classes (rich and poor, also foreigners). The experience of living in this city depends on the social situation in which you are. It is not the same thing to live as a worker (badly paid, living in the east of the city) or as a manager or an incredibly wealthy politician living in Santa Fe. Even foreigners obtain good jobs more easily than natives do. David Lidia has some critical views. He denounced social inequalities (it's a pity that the richest man in earth - Carlos Slim - lives here, meanwhile there is a huge poor population living in unworthy conditions), machism (girls and women are victims of harassment), and the double moral (appearances, people who behave in different ways in public and private spaces, e.g. sexual fidelity in public, cheaters in private). A very interesting point he makes is about the sense of insecurity in Mexico city. He claims that the feeling of insecurity in this city is over exaggerated. Chilangos consider everyday very seriously to avoid the possibility of being a victim of murder, robbery, etc. There is a strong lack of trust between unknown people. But the point is that

according to statistics the probability of being a victim of murder is higher in LA, Chicago or Washington DC than in Mexico city. But there are some firms who take advantage of this situation (they offer security services). Even the government obtains a piece of cake, as they manage to focus the political debate on these topics. The death penalty, a more severe punishment for criminals-, in order to avoid the debate of social problems caused by neoliberalism. At the end of the book Lidia talked about how the Mexican working class is living in this chaotic city despite the government (bad urban plans and corruption both in federal and local levels). The shocking point is that this city has not collapsed yet in spite of the chaos. Why? The answer Lidia explores is related to resilience. Mexican people have learnt to deal with uncertainty. The earthquake of 1986 is a case in which people helped each other without the aid of a corrupt government (the political party called PRI). The same story goes with the economic crisis and neoliberalism. Mexican people developed an "informal economy" which creates jobs, decreases the prices of basic goods and this has helped hitherto the survival of the Mexican working class.

First off, this book is about 10 years of date. Updating the introduction did little to help. The book itself just seemed to be a collection of previously written articles stuffed into a book. It has no focus, no order, and ends up being basically a disaffected journey through various aspects of Mexico City that the author found interestingly quirky but to me it got boring rather quickly. I was ready to put it down about 2/3's of the way through but soldiered on- to no good end. Indeed the overall tone of all the articles was disturbingly downcast. I kept wondering why the author lived there for a decade if it was so dissolute and depressing. His presentation did not reflect at all how incredibly fascinating and inspiring the city is and did not reflect at all the city I found it to be on three visits now.

David Lida is a fine writer. The man has a way with words. And he uses them skillfully, artistically, and at moments emotionally, to illuminate non-traditional aspects of his adopted home city, el Distrito Federal - aka el D.F. - better known in gringolandia as Mexico City. For the thoughtful traveler who wishes to immerse him or herself in the quirks and oddities of Mexican culture before visiting either Mexico City or Mexico in general, this book is somewhere between entertaining and indispensable. It gets my highest serious real world recommendation. As an added treat, those not familiar with David Lida's writing/s....should be surprised and occasionally delighted.

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