



Chef Ricard Camarena's Canalla Bistro, designed by Francesc Rifé Studio

Mexico City

Creativity and culture are synonymous with this Mexican mecca, and it's poised to become even more of an urban magnet. Designated the World Design Capital for 2018, the thriving metropolis has seen a 4.1 percent occupancy increase, a 17.5 percent growth in ADR, and a 22.3 percent rise in RevPAR year-to-date through December 2016, according to data and analytics specialist STR. This energy bodes well for hoteliers. In a city that is already flush with luxury brands, such as St. Regis and Las Alcobas—both brought to life by Toronto- and New York-based Yabu Pushelberg—the renovated Four Seasons from French designers Gilles & Boissier, and the 700-room Intercontinental Presidente, new hotels are changing the landscape, including avant-garde boutique properties from Grupo Habita,

the Hotel Carlota, spearheaded by local firm JSa Arquitectura, and the 298-room Sofitel Mexico City Reforma, set to come online this year.

Last spring the W Mexico City, set in the posh Polanco district, emerged from a multimillion-dollar renovation. New York's Nemaworkshop oversaw the masquerade-inspired overhaul, which includes floor-to-ceiling artwork by Mexican artist Ivan Aguirre, bringing to life such symbols as the conquistador and women of the Mexican revolution. "We were intrigued by the notion of role play, performance, and reinvention," says principal Anurag Nema. Infinity mirror installations in each of the 237 guestrooms feature traditional Mexican crafts and toys suspended in the glass, creating optical illusions. The hotel is also home to J by José Andrés, the first global venture for the lauded Washington, DC



Nemaworkshop's bright Living Room at the W Mexico City



A rendering of the DoubleTree by Hilton Mexico City Santa Fe guestroom



A rendering of Hyatt House Santa Fe's lobby from Eli Neumann Arquitectos



Francisco Pardo Arquitecto's crafted the mixed-use Havre 77

Photo by DIANA ARNAU



Hotel Carlota's glass-mirror façade by JSa Arquitectura

Photo by RAFAEL GAMO

chef. Designed by Capella Garcia (the same Barcelona firm responsible for many of Andrés' other restaurants), it features a tapas bar, indoor-outdoor terrace, and quirky details including a foosball table and bull's head.

Hybrid concepts are also finding a home in Mexico City. Locally based Francisco Pardo Arquitecto transformed Havre 77, a one-time 19th-century house on Paseo on de la Reformainto, into a mixed-use venue encompassing offices, co-working spaces, and a French-Japanese restaurant housed in a bi-level steel and concrete addition. Indeed, Havre 77 is fueling "the restoration of a decaying neighborhood," Pardo, the firm's founder, points out, dovetailing with Mexico City's contemporary shift. "It has become a hub for entrepreneurs in art, design, fashion, and architecture—free thinkers from all around the world," he says. "The new trend is looking inside, rather than outside. Younger generations are into a 'made in Mexico' mentality."

That generation is also looking for innovative restaurant concepts, which has helped turn Mexico City into a foodie haven over the last few years. Take Canalla Bistro, led by Michelin star chef Ricard Camarena and designed by Francesc Rifé Studio. Located in the northwest part of Mexico City, this outpost pays homage to its sister restaurant in Valencia, Spain through its materials: Mexican and Spanish wood and orange crates, a staple of Valencia life, get new life as ceiling cladding. "The design captures Mexican social and cultural sensibilities," says Rifé. "Its essence is the reinterpretation of the idiosyncrasy of Mexico, bringing a thoughtful

design to the table and adding value to the urban cuisine."

For budget-minded visitors, InterContinental Hotel Group expanded its presence in Mexico City last year with the 108-room Holiday Inn Express Mexico Toreo, located in Naucalpan. Father and son duo Ricardo and Alexis Elias of Guadalajara and Miami-based Elias Elias, alongside Hilton's director of design for Latin America and the Caribbean Josefina Ratto, are behind the 189-room Hilton Garden Inn, which is expected to debut in late 2017 as the sequel to the 172-room DoubleTree by Hilton Mexico City Santa Fe (also by the same design team), which is in the midst of a conversion. The development, located adjacent to the Expo Santa Fe Mexico Convention Center, is the first dual-branded Hilton property in the country. In addition, a 119-room Hyatt House Mexico City/Santa Fe, crafted by local firm Eli Neumann Arquitectos, will open in the fall.

Another mixed-use building, Chapultepec Uno, will further showcase the city's development. Here, the 153-room Ritz-Carlton, Mexico City—the upscale brand's first foray into Mexico—arrives in 2019, overlooking Chapultepec Park and occupying floors 36-47 of the 58-story tower from local firms Taller Global and KMD Architects.

"As a new generation of talented Mexican architects and interior designers flourish, they are becoming the protagonists of a true design revolution," says Leo Eskenazi, Hilton's senior director of design for Latin America and the Caribbean. "Their designs are powerful, thoughtful, deeply rooted, more experimental, and highly experiential."