

stay

at a well-known address. Andaz, a Hyatt brand, is set to open its latest property on Wall Street next week. A double room costs from US\$228 (Dh836) per night, including taxes (www.andaz.com)



## hotel insider

# Distrito Capital, Mexico City

## The welcome

Efficient and slightly detached. A bellboy soon arrived to take my bags up to the fifth floor lobby and, despite the rather imposingly dark corridor leading to the lift, a soothing passion fruit and guava mojito was waiting for me at the minimalist front desk.

## The neighbourhood

Santa Fé is Mexico City's premier commercial district and has probably overtaken Palenque as the main business hub. Situated to the west of the capital, skyscrapers have shot up at an ambitious pace over the last decade on what used to be the city's rubbish dump. The Centro Commercial Santa Fé is the city's biggest shopping complex and there are a range of high-end bars and restaurants, as well as department stores like Liverpool and Saks Fifth Avenue. Santa Fé operates in a bit of a bubble – a microclimate situated in the highest part of the city, peering down on the pollution and congestion of downtown. The neighbourhood is around nine miles from the old centre, but distances are vast in Mexico City, a megalopolis of 1,300 square kilometres and 19 million inhabitants.

## The scene

Distrito Capital's focus is very much on design: think clean lines and muted tones. The lobby is a veritable shrine to avant-garde

retro furnishings, from a light "installation" by Thomas Glassford to 1960s recording equipment mounted on the wall. It's all so impossibly hip, with books on art, design and photography on the lobby's table and hotel staff wearing blue Converse trainers with their shirts and ties. The hotel, which opened last year, was busiest in the evenings when business types filled the bar, restaurant and pool area, along with a rowdy group of wealthy Mexican women. It seemed quieter during the mornings, but the hotel was fully booked according to the manager.

## The room

Slick, clean and spacious. High ceilings and huge windows fill the rooms – situated between levels 25 and 28 – with masses of light. While the black and white colour scheme is functional and slightly sterile, comfort is of the highest standard, from the impeccably sprung double bed to the walk-in power shower. There are only 30 rooms in Distrito Capital, in an area dominated by chain hotels, and there's a boutique feel to the rooms. The Corner Suites and Master Suites come with designer bath tubs while the Suite Royal has a gas fire and views from three floor-to-ceiling windowed walls. There's no tea or coffee making facilities in the room, although there's an honesty Nespresso coffee machine at the end of each floor's corridor, where you're expected to

mark down what you drink to be charged.

## The service

Either one extreme or the other. Following a problem with the internet connection in the bedroom (see Hated), it took around 40 minutes from the time I phoned reception for someone to come and take a look at it. The restaurant was also completely overstaffed and food was whisked away the second I'd finished eating – and once even before – which made me feel a little hurried. Having said that, the bellhops and staff behind the front desk were extremely friendly and helpful, letting me know about how to catch a bus into town, where to eat and drink and organising a punctual taxi when it was time to check out.

## The food

Innovative and excellent. The restaurant – marble table surfaces, low-hanging lights and Wim Rietveld chairs – is overseen by chef Enrique Olvera, now an international name. The dinner menu takes international cuisine and gives it a Mexican slant, with starters including avocado ravioli stuffed with shrimp and chipotle mayonnaise and seared tuna with spicy cilantro cream, which was delicious. Main courses range from a hamburger made with famed Japanese Kobe beef to sea bass in a guajillo, garlic and pineapple sauce. But the high-



Some suites come with designer bath tubs overlooking the sprawling capital. Undine Pröhl / Distrito Capital

light was the key lime pie dessert with the different ingredients – the cookie base, grated lime, ice cream and condensed milk – separated on the plate and, like all the food, beautifully presented. A three-course meal costs from US\$20 (Dh74).

Breakfast was also very good (try the *huevos rancheros* (\$7; Dh26): eggs with chilli salsa, sausage and mashed black beans) and the hotel's guacamole is also highly recommended.

## Loved

The attention to detail in the bedroom. Each room has its own iPod dock and speakers (if you don't own an actual iPod you can borrow one from reception, along with an Xbox games console for the "boys with toys" within you). The iPod is connected to the shower room, so you

can niftily turn a dial and speakers in the ceiling come on as you wash. There's also a telephone in the toilet which, although I'm not sure I'd ever use, is a nice touch.

The views from the hotel are incredible, especially at night when thousands of shimmering lights stretches far as the eye can see. On my first night, I lay on the bed contemplating the immensity of Mexico City and, as if on cue, fireworks started to explode in the sky.

## Hated

For a hotel geared up for business, the fact that the Wi-Fi connection was not working in my room for the two nights I stayed wasn't good. A thunderstorm had apparently affected communications, but it should have been sorted out more quickly. Luckily, the internet was

working in the lobby.

## The verdict

A refreshing addition to the Santa Fé scene and a decent option for visitors to Mexico City – especially those on business – who want to avoid stress. Reasonably priced and worth it for the views alone, which although not beautiful in any conventional way, give a real sense of the ambiguities and anomalies of this fascinating city.

## The bottom line

Double rooms cost from US\$153 (Dh562) per night, including taxes. Distrito Capital, Juan Salvador Agraz 37, Santa Fé, Mexico City (www.hoteldistritocapital.com; 00 52 55 5257 1300).

★ Ed Stocker

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