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## How to Spend a Weekend in Valle de Bravo If You've Already Done Mexico City



Views of Valle de Bravo and the surrounding hills.

*Where do you go when you're looking to travel beyond all that CDMX has to offer? Below, the perfect side trip to Valle de Bravo.*



It is a truth universally acknowledged that Mexico City is awesome.

You're pretty much guaranteed to have a good time, from CDMX's tried and true street food to the city's delightful architecture, and if my Instagram feed is any testament, it seems like everyone has made their way to the Mexican capital in recent years. But if you're looking for less-charted territory, you may have to venture beyond city limits.

Enter Valle de Bravo. Valle is one of Mexico's magic towns—in 2005 it was, quite literally, christened a "Pueblos Mágico" by the Mexican government. This is because, unlike much of urban Mexico, which has undergone waves of invasive modernization over the years, Valle de Bravo is a preserved colonial town. It was founded in 1530, and much of the original architecture still stands. Valle is a place out of time, with more than a little magic to it—and while it is a beloved destination within Mexico, the rest of the world essentially has no idea it's there.



On the road, between Mexico City and Valle de Bravo.

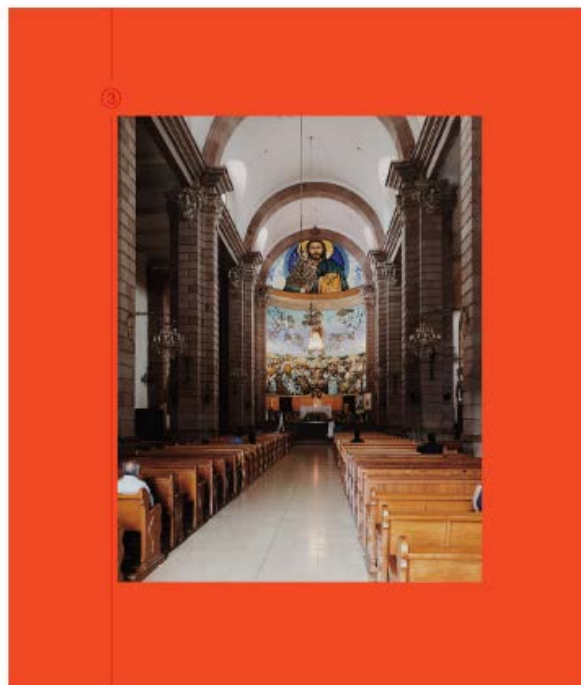


## Stop 1: The Scenic Drive to Valle de Bravo

Valle is a two-hour drive from the Mexico City airport, no matter which way you slice it. You'll need to rent a car or hire a taxi, as there are no shuttles. Your consolation prize is that the drive itself is gorgeous: 30 or 40 minutes outside CDMX's sparkling towers and multicolored homes lie sweeping vistas of cacti, palms, and pines. On a more practical note, make sure to have cash (MXN) on hand for tolls.

## Stop 2: Explore Mercado de Artesanías near Plaza Principal

Plaza Principal is Valle's main square, comprised of a garden, San Francisco de Asis Church (see Stop 3), and a plethora of food, drink, art, craft, clothing, and knick-knack stalls that comprise an ever-changing pop-up market. You could easily spend your entire morning here. My favorite snack is the local mainstay: grilled corn served with crema and lime. Just a few blocks away, find Mercado de Artesanías, a dedicated arts and crafts market with a more focused selection of artisan wares from Valle and the surrounding region. You'll see baskets, ceramics, textiles, and more.



Inside San Francisco de Asis Church in Valle de Bravo.



### Stop 3: Relax at San Francisco de Asis Church

This beautiful church is smack dab in the middle of town—its towers are the centerpiece of Valle’s skyline (and have been since the 17th century). Step inside for respite from the nonstop energy of Plaza Principal, and to see paintings, sculptures, murals, and ‘San Francisco,’ the bell. The church is open every day of the week, from dawn to dusk.

### Stop 4: Barbecue at Asados Don Abel (and Ice Cream at Michoacana)

These two eateries are just steps from each other in Avandaro, the modern neighborhood about 20 minutes south of Valle proper. (Avandaro is where many wealthy residents of Mexico City have permanent vacation homes, stretches of it resembling residential West Hollywood.) Asados Don Abel is a barbecue joint that specializes in wild boar tacos. A bevy of orange banners advertising boar frame the spit itself, which is in full view of pedestrians and passing cars. It’s boisterous and crowded in the very best way. Michoacana—a bit more modest in its presentation—serves handmade ice cream from a little storefront at the end of the street. (I couldn’t find it on Google maps, so you may have to wander a bit or ask a local for the exact location. More power to you!)

### Stop 5: Views at Parque El Pino

El Pino offers panoramic views of town and the surrounding hills. If the drive from Mexico City didn’t totally fill your big-sky-and-rolling-hills quota, take your time in this picturesque little park. Enjoy topiaries, a display of centuries-old sculptural artifacts excavated from the hills, and an ancient *ahuehuete* tree that’s a landmark in and of itself. (Fun fact: the *ahuehuete* is Mexico’s national tree.)



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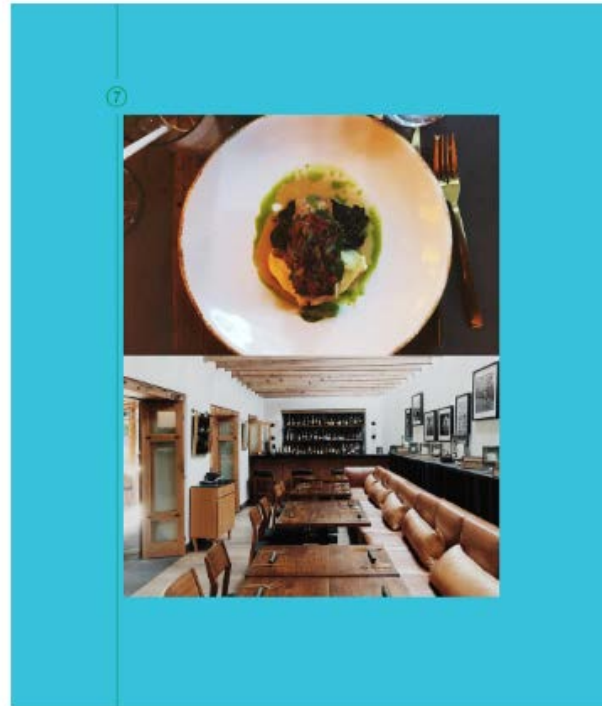


Serene Lake Avandaro in Valle de Bravo, Mexico.

## Stop 6: Get Wet at Lake Avandaro

There is no Valle without Lake Avandaro. It's the lifeblood of the town—most of the year, locals and domestic tourists flock to its shores to picnic, swim, paddleboard, and parasail. The best way to see Valle is, without a doubt, by parasail. But if the weather isn't cooperating, or heights aren't your thing, try a boat tour instead.





A course of sea bass at Nuestro, a restaurant in Valle de Bravo.

## Stop 7: Creative Dining at Nuestro

Nuestro is the restaurant at La Casa Rodavento—unlike your everyday hotel restaurant, it is excellent. The space is contemporary and beautiful, with food to match. Chef Alberto Colín spent a decade in New York City, cooking under French titan Jean-Georges Vongerichten, before he returned to Mexico to run the kitchen at Nuestro. His food is Mexican with a twist. He focuses on hyper-local ingredients (the seasonal menu changes each quarter), which make his reinterpretations of classic flavors and dishes sing. The highlights: catch-of-the-day ceviche; cubed fried rice served with avocado, dill, and spicy aioli; and a deconstructed carrot cake. Nuestro is open to the public, and serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner seven days a week.





A delicious mezcal and citrus concoction at Rūf in Valle de Bravo.

### **Stop 8: Rūf at CINCO for Rooftop Drinks**

The name is a bit silly, but the drinks certainly aren't. At Rūf I had the best cocktails of my trip—to the point that I'm now a mezcal convert, having previously had a strong aversion to it (apparently the New York bars I frequent are missing something). Rūf is, naturally, a rooftop bar; it offers a view of Lake Avandaro that is stunning, day or night.

