



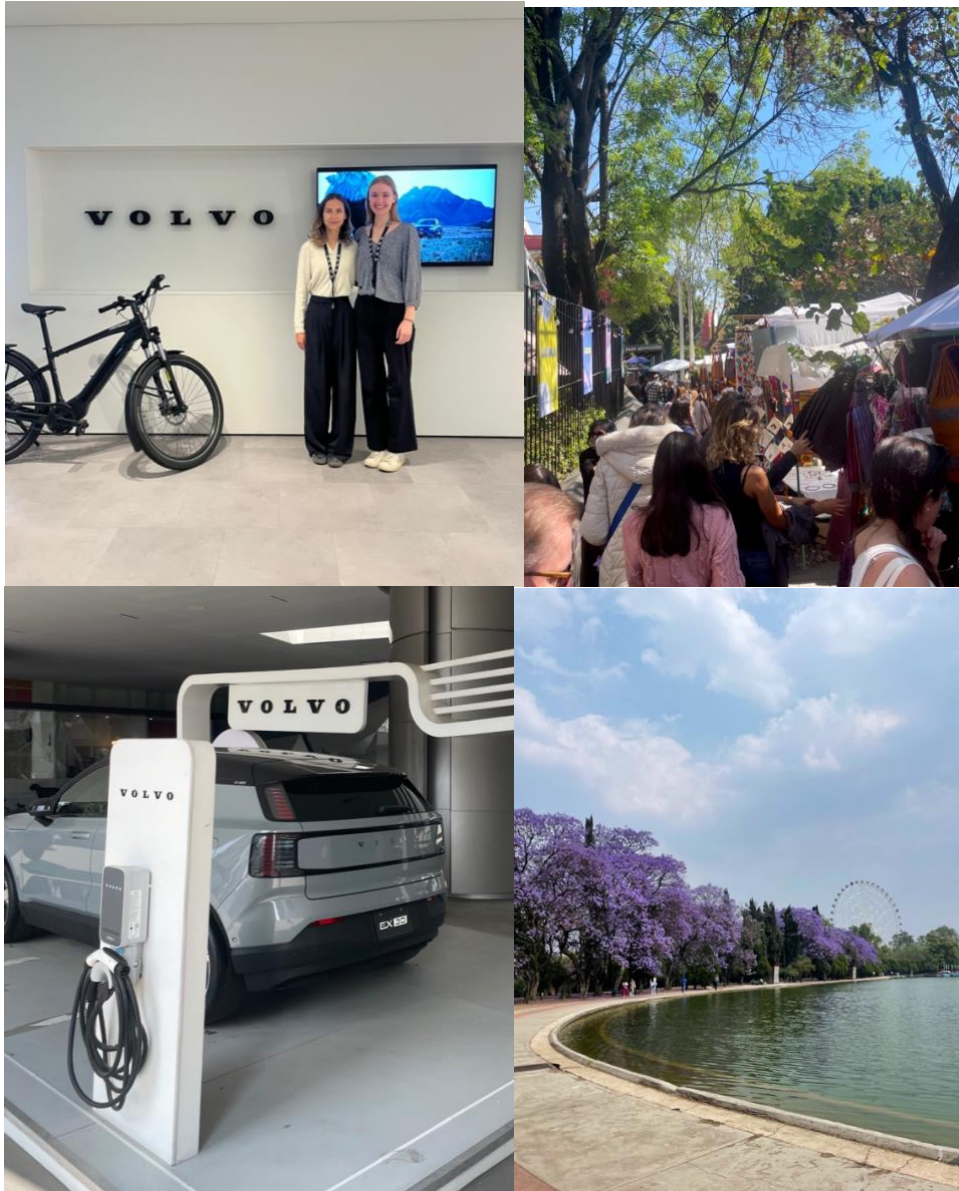
Charging Stations and Cafecitos: Exploring What Drives EVs in Mexico

Before arrival

We were excited by the opportunity to travel somewhere for our bachelor thesis and started looking for locations and companies the spring of our second year. We began sending emails to companies with a preliminary description of our project in July. We had a connection in Mexico City and Sophia had lived there for a year previously, so we decided it would be an interesting project and in an exciting place. One of us had studied Spanish previously and we took additional Spanish courses before we left, which was helpful since the majority of those we met preferred to speak Spanish. Before leaving, we also needed to get vaccines for tetanus, hepatitis, and rabies, among other things. We did not need to apply for a visa since we were not getting paid and were staying for under 90 days. This required only a tourist visa which was granted to us at the airport upon entry.

Upon arrival

We arrived on a Friday evening and were welcomed by our host family who greeted us at the airport, and then had time for tourist activities in Mexico City over the weekend. We visited artisan markets and explored museums around the city. We then began our project on the Monday morning at the office, where our supervisor gave us an introduction presentation. We wanted to complete as much of the project as possible while we were in Mexico, so, balancing it with following our KTH classes by distance, we tried to work on it at about 75% speed from January 17th until March 26th when we flew back to Stockholm.



Financials

At the time of our visit, the Mexican peso was equal to about 0.5 SEK. Prices in general were a little over half what they would be in Sweden, depending on the neighborhood of the city or region of the country. Prices in many neighborhoods of Mexico City are typically higher than in the rest of the country because of the higher income and large tourist presence. However, food in general was cheaper than in Sweden. Fresh produce, for example costs less and is much fresher. Ubers cost a fraction of the price of taxis in Sweden, and a 20 minute trip for the two of us could cost the equivalent of an SL ticket per person depending on demand.

Accommodation

We were able to stay with a family living in Mexico City in a house about 30 minutes from the office. Our contact person could put us in touch with the family, whom she knew from before. Our host family was extremely generous and they showed us around the city in their free time. Other students we met there lived in relatively young, international neighborhoods near Condesa and Roma, where renting a relatively good quality accommodation costs less than in Stockholm.

Project

Our project is called “Advancing Sustainable Mobility in Mexico: Analyzing Key Factors Driving Electric Vehicle Adoption.” Mexico, and Mexico City in particular, has long suffered from high pollution levels in its large urban areas. This is in large part due to the number of vehicles in circulation. We identified electric vehicles as a possible solution to this problem and our project centered on analyzing how their use could be increased in Mexico. This involved the collection of demographic, economic, environmental, and industry data to identify the most significant drivers of EV adoption. It also involved carrying out interviews with industry experts from the private and public sector who could give us perspective on challenges and solutions to increase the use of EVs. Typically, we would sit in the morning with schoolwork, then in the afternoons meet with our supervisor at the office or to interview contacts at a different location. We spent the rest of our time planning the project, contacting interviewees, writing questions, collecting data from databases, and beginning our text. (The majority of this work was carried out at various cafes around the city so we could explore new neighborhoods.) At the end of the project, we presented for our supervisor at the office and plan to present for the company management at a later date.



Country

Mexico City is extremely vibrant, with over 20 million people and unlimited cultural and historical sites and activities, as well as delicious food. There are restaurants, museums, parks, and a variety of neighborhoods to explore. We mainly stayed in Mexico City but also took a couple of trips to nearby cities to experience their culture and history. All the people we met were extremely warm, generous, and helpful. Everyone was eager to welcome us and provide help in any way they could. Though our experience was extremely positive, a culture shock for us was the fluidity of time and plans relative to Sweden. While most people we met with were punctual, plans could generally be created, delayed, or canceled with little to no advance notice. (One interview, for example, was delayed by over an hour without any advance notice.) Often, people were also disinclined to say no to requests even if they were not realistic, meaning that at times people might say yes but overpromise or exaggerate their ability and willingness to provide time or resources.



Leisure and social activities

There were many neighborhoods to explore with a variety of cafes, restaurants, parks, museums, and craft markets. Mexico's history is made up of a blend of ancient Aztec and Spanish culture, which is apparent in many parts of the culture, language, and architecture. We visited Aztec pyramids an hour outside the city, the Frida Kahlo Museum, the Zócalo and historic center, the 500-year-old Metropolitan Cathedral and Aztec temple ruins, the Anthropological Museum, the Palacio de Bellas Artes, the Castillo de Chapultepec, and a variety of other museums and historical sites around the city. While we socialized largely with our host family, we also met some students our age. There are lots of Facebook groups for internationals that organize a range of activities and meetings, especially in neighborhoods with more tourists and expats.



Sustainability

When we could, we walked, but distances were large and our host family recommended us not to use public transportation for safety reasons (although we believe we were overly cautious). The city is not very walkable and is mainly designed around vehicular traffic. Within certain neighborhoods it was easy to get to places on foot, but sidewalks are for example uneven and we sometimes had to cross freeways or underpasses in order to walk from one neighborhood to another.

Our project was related to this in that it aimed to reduce pollution from the large number of vehicles in the city by switching from combustion engine to electric vehicles. One of our conclusions was that vehicular traffic overall needs to be reduced to reduce pollution. Walkability, “bikeability”, and public transportation need to be improved and expanded to reduce emissions as well as pollution and its health effects. The project connects to SDG 3 (Good Health) by addressing pollution and health issues, SDG 9 (Industry and Infrastructure) by promoting sustainable automotive infrastructure, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) through cleaner urban mobility, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by reducing CO₂ emissions.

Other recommendations and observations

It helped us to have studied Spanish before arriving. Most people will not speak English so it is much easier to get around speaking the language of the country. Be cautious and generally aware of your surroundings, as in any big city. We mainly moved around a handful of neighborhoods; some of our favorites included Lomas de Chapultepec, Polanco, Condesa, Roma, and Coyoacán. Take advantage of the large green spaces for walks and exercise and visit museums and historical sites to experience the rich history of the city and country! We loved Mexico City and highly recommend it.