

DEMOGRAPHIA



TOLUCA: GROWING EXURB

SUMMARY INFORMATION		Similar To
Urbanized Area* Population	1,100,000	Leon, Columbus, Rosario, Liverpool, Perth, Sendai
Urbanized Land Area: Square Miles	100	Dublin, Lille, Halifax
Urbanized Land Area: Square Kilometers	260	
Population per Square Mile	11,100	Valencia, Porto Alegre, Buenos Aires, Valencia
Population per Square Kilometer	4,200	
*Continuously built up area		

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Toluca is the second largest of Mexico City's four large exurbs. At approximately 40 miles away, it is closer to Mexico City than the others (the larger Puebla and the smaller Cuernavaca and Queretaro) and it is on the more prosperous side.

Toluca, with more than a million metropolitan area occupies a high plain just over the pass from Mexico City's emerging peripheral business center, Santa Fe. From Santa Fe, a high-quality toll road leads to the top of the pass, with the balance of the trip completed on a six lane free road, which from all accounts, experiences higher traffic speeds, on average, than on the toll road. Toluca's elevation is approximately 8,500 feet, making it higher than any other major metropolitan area except La Paz, the half-capital of Bolivia.

Toluca shares its name with a volcano to the southwest. Toluca, the volcano, rises to 15,433 feet, nearly 1,000 feet higher than Mount Whitney, the tallest peak in the 48 contiguous states of the United States. Volcan Toluca is nearly as tall as Mount Blanc, western Europe's highest peak. But of course, it is a full 2,000 to 3,000 feet lower than Iztaccyhuatl and Popocatepetl, which stand to the east between Mexico City and Puebla and Orizaba, which is still further east.



Toluca is the capital of the state (estado) of Mexico. Mexico City is in the heart of what would be the Estado de Mexico, if it were not that a federal district had been designated for the national capital (Distrito Federal). As a result, the Estado de Mexico is shaped like an unbalanced horseshoe, with much land in the west and comparatively narrow strips of land to the north and east of Distrito Federal. All of



the population growth in the Mexico City area in the last quarter century has been in the suburbs, all of which are in the Estado de Mexico. The state itself has grown from 7.5 million people in 1980 to 13 million people in 2000. Over the same period, Distrito Federal has lost 200,000 people. But Toluca is not a suburb, it is rather an exurb, separated from Mexico City by open country in the form of mountains. So, Toluca has its own identity.

As the winding road (federal route 15) approaches Toluca's valley, it straightens out. There is significant commercial development along the route for the remaining miles to the core of the city. Beyond the stores that line the highway are large industrial areas to both the north and the south. Eventually, the urbanization becomes more residential, and the main road turns north and then northwest, heading toward Cerro Jocotitlan, a 13,000 foot volcanic peak, topped by a television tower, and then on to Guadalajara. A southern elevated bypass takes traffic around the oldest part of Toluca.

Centro and the old city are located to the west, near where the hills rise from the plain. The city has a grid street pattern and a collection of squares. As would be expected, the most important square is adjacent to the Cathedral. Here is a rather unique feature. The Cathedral is integrated into a large arcade that fills an over-sized block.

Like other large metropolitan areas, Toluca looks much better kept than Mexico City. The residential districts of Toluca look similar to Leon or Guadalajara. Like Puebla, Toluca seems to be positioning itself to take spillover growth from Mexico City. The international airport has flights from throughout Mexico and also from Houston. Toluca also has the advantage of a nearly flat valley on which to expand. And it has been expanding. The city itself has more than doubled in population since 1980, while the suburbs have expanded even more.

The urban area looks generally more prosperous than might be expected. Further, its more recent growth has led to lower population densities than would be expected. Toluca may be the least dense major metropolitan area of Mexico.





Toluca, Heading toward Mexico City

By Wendell Cox

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