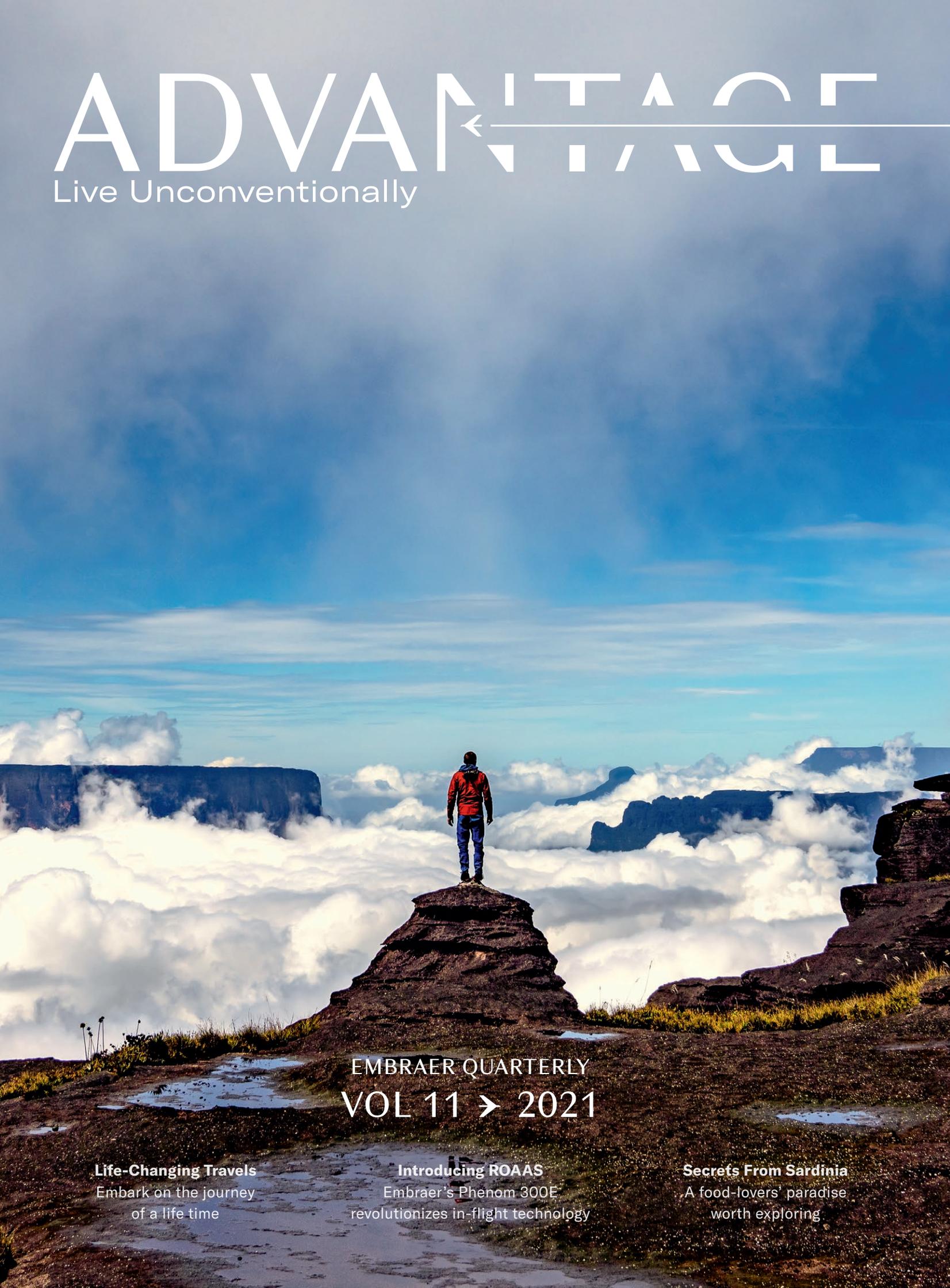


ADVANTAGE

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MOLE, MEZCAL AND MEXICO

To get a taste of Oaxaca's local flavor, here's where to stay, what to eat and where to shop when you're in town

Seven legendary mole dishes and the smoky flavors of homegrown mezcal lure sybarites from near and far to the cobblestone streets of Oaxaca, a colonial city cradled in the verdant valley of Mexico's southern state of Oaxaca. But there is much more to this cultural hub than its world-renowned gastronomic pleasures. A rich legacy of Zapotec and Mixtec indigenous influences, 17th-century Cantera stone architecture, colorful markets, festivals, and a thriving arts and crafts scene have earned this capital city well-deserved UNESCO status.

CHECK-IN

Mexico has some of the finest design-led hotels in the world, and Oaxaca is no exception. Hotel Casa Carmen comprises two incredibly stylish four-bedroom sister properties, Morelos and Reforma, both a stone's throw from the central Zócalo plaza and surrounding sites. Spacious sun-dappled rooms are punctuated by modern works from local artist Amador Montes, whose inimitable design aesthetic can also be found throughout the hotel's curated selection of embroidered textiles, colorful rugs and Acapulco chairs chosen by the artist. Don't

miss the hearty Mexican breakfasts or a visit to the hotel's private art gallery that's only open to guests.

Casa Antonieta, a hidden gem housed in a 20th-century residence just steps from the city's main square, blends a reverence for craftsmanship and minimalist design. The boutique hotel's six rooms flank a leafy colonial courtyard featuring the bohemian-cool Muss Café, where locals and travelers linger over organic Mexican coffee and fresh eats. Guest rooms and suites showcase artisan-made wood furniture and creamy textiles complemented by local artwork, wicker chairs, and rugs sourced from the nearby weaving village of Teotitlán del Valle.

FEAST UP

Travelers from Michelin-starred chefs to insatiable foodies follow their taste buds to Oaxaca's markets, food stalls, restaurants and mezcaterías, where the promise of culinary bliss awaits. A rainbow of moles (a rich, complex sauce packed with a variety of chiles, warm spices, nuts, raisins, tomato and sometimes chocolate), tlayudas (pizza-style

Above
Made from agave, an iconic plant of Mexico, mezcal plays an important role in the culture of Oaxaca

Right page (left)
Casa Carmen Morelos boasts an interior patio for an intimate experience at the heart of the city

Right page (right)
In the center of Oaxaca, the Church of Santo Domingo de Guzmán is surrounded by colorful residences

Right page (bottom)
Alberly Sombreros is a family-run shop handcrafting stylish wide-brimmed hats



EMBRAER TIP

The fastest and longest-ranged single-pilot business jet, the **Phenom 300E**, is now capable of speeds up to Mach 0.80, getting you and five occupants to Oaxaca efficiently from California.

corn tortillas topped with refried beans, meat, Oaxacan cheese and veggies), chapulines (fried grasshoppers), memelas (corn dough cakes piled high with savory ingredients) and nieve (hand-churned ice-cream) must be sampled on a visit to the city. Wash it all down with tejate—a traditional beverage made from ground maize, mamey seeds, cacao beans and flor de cacao, or tipple a glass of mezcal, the region's emblematic spirit derived from the agave plant.

Book a rooftop table at critic-approved Casa Oaxaca to feast on chef Alejandro Ruiz's famous moles and salsa prepared tableside. At Origen, chef Rodolfo Castellanos serves up modern riffs of age-old regional recipes with farm-fresh ingredients, while newcomer restaurant Criollo offers experimental daily tasting menus from acclaimed chefs Enrique Olvera and Luis Arellano showcasing produce-driven takes on typical Oaxacan dishes. Post-dinner, head to La Mezcaloteca, Los Danzantes or Los Amantes for memorable mezcal cocktails.

TAKE HOME

Oaxaca is a destination where modern art found hanging on the walls at contemporary museums and galleries harmonizes with a culture of pre-Colombian craft traditions that can still be appreciated today. Visit Colectivo 1050° to pick up an exquisite piece of handmade pottery from tableware and jugs to clay pots. The earthy shop is an artisan-owned cooperative representing over 50 potters in various villages surrounding Oaxaca. Make a bold fashion statement by donning a hat from Alberly Sombreros; the family-run shop has been handcrafting stylish wide-brimmed hats for more than 60 years. Head to Mercado Benito Juárez and neighboring Mercado 20 de Noviembre to wander stalls overflowing with exotic fruits and vegetables, bright flowers, piles of dried chiles, and handiworks like leather goods, hats and knives that make great souvenirs. Be sure to pack your suitcase with a bottle of mezcal from Bar Zebu, featuring unique labels designed by the bar's owner, or In Situ, which has a library of 180 different mezcals. ◀



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