**Mexico Sport and Recreation**

**Children love to play Soccer (Futbol) and you can see them in schools, streets and parks. Also, but in a less degree, basketball (schools and parks) and volleyball (schools and parks).**

**Mexico Facts and Culture**

* [Food and Recipes:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipes.htm) When eating, both hands are kept above the table. Guests do not leave directly after the meal, but stay for... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipes.htm)
* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/family.htm) Mexican families are usually large (three or more children). Families that live in urban areas usually have smaller families. ... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/fashion.htm) Most Mexicans wear clothing that is also common in other Western countries, especially in the urban areas. But there are... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/visiting.htm) Mexicans are very accomodating. Visitors are usually welcomed and served refreshments even though they arrive unnacounced. It is impolite to... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/visiting.htm)

**Mexico Facts**

Mexico stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital | Mexico City (Distrito Federal) |
| Government Type | federal republic |
| Population | 116,220,947 |
| Total Area | 758,445 Square Miles 1,964,375 Square Kilometers |
| Location | North America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, between Belize and the United States and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Guatemala and the United States |
| Language | Spanish only 92.7%, Spanish and indigenous languages 5.7%, indigenous only 0.8%, unspecified 0.8%  note: indigenous languages include various Mayan, Nahuatl, and other regional languages |

Map of Mexico



**Mexico Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

Mexico is located in North America. It borders the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico between Belize and the U.S. and borders the North Pacific Ocean between Guatemala and the U.S. Its land mass covers approximately 1.9 million sq. kms, and has approximately 9,330 sq. kms of beachfront property.

With a climate that varies from tropical to desert, the terrain ranges from high rugged mountains to low coastal plains and high plateaus to desert. Its lowest elevation point is Laguna Salada at 10 meters. The highest point is the Volcano, Pico de Orizaba, at 5,700 meters.  
  
Mexican natural hazards include tsunamis on the Pacific coast, volcanoes and destructive earthquakes at the center and south, and hurricanes on the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean coasts.

**Geography - note**

strategic location on southern border of US; corn (maize), one of the world's major grain crops, is thought to have originated in Mexico

**Mexico Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location | North America |
| Total Area | 758,445 Square Miles 1,964,375 Square Kilometers |
| Land Area | 750,557 Square Miles 1,943,945 Square Kilometers |
| Water Area | 7,888 Square Miles 20,430 Square Kilometers |
| Land Boundaries | 2,705 Miles 4,353 Kilometers |
| Irrigated Land | 24,942 Square Miles 64,600 Square Kilometers |
| Border Countries | Belize 250 km, Guatemala 962 km, US 3,141 km |
| Coastline | 5,797 Miles 9,330 Kilometers |
| Geographic Coordinates | 23 00 N, 102 00 W |
| Terrain | high, rugged mountains; low coastal plains; high plateaus; desert |
| Highest Point | 5,700 Meters |
| Highest Point Location | Volcan Pico de Orizaba 5,700 m |
| Lowest Point | -10 Meters |
| Lowest Point Location | Laguna Salada -10 m |
| Natural Resources | petroleum, silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber |
| Time Zone | UTC-6 (1 hour behind Washington, DC during Standard Time)  note: Mexico is divided into three time zones |
| Daylight saving time | +1hr, begins first Sunday in April; ends last Sunday in October |

**Mexico Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

With a climate that varies from tropical to desert, the terrain ranges from high rugged mountains to low coastal plains and high plateaus to desert. Mexican natural hazards include tsunamis on the Pacific coast, volcanoes and destructive earthquakes at the center and south, and hurricanes on the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean coasts.

**Mexico Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate | With a climate that varies from tropical to desert, the terrain ranges from high rugged mountains to low coastal plains and high plateaus to desert. Mexican natural hazards include tsunamis on the Pacific coast, volcanoes and destructive earthquakes at the center and south, and hurricanes on the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean coasts. |
| Terrain | high, rugged mountains; low coastal plains; high plateaus; desert |
| Natural Resources | petroleum, silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber |
| Natural Hazards | tsunamis along the Pacific coast, volcanoes and destructive earthquakes in the center and south, and hurricanes on the Pacific, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean coasts  volcanism: volcanic activity in the central-southern part of the country; the volcanoes in Baja California are mostly dormant; Colima (elev. 3,850 m), which erupted in 2010, is Mexico's most active volcano and is responsible for causing periodic evacuations of nearby villagers; it has been deemed a "Decade Volcano" by the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior, worthy of study due to its explosive history and close proximity to human populations; Popocatepetl (elev. 5,426 m) poses a threat to Mexico City; other historically active volcanoes include Barcena, Ceboruco, El Chichon, Michoacan-Guanajuato, Pico de Orizaba, San Martin, Socorro, and Tacana |
| Irrigated Land | 24,942 Square Miles 64,600 Square Kilometers |
| Environmental Issues | scarcity of hazardous waste disposal facilities; rural to urban migration; natural freshwater resources scarce and polluted in north, inaccessible and poor quality in center and extreme southeast; raw sewage and industrial effluents polluting rivers in urban areas; deforestation; widespread erosion; desertification; deteriorating agricultural lands; serious air and water pollution in the national capital and urban centers along US-Mexico border; land subsidence in Valley of Mexico caused by groundwater depletion  note: the government considers the lack of clean water and deforestation national security issues |
| Environment - International Agreements | party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands, Whaling   signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements |

**Mexico Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population | 116,220,947 |
| Population Growth Rate | 1.07% |
| Urban Population | 78.1% |
| Population in Major Urban Areas | MEXICO CITY (capital) 20.446 million; Guadalajara 4.525 million; Monterrey 4.213 million; Puebla 2.335 million; Tijuana 1.82 million; Toluca de Lerdo 1.748 million |
| Nationality Noun | Mexican(s) |
| Nationality Adjective | Mexican |
| Ethnic Groups | mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 60%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian 30%, white 9%, other 1% |
| Languages | Spanish only 92.7%, Spanish and indigenous languages 5.7%, indigenous only 0.8%, unspecified 0.8%  note: indigenous languages include various Mayan, Nahuatl, and other regional languages |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change | 1.49% |

**Mexico Medical Information**

Adequate medical care can be found in major cities. Excellent health facilities are available in Mexico City, but training and availability of emergency responders may be below U.S. standards. Care in more remote areas is limited. Standards of medical training, patient care, and business practices vary greatly among medical facilities in beach resorts throughout Mexico. In recent years, some U.S. citizens have complained that certain health-care facilities in beach resorts have taken advantage of them by overcharging or providing unnecessary medical care. A significant number of complaints have been lodged against some of the private hospitals in the Cabo San Lucas area, including complaints about price gouging and various unlawful and/or unethical pricing schemes and collection measures. Additionally, U.S. citizens should be aware that many Mexican facilities require payment ‘up front' prior to performing a procedure. Hospitals in Mexico do not accept U.S. domestic health insurance or Medicare/Medicaid and will expect payment via cash, credit, debit card, or bank transfer. Elective medical procedures may be less expensive than in the United States, but providers may not adhere to U.S. standards. Additionally, visitors are cautioned that facilities may lack access to sufficient emergency support. The U.S. Embassy encourages visitors to obtain as much information about the facility and the medical personnel as possible when considering surgical or other procedures, and when possible patients should travel with a family member or another responsible party.  
  
In addition to other publicly available information, U.S. citizens may click on the map of U.S. consular operations in Mexico to link to the nearest Embassy or consulate's website which contains lists of doctors or hospitals. Before beginning international travel, U.S. citizens may wish to obtain emergency medical evacuation insurance, check with their health care providers to see if the cost for medical treatment outside the U.S. is covered, and inquire about the reimbursement process.  
  
Procedures after the Death of a U.S. Citizen in Mexico: When a United States citizen dies in Mexico, it is critical that the next of kin act promptly to contract with a Mexican funeral home to help carry out funeral arrangements, including return of the deceased's remains to the U.S., if desired. The next of kin must also provide documents establishing the identity of both the next of kin and the decedent. Common documents used for this purpose are passports, government-issued photo identification such as a driver's license, birth certificates, and marriage certificates. The next of kin is responsible for all costs associated with the funeral home, and/or shipment of remains or personal effects.  
  
The Embassy or Consulate in the district where the U.S. citizen died can provide a list of funeral homes and location-specific requirements in the Consular District. Although Embassy staff members may not make funeral and other arrangements, staff can help locate and notify the next of kin of their loved one's passing, inform families about the Mexican legal requirements for claiming a loved one's remains, and assist in shipping personal effects to the United States. The U.S. Embassy and its Consulates also prepare a Consular Report of Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad, based on the local Mexican death certificate. The Consular Report of Death Abroad may be used in most legal proceedings in the United States as proof of death overseas. To prepare this document, Embassy staff will need original evidence of U.S. citizenship of the decedent and the original Mexican death certificate.  
  
Water Quality: In many areas in Mexico, tap water is unsafe and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe, although, visitors should be aware that many restaurants and hotels serve tap water unless bottled water is specifically requested. Ice may also come from tap water and should be avoided. Visitors should exercise caution when buying food or beverages from street vendors.  
  
The quality of water along some beaches in or near Acapulco or other large coastal communities may be unsafe for swimming because of contamination. Swimming in contaminated water may cause diarrhea and/or other illnesses. Mexican government agencies monitor water quality in public beach areas but their standards and sampling techniques may differ from those in the United States.  
  
Altitude: In high-altitude areas such as Mexico City (elevation 7,600 feet or about 1/2 mile higher than Denver, Colorado), most people need a short adjustment period. Symptoms of reaction to high altitude include a lack of energy, shortness of breath, occasional dizziness, headache, and insomnia. Those with heart problems should consult their doctor before traveling. Air pollution in Mexico City and Guadalajara is severe, especially from December to May, and combined with high altitude could affect travelers with underlying respiratory problems.

**Mexico Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP) | 6.4% |
| Death Rate/1,000 population | 4.94 |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate | 32.1% |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population | 1.7 |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population | 1.96 |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population | 16.26 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population | 14.38 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population | 18.04 |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years | 2.8% |
| Total Fertility Rate | 2.25 |
| Age of Mother's First Birth | 21.3 |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49) | 70.9% |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births | 50 |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate | 0.3% |
| HIV Aids People Living With | 220,000 |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved | 5.1% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved | 90.8% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved | 95.9% |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved | 14.7% |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved | 87% |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved | 79% |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk | intermediate |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s) | bacterial diarrhea and hepatitis A |
| Vectorborne Disease (s) | dengue fever |

**Mexico Crime**

**Crime Information**

Crime in Mexico continues to occur at a high rate and can often be violent. Street crime, ranging from pick-pocketing to armed robbery, is a serious problem in most major cities. Carjacking is also common (see the Travel Warning for Mexico for more specific information). The homicide rates in parts of Mexico have risen sharply in recent years, driven largely by violence associated with transnational criminal organizations. The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect foreign visitors traveling to major tourist destinations.As a result, resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico generally do not see the levels of violence and crime reported in the northern border region and in areas along major trafficking routes. Nevertheless, crime and violence are still serious problems. While most victims of violence are individuals associated with criminal activity, the security situation poses serious risks for anyone, including U.S. citizens. U.S. citizen victims of crime in Mexico are encouraged to report incidents to the nearest police headquarters and to the nearest U.S. consular office.  
  
The Mexican government has taken significant steps to strengthen its law enforcement capabilities at the federal level. However, state and local police forces continue to suffer from lack of training and funding, and are a weak deterrent to criminals, often armed with superior weapons. In some areas, municipal police are widely suspected of colluding with organized crime. In others, police officers are specifically targeted by criminal organizations. Because of the dangerous situation in which police officers operate, all travelers are advised to take a non-threatening posture when interacting with police and to cooperate with police instructions. We further advise travelers to avoid any areas where law enforcement operations are being carried out.  
  
Pirated Merchandise: Counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available in Mexico. Their sale is largely controlled by organized crime. Purchase for personal use is not criminalized in Mexico; however, bringing these goods back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.  
  
Personal Property: Travelers should always leave valuables and irreplaceable items in a safe place, or avoid bringing them at all. Visitors are encouraged to make use of hotel safes, avoid wearing expensive jewelry, clothing, or accessories, and carry only the cash or credit cards that will be needed on each outing. There have been significant numbers of incidents of pick pocketing, purse snatching, and hotel-room theft. Public transportation is a particularly popular place for pickpockets.  
  
Do not leave valuables in rental vehicles, even when locked. Some travelers have had their passports stolen from their bags within airports. Remember to secure your passport within a zipper pocket or other safe enclosure so that it cannot be easily removed from your person or your luggage. Be vigilant of your passport even after passing through security and while waiting in a departure lounge to board your flight.  
  
Business travelers should be aware that theft can occur even in apparently secure locations. Theft of items such as briefcases and laptops occur frequently at Mexico City's Benito Juarez International Airport and at business-class hotels. Passengers arriving at Mexican airports who need to obtain pesos should use the exchange counters or ATMs in the arrival/departure gate area, where access is restricted, rather than changing money after passing through Customs, where they can be observed by criminals. A number of U.S. citizens have been arrested for passing on counterfeit currency they had earlier received in change. If you receive what you believe to be a counterfeit bank note, bring it to the attention of Mexican law enforcement.  
  
Personal Safety: Visitors should be aware of their surroundings at all times, even when in areas generally considered safe. Women traveling alone are especially vulnerable and should exercise caution, particularly at night. Some U.S Citizens have reported being sexually assaulted, robbed of personal property, or abducted and then held while their credit cards were used at various businesses or Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). Individuals who have been targeted were often walking alone in isolated locations. Be very cautious in general when using ATMs in Mexico. If you must use an ATM, it should be accessed only during the business day at large protected facilities (preferably inside commercial establishments, rather than at glass-enclosed, highly visible ATMs on streets). Travelers to remote or isolated hunting or fishing venues should be aware that they may be some distance from appropriate medical services, banking facilities (such as ATMs), and law enforcement or consular assistance in an emergency.  
  
Kidnapping: Kidnapping, including the kidnapping of U.S. citizens, continues to occur. So-called express kidnappings, i.e., attempts to get quick cash in exchange for the release of an individual, have occurred in almost all of Mexico's large cities and appear to target not only the wealthy but also the middle class. Kidnappings are largely crimes of opportunity, increasingly carried out by younger, less "professional" criminals, and are more violent than in the past. The National Citizens' Observatory, a think tank, reported on June 27, 2013 that kidnappings in Mexico increased by 17 percent in the first quarter of 2013 compared with the last quarter of 2012. The Mexican government had reported a decline in kidnappings until it stopped publishing statistics on ths category of crime in April 2013. Review the sections above on personal property and personal safety for common sense actions you can take to reduce the risk of becoming a victim.  
  
A common scam throughout Mexico is ‘virtual' kidnapping, a confidence scam in which a telephone caller contacts a family member of an alleged victim, typically speaking in a distraught voice in a ploy to elicit information about a family member and then use this knowledge to demand ransom for the release of the alleged victim. Other types of ‘virtual' kidnappings include communicating via text message only from stolen or lost cell phones, or convincing individuals to isolate themselves in an effort to extort money from their families. Information that can be used against victims may also be obtained from social networking websites. Calls are often placed by prison inmates using smuggled cellular phones. In the event of such a call, it is important to stay calm, as the vast majority of these calls are hoaxes. Do not reveal any personal information and try to speak with the victim to corroborate his/her identity. Any kidnapping, real or virtual, should be reported to the police as well as to the Embassy or nearest consulate.  
  
Credit/Debit Card "Skimming": Exercise caution when utilizing credit or debit cards. There have been reports of instances in which U.S. citizens in Mexico have had their card numbers "skimmed" and the money in their debit accounts stolen or their credit cards fraudulently charged. ("Skimming" is the theft of credit card information by an employee of a legitimate merchant or bank, manually copying down numbers or using a magnetic stripe reader, or using a camera and skimmer installed in an ATM machine.) In addition to skimming, the risk of physical theft of credit or debit cards also exists. To prevent such theft, the Embassy recommends that travelers keep close track of their personal belongings and that they only carry what they need. Most restaurants and other businesses will bring the credit card machine to your table so that you can keep the card in your possession at all times. If travelers choose to use credit cards, they should regularly check their account status to ensure there are no unauthorized transactions.  
  
Buses and Public Transportation: Whenever possible, visitors should travel by bus only during daylight hours and only by first-class conveyance. Although there have been several reports of bus hijackings and robberies on toll roads, buses on toll roads have experienced a markedly lower rate of incidents than (second- and third-class) buses that travel the less secure "free" highways. Although the police have made progress in bringing this type of crime under control, armed robberies of entire busloads of passengers still occur, including recent armed robberies of local commuter buses traveling within Mexico City. There was one recent incident involving the placement of contraband under a bus seat of an unwitting U.S. citizen passenger. Be sure to check around and under your seat and immediately report any items that do not belong to you. Metro (subway) robberies are frequent in Mexico City, especially during peak travel times. If riding the metro or the city bus system, U.S. citizens should take extreme care with valuables and belongings.  
  
Taxis: Robberies and assaults on passengers in "libre" taxis (that is, taxis not affiliated with a taxi stand) are frequent and violent in Mexico, with passengers subjected to beating, shooting, and sexual assault. U.S. citizens visiting Mexico should avoid taking any taxi not summoned by telephone or contacted in advance. When in need of a taxi, telephone a radio taxi or "sitio" (regulated taxi stand – pronounced "C-T-O"), and ask the dispatcher for the driver's name and the taxi's license plate number. Ask the hotel concierge or other responsible individual to write down the license plate number of the cab you are taking. Avoid "libre" taxis and the Volkswagen beetle taxis altogether. Although "libre" taxis are more convenient and less expensive, these are not as well regulated, may be unregistered, and are potentially more dangerous. U.S. Embassy employees in Mexico City are prohibited from using "libre" taxis, or any taxis hailed on the street, and are authorized to use only "sitio" taxis.  
  
Passengers arriving at any airport in Mexico should take only authorized airport taxis after pre-paying the fare at one of the special booths located and well publicized inside the airport.  
  
Harassment/Extortion: In some instances, U.S. citizens have become victims of harassment, mistreatment, and extortion by alleged Mexican law enforcement, immigration and other officials. Mexican authorities have cooperated in investigating such cases, but one must have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint effectively. Please note this information if you have a problem with police or other officials. In addition, tourists should be wary of persons representing themselves as police officers or immigration or other officials. When in doubt, ask for identification. Be aware that offering a bribe to a public official to avoid a ticket or other penalty is a crime in Mexico.  
  
One extortion technique, known as the " grandparent scam ", involves calls placed by persons alleging to be attorneys or U.S. Government employees claiming that a person's relative – nearly always a purported grandchild - has been in a car accident in Mexico and has been arrested/detained. The caller asks for a large sum of money to ensure the subject's release. When the recipient of the call checks on their family member, they discover that the entire story is false. If the alleged detainee cannot be located in the U.S. and the family has reason to believe that the person did, in fact, travel to Mexico, contact the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate for assistance in determining if they have been detained by authorities. Further information on international financial scams is available on our website.  
  
Beware of possible scams involving inflated prices for tourist-related goods and services and avoid patronizing restaurants and other service providers that do not have clearly listed prices. You should check with your hotel for the names of reputable establishments and service providers in the area. When using credit cards for payment you should try to maintain direct visibility of the person swiping the card in the machine to protect against credit card skimming.  
  
Sexual Assault: Rape and sexual assault continue to be serious problems in resort and other areas. Many of these incidents occur at night or during the early morning hours, in hotel rooms, or on deserted beaches. Acquaintance rape is a serious problem. Hotel workers, taxi drivers, and security personnel have been implicated in many cases. Women should avoid being alone, particularly in isolated areas and at night. It is imperative that victims file a police report, which should include a rape "kit" exam, against the perpetrator(s) as soon as possible at the nearest police station. There have been several cases where the victim traveled back to the U.S. without filing a police report or undergoing a rape exam; their attempts to document their case later on did not carry weight with local Mexican authorities.  
  
Some bars and nightclubs, especially in resort cities such as Cancun, Acapulco, Mazatlan, Cabo San Lucas, and Tijuana, can be havens for drug dealers and petty criminals. Interaction with such individuals may put a traveler at risk. There have been instances of contamination or drugging of drinks to gain control over the patron.  
  
See the information under "Special Circumstances" below regarding Spring Break in Mexico if you are considering visiting Mexican resort areas between February and April, when thousands of U.S. college students traditionally arrive in those areas. Additional information designed specifically for traveling students is also available on our Students Abroad website.  
  
Transnational Crime in Mexico: Mexican transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are engaged in a violent struggle to control trafficking routes and other criminal activity. Recent attacks and persistent security concerns have prompted the U.S. Embassy to urge U.S. citizens to defer nonessential travel to certain areas in Mexico, and to advise U.S. citizens residing or traveling in those areas to exercise extreme caution. For updated and more detailed information on these areas and the threats involved, please refer to the Travel Warning for Mexico.  
  
TCOs have increasingly targeted unsuspecting individuals, who cross the border on a regular and predictable basis traveling between known destinations, as a way to transport drugs to the U.S. They affix drugs to the undercarriage of the traveler's car while it is parked in Mexico. Once in the U.S., members of the organization remove the packages while the vehicle is unattended. If you are a frequent border crosser, you should vary your routes and travel times as well as closely monitor your vehicle to avoid being targeted.

**Mexico Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While in a foreign country, an individual is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which can differ significantly from those in the United States – and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. The trial process and typical investigation/prosecution timeline in Mexico is significantly different and longer from that in the United States, and procedures may vary from state to state. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mexican laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mexico are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. If you break local laws in Mexico, your U.S. citizenship will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It is very important to know what is legal and what is illegal wherever you go. If arrested in Mexico, a U.S. citizen must go through the foreign legal process including possible charge or indictment, prosecution, possible conviction and sentencing, and any appeals process. Within this framework, U.S. consular officers provide certain services to U.S. citizens and their families, including information about local attorneys, and advocacy to ensure fair and humane treatment.  
  
Sexual Crimes: Sexual exploitation of children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States. Soliciting sexual services of a minor is illegal in Mexico, and is punishable by imprisonment. The Mexican government has announced an aggressive program to discourage sexual tourism. Police authorities in the state of Baja California recently began enforcement of anti-pedophile legislation.  
  
Firearms Penalties: Illegal firearms trafficking from the United States into Mexico is a major problem and the Mexican government has strict laws prohibiting the importation of weapons. The Department of State warns all U.S. citizens against taking any firearm or ammunition into Mexico. Entering Mexico with a firearm, certain types of knives, or even a single round of ammunition is illegal, even if the weapon or ammunition is taken into Mexico unintentionally. The Mexican government strictly enforces laws restricting the entry of firearms and ammunition along all land borders and at airports and seaports, and routinely x-rays all incoming luggage. U.S. citizens entering Mexico with a weapon or any amount of ammunition at all, even accidentally, generally are detained for at least a few days, and can result in arrests, convictions, and long prison sentences. Travelers are strongly advised to thoroughly inspect all belongings prior to travel to Mexico to avoid the accidental import of ammunition or firearms. For more information visit the websites for the Mexican Secretary of Defense and Mexican Customs.  
  
The process for temporarily importing a hunting weapon or ammunition into Mexico is complicated and, if handled incorrectly can result in imprisonment and confiscation of the weapon and any ammunition. The U.S. Embassy in Mexico recommends prospective hunters obtain the services of a licensed shooting or hunting club for help in importing any firearm or ammunition, which require separate permits. Prohibited weapons and calibers are all those identified by Mexican law as reserved for "the exclusive use of the Mexican military." These prohibited weapons and calibers include: full-auto and semi-auto handguns larger than.380, revolvers.357 Magnum and larger, rifles larger than.30 caliber, and shotguns larger than 12ga or with a barrel shorter than 25 inches. Allowed hand gun calibers are.380 auto,.38 and.22. Allowed long guns are: rifles no larger than.30 caliber, and 12-, 20-, and 410-gauge shotguns with barrels longer than 25 inches. For more information aboutimporting huntingweapons or ammunition into Mexico, contact the ANGADI (Asociación Nacional de GanaderosDiversificados Criadores de Fauna) at info@anggadi.org.mx.  
  
Vessels entering Mexican waters with firearms or ammunition on board must have a permit previously issued by the Mexican Embassy or a Mexican consulate. Mariners do not avoid prosecution by declaring their weapons at the port of entry. Before traveling, mariners who have obtained a Mexican firearm permit should contact Mexican port officials to receive guidance on the specific procedures used to report and secure weapons and ammunition.  
  
Drug Penalties and Prescription Medications: Penalties for drug offenses are strict, and convicted offenders can expect large fines and jail sentences of up to 25 years. The purchase of controlled medications requires a prescription from a licensed Mexican physician. Some Mexican doctors have been arrested for writing prescriptions without due cause. In those instances, U.S. citizens who purchased the medications have been held in jail for months waiting for the Mexican judicial system to make a decision on their case. Marijuana prescriptions (or "medical marijuana") are not valid in Mexico. Individuals in possession of a state medical marijuana license should remember that the license is not valid outside of the borders of that state, and bringing marijuana into Mexico – even if it is accompanied by a prescription – is considered international drug trafficking, a serious federal offense. The Mexican list of controlled medications differs from that of the United States, and Mexican public health laws concerning controlled medications are unclear and often enforced selectively. To determine whether a particular medication is controlled in Mexico or requires a prescription from a Mexican doctor for purchase, please consult the website of the Mexican Federal Commission for Protection against Health Risks (Comisión Federal para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios - COFEPRIS).  
  
The U.S. Embassy cautions that possession of any amount of prescription medication brought from the United States, including medications to treat HIV, and psychotropic drugs such as Valium, can result in arrest if Mexican authorities suspect abuse, or if the quantity of the prescription medication exceeds the amount required for several days' use. Individuals are advised to carry a copy of the prescription. If significant quantities of the medication are required, individuals should carry a doctor's letter explaining that the quantity of medication is appropriate for their personal medical use.  
  
Buying Prescription Drugs: Any drug classified by the Mexican government as a controlled medicine, including antibiotics, cannot be purchased in Mexico without a Mexican prescription. The prescription must be written by a physician who is federally registered. Purchasing a controlled medicine without a valid prescription in Mexico is a serious crime for both the purchaser and the seller. Purchasing a controlled medicine with a U.S. prescription is not sufficient and is also illegal, regardless of what the Mexican pharmacy may be willing to sell to the purchaser. By law, Mexican pharmacies cannot honor foreign prescriptions. U.S. citizens have been arrested and their medicines confiscated by authorities when their prescriptions were written by a licensed U.S. physician and filled by a licensed Mexican pharmacist. There have been cases of U.S. citizens buying prescription drugs in border cities only to be arrested soon after or have money extorted by criminals impersonating police officers. Those arrested are often held for the full 48 hours allowed by Mexican law without charges being filed, then released. During this interval, the detainees are often asked for bribes or are solicited by attorneys who demand large fees to secure their release, which will normally occur without any intercession as there are insufficient grounds to bring criminal charges against the individuals. In addition, U.S. law enforcement officials believe that as many as 25 percent of the medications available in Mexico are counterfeit and substandard. Such counterfeit medications may be difficult to distinguish from the real medications and could pose serious health risks to consumers. The importation of prescription drugs into the United States can be illegal in certain circumstances. U.S. law generally permits persons to enter the United States with only an immediate supply (i.e., enough for about one month) of a prescription medication.  
  
Criminal Penalties for Possession: Mexico has new laws that have been touted by the press as making the possession of drugs for personal use legal. Many of the allowable amounts are much less than what has been reported by the news media. Additionally, the new drug laws include stiffer penalties for many drug offenses, and the sale and distribution of drugs continues to be illegal in Mexico. U.S. citizens traveling to Mexico should review this information to avoid possible prosecution under Mexican law.  
  
Importing Medicines into Mexico: Medications for personal use are not subject to duty when hand-carried into Mexico. Individuals are advised to carry a copy of their prescriptions in the event they are asked to prove that the medicines are for personal use. To ship (import) prescription medication into Mexico for personal use, a foreigner must obtain a permit from the Mexican Health Department prior to importing the medicine into Mexico. For a fee, a customs broker can process the permit before the Mexican authorities on behalf of an individual. If using the services of a customs broker, it is advisable to agree upon the fees before telling the broker to proceed. Current listings of local customs brokers (agencias aduanales) are available in the Mexico City yellow pages.  
  
Arrests and Notifications: The Mexican government is required by international law to notify the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate promptly when a U.S. citizen is arrested, if the arrestee so requests. In practice, however, depending on where the arrest takes place, this notification can be months late, or may never occur at all, limiting the assistance the U.S. Government can provide. U.S. citizens should promptly identify themselves as such to the arresting officers, and should request that the Embassy or nearest consulate be notified immediately. Also see the "grandparent scam," described above in the Harassment/Extortion section, in which a U.S. citizen is alleged to be detained by authorities in Mexico in an attempt to get relatives in the United States to wire money. Confirm an alleged detention or arrest with the Embassy or consulate before taking any other action.  
  
Prison Facilities: Prison conditions in Mexico can be extremely poor. In many facilities food is insufficient in both quantity and quality, and prisoners must pay for adequate nutrition from their own funds. Many Mexican prisons provide sub-standard medical care, and prisoners with urgent medical conditions may receive only a minimum of attention. U.S. citizens who are incarcerated in Mexico are sometimes forced to pay hundreds and even thousands of dollars in "protection money" to fellow prisoners. From 2009 through 2012, 29 U.S. citizen deaths in Mexican prisons have been reported, including at least 9 apparent homicides.  
  
Prisoner Treatment/Interrogations: Mexico is party to several international anti-torture conventions, and both the Mexican Constitution and Mexican law prohibit torture. However, U.S. citizens have reported being beaten, sexually assaulted, and subjected to severe interrogation techniques while in the custody of Mexican security forces. In its annual report, Mexico's National Commission on Human Rights documents cases of Mexican security forces seeking to obtain information through torture. Convictions for torture or for any alleged abuses by security forces are rare.

**Mexico Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth | 76 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female | 79 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male | 74 Years |
| Median Age (female) | 28 Years |
| Median Age (male) | 26 Years |
| Median Age | 27 Years |

**Mexico Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language | Spanish only 92.7%, Spanish and indigenous languages 5.7%, indigenous only 0.8%, unspecified 0.8%  note: indigenous languages include various Mayan, Nahuatl, and other regional languages |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| Literacy Female | 85.3% |
| Literacy Male | 86.9% |
| Literacy Total | 86.1% |

**Mexico Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP | 5.1% |
| Literacy - female | 85.3% |
| Literacy - male | 86.9% |
| Literacy - total population | 86.1% |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| School Life Expectancy - female | 13 Years |
| School Life Expectancy - male | 13 Years |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary) | 13 Years |

**Mexico Age of Population**

Age 0-14: 27.4 %Age 15-24: 18.1 %Age 25-54: 40.7 %Age 55-64: 6.9 %Over 64: 6.9 %Highcharts.com

**Classroom**

Private schools tend to have lots of money for nice facilities and books. The buildings are in good shape, and the teachers have plenty of funding for support materials, including modern computers. Teachers in these schools also tend to emphasize bilingual instruction.

Public schools can have much less funding, although government programs now provide free books to 90% of the public schools in Mexico. In poorer towns, it is not uncommon for schools to be missing windows and have bare cement floors. Supplies and other resources are also lacking.

The average classroom size will vary between 22 and 32 students per teacher, with some indigenous community schools having as high as 40 or more students per teacher.

**Education Culture**

The school year in Mexico runs from September to June. Social class and economic status determine the school that a child will attend. Children of wealthy families will likely go to private schools; others attend public schools. Children must attend school through the sixth grade, although many poorer families are forced to have their children work instead of going to school so that they can earn enough money to survive. The Mexican government is working to improve this situation. Nearly 25% of the budget is now being spent on educational support and reform. Because of these efforts to improve educational opportunities, the percent of children starting school and making it through sixth grade improved from 74% in 1994 to approximately 90% today. Nine out of every 10 children in Mexico from age 6 to 14 is enrolled in school, a significant improvement. Further, more than 8 million students are enrolled in schools beyond the primary level.

Although nearly 80% of all adults in Mexico between the ages of 25 and 34 have not received high school diplomas, that trend is for more young people to complete a secondary education. Unfortunately, educational expenditures are growing faster than government budgets can handle. So while education is seen as very important to the country’s future, and much is being done to promote it, the growth rate cannot be sustained, and educational issues will be critical for years to come.

**Learning**

School children are required to wear uniforms. Though many families buy their children’s uniforms, government programs are working to help provide the poorest families with free uniforms so their children can attend school.

Private schools are more likely to have computers available for students than public schools, but the prevalence of Internet cafés allows almost all children sufficient access to computers to support their schooling.

The school day lasts four hours. Mid-morning is a break to have a snack and play outside. Many children eat *molletes* at the break, which is a bread roll split in two and covered with beans and cheese. The classes tend to be more informal than classrooms in the United States, and much of the learning takes place with group activities. Despite the informality, students are expected to respect the teacher (*maestro* or *maestra*), and parents do not interfere in school matters for the most part.

Children receive grades for their performance in class. The grading scale is usually 1-10. Teachers give exams five times a year, with a national exam at the end of the year. Students who score less than 6 on that exam do not move on to the next grade level.

Kindergarten begins at age four and continues to age six. In kindergarten, children learn to color, sing songs, and play with other children. Toward the end of kindergarten and in the first grade, they will learn to count and learn the alphabet. Common courses taught in elementary school are math, social studies, grammar, writing, reading, and physical education.

Some children begin learning English as early as the sixth grade. Learning English is getting more attention than ever before, and private language schools are available nearly everywhere.

Growing numbers of students who finish elementary school progress on to middle school (grades 7-9) and then to high school (10-12). Although the government provides free texts to elementary students, those who progress past that point must buy their own books. Not all families can afford this, so many children do not advance. The latter years in high school require a student to choose classes that direct the student towards either business or a vocation.

Mexico has a rich cultural tradition in the arts. The degree to which a school may support artistic education usually has more to do with the amount of funds available than any established curriculum. Similarly, children of wealthier families tend to have more time for developing such talents than children of poorer families, who often must sacrifice personal wants in order to work for family survival. Because so much of Mexico is agricultural, it is not uncommon for a child to work in the fields, along with many of their friends.

**To School**

Some children ride bikes to school or walk, some ride buses provided by the school, and others with more money will ride in taxi-type cars and pay for the ride (several families might hire together someone to drive the children to and from school).

**Mexico Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name | Mexico City (Distrito Federal) |
| Country Name | Mexico |
| Local - Long | Estados Unidos Mexicanos |
| Full Country Name | United Mexican States |
| Local - Short | Mexico |
| Government Type | federal republic |
| Capital - geographic coordinate | 19 26 N, 99 08 W |
| Daylight Savings Time | +1hr, begins first Sunday in April; ends last Sunday in October |
| Capital Time Difference | UTC-6 (1 hour behind Washington, DC during Standard Time)  note: Mexico is divided into three time zones |
| National Holiday | Independence Day, 16 September (1810) |
| Constitution | 5 February 1917 |
| Legal System | civil law system with US constitutional law theory influence; judicial review of legislative acts |
| Suffrage | 18 years of age; universal and compulsory (but not enforced) |

**Mexico Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch | chief of state: President Enrique PENA NIETO (since 1 December 2012); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government   head of government: President Enrique PENA NIETO (since 1 December 2012)   cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the president; note - appointment of attorney general, the head of the Bank of Mexico, and senior treasury officials require consent of the Senate   elections: president elected by popular vote for a single six-year term; election last held on 1 July 2012 (next to be held in July 2018)   election results: Enrique PENA NIETO elected president; percent of vote - Enrique PENA NIETO (PRI) 38.21%, Andres Manuel LOPEZ OBRADOR (PRD) 31.59%, Josefina Eugenia VAZQUEZ Mota (PAN) 25.41%, other 4.79% |
| Legislative Branch | bicameral National Congress or Congreso de la Union consists of the Senate or Camara de Senadores (128 seats; 96 members elected by popular vote to serve six-year terms, and 32 seats allocated on the basis of each party's popular vote) and the Chamber of Deputies or Camara de Diputados (500 seats; 300 members are elected by popular vote; remaining 200 members are allocated on the basis of each party's popular vote; members to serve three-year terms)  elections: Senate - last held on 1 July 2012 for all of the seats (next to be held on 1 July 2018); Chamber of Deputies - last held on 1 July 2012 (next to be held on 5 July 2015)  election results: Senate - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PRI 52, PAN 38, PRD 22, PVEM 9, PT 4, Movimiento Ciudadano 2, PANAL 1; Chamber of Deputies - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PRI 208, PAN 114, PRD 100, PVEM 33, PT 19, Movimiento Ciudadano 16, PANAL 10 |
| Judicial Branch | Supreme Court of Justice or Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nacion (justices or ministros are appointed by the president with consent of the Senate) |
| Regions or States | 31 states (estados, singular - estado) and 1 federal district\* (distrito federal); Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campeche, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila de Zaragoza, Colima, Distrito Federal\*, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico, Michoacan de Ocampo, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo Leon, Oaxaca, Puebla, Queretaro de Arteaga, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosi, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave (Veracruz), Yucatan, Zacatecas |
| Political Parties and Leaders | Citizen's Movement (Movimiento Ciudadano) [Luis WALTON Aburto]; Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) or PRI [Cesar CAMACHO Quiroz]; Labor Party (Partido del Trabajo) or PT [Alberto ANAYA Gutierrez]; Mexican Green Ecological Party (Partido Verde Ecologista de Mexico) or PVEM [vacant]; National Action Party (Partido Accion Nacional) or PAN [Gustavo MADERO Munoz]; New Alliance Party (Partido Nueva Alianza) or PNA/PANAL [Luis CASTRO Obregon]; Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolucion Democratica) or PRD [Jesus ZAMBRANO Grijalva] |
| International Law Organization Participation | accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction with reservations; accepts ICCt jurisdiction |
| International Organization Participation | APEC, BCIE, BIS, CAN (observer), Caricom (observer), CD, CDB, CE (observer), CELAC, CSN (observer), EBRD, FAO, FATF, G-20, G-3, G-15, G-24, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC (NGOs), LAES, LAIA, MIGA, NAFTA, NAM (observer), NEA, OAS, OECD, OPANAL, OPCW, Paris Club (associate), PCA, SICA (observer), UN, UNASUR (observer), UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, Union Latina (observer), UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders | Businessmen's Coordinating Council or CCE; Confederation of Employers of the Mexican Republic or COPARMEX; Confederation of Industrial Chambers or CONCAMIN; Confederation of Mexican Workers or CTM; Confederation of National Chambers of Commerce or CONCANACO; Coordinator for Foreign Trade Business Organizations or COECE; Federation of Unions Providing Goods and Services or FESEBES; National Chamber of Transformation Industries or CANACINTRA; National Peasant Confederation or CNC; National Small Business Chamber or CANACOPE; National Syndicate of Education Workers or SNTE; National Union of Workers or UNT; Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca or APPO; Roman Catholic Church |

**Mexico Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product | $1,845,000,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - official exchange rate | $1,327,000,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - real growth rate | 1.2% |
| GDP Per Capita | $15,600.00 (USD) |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture | 3.6% |
| GDP by Sector- Industry | 36.6% |
| GDP by Sector- services | 59.8% |
| Population Below Poverty Line | 51.3% |
| Inflation Rate | 3.6% |
| Labor Force | 50,700,000 |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture | 13.4% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry | 24.1% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services | 61.9% |
| Unemployment Rate | 5% |
| Unemployment - note | underemployment may be as high as 25% |
| Fiscal Year | calendar year |
| Annual Budget | $276,200,000,000 (USD) |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP | -2.5% |
| Public Debt (% of GDP) | 35.4% |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP | 21.9% |
| Major Industries | food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel, petroleum, mining, textiles, clothing, motor vehicles, consumer durables, tourism |
| Industrial Growth Rate | 3.6% |
| Agriculture Products | corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, beans, cotton, coffee, fruit, tomatoes; beef, poultry, dairy products; wood products |
| Currency Code | Mexican peso (MXN) |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14 | 5% |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14 | 1,105,617 |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate | 4.7% |

**Mexico Economy**

**Economic Overview**

Mexico has a free market economy in the trillion dollar class. It contains a mixture of modern and outmoded industry and agriculture, increasingly dominated by the private sector. Recent administrations have expanded competition in seaports, railroads, telecommunications, electricity generation, natural gas distribution, and airports. Per capita income is roughly one-third that of the US; income distribution remains highly unequal. Since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, Mexico's share of US imports has increased from 7% to 12%, and its share of Canadian imports has doubled to 5.5%. Mexico has free trade agreements with over 50 countries including Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, the European Free Trade Area, and Japan - putting more than 90% of trade under free trade agreements. In 2012 Mexico formally joined the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations and in July it formed the Pacific Alliance with Peru, Colombia and Chile. In 2007, during its first year in office, the Felipe CALDERON administration was able to garner support from the opposition to successfully pass pension and fiscal reforms. The administration passed an energy reform measure in 2008 and another fiscal reform in 2009. Mexico's GDP plunged 6.2% in 2009 as world demand for exports dropped, asset prices tumbled, and remittances and investment declined. GDP posted positive growth of 5.6% in 2010 with exports - particularly to the United States - leading the way. Growth slowed to 3.9% in 2011 and slightly recovered to 4% in 2012. In November 2012, Mexico's legislature passed a comprehensive labor reform which was signed into law by former President Felipe CALDERON. Mexico's new PRI government, led by President Enrique PENA NIETO, has said it will prioritize structural economic reforms and competitiveness. The new president signed the Pact for Mexico, an agreement that lists 95 priority commitments, along with the leaders of the country's three main political parties: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

**Mexico Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports | $370,900,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Exports | manufactured goods, oil and oil products, silver, fruits, vegetables, coffee, cotton |
| Top Export Partners | US 78% |

**Mexico Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports | $379,400,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Imports | metalworking machines, steel mill products, agricultural machinery, electrical equipment, car parts for assembly, repair parts for motor vehicles, aircraft, and aircraft parts |
| Top Import Partners | US 49.7%, China 14.9%, Japan 4.7% |

**Mexico Flag**

Originally the colors stood for (green) — independence, (white) — purity of religion, and (red) — striving for unity between the native races and the Spaniards. Now they stand for (green) — hope, (white) — purity, and (red) — religion.

**Mexico Flag Description**

three equal vertical bands of green (hoist side), white, and red; the coat of arms (an eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its beak) is centered in the white band.

Mexico flag



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anthem Lyrics English | CHORUS    Mexicans, at the cry of battle  lend your swords and horse;  and let the earth tremble at its center  upon the roar of the cannon.    Your forehead shall be girded, oh fatherland, with olive garlands  by the divine archangel of peace,  For in heaven your eternal destiny  has been written by the hand of God.  But should a foreign enemy  Profane your land with his sole,  Think, beloved fatherland, that heaven  gave you a soldier in each son.    CHORUS    II    War, war without truce against who would attempt  to blemish the honor of the fatherland!  War, war! The patriotic banners  saturate in waves of blood.  War, war! On the mount, in the vale  The terrifying cannon thunder  and the echoes nobly resound  to the cries of union! liberty!    CHORUS    III    Fatherland, before your children become unarmed  Beneath the yoke their necks in sway,  May your countryside be watered with blood,  On blood their feet trample.  And may your temples, palaces and towers  crumble in horrid crash,  and their ruins exist saying:  The fatherland was made of one thousand heroes here.    CHORUS    IV    Fatherland, fatherland, your children swear  to exhale their breath in your cause,  If the bugle in its belligerent tone  should call upon them to struggle with bravery.  For you the olive garlands!  For them a memory of glory!  For you a laurel of victory!  For them a tomb of honor! |

**Mexico Interesting Facts**

* The Aztec's believed that Huitzilopochtli (the god of the sun) needed the sacred life force of human blood to keep the sun moving across the sky. Many of those who were sacrificed were prisoners captured during times of war. Others were actually volunteers who saw it as a gesture of nobility to give themselves for the survival of their society.
* A Mexican birthday child might wake to the song "Las Mañanitas" or "The Little Mornings."  
    
  Many Mexican birthday celebrations include a piñata. Usually made out of paper mache and in the form of an animal, the piñata is filled with goodies and hung from the ceiling. The children take turns being blindfolded and hitting the piñata. When it cracks open, all the children run in to grab their share of the treats.  
    
  Most Mexican girls celebrate their 15th birthday with a quinceañera. Dressed in a beautiful gown, the girl attends a special mass with her family and loved ones. After the religious ceremony, it becomes a social event. The girl may give a doll to her younger sister (symbolically giving up her childhood) and change from flats into her first pair of high heels before being introduced to the community as a young woman. Food and music fill the evening, and there is usually a special waltz between the girl and her father. These parties tend to be lavish and expensive. Some girls are choosing to have a simpler party and use the money saved for a trip abroad.
* The Chihuahua is the smallest breed of dog and is named for the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Evidence that Chihuahuas have been in Mexico for thousands of years include dog shaped pots and wheeled toys that resemble the breed.
* Mexico consumes the most Coca-Cola at 412 eight ounce servings per person each year.
* Cedric Gibbons designed the Oscar statuette based on Mexican film director, Emilio "El Indio" Fernandez. Though the base has evolved, the statuette has changed little since 1929.  
    
  Born in Coahuila, Mexico in 1904, Fernández worked as a screenwriter, actor, and director in both the Mexican and American film industries.
* Mexico City gets 70 percent of their water from the aquifer below the city and they are pumping it out more quickly than it can be replenished. This is causing one of the largest cities in the world to sink. Some places have dropped 42 feet in the last 100 years, damaging subway networks, reversing drainage systems and even tilting landmarks like the Basilica of Guadalupe.
* An important celebration for Mexicans is the Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe which takes place on December 12. Some people walk all the way, sometimes for weeks, from their homes to the main cathedral in Mexico City.  
    
  Streets are filled with patrons waiting to enter the church and make their offering. Food and drink are shared by all. Conchero dancers begin at midnight and take turns performing non-stop throughout the day.
* The feathered serpent god, Quetzalcoatl, was important to many Mesoamerican cultures. Near Mexico City are the ruins of a holy city named Teotihuacan. Among the monuments there are the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl.
* Spanish is spoken in Spain, most countries in Central and South America, and parts of the United States and the Philippines.  
    
  Spanish was introduced to the people as Spain colonized the Americas. But because of the influence of indigenous languages, and later influence by the English spoken in the United States, there are many differences between Mexican and European Spanish.
* In Mexico, when a child loses a tooth they may leave the tooth in a box on the bedside table. El Ratón, the magic mouse, will take the tooth and bring some money. He leaves more money for a front tooth.
* Chicle, a milky sap extracted from a tree found throughout the Yucatán peninsula, launched the worldwide chewing gum industry.
* Chocolate has been around for thousands of years. Both the Mayans and Aztecs used beans from the cacao tree to make a drink known as Xocoatll. This "food of the gods" was believed to be brought to earth by Quetzalcoatl, the winged-serpent god of peace, wisdom and power.  
    
  Cacao beans were at times reserved for nobility, but they also had religious and medicinal purposes. They were even used as currency.
* Mexico has one of the most effective drug crop eradication programs in the world.
* The meaning of the colors of the Mexican flag are: green for hope and fertility of the soil, white for purity, and red for the blood shed during the fight for independence.
* Mexico was home to many ancient civilizations. The Olmec people may have created the first written language in the Western Hemisphere. The Mayans left behind temples and pyramids still standing today. The Aztec Empire was centered where Mexico City is now, but spread from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean.
* In keeping with Spanish tradition, a Mexican usually has two family names. For example, Juan Perez Lopez. Perez is the family name of Juan's father and Lopez is the family name of his mother.
* Mexico has the fourth largest oil holdings in the world.
* Special education programs are available for nearly five million Native children living in poor areas of the country.
* Tequila is a liquor produced exclusively in Mexico, particularly in the area surrounding the city of Tequila. It is made from the blue agave plant which is still farmed manually, often with knowledge passed down through generations of families. In countries outside of Mexico, tequila is often served with salt and a slice of lime or as the main ingredient of a margarita.

**Mexico Birthday Traditions**

A Mexican birthday child might wake to the song "Las Mañanitas" or "The Little Mornings."  
  
Many Mexican birthday celebrations include a piñata. Usually made out of paper mache and in the form of an animal, the piñata is filled with goodies and hung from the ceiling. The children take turns being blindfolded and hitting the piñata. When it cracks open, all the children run in to grab their share of the treats.  
  
Most Mexican girls celebrate their 15th birthday with a quinceañera. Dressed in a beautiful gown, the girl attends a special mass with her family and loved ones. After the religious ceremony, it becomes a social event. The girl may give a doll to her younger sister (symbolically giving up her childhood) and change from flats into her first pair of high heels before being introduced to the community as a young woman. Food and music fill the evening, and there is usually a special waltz between the girl and her father. These parties tend to be lavish and expensive. Some girls are choosing to have a simpler party and use the money saved for a trip abroad.

**Mexico Lost Tooth Traditions**

When they go to sleep, they leave the baby tooth, called “ dientes de leche ” (milk teeth) in a box (dentists even provide them) on the bedside table or under their pillow. El Raton,(or el ratón de los dientes)the magic mouse will take the tooth and bring some money. He leaves more money for a front tooth.

**History of Mexico**

MEXICO’S MANY ARCHAEOLOGICAL treasures, its architectural wealth, and its diverse population provide physical clues to a past that has given rise to stories of migration, settlement, conquest, and nation-building. The cultural heritage of the Aztec, the Maya, and other advanced civilizations, seen in the ruins of their temples and in their artifacts, bears witness to the achievements of the early inhabitants of Mesoamerica (see Glossary). Following a pattern that spans the pre-Columbian era to modern times, new civilizations have been built on the ruins of the old. In this ongoing process of cultural superimposition, many elements of the past have endured, despite occasional efforts to root out traditional practices and native identities. A major change came with the Spanish conquest. The conquest caused a traumatic break in the ebb and flow of native kingdoms and led to a single, albeit stratified, society that was neither wholly native nor European, but mestizo.

The conquistadors unified the populations of the former Mesoamerican kingdoms under the rule of a militaristic and theocratic Spanish monarchy. After early attempts by the conquerors and their descendants to establish a decentralized feudal society, central aristocratic authority prevailed. Throughout the colonial period, a distinctly "Mexican" national identity was emerging among the mestizo and creole inhabitants of New Spain. By the early nineteenth century, Spain’s mercantilist trade policies and its discrimination against native-born Mexicans in colonial business and administrative affairs fostered widespread resentment and a desire for greater autonomy. The geopolitical crisis of the Napoleonic wars and the influence of Enlightenment ideas provoked a sudden break with Madrid in 1810.

In the aftermath of independence, Mexico suffered a prolonged tumultuous period of factionalism and foreign intervention. Riven by bitter disputes between conservatives and liberals and governed by a series of military strongmen, the country languished in political turmoil while it lost half of its territory to an expanding United States. Stability, when it was finally achieved at the close of the nineteenth century, was imposed by the modernizing but politically repressive regime of José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Mexico’s population was denied opportunities for individual prosperity and fair and equal treatment before the law. In a country that remained predominantly rural until the 1950s, landlessness and rural unemployment had become endemic. The suppression of civil liberties and the excessive concentration of wealth during the Porfiriato (the name given to the years of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship, 1876-1910) polarized Mexican society and eventually led to the bitter and destructive factional wars collectively known as the Mexican Revolution. After nearly a decade of devastating warfare, the combatants came together in the town of Querétaro in 1917 to draft a grand compromise that would incorporate the ideals of the diverse revolutionary factions.

The constitution of 1917 gave Mexicans the legal and ideological framework on which to base national development: equality before the law, national self-determination, and a state-mediated balance between private property rights and social welfare objectives. In the decades that followed, different Mexican administrations would alternatively promote redistribution or economic growth, depending on a variety of circumstances.

By the late twentieth century, the burgeoning Mexican state could no longer assure the Revolution’s promise of growth with equity. After decades of semiauthoritarian rule by the dominant Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional--PRI), corruption and excessive clientelism had overshadowed the ideal of equality before the law. Poverty, although lessened, continued to beset half of the population. The debt crisis of the early 1980s marked the end of Mexico’s protectionist, state-centered economic model and set the stage for far-reaching trade and financial liberalization and systematic privatization of key industries. By the early 1990s, Mexico’s economy was thoroughly integrated into the global market, and a renascent civil society was exercising increasing autonomy from Mexico’s corporatist political institutions. Mexico thus approached the end of the twentieth century in a state of profound transition (see fig. 1).

**Preconquest Mexico**

Despite Mexico’s rich pre-Columbian history, following the Spanish conquest in 1519, the country’s new rulers made a concerted attempt to erase all things related to indigenous cultures. Conquerors and missionaries felt divinely inspired to "civilize and evangelize" the native peoples of the New World. The attempts to Europeanize and Christianize Mexico led to the devaluation of much of the indigenous culture for the next 400 years.

This situation was finally reversed in the 1920s during what has become known as the cultural phase of the Revolution, when a conscious effort was undertaken to search for a national cultural identity known as *mexicanidad* ("Mexicanness"). The search for this new national consciousness resulted in a renewed appreciation of the advanced civilizations encountered by the Spanish in 1519. Since the 1920s, extensive scholarship has been devoted to native Mexican values and the cultural expressions of those indigenous values in contemporary society.

**Mexico History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mexico Year in History | Mexico Timeline |
| -1500 | **Villages appear, and inhabitants produce clay products.** Villages appear, and inhabitants produce clay products. |
| -200 | **Monte Albán civilization in southern Mexico.** Monte Albán civilization in southern Mexico. |
| 1 | **Teotihuacán civilization in central Mexico.** Teotihuacán civilization in central Mexico. |
| 600 | **Classic Mayan civilization in the Yucatan peninsula.** Classic Mayan civilization in the Yucatan peninsula. |
| 1300 | **Aztec arrive in the Valley of Mexico.** Aztec arrive in the Valley of Mexico. |
| 1376 | **First Aztec king crowned.** First Aztec king crowned. |
| 1500 | **Early sixteenth century Colonial administration established.** Early sixteenth century Colonial administration established. European settlers pour into colony seeking wealth. Native population decimated by disease and harsh labor practices. |
| 1500 | **Late sixteenth century Ranching and industry grow, and mining expands.** Late sixteenth century Ranching and industry grow, and mining expands. |
| 1502 | **Reign of Moctezuma II (Montezuma).** Reign of Moctezuma II (Montezuma). |
| 1519 | **Hernán Cortés and about 700 men conquer the Aztec Empire.** Hernán Cortés and about 700 men conquer the Aztec Empire. |
| 1600 | **Seventeenth century Colony stagnates.** Seventeenth century Colony stagnates. Society becomes stratified along racial and social lines. |
| 1700 | **Eighteenth century Reforms** Eighteenth century Reforms by new Bourbon monarchs in Spain revitalize colony. Immigration increases, and economy and trade expand. |
| 1808 | **French occupation of Spain throws colonies into political turmoil.** French occupation of Spain throws colonies into political turmoil. |
| 1810 | **Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla’s call for independence.** Grito de Dolores (Cry of Dolores)--Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla’s call for independence. |
| 1811 | **Hidalgo executed.** Hidalgo executed. Independence movement led by José María Morelos y Pavón. |
| 1815 | **Morelos executed.** Morelos executed. Independence movement degenerates into sporadic guerrilla fighting. Vicente Guerrero most important guerrilla leader. |
| 1821 | **Colonization grant given to Moses Austin to settle Texas.** Colonization grant given to Moses Austin to settle Texas. Plan of Iguala proclaims Mexican independence. Augustín de Iturbide and Spanish envoy sign Treaty of Córdoba recognizing Mexico’s independence; treaty not honored by Spanish government, however. |
| 1822 | **Army of the Three Guarantees occupies Mexico City under Iturbide’s command.** Army of the Three Guarantees occupies Mexico City under Iturbide’s command. Iturbide becomes emperor of Mexico as Agustín I. Iturbide deposed, and republic proclaimed by Antonio López de Santa Anna Pérez de Lebrón. |
| 1823 | **Guadelupe Victoria becomes first Mexican president.** Guadelupe Victoria becomes first Mexican president. |
| 1824 | **Federal republican government is established** Federal republican government is established under new constitution. Guerrero becomes president. |
| 1828 | **Santa Anna repels Spain’s attempt to regain control of Mexico.** Santa Anna repels Spain’s attempt to regain control of Mexico. Guerrero abolishes slavery as means of discouraging migration of United States southerners to Texas. |
| 1830 | **Political disturbances.** Political disturbances. Rebellion drives Guerrero from presidency. Immigration to Texas from United States prohibited but not enforced. |
| 1833 | **Santa Anna elected president.** Santa Anna elected president. Dictatorship established in 1834. End of first liberal reforms. Tithes abolished. |
| 1835 | **Texas pioneers seek independence** Texas pioneers seek independence from Mexico in 1835, achieving it in March 1836. Santa Anna defeated and forced to recognize independence of Texas. Spain and Vatican recognize Mexican republic in 1836. |
| 1837 | **Anastasio Bustamante becomes president, initiating a process of centralization.** Anastasio Bustamante becomes president, initiating a process of centralization. |
| 1841 | **Conservative rebellion against Bustamante.** Conservative rebellion against Bustamante. Santa Anna’s dictatorship. |
| 1842 | **Santa Anna retires to his hacienda and leaves government to Nicolás Bravo.** Santa Anna retires to his hacienda and leaves government to Nicolás Bravo. |
| 1843 | **Santa Anna chosen as president of Mexico.** Santa Anna chosen as president of Mexico. |
| 1844 | **Santa Anna forced into exile.** Santa Anna forced into exile. |
| 1845 | **Santa Anna returns to Mexico. Annexation of Texas by United States.** Santa Anna returns to Mexico. Annexation of Texas by United States. |
| 1846 | **Mexico severs diplomatic relations with United States. Beginning of Mexican-American War.** Mexico severs diplomatic relations with United States. Beginning of Mexican-American War. |
| 1848 | **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends Mexican-American War.** Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends Mexican-American War. Texan independence confirmed. United States annexes territories of Upper California and New Mexico. |
| 1853 | **Santa Anna returns to Mexico and becomes president.** Santa Anna returns to Mexico and becomes president. Sells additional territory to United States under Gadsden Purchase. |
| 1854 | **Triumph of Plan of Ayutla under leadership of Benito Juárez.** Triumph of Plan of Ayutla under leadership of Benito Juárez. |
| 1855 | **Santa Anna resigns** Santa Anna resigns in August. Juárez Law ends fueros (privileges) enjoyed by military and clergy. |
| 1857 | **Constitution of 1857 promulgated.** Constitution of 1857 promulgated. |
| 1858 | **War of the Reform** War of the Reform between conservatives/clericalists and liberals engulfs country in three years of bitter struggle. After liberal victory, Juárez promulgates Reform Laws, establishing nationalization of ecclesiastical properties without compensation, as well as suppression of religious orders. |
| 1861 | **Moratorium on foreign debt payments.** Moratorium on foreign debt payments. Tripartite agreement for intervention signed by Britain, France, and Spain. |
| 1862 | **French forces march on capital but suffer defeat at Puebla.** French forces march on capital but suffer defeat at Puebla. |
| 1863 | **French enter Puebla, then Mexico City. Juárez forced to abandon the city.** French enter Puebla, then Mexico City. Juárez forced to abandon the city. |
| 1864 | **Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph’s reign as Maximilian I begins.** Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph’s reign as Maximilian I begins. He confirms Reform Laws, except for those that refer to indigenous communities. |
| 1866 | **French troops depart.** French troops depart. |
| 1867 | **Juárez offensive takes place.** Juárez offensive takes place. Maximilian surrenders at Querétaro and is executed. Juárez moves his government to Mexico City and becomes president. |
| 1872 | **Death of Juárez. Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada inaugurated president.** Death of Juárez. Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada inaugurated president. |
| 1873 | **Reform Laws incorporated into Mexican constitution confirming separation of church and state.** Reform Laws incorporated into Mexican constitution confirming separation of church and state. |
| 1876 | **José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz leads rebellion** José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz leads rebellion on platform of “no reelection” and starts his presidential career, which lasts for thirty-four years (except 1880-84), of “order and progress.” Finances, trade, industry, and mining sector modernized. Political ideology based on positivism. |
| 1880 | **United States railroad companies receive favorable concessions; railroad boom.** United States railroad companies receive favorable concessions; railroad boom. |
| 1884 | **Mining code reformed.** Mining code reformed. Subsoil ownership given to landowners. Reelection of Díaz. |
| 1888 | **Constitution changed to allow Díaz to succeed himself.** Constitution changed to allow Díaz to succeed himself. |
| 1904 | **Constitution changed to allow for six-year presidential term.** Constitution changed to allow for six-year presidential term. |
| 1906 | **Proclamation against Díaz issued by the liberals in St. Louis, Missouri.** Proclamation against Díaz issued by the liberals in St. Louis, Missouri. |
| 1908 | **Díaz states his intention of not seeking reelection in interview.** Díaz states his intention of not seeking reelection in interview. Francisco I. Madero publishes The Presidential Succession of 1910 . |
| 1910 | **Mexico’s 100 years of independence celebrated.** Mexico’s 100 years of independence celebrated. Seventh reelection of Díaz. Madero’s Plan of San Luis Potosí. Rebellion breaks out in north and in Puebla. |
| 1911 | **Rebellion spreads throughout Mexico.** Rebellion spreads throughout Mexico. After attack on Ciudad Juárez, Díaz resigns. Madero returns in triumph to Mexico City and is elected to presidency. Emiliano Zapata publishes Plan of Ayala demanding quick reforms. |
| 1912 | **Pascual Orozco rebels against Madero.** Pascual Orozco rebels against Madero. Victoriano Huerta’s troops crush rebellion. Huerta exiled to France. Zapata and Francisco “Pancho” Villa enter Mexico City. Venustiano Carranza establishes constitutional government at Veracruz. |
| 1913 | **Madero overthrown by coup d’état staged by Felix Díaz and Huerta.** Madero overthrown by coup d’état staged by Felix Díaz and Huerta. Madero assassinated. Carranza, Villa, and Álvaro Obregón lead northern rebellion. |
| 1914 | **United States troops land at Veracruz. Huerta defeated and forced into exile.** United States troops land at Veracruz. Huerta defeated and forced into exile. |
| 1915 | **Obregón turns against Villa.** Obregón turns against Villa. Villa continues to fight and raids United States border towns for next five years. Carranza recognized by United States as chief of government forces. |
| 1916 | **General John J. “Blackjack” Pershing’s punitive expedition** General John J. “Blackjack” Pershing’s punitive expedition pursues Villa and provokes bitterness between Mexico and United States. |
| 1917 | **Constitution of 1917 promulgated.** Constitution of 1917 promulgated. Carranza elected president. |
| 1920 | **Obregón rebels.** Obregón rebels. Carranza dies. Obregón elected president. |
| 1923 | **United States recognizes Obregón government.** United States recognizes Obregón government. |
| 1924 | **Plutarco Elías Calles elected president.** Plutarco Elías Calles elected president. |
| 1926 | **Anticlerical policies spark Cristero Rebellion.** Anticlerical policies spark Cristero Rebellion. |
| 1927 | **Constitution of 1917 amended to extend presidential term to six years.** Constitution of 1917 amended to extend presidential term to six years. |
| 1928 | **Calles succeeded by Obregón** Calles succeeded by Obregón, who is assassinated before taking office. Calles, who is to remain political strongman through 1935, chooses Emilio Portes Gil as president. |
| 1929 | **Cristero Rebellion suppressed.** Cristero Rebellion suppressed. Founding of official political party--National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario--PNR). Pascual Ortiz Rubio elected president of country, but Calles remains as recognized political boss. |
| 1930 | **Portes Gil succeeded by Ortiz Rubio as president.** Portes Gil succeeded by Ortiz Rubio as president. |
| 1934 | **Lázaro Cárdenas presidency.** Lázaro Cárdenas presidency. Forced exile of Calles (1936). Cárdenas begins socialist policies. Agrarian reform establishes ejidos (see Glossary) and collectivization. Official party renamed Party of the Mexican Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Mexicana--PRM); includes representatives from all sectors of society. Nationalization of oil industry in 1938. |
| 1940 | **Manuel Ávila Camacho presidency.** Manuel Ávila Camacho presidency. Mexico joins Allies in declaring war on Axis powers. PRM reorganized to provide wider representation and renamed Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional--PRI). Bracero (migrant Mexican worker) agreement established between Mexico and United States. |
| 1946 | **Miguel Alemán Valdés presidency.** Miguel Alemán Valdés presidency. Industrialization, public works, and creation of a new campus for the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México--UNAM). |
| 1952 | **Adolfo Ruiz Cortines presidency. Women’s suffrage extended to national level.** Adolfo Ruiz Cortines presidency. Women’s suffrage extended to national level. Beginning of political stability through appointment of PRI candidates to presidency. |
| 1958 | **Adolfo López Mateos presidency.** Adolfo López Mateos presidency. Increased foreign investments in Mexico and control of economy by foreign (mainly United States) interests. Land redistribution policies and increased agricultural production. Greater participation of minority parties in political process. |
| 1964 | **Gustavo Díaz Ordaz presidency.** Gustavo Díaz Ordaz presidency. Termination of bracero program. Foreign firms operate in Mexico on grand scale. Student unrest leads to Tlatelolco Massacre in 1968. |
| 1968 | **Hosts Summer Olympic Games** Mexico City, Mexico hosts Summer Olympic Games. |
| 1970 | **Luis Echeverría Álvarez presidency.** Luis Echeverría Álvarez presidency. Emphasis by Mexico on participation in Third World policies against imperialism and foreign economic control. Oil boom in Chiapas and Tabasco. Economic difficulties. |
| 1976 | **José López Portillo y Pacheco presidency.** José López Portillo y Pacheco presidency. Mexico becomes world’s fourth largest producer of oil and also one of world’s leading debtor countries. Political reform, leading to increase of minority party representation in Chamber of Deputies by proportional representation system. Foreign debt and inflation soar. Government corruption rampant. |
| 1982 | **Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado presidency.** Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado presidency. Economy contracts, and standard of living falls. Foreign debt renegotiated. Government adopts economic austerity measures. |
| 1988 | **Carlos Salinas de Gortari presidency.** Carlos Salinas de Gortari presidency. Continuation of austerity policies leads to upturn in economy. Government takes steps to control corruption. Free-trade measures introduced. Mexico joins North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Measures taken to open governorships to opposition parties. Guerrilla group, Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional--EZLN) appears in Chiapas. PRI nominee for next sexenio , Donald Luis Colosio Murrieta, assassinated. |
| 1994 | **Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León presidency.** Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León presidency. Devaluation of new peso leads to investor panic and near-economic collapse; massive foreign intervention required to stabilize situation. Military action against Zapatistas results in stalemate. Former President Salinas leaves country in disgrace amid charges of corruption and possible involvement in series of assassinations. |
| 1997 | **Indians killed by paramilitary** Forty five Indians killed by paramilitary gunmen in a Chiapas village. The incident causes an international outcry. |
| 2000 | **Vicente Fox wins presidential elections** Vicente Fox of the political party Alliance for Change wins the presidential elections. The first opposition candidate ever to do so. |
| 2002 | **Secret security files released** Millions of secret security files are released, indicating the the torture and killing of hundreds of political activists by security forces in the 1960s and 1970s. President Fox says government will pursue prosecutions. |
| 2006 | **Violent crime against women** A special prosecutor is created to tackle violent crime against women. Mexico had been criticized by the United Nations and rights groups over the unsolved murders of more than 300 women over 12 years in the city of Ciudad Juarez. |
| 2007 | **Carlos Slim richest person** Mexican telecoms tycoon Carlos Slim overtakes Microsoft founder Bill Gates to become the world's richest person. |
| 2009 | **1,000 people died** 1,000 people died in a further upsurge in drug-related violence in the first six weeks of 2009. |
| 2010 | **Agents and equipment along the Mexican border** United State President Barack Obama signs into law a $600 million bill to put more agents and equipment along the Mexican border to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. |
| 2012 | **Enrique Pena Nieto wins presidential election** The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate Enrique Pena Nieto wins presidential election. |

**Mexico Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| March 20-21st | **The Equinox at Chichen Itza - vernal** Chichen Itza, Yucatan State The remains of an ancient Mayan city on the Yucatan Peninsula are always a popular attraction but twice a year thousands come to see the Temple of Kukulkan or El Castillo. El Castilo (The Castle) is a square, stepped pyramid dominating the Chichen Itza site and built for Kukulkan, the feathered serpent god.  During the weeks before and after each equinox, the setting sun causes a shadow to "slither" down the northern side of El Castilo. In the spring, locals still gather to the pyramid at this time to pray for a good growing season. |
| September 21-22nd | **The Equinox at Chichen Itza- autumnal** Chichen Itza, Yucatan State The remains of an ancient Mayan city on the Yucatan Peninsula are always a popular attraction but twice a year thousands come to see the Temple of Kukulkan or El Castillo. El Castilo (The Castle) is a square, stepped pyramid dominating the Chichen Itza site and built for Kukulkan, the feathered serpent god.  During the weeks before and after each equinox, the setting sun causes a shadow to "slither" down the northern side of El Castilo. |
| mid-August | **Assumption of the Virgin** Huamantla, Tlaxcala State Throughout Mexico there are special masses, parades, and gatherings filled with song and dance to honor Our Lady.  The most famous celebration is in Huamantla where streets are laid with intricate patterns of flower blossoms, moss and dyed sawdust. Fireworks begin at midnight on August 15th and a girl (representing the town's patron saint, the Virgin of Charity) leads a procession through town to the main church. After mass, there are bands and dancing and sand paintings to enjoy.  The festivities continue for another couple weeks as the Huamantla Fair brings visitors from all the surrounding areas to participate in activities that include running bulls, a rodeo, donkey and car racing, craft exhibitions, livestock shows, concerts, rides and food. |
| February | **Mazatlan Carnival** Mazatlan, Sinaloa State One of the world's largest celebrations leading up to the fasting season of Lent. The city is filled with music, food and colorful decorations. The juegos florales (floral games) include crowning the Flower Queen and poetry reading for prizes. On Sunday there is a huge costume parade and a giant offshore firework display that glorifies the 19th century victory over a French fleet. Festivities continue through Tuesday with another big parade and streets filled with music and people. |
| July 6th | **Birth date - Frida Kahlo**  Birth date - Frida Kahlo, Mexican artist,  was born on July 6, 1907 in Mexico City. |
| September 16th | **Independence Day** |
| November 1st | **Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)** throughout Mexico |
| December 23rd | **Noche de Rabanos (Night of the Radishes)**  Dec. 23 - Noche de Rabanos (Night of the Radishes)  A uniquely Oaxaca expression of the Christmas season is the Noche de Rabanos (Night of the Radishes) on the evening of December 23rd, an evening in which the zocalo becomes the scene of a huge exhibition of figures sculpted from radishes . Often these figures are in scenes of the birth of Jesus or other scenes expressing the history and culture of Oaxacans. A contest is held with everyone vying for the first prize and having their picture in the morning paper. |
| December 25th | **Christmas (Navidad)** *Las Posadas* is the most important Christmas custom for Mexicans. It is an eight day ritual beginning December 16 until Christmas Eve. *Pastorleas* are another custom in many areas of Mexico. *Farolitos*, also called luminaries are another tradition. On Christmas day families go to church. The also get together to eat things like empanadas, enchiladas, and flan. The poinsettia originated in Mexico. |

**Mexico Meals and Food**

Recipes from Mexico

* [(Mexican Rice) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/mexican-rice.htm)
* [(White Cheese Enchiladas with Green Salsa)) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/white-cheese-enchiladas-with-green-salsa.htm)
* [Aqua de Horchata (Rice Water) - Beverage](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/aqua-de-horchata-rice-water.htm)
* [Candy of Coconut - Dessert](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/candy-of-coconut.htm)
* [Chiles Rellenos (Stuffed Chiles) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/chiles-rellenos-stuffed-chiles.htm)
* [Entomatadas (Tomato Tortillas) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/entomatadas-tomato-tortillas.htm)
* [Flan - Dessert](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/flan.htm)
* [Flautas (Stuffed Corn Tortillas) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/flautas-stuffed-corn-tortillas.htm)
* [Frijoles (Beans) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/frijoles-beans.htm)
* [Guacamole (Avocado Dip) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/guacamole-avocado-dip.htm)
* [Jereicalla - Dessert](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/jereicalla.htm)
* [Machaca con Huevo (Eggs with Beef Jerky) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/machaca-con-huevo-eggs-with-beef-jerky.htm)
* [Mole Poblano (Mexican Hot Sauce Served with Meat) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/mole-poblano-mexican-hot-sauce-served-with-meat.htm)
* [Pozole (Pork and Hominy Soup) - Soup](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/pozole-pork-and-hominy-soup.htm)
* [Red Enchiladas - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/red-enchiladas.htm)
* [Tortas de Camerones - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Mexico/recipe/tortas-de-camerones.htm)

**Mexico Recipes and Diet**

Mexico food and meal customs

**Diet**

Staple foods include corn, beans, rice, and chillies. They are combined with spices, vegetables, and meats or fish in the daily meals. Tortillas (made from cornmeal or flour) are cooked on a skillet or hotplate, and are eaten everywhere. They are eaten as bread, or filled with beans, potatoes, meat and cheese (torta). Some popular foods include frijoles refritos (refried beans), and posole (white corn boiled with pork)  
  
Children usually eat breakfast at school but they have their lunch time at 12:00 pm where they eat snacks or sandwiches. Workers, eat at factories or some stands where they sell burritos or lonches. Dinner it's often at home, depending of the family schedules. Normally, the father eats in the â€œheadâ€ of the table, but it's not always.

**Meals**

When eating, both hands are kept above the table. Guests do not leave directly after the meal, but stay for conversation. Lunch is usually the main meal of the day. Dinner might be light or heavy, depending on the family. It is inappropriate for adults to eat while walking on the street. Some foods are eaten with utensils, others with the hand. Tortillas are often used as scoops for sauces.

Food in Mexico

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[[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/mx/food.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/food.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/food.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/mx/food2.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/food2.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/food2.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/mx/mexicostore2.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/mexicostore2.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/mexicostore2.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/mx/mexicofeet.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/mexicofeet.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/mx/mexicofeet.jpg)

**Mexico Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish only 92.7%, Spanish and indigenous languages 5.7%, indigenous only 0.8%, unspecified 0.8%  
  
note: indigenous languages include various Mayan, Nahuatl, and other regional languages

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Mexico Clothing and Fashion**

Most Mexicans wear clothing that is also common in other Western countries, especially in the urban areas. But there are also many types of traditional clothing worn in rural areas-either daily or for festivals. People from various regions of Mexico wear many different kinds of clothing, but color and beauty are two common features for all of them.  
  
The Mexican sombrero, a recognizable icon of Mexican culture and labor, traces  
  
back to the vaquero who works with horses, the peasant farmer, and the mariachi musician. The sombrero is designed to protect the wearer from sunlight on long days of  
  
desert work. The sombrero has come to be associated, also, with the official folk dance of Mexico, the “jarabe tapatio” or the Mexican Hat dance.

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**Dating, Family and Children Mexico**

**Dating and Marriage**

When dating, a young man frequently meets a youg women at a prearranged place, rather than at her home. Parental approval of the young man, however, is important to obtain. It is common for Mexican males to make piropos (flattering personal comments) to passing females, to which the females generally do not respond. Marriage customs follow Catholic traditions. The marriage is legally registered first with a civil ceremony, often followed by a church ceremony with many guests.

**Family and Children**

Mexican families are usually large (three or more children). Families that live in urban areas usually have smaller families. The family unit is very important to society. The divorce is relatively low compared to other countries, due in part to a significant portion of the population belonging to the Catholic religion. Traditionally, the father has been the leader of the family, while the mother runs the household. However, as women go out to work more, and sometimes fathers look after children, this is changing.

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**Mexico Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

The usual greeting is a handshake or a nod of the head, although a hug between friends is not uncommon. Mexicans typically stand close to each other while talking, sometimes touching their friend's clothing. Mexicans are generally very friendly and polite in their greetings. Women will often greet one another with a kiss on the cheek.  
  
Mexicans Formally greet each other in the morning by saying “buenos dias”, at noon and before 7:p.m. “buenas tardes” and in the night they say “buenas noches”. Young people who are friends might say “que onda, wey?” Adults might say “quibole!”  
  
To get someone's attention one might say “disculpa (excuse me)” When someone is leaving they might say “cuidate mucho!” (take care), “saludos a todos” (say hi to everyone else) or “ahi nos vemos”(see ya later!)

**Gestures**

Items are handed, not tossed, to another person. Tossing an item shows a lack of manners and is offensive. Hand and arm gestures are often used in conversation.

**Visiting**

Mexicans are very accomodating. Visitors are usually welcomed and served refreshments even though they arrive unnacounced. It is impolite to refuse refreshments. Mexicans enjoy socializing with friends and relatives. First-time visitors usually receive a tour of the host's home.

**Cultural Attributes**

Generally, Mexicans feel individuals are more important than schedules. The Mexican people are generally proud of their country. A wealthy person would be defined as somebody who lives in a big house in a nice neighborhood, their children attend expensive schools, drive the latest year cars and women normally will not work, but will socialize. The poorer people want money to buy expensive possessions and to buy any kind of real estate

**Mexico Church and Religion**

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom; however, in certain areas, particularly in the south, political, cultural, and religious tensions continue to limit the free practice of religion within some communities. The constitution states that all persons are free to profess their chosen religious belief and to practice its ceremonies and acts of worship. Congress may not enact laws that establish or prohibit any religion. The constitution also provides for the separation of church and state.   
  
The law permits religious groups to operate informally without registering with the Government. However, if a religious community wishes to take on a legal personality, which is necessary for it to enter into contracts and purchase or rent land, it must register with the DAR as a religious association. To be registered as a religious association, a group must articulate its fundamental doctrines and religious beliefs, not be organized primarily for profit, and not promote acts that are physically harmful or dangerous to its members.   
  
Of eight official holidays, Christmas Day is the only Christian holy day. Most employers give holiday leave on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, All Souls' Day, Virgin of Guadalupe Day, and Christmas Eve.  
  
The constitution bars members of the clergy from holding public office, advocating partisan political views, supporting political candidates, or opposing the laws or institutions of the state.

**Religions in Mexico**

The following chart illustrates the breakdown of major religions in Mexico:

Roman Catholic: 82.5 %Protestant: 1.6 %Evangelical Churches: 5.0 %Jehovahs Witness: 1.4 %none: 4.7 %unspecified: 4.9 %Highcharts.com

**Religion Photos**

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**Students Life in Mexico**

**Mornings**

Breakfast will vary by family preferences and regional access to produce. A light breakfast will consist of a hot beverage and breads. A heavier breakfast might include any of the following: egg dishes (such as *huevos rancheros*), meats, beans, tortillas, pastries, fruit (such as bananas, oranges, pineapples, mangos, papayas, guava, and strawberries), vegetables (peppers, tomatoes, and beans), or *menuido* (a tripe stew).

**School**

Some children ride bikes to school or walk, some ride buses provided by the school, and others with more money will ride in taxi-type cars and pay for the ride (several families might hire together someone to drive the children to and from school).

**Classroom**

Private schools tend to have lots of money for nice facilities and books. The buildings are in good shape, and the teachers have plenty of funding for support materials, including modern computers. Teachers in these schools also tend to emphasize bilingual instruction.

Public schools can have much less funding, although government programs now provide free books to 90% of the public schools in Mexico. In poorer towns, it is not uncommon for schools to be missing windows and have bare cement floors. Supplies and other resources are also lacking.

The average classroom size will vary between 22 and 32 students per teacher, with some indigenous community schools having as high as 40 or more students per teacher.

**Student Learning**

School children are required to wear uniforms. Though many families buy their children’s uniforms, government programs are working to help provide the poorest families with free uniforms so their children can attend school.

Private schools are more likely to have computers available for students than public schools, but the prevalence of Internet cafés allows almost all children sufficient access to computers to support their schooling.

The school day lasts four hours. Mid-morning is a break to have a snack and play outside. Many children eat *molletes* at the break, which is a bread roll split in two and covered with beans and cheese. The classes tend to be more informal than classrooms in the United States, and much of the learning takes place with group activities. Despite the informality, students are expected to respect the teacher (*maestro* or *maestra*), and parents do not interfere in school matters for the most part.

Children receive grades for their performance in class. The grading scale is usually 1-10. Teachers give exams five times a year, with a national exam at the end of the year. Students who score less than 6 on that exam do not move on to the next grade level.

Kindergarten begins at age four and continues to age six. In kindergarten, children learn to color, sing songs, and play with other children. Toward the end of kindergarten and in the first grade, they will learn to count and learn the alphabet. Common courses taught in elementary school are math, social studies, grammar, writing, reading, and physical education.

Some children begin learning English as early as the sixth grade. Learning English is getting more attention than ever before, and private language schools are available nearly everywhere.

Growing numbers of students who finish elementary school progress on to middle school (grades 7-9) and then to high school (10-12). Although the government provides free texts to elementary students, those who progress past that point must buy their own books. Not all families can afford this, so many children do not advance. The latter years in high school require a student to choose classes that direct the student towards either business or a vocation.

Mexico has a rich cultural tradition in the arts. The degree to which a school may support artistic education usually has more to do with the amount of funds available than any established curriculum. Similarly, children of wealthier families tend to have more time for developing such talents than children of poorer families, who often must sacrifice personal wants in order to work for family survival. Because so much of Mexico is agricultural, it is not uncommon for a child to work in the fields, along with many of their friends.

**After School Activities**

Private schools tend to offer more for students to do after hours, when students may stay to work on the computers, play sports (such as soccer or basketball), or stay for private lessons in subjects that may be more difficult. The majority of the children, however, do not have the time or the means to support extracurricular commitments.

**Student Free Time**

Outside of school time, children love to play soccer, or go boating or bicycling, even in Mexico City, one of the largest cities in the world. Unfortunately, for most of the poorer children in the country, there is little time for such activities as they must go to work right after school. As a result, it can be difficult to even find time to do their homework.

**Evenings**

Families are close in Mexico and they gather together for their evening meals. Staples for these meals include chili, corn, tortillas, tamales, *pozolel* (corn chowder), fruits, and vegetables. For more information, see “Family” in the “Culture and Customs” information for Mexico.

**Education Culture**

The school year in Mexico runs from September to June. Social class and economic status determine the school that a child will attend. Children of wealthy families will likely go to private schools; others attend public schools. Children must attend school through the sixth grade, although many poorer families are forced to have their children work instead of going to school so that they can earn enough money to survive. The Mexican government is working to improve this situation. Nearly 25% of the budget is now being spent on educational support and reform. Because of these efforts to improve educational opportunities, the percent of children starting school and making it through sixth grade improved from 74% in 1994 to approximately 90% today. Nine out of every 10 children in Mexico from age 6 to 14 is enrolled in school, a significant improvement. Further, more than 8 million students are enrolled in schools beyond the primary level.

Although nearly 80% of all adults in Mexico between the ages of 25 and 34 have not received high school diplomas, that trend is for more young people to complete a secondary education. Unfortunately, educational expenditures are growing faster than government budgets can handle. So while education is seen as very important to the country’s future, and much is being done to promote it, the growth rate cannot be sustained, and educational issues will be critical for years to come.

**Mexico Sport and Recreation**

Children love to play Soccer (Futbol) and you can see them in schools, streets and parks. Also, but in a less degree, basketball (schools and parks) and volleyball (schools and parks).