**Paraguay Facts and Culture**

* [Food and Recipes:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/recipes.htm) The national dish is sopa paraguaya which is a corn bread with cheese and onions. Maise (corn) and cassava are... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/recipes.htm)
* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/family.htm) Paraguayan women work hard doing housework grinding corn cooking food, mending clothes, and taking care of their children. They... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/fashion.htm) In urban areas people wear Western or European style of clothing. Rural women wear a shawl called a rebozo and... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/visiting.htm) Drinking maté is a social pastime and an important ritual shared among friends. [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/visiting.htm)

**Paraguay Facts**

Paraguay stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital | Asuncion |
| Government Type | constitutional republic |
| Currency | PYG |
| Population | 6,623,252 |
| Total Area | 157,047 Square Miles 406,752 Square Kilometers |
| Location | Central South America, northeast of Argentina, southwest of Brazil |
| Language | Spanish (official), Guarani (official) |

Map of Paraguay



**Paraguay Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

Located in the heart of South America, Paraguay is a landlocked, agricultural country. The Parana-Paraguay River system is Paraguay’s commercial access to the outside world. Rivers and their tributaries largely define Paraguay's boundaries, and the Paraguay River divides the country into two dissimilar sections, east and west.

The eastern section consists of rolling, fertile farming areas and grasslands, together with large, wooded areas and jungle patches near the Brazilian border. Most of the country's population live in the east and engage in small-scale agriculture. Asuncion and other commercially important towns-Encarnacion, Ciudad del Este, Pedro Juan Caballero, Concepcion, Coronel Oviedo, and Villarrica are in this area, and most are accessible by paved roads. The western section, nearly two-thirds of Paraguay's total area, is called the Chaco. It is a low-lying plateau covered with grassy meadows, bogs, spiny bushes, palms, and small trees. Lacking roads and navigable rivers, much of the region is inaccessible. Only 3% of the population live in this area.

The riverfront elevation of Asuncion is 177 feet above sea level. Residential areas are situated on low hills that rise another 200 feet. Elevations throughout Paraguay are moderate, the highest range of hills, located in the eastern region, rises to about 2,000 feet.

**Geography - note**

landlocked; lies between Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil; population concentrated in southern part of country

**Paraguay Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location | South America |
| Total Area | 157,047 Square Miles 406,752 Square Kilometers |
| Land Area | 153,398 Square Miles 397,302 Square Kilometers |
| Water Area | 3,649 Square Miles 9,450 Square Kilometers |
| Land Boundaries | 2,482 Miles 3,995 Kilometers |
| Irrigated Land | 259 Square Miles 670 Square Kilometers |
| Border Countries | Argentina 1,880 km, Bolivia 750 km, Brazil 1,290 km |
| Geographic Coordinates | 23 00 S, 58 00 W |
| Terrain | grassy plains and wooded hills east of Rio Paraguay; Gran Chaco region west of Rio Paraguay mostly low, marshy plain near the river, and dry forest and thorny scrub elsewhere |
| Highest Point | 842 Meters |
| Highest Point Location | Cerro Pero (Cerro Tres Kandu) 842 m |
| Lowest Point | 46 Meters |
| Lowest Point Location | junction of Rio Paraguay and Rio Parana 46 m |
| Natural Resources | hydropower, timber, iron ore, manganese, limestone |
| Daylight saving time | +1hr, begins first Sunday in October; ends fourth Sunday in March |

**Paraguay Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Paraguay's climate is seasonal and subject to abrupt changes. It is subtropical, with summer and winter seasons opposite those in the United States. Winds are generally moderate, but high winds accompanied by thunder and electrical storms are common, especially in summer. The long, hot summer lasts from October through March, with January average maximum temperature 91ºF and mean temperature 81øF. Severe hot spells with very high humidity are common. Temperatures often exceed 100ºF during the day from December to February (the official record high temperature is 109ºF), with little relief at night.

Winter extends from June through August. Cold snaps of 4 or 5 days with temperatures in the low 40s and high 30s are interspersed with several days in the upper 70s and low 80s. Frosts occur rarely. The official record low in Asuncion is 32ºF, although the damp air make it seem much colder. With frequent and abrupt changes, from winter to summer-like weather and back again (temperature changes of 20ºF-50ºF are common), Relative humidity ranges between 67% and 78% (monthly averages) year round and is particularly high in summer.   
  
Asuncion's average 59-inch annual rainfall is well distributed seasonally. Slightly greater amounts fall in hotter months. Torrential rains cause annual floods in riverside communities. The Chaco, which receives little rainfall, becomes semiarid in its westernmost reaches. During rainy periods, however, water covers large areas due to the impermeable clay subsoil.

**Paraguay Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate | Paraguay's climate is seasonal and subject to abrupt changes. It is subtropical, with summer and winter seasons opposite those in the United States. Winds are generally moderate, but high winds accompanied by thunder and electrical storms are common, especially in summer. The long, hot summer lasts from October through March, with January average maximum temperature 91ºF and mean temperature 81øF. Severe hot spells with very high humidity are common. Temperatures often exceed 100ºF during the day from December to February (the official record high temperature is 109ºF), with little relief at night.  Winter extends from June through August. Cold snaps of 4 or 5 days with temperatures in the low 40s and high 30s are interspersed with several days in the upper 70s and low 80s. Frosts occur rarely. The official record low in Asuncion is 32ºF, although the damp air make it seem much colder. With frequent and abrupt changes, from winter to summer-like weather and back again (temperature changes of 20ºF-50ºF are common), Relative humidity ranges between 67% and 78% (monthly averages) year round and is particularly high in summer.   Asuncion's average 59-inch annual rainfall is well distributed seasonally. Slightly greater amounts fall in hotter months. Torrential rains cause annual floods in riverside communities. The Chaco, which receives little rainfall, becomes semiarid in its westernmost reaches. During rainy periods, however, water covers large areas due to the impermeable clay subsoil. |
| Terrain | grassy plains and wooded hills east of Rio Paraguay; Gran Chaco region west of Rio Paraguay mostly low, marshy plain near the river, and dry forest and thorny scrub elsewhere |
| Natural Resources | hydropower, timber, iron ore, manganese, limestone |
| Natural Hazards | local flooding in southeast (early September to June); poorly drained plains may become boggy (early October to June) |
| Irrigated Land | 259 Square Miles 670 Square Kilometers |
| Environmental Issues | deforestation; water pollution; inadequate means for waste disposal present health risks for many urban residents; loss of wetlands |
| Environment - International Agreements | party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands   signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements |

**Paraguay Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population | 6,623,252 |
| Population Growth Rate | 1.23% |
| Urban Population | 61.9% |
| Population in Major Urban Areas | ASUNCION (capital) 2.139 million |
| Nationality Noun | Paraguayan(s) |
| Nationality Adjective | Paraguayan |
| Ethnic Groups | mestizo (mixed Spanish and Amerindian) 95% |
| Languages | Spanish (official), Guarani (official) |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change | 2.55% |

**Paraguay Medical Information**

Adequate medical facilities, prescription and over-the-counter medications, supplies, and services are available in Asuncion. Elsewhere these are limited, and in rural areas may not exist.

**Paraguay Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP) | 9.7% |
| Death Rate/1,000 population | 4.61 |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate | 17.9% |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population | 1.3 |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population | 1.11 |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population | 21.48 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population | 17.57 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population | 25.21 |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years | 3.4% |
| Total Fertility Rate | 2.01 |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49) | 79.4% |
| Contraceptive Prevalence - note | note: percent of women aged 15-44 |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births | 99 |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate | 0.3% |
| HIV Aids Deaths | 300 |
| HIV Aids People Living With | 13,000 |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved | 6.2% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved | 83.4% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved | 100% |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved | 20.3% |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved | 96.1% |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved | 52.5% |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk | intermediate |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s) | bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever |
| Vectorborne Disease (s) | dengue fever |

**Paraguay Crime**

**Crime Information**

Crime has increased steadily over the past several years posing a challenge to the Paraguayan National Police. Although most crime is nonviolent, there has been an increase in the use of weapons, and there have been incidents where extreme violence has been used. U.S. citizens have on occasion been the victims of assault, robbery, and rape. Local authorities frequently lack the training and resources to solve these cases. Under these circumstances, U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Paraguay should be aware of their surroundings and security at all times. Travelers and residents alike should take common sense precautions including refraining from displaying expensive-looking cameras and jewelry, large amounts of money, or other valuable items. Criminals often target those thought to be wealthy. Resistance to armed assailants has often aggravated the situation and therefore is not advised.  
  
Armed robbery, car theft, and home invasions are a problem in both urban and rural areas. Street crime, including pick pocketing and mugging, is prevalent in cities. The number of pick pocketing incidents and armed assaults is also increasing on public buses and in the downtown area of Asuncion. A common tactic is the use of motorcycles by robbers to quickly approach their victims and then brandish a weapon and demand a wallet or purse. Please note that this method of operation – two men on a motorcycle – is something for which you should be attentive. As many incidents on public buses involve individuals snatching valuables, passengers should not wear expensive-looking jewelry or display other flashy items. There have been incidents of pilferage from checked baggage at both airports and bus terminals. Travelers have found it prudent to hide valuables on their person or in carry-on luggage. Unauthorized ticket vendors also reportedly operate at the Asuncion bus terminal, badgering travelers into buying tickets for substandard or non-existent services.  
  
Despite concerted efforts by the Paraguayan government over the last several years to improve the quality of its police force, corruption continues to be a problem within the Paraguayan National Police. Police are frequently involved in various criminal activities and actively solicit bribes. Uniformed police often conduct roving checks of vehicles and passengers. All lawful police instructions should be adhered to. However, the Embassy does not support the payment of bribes under any circumstances and encourages U.S. citizens to contact the Embassy if they believe they are being treated improperly.  
  
Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal in the United States, if you purchase them you will be breaking local law.

**Paraguay Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in Paraguay, you are subject to its laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States. If you break local laws in Paraguay, your U.S. passport won’t help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It’s very important to know what’s legal and what’s not wherever you go.  
  
Persons violating Paraguayan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Paraguay are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. If you should find yourself in jail or legal trouble, you can contact the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy and consult the Embassy Website for a list of local attorneys.  
  
Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, bilateral agreements with certain countries, and customary international law, if you are arrested in Paraguay, you have the option to request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate of your arrest, and to have communications from you forwarded to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

**Paraguay Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth | 76 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female | 79 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male | 73 Years |
| Median Age (female) | 26 Years |
| Median Age (male) | 26 Years |
| Median Age | 26 Years |

**Paraguay Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language | Spanish (official), Guarani (official) |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| Literacy Female | 93% |
| Literacy Male | 94.9% |
| Literacy Total | 94% |

**Paraguay Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP | 4.8% |
| Literacy - female | 93% |
| Literacy - male | 94.9% |
| Literacy - total population | 94% |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| School Life Expectancy - female | 13 Years |
| School Life Expectancy - male | 12 Years |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary) | 13 Years |

**Paraguay Age of Population**

Age 0-14: 26.8 %Age 15-24: 20.8 %Age 25-54: 39.0 %Age 55-64: 6.9 %Over 64: 6.4 %Highcharts.com

**Classroom**

Most schools require a uniform. In order to make the most of the school buildings and facilities, some schools will begin at 7:30 in the morning and go until 11:30. A second session for other students will run from 1:30 until 5:30. Some schools will also offer a third session in the evening. Children only attend school for four hours a day, and the multiple sessions of school available help them because they must often work most of the rest of the day, either on a farm in rural areas or selling goods on the streets in the cities. Children can make up the bulk of the street vendors in the cities, which is quite a change from North American and European cultures.

Most children go to school with only a notebook and a pencil. Textbooks are hard to come by, and teachers usually do most of their teaching from a barely adequate blackboard.

In Paraguay, the big meal of the day is usually at noon. Families return home for lunch and then take a little nap (siesta) after eating and before returning to their day’s activities. In large cities such as Ascuncion this is becoming more difficult to do, so the tradition is changing to a more American-like work and school schedule, but most of the country continues as they have for many, many years.

**Education Culture**

Education in Paraguay, like many Latin American countries, is difficult. Despite that, 80% of all children over the age of five can read and write, and 92% of adults read and write.

Schooling is free and required for children from ages seven to fourteen years old. However, this rule is not strictly enforced, especially for children in rural areas. In those areas, many children never attend or will drop out to help their family attend to farming. The school year runs from March to October, with a two-week break in mid-winter (July).

Because of the challenge of getting a good education in Paraguay, wealthier families will often send their children to universities in Argentina or Brazil. Paraguay has two universities for those who are able to advance to that level (the National University and the Catholic University), but for those who do, the education is free—even at the universities.

In the early 1970s, more than 95% of all rural students dropped out of school before finishing the required six years of education. Soon after, however, education began a slow but determined improvement. Recent studies show that the overall percentage of children, both urban and rural, who finish six years of school has risen to nearly 40%. (For rural kids, only 25% finish elementary school.) Approximately one out of every four children will continue to secondary school, but only 1% will earn a university degree. One very encouraging fact is that young women make up half of all secondary school graduates, which reflects significant progress in education rights and possibilities for girls.

Following six years in elementary school, secondary school is divided into two separate three-year segments: one focuses on the humanities and is intended to prepare students for university and professional studies, while the other is focused on more practical interests such as a program in agriculture, commerce, or industry. Graduation from either program brings the student a baccalaureate degree.

**Learning**

Paraguay has two official languages: Spanish and Guarani. Spanish is used in schools, government, and business, whereas Guarani is common for everyday conversations among family and friends. In schools with high Guarani-speaking populations, some classes and some materials are available in that language.

Primary education is Compulsory but not every child attends especially in the  rural areas. By the time young people reach secondary school they often must give up their studies to work in the fields to supplement family incomes.  To persuade parents of the relevance of education the government offers technical and vocational education to young people.   About 90 percent of the adult population can read and write.

The school system is heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, which is the official state religion and operates nearly all private schools. There is little distinction between church and state education. However, other religions are permitted to both worship in the country and operate schools if they so choose. In part because of this strong, centuries-long influence, the school system is quite centralized, with all schools conducting the same programs and teaching the same content.

The core subjects covered in elementary schools include reading, writing, math, science, and history; additional subjects offered in many schools are Christian education, Spanish, Guarani, English, music, and computer skills.

The average student to teacher ratio is 21 to 1. Unfortunately, many teachers in the rural schools are not certified to teach and are not as well educated as they should be.

**To School**

Kids will either walk or ride public transportation buses to school, regardless of which school session they attend, and then return home the same way. In some areas, bicycles may be the best way to get around, but walking remains most common. It is free and can get the kids everywhere, given enough time.

**Paraguay Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name | Asuncion |
| Country Name | Paraguay |
| Local - Long | Republica del Paraguay |
| Full Country Name | Republic of Paraguay |
| Local - Short | Paraguay |
| Government Type | constitutional republic |
| Capital - geographic coordinate | 25 16 S, 57 40 W |
| Daylight Savings Time | +1hr, begins first Sunday in October; ends fourth Sunday in March |
| National Holiday | Independence Day, 14 May 1811 (observed 15 May) |
| Constitution | promulgated 20 June 1992 |
| Legal System | civil law system with influences from Argentine, Spanish, Roman, and French civil law models; judicial review of legislative acts in Supreme Court of Justice |
| Suffrage | 18 years of age; universal and compulsory until the age of 75 |

**Paraguay Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch | chief of state: President Horacio CARTES (since 15 August 2013); Vice President Juan AFARA Maciel (since 15 August 2013); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government   head of government: President Horacio CARTES (since 15 August 2013); Vice President Juan AFARA Maciel (since 15 August 2013)   cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president   elections: president and vice president elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a single five-year term; election last held on 21 April 2013 (next to be held in April 2018)   election results: Horacio CARTES elected president; percent of vote - Horacio CARTES 45.8%, Efrain ALEGRE 36.94%, Mario FERREIRO 5.88%, Anibal CARRILLO 3.32%, other 8.06% |
| Legislative Branch | bicameral National Congress or Congreso Nacional consists of the Chamber of Senators or Camara de Senadores (45 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms) and the Chamber of Deputies or Camara de Diputados (80 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)  elections: Chamber of Senators - last held on 20 April 2008 (next to be held in April 2013); Chamber of Deputies - last held on 20 April 2008 (next to be held in April 2013)  election results: Chamber of Senators - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - ANR 15, PLRA 14, UNACE 9, PPQ 4, other 3; Chamber of Deputies - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - ANR 30, PLRA 27, UNACE 15, PPQ 3, APC 2, other 3; note - as of 1 January 2010, the composition of the Chamber of Deputies is ANR 30, PLRA 29, UNACE 15, PPQ 4, other 2 |
| Judicial Branch | Supreme Court of Justice or Corte Suprema de Justicia (nine judges proposed by the Council of Magistrates or Consejo de la Magistratura, and approved by the Senate and president) |
| Regions or States | 17 departments (departamentos, singular - departamento) and 1 capital city\*; Alto Paraguay, Alto Parana, Amambay, Asuncion\*, Boqueron, Caaguazu, Caazapa, Canindeyu, Central, Concepcion, Cordillera, Guaira, Itapua, Misiones, Neembucu, Paraguari, Presidente Hayes, San Pedro |
| Political Parties and Leaders | Alianza Patriotica por el Cambio (Patriotic Alliance for Change) or APC [Fernando LUGO]; Asociacion Nacional Republicana - Colorado Party or ANR [Lilian SAMANIEGO]; Movimiento Popolar Tekojoja or Tekojoja [Sixto PEREIRA]; Movimiento Union Nacional de Ciudadanos Eticos or UNACE [Lino Cesar OVIEDO Silva]; Patria Querida (Beloved Fatherland Party) or PPQ [Pedro Nicolas Maraa FADUL Niella]; Partido del Movimiento al Socialismo or P-MAS [Camilo Ernesto SOARES Machado]; Partido Democratica Progresista or PDP [Rafael Augusto FILIZZOLA Serra]; Partido Encuentro Nacional or PEN [Fernando CAMACHO Paredes]; Partido Liberal Radical Autentico or PLRA [Amanda NUNEZ]; Partido Pais Solidario or PPS [Carlos Alberto FILIZZOLA Pallares] |
| International Law Organization Participation | accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction; accepts ICCt jurisdiction |
| International Organization Participation | CAN (associate), CELAC, FAO, G-11, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAES, LAIA, Mercosur (suspended), MIGA, MINURSO, MINUSTAH, MONUSCO, NAM (observer), OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, PCA, UN, UNASUR, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFICYP, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNMIL, UNMISS, UNOCI, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders | Ahorristas Estafados or AE; National Coordinating Board of Campesino Organizations or MCNOC [Luis AGUAYO]; National Federation of Campesinos or FNC [Odilon ESPINOLA]; National Workers Central or CNT [Secretary General Juan TORRALES]; Paraguayan Workers Confederation or CPT; Roman Catholic Church; Unitary Workers Central or CUT [Jorge Guzman ALVARENGA Malgarejo] |

**Paraguay Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product | $45,900,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - official exchange rate | $30,560,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - real growth rate | 12% |
| GDP Per Capita | $6,800.00 (USD) |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture | 20.4% |
| GDP by Sector- Industry | 17.7% |
| GDP by Sector- services | 61.9% |
| Population Below Poverty Line | 18.8% |
| Inflation Rate | 7.2% |
| Labor Force | 3,038,000 |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture | 26.5% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry | 18.5% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services | 55% |
| Unemployment Rate | 5.7% |
| Fiscal Year | calendar year |
| Annual Budget | $3,238,000,000 (USD) |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP | 1.6% |
| Public Debt (% of GDP) | 36.1% |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP | 18.9% |
| Major Industries | sugar, cement, textiles, beverages, wood products, steel, metallurgic, electric power |
| Industrial Growth Rate | 6.5% |
| Agriculture Products | cotton, sugarcane, soybeans, corn, wheat, tobacco, cassava (tapioca), fruits, vegetables; beef, pork, eggs, milk; timber |
| Currency Code | guarani (PYG) |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14 | 15% |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14 | 205,297 |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate | 28.9% |

**Paraguay Economy**

**Economic Overview**

Paraguay has a market economy marked by a large informal sector. The informal sector features both reexport of imported consumer goods to neighboring countries as well as the activities of thousands of microenterprises and urban street vendors. Because of the importance of the informal sector, accurate economic measures are difficult to obtain. A large percentage of the population derives their living from agricultural activity, often on a subsistence basis. The formal economy grew by an average of about 3% annually in 1995-97; but GDP declined slightly in 1998, 1999, and 2000, rose slightly in 2001, only to fall again in 2002. On a per capita basis, real income has stagnated at 1980 levels. Most observers attribute Paraguay's poor economic performance to political uncertainty, corruption, lack of progress on structural reform, substantial internal and external debt, and deficient infrastructure.

**Paraguay Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports | $3,130,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Exports | soybeans, feed, cotton, meat, edible oils, electricity, wood, leather |
| Top Export Partners | Brazil 29.8%, Argentina 18%, Chile 5.5%, Bermuda 4% |

**Paraguay Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports | $9,567,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Imports | road vehicles, consumer goods, tobacco, petroleum products, electrical machinery |
| Top Import Partners | Brazil 28.9%, US 22.5%, Argentina 17.7%, Uruguay 4.7%, Hong Kong 4.3%, China 4.1% |

**Paraguay Flag**

This is the only national flag in the world to have a different design on the oberse and reverse. Red stands for Patriotism, courage, equality, and justice. White for steadfastness, unity , peace, and the purity of ideas. Blue is for Kindliness, love, sharpness, sense of reality and liberty. Tje star symbolizes the date of independence, May 14, 1811. The lion guarding the Phrygian cap symbolizes the defense of liberty.

**Paraguay Flag Description**

three equal, horizontal bands of red (top), white, and blue with an emblem centered in the white band; unusual flag in that the emblem is different on each side; the obverse (hoist side at the left) bears the national coat of arms (a yellow five-pointed star within a green wreath capped by the words REPUBLICA DEL PARAGUAY, all within two circles); the reverse (hoist side at the right) bears the seal of the treasury (a yellow lion below a red Cap of Liberty and the words Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice) capped by the words REPUBLICA DEL PARAGUAY, all within two circles)

Paraguay flag



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anthem History | Paraguayos, Repú blica o Muerte is the national anthem of Paraguay. The lyrics were written by Francisco Acuña de Figueroa |
| Anthem Lyrics English | Paraguayans: Republic or Death!  Our spirit gave us liberty  Neither opressors nor slaves exist  Where union and equality reign.  The peoples of the Americas, unfortunately,  Were oppressed for three centuries by a scepter  Bt one magnificent day surging forth,  "Enough", it said, and broke the scepter.  Our fathers, grandiose in battle,  Showed their martial glory;  And after smashing the august diadem,  Raised the triumphal cap.  A new Rome, the Fatherland shall proudly display  Two leaders of name and valor  Who, rivals, like Romulus and Remus  Divided government and power.  Long years, during which Phoebus in the clouds  Saw darken the pearl of the South,  Today a grand hero appears  Raising up again her glory and virtue...  Europe and the world salute her with applause  And also acclaim  Invincible bastion of heroism,  Magnificent Eden of riches.  (But) when discord rumbled all around  Which fatally devoured other Peoples,  Paraguayans, the sacred ground  Was covered by an angel with its wings.  Oh, how pure, of laurel girded  Sweet Fatherland, in this manner you show yourself.  In your ensign one sees the colors  Of sapphire, diamond, and ruby.  In your coat of arms, which the Sun illuminates,  Under the cap, one sees the lion.  Double image of the strong and the free,  And of glories, the memory and crest.  From the tomb of vile feudalism  The national Deity rises free;  Oppressors, bend your knees!  Compatriots, entone the hymn!  Sound the cry, "Republic or death"!  Our breasts exhale it with faith,  And the mountains repeat its echoes  Like giants arising.  Our Fatherland defends liberty and justice;  Tyrants: listen!  The laws in its sacred charter  Will sustain its heroism in the fight.  Against the world, if the world opposes it,  If the world dares to insult her security,  Battling to avenge we shall know her  Or die embracing her.  Arise, oh People, your splendid sword  That strikes with sparkles of God,  There is no middle ground between free or slave  And an abyss divides the two.  In the gentle breezes the Hymn resounds,  Repeating with triumphal echo:  For the free, renowned glory!  For the Fatherland, immortal laure |

**Paraguay Interesting Facts**

* The Guarani are one of the indigenous groups which inhabited Paraguay before the arrival of Europeans.  
  In August 2004 over four hundred and twenty people died in a fire at a shopping center in Asuncion.

**History of Paraguay**

*Ruins of the Jesuit mission at Trinidad, Itapúa Department*

PARAGUAY WAS ONE of the first countries in South America to achieve independence. Its history since the arrival of the Spaniards in 1537 evokes images of tremendous sacrifice and suffering amid lush surroundings. Because of its small population and poverty, however, its weight among the nations of the modern world is small. At the time of the Spanish conquest in the mid1500s , Paraguay was the second most important of the Spanish dominions in South America after Peru. But its preeminence as a colony did not last because it produced no gold or silver. In the long run, however, the country’s lack of precious ores proved to be a blessing because it allowed Paraguay to escape the horrors of slavery that prevailed in the mines of Peru and Mexico. The Spanish conquest and settlement proceeded more humanely in Paraguay than elsewhere in Spanish America.

The country’s basic characteristics were determined during the first few decades of European rule and reinforced under the Republic of Paraguay after independence in 1811. The country has a largely egalitarian social structure. Its relatively homogeneous population of mestizos follows Spanish culture and religion but speaks the Indian language, Guaraní, at home. It also has a tradition of authoritarian rule and a concomitant lack of democratic institutions. Finally, Paraguay suffers from a paranoiainducing isolation, originally because of its location in a wilderness populated by hostile Indians, and later because of its location between powerful neighbors--Brazil and Argentina.

Partly because of its remoteness, Paraguay never had a very large European population. The colony’s first governor urged Spanish men to take Indian wives to help them take their minds off returning to Spain, solve the problem of the scarcity of European women, and encourage peaceful relations between the tiny, vulnerable, European colony and its numerous Indian neighbors. Neither Spaniard nor Indian needed any prodding, however, as mixed unions predominated from the start. The Paraguayan republic’s first dictator, José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, a criollo who distrusted his own criollo upper class, strengthened this pattern of marrying Indians. Francia forced the elite to marry Indian women, confiscated their lands, and broke their power. The disastrous 1865-70 War of the Triple Alliance, which ended with the death of Paraguayan dictator Francisco Solano López, further strengthened the mestizo composition of society. At the end of the war, only 28,000 Spanish males were alive, down from 220,000. Spanish women who wanted to marry had no choice but to accept mestizo suitors.

Dictatorship is to Paraguay what constitutional democracy is to Scandinavia or Britain: it is the norm. Paraguay, a country where power has usually been centered on one man, has a history of domination by authoritarian personalities. Paraguay’s authoritarianism derives from Spanish attitudes, isolation amid hostile neighbors, and political inexperience and naiveté among a population that has historically proved willing to abdicate its political rights and responsibilities. Nearly 300 years of Spanish rule rendered many Paraguayans poor, uneducated, unaware of the outside world, and lacking in experience with democracy. Furthermore, the people were nearly always under the threat of attack either from Indians or from raiders from Brazil. Indeed, its three neighbors--Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia--each went to war with Paraguay at least once since 1810.

Francia, named "dictator for life" in 1816 by a largely uneducated nation grateful for his diplomatic and administrative expertise, set the tone by founding a despotic police state that lasted until his death in 1840. His goal was to keep the country independent at all costs. He succeeded by founding the world’s first system of state socialism, sealing off the country’s borders, and pouring all available resources into defense. Paraguay was the only major country in Spanish America to undergo a major social revolution as a direct result of independence. Father and son dictators Carlos Antonio López and Francisco Solano López succeeded Francia from 1841 to 1862 and 1862 to 1870, respectively. After the 1865-70 war, military officers began to replace civilians as politicians but this fact represented no change in the country’s pattern of dictatorial rule.

Paraguay’s stability diminished after 1904 when the Liberal Party (Partido Liberal--PL) ruled the nation. Paraguay had traded stable dictatorships for unstable ones. Between 1904 and 1954, Paraguay had thirty-one presidents, most of whom were removed from office by force. During the particularly unstable period between 1910 and 1912, seven presidents entered and left office. As political instability grew, so did the importance of the military in politics. Still, military rule did not predominate. Only four of eight presidents who finished their terms were military men.

A 1954 coup ushered in the Stronato, the period of rule of Alfredo Stroessner Mattiauda, who remained in power in late 1988. Few imagined in the 1950s that Stroessner’s term of office would become the longest in Paraguay’s history. Stroessner effectively combined political skill, hard work, and repression to gain complete control of the National Republican Association-Colorado Party (Asociación Nacional Republicana-Partido Colorado) and eliminate regime opponents. By the early 1960s, all other political parties were either legitimating the political system by participating in fraudulent elections or were effectively isolated.

Although Stroessner clearly represented continuity with Paraguay’s authoritarian past, he also dragged the country out of its isolation. A mammoth hydroelectric project at Itaipú on the Rio Paraná shattered Paraguay’s seclusion forever by injecting billions of dollars into the economy. The project put money into the pockets of previously penniless campesinos and contributed to the emergence of the middle class. Many observers believed that economic growth unleashed demands for democratic reform in Paraguay, and, as the 1980s began, the Stroessner regime seemed increasingly under attack from its critics.

**Paraguay History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Paraguay Year in History | Paraguay Timeline |
| 1525 | **Portuguese explorer Alejo Garcia visits Paraguay.** Portuguese explorer Alejo Garcia visits Paraguay. |
| 1537 | **Spanish begin colonising the interior plains of Paraguay.** Spanish begin colonizing the interior plains of Paraguay. |
| 1537 | **Spanish settlers established the first successful colony in the Río de la Plata area at Asunci&** Spanish settlers established the first successful colony in the Río de la Plata area at Asunción. |
| 1588 | **Members of the Roman Catholic Society of Jesus, known as Jesuits arrived in Paraguay.** Members of the Roman Catholic Society of Jesus, known as Jesuits arrived in Paraguay. |
| 1609 | **Spanish Jesuits begin converting the local population to Roman Catholicism.** Spanish Jesuits begin converting the local population to Roman Catholicism. |
| 1811 | **Paraguay declares independence from Spain.** Paraguay declares independence from Spain. |
| 1865 | **Paraguay is reduced to half its population** Paraguay is reduced to half its population, looses 55,000 square miles, and is saddled with huge debt as a result of the War of the Triple Alliance where Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay fight against Paraguay. |
| 1867 | **War of the Triple Alliance in Paraguay.** War of the Triple Alliance in Paraguay. Triple Alliance consists of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. |
| 1870 | **The war ends when President Lopez is killed.** The war ends when President Lopez is killed. |
| 1872 | **New government of Paraguay makes peace with Brazil.** In the aftermath of the War of the Triple Alliance, new government of Paraguay makes peace with Brazil, grant reparations and territorial concessions. |
| 1874 | **General Bernardion Caballero, a war hero founded the Colorado party and dominated Paraguayan politic** General Bernardion Caballero, a war hero founded the Colorado party and dominated Paraguayan politics for 30 years. |
| 1876 | **Paraguay makes peace with Argentina after the War of the Triple Alliance.** Paraguay makes peace with Argentina after the War of the Triple Alliance. |
| 1878 | **US arbitration rejects Argentinean claims to Paraguay’s part of Chaco region.** US arbitration rejects Argentinean claims to Paraguay’s part of Chaco region. |
| 1882 | **Chaco war between Bolivia and Paraguay.** Chaco war between Bolivia and Paraguay. Paraguay wins territory in the west from Bolivia. |
| 1882 | **Peace treaty between Paraguay and Uruguay.** Peace treaty between Paraguay and Uruguay. |
| 1928 | **The Chaco War** The Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay. In 1938 a formal peace tready confirmed Paraguay's victory and awarded Paraguay more than 20,000 square miles of land. |
| 1945 | **Paraguay joins the United Nations.** Paraguay joins the United Nations. |
| 1954 | **General Alfredo Stroessner seizes power in coup.** General Alfredo Stroessner seizes power in coup, ushering in more than 30 years of ruthless dictatorship. |
| 1989 | **General Alfredo Stroessner deposed in coup.** Stroessner deposed in coup led by Gen Andres Rodriguez, who is then elected president. However, Stroessner’s centre-right, military-backed National Republican Association-Colorado Party wins parliamentary elections. |
| 1992 | **New democratic constitution promulgated.** New democratic constitution promulgated. |
| 2004 | **More than 420 people are killed in a blaze at a shopping center in Asuncion.** More than 420 people are killed in a blaze at a shopping center in Asuncion. Three days of national mourning are declared. |
| 2009 | **Brazil and Paraguay reach a deal to end their long-running dispute.** Brazil and Paraguay reach a deal to end their long-running dispute over the cost of energy from the giant Itaipu hydro-electric plant on their border. |

**Paraguay Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| May 14th | **Independence Day** |
| December 25th | **Christmas** The Christmas season begins with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Papa Noel (Father Christmas) is the one who brings gifts to the children.  Christmas dinner often features duck, lamb, chicken and turkey, beer and cider. |

**Paraguay Meals and Food**

Recipes from Paraguay

* [Bori-bori (Paraguayan Dumpling Soup) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/recipe/bori-bori-%28paraguayan-dumpling-soup%29.htm)
* [Meat Empanadas - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/recipe/meat-empanadas.htm)
* [Paraguayan Corn Bread - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/recipe/paraguayan-corn-bread.htm)
* [Sopa Paraguaya (Paraguayan Soup) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/recipe/sopa-paraguaya-%28paraguayan-soup%29.htm)
* [Winter Squash Soup - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Paraguay/recipe/winter-squash-soup.htm)

**Paraguay Recipes and Diet**

Paraguay food and meal customs

**Meals**

The national dish is *sopa paraguaya* which is a corn bread with cheese and onions. *Maise* (corn) and cassava are a staple at most meals. *Parrillada*, grilled meat is a popular item at restaurants.

Food in Paraguay

[](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/yuca.jpg)

**Paraguay Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish (official), Guarani (official)

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Guarani**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Merry Christmas | Avyaitete ahï ko Tupa ray árape qyraï Yy Kapyryin rira |

**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 |

**Paraguay Clothing and Fashion**

In urban areas people wear Western or European style of clothing. Rural women wear a shawl called a *rebozo* and a simple dress or a skirt and blouse. Men usually wear loose pants called *bomachas*, a shirt or jacket, a neck scarf and a poncho.

[](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/kids2.jpg)

[[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/pa/home.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/home.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/home.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/pa/kids.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/kids.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/kids.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/pa/kids2.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/kids2.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/kids2.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/pa/family.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/family.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/family.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/pa/school.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/school.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/school.jpg)

**Dating, Family and Children Paraguay**

**Family and Children**

Paraguayan women work hard doing housework grinding corn cooking food, mending clothes, and taking care of their children. They also do the marketing and carry the water. Women are limited in their job opportunities outside the home. They can be needle workers, lace makers, laundresses, cigar makers, small storekeepers or cotton pickers to supplement family income.

In the lower income families marriage is likely to be an informal affair with no church or civil ceremony. As a result spouses may be changed frequently and easily. Marriages in which loyalty is not strongly asked of either partner often are dissolved leaving the woman with the burden or raising the children.

**Paraguay Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

The Guaraní have a secular, a secret and a sacred language. All Guaraní  
speak the secular language. The male and female members speak the sacred language to receive divine messages and transmit them to the rest of the group. The secret language is used by religions leaders.

**Visiting**

Drinking *maté* is a social pastime and an important ritual shared among friends.

**Cultural Attributes**

Paraguayan culture has been heavily shaped by its Spanish Colonial past creating a modern culture this is a unique blend of European and indigenous heritages. Paraguayans are deeply proud of their heritage.

The system of social classes roughly follow the Spanish system. In general town people are considered to have higher status than country folk and people who have been married in the church may look down on those whose matrimony has been a less formal affair. Those who live in Asuncion think of themselves as better than those who live in smaller towns.

**Paraguay Church and Religion**

There were active Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Jewish (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Baha'i communities. There was an Islamic community concentrated in the department of Alto Parana, an area that received substantial immigration from the Middle East, particularly from Lebanon. There was also a substantial Mennonite community, principally in the western department of Boqueron.   
  
The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The constitution and other laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion.   
  
The constitution recognizes the historical role of the Catholic Church in public life, and Catholic priests often performed Mass at government functions.   
  
The following holy days are official national holidays: Maundy (Holy) Thursday, Good Friday, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (now known as the Founding of Asunción), Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (now known as the Virgin of Caacupe Day), and Christmas. The Government also observed the death of Pope John Paul II as a public holiday on the day of his funeral.   
  
All religious groups must be registered with the Ministry of the Interior. The criteria for recognition consist of completing required paperwork, being certified as a nonprofit organization, passing financial and criminal background checks, and paying a small fee. The Government enforced few controls on religious groups, and there were many unregistered churches. The latter were typically small, Christian evangelical churches with few members.   
  
The Government is secular. Most government officials were Catholic, but adherence to a particular creed confers no legal advantage or disadvantage. The armed forces have an extensive Catholic chaplain program. The Catholic Church considers this chaplaincy as a diocese and appoints a bishop to oversee the program on a full-time basis.   
  
Both public and religiously affiliated schools exist, and parents were free to send their children to the school of their choice without sanction or restriction. The Government imposes no curriculum requirements regarding religion.

**Religions in Paraguay**

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

Roman Catholic: 89.0 %Protestant: 6.0 %Other: 5.0 %Highcharts.com

**Religion Photos**

[](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/paraguaycreche.jpg)

[[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/pa/paraguaycreche.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/paraguaycreche.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/paraguaycreche.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/pa/church.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/church.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/pa/church.jpg)

**Students Life in Paraguay**

**Mornings**

Mornings at home in Paraguay may differ from home to home, depending on which session of school the children attend. In any case, children arise early and have a light breakfast of local bread and perhaps a tea-like drink before heading off to work in the fields, sell goods on the street, or attend school for half the day.

**School**

Kids will either walk or ride public transportation buses to school, regardless of which school session they attend, and then return home the same way. In some areas, bicycles may be the best way to get around, but walking remains most common. It is free and can get the kids everywhere, given enough time.

**Classroom**

Most schools require a uniform. In order to make the most of the school buildings and facilities, some schools will begin at 7:30 in the morning and go until 11:30. A second session for other students will run from 1:30 until 5:30. Some schools will also offer a third session in the evening. Children only attend school for four hours a day, and the multiple sessions of school available help them because they must often work most of the rest of the day, either on a farm in rural areas or selling goods on the streets in the cities. Children can make up the bulk of the street vendors in the cities, which is quite a change from North American and European cultures.

Most children go to school with only a notebook and a pencil. Textbooks are hard to come by, and teachers usually do most of their teaching from a barely adequate blackboard.

In Paraguay, the big meal of the day is usually at noon. Families return home for lunch and then take a little nap (siesta) after eating and before returning to their day’s activities. In large cities such as Ascuncion this is becoming more difficult to do, so the tradition is changing to a more American-like work and school schedule, but most of the country continues as they have for many, many years.

**Student Learning**

Paraguay has two official languages: Spanish and Guarani. Spanish is used in schools, government, and business, whereas Guarani is common for everyday conversations among family and friends. In schools with high Guarani-speaking populations, some classes and some materials are available in that language.

Primary education is Compulsory but not every child attends especially in the  rural areas. By the time young people reach secondary school they often must give up their studies to work in the fields to supplement family incomes.  To persuade parents of the relevance of education the government offers technical and vocational education to young people.   About 90 percent of the adult population can read and write.

The school system is heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, which is the official state religion and operates nearly all private schools. There is little distinction between church and state education. However, other religions are permitted to both worship in the country and operate schools if they so choose. In part because of this strong, centuries-long influence, the school system is quite centralized, with all schools conducting the same programs and teaching the same content.

The core subjects covered in elementary schools include reading, writing, math, science, and history; additional subjects offered in many schools are Christian education, Spanish, Guarani, English, music, and computer skills.

The average student to teacher ratio is 21 to 1. Unfortunately, many teachers in the rural schools are not certified to teach and are not as well educated as they should be.

**After School Activities**

Extracurricular activities in Paraguay are largely nonexistent. If children want to participate in sports or other interests, they must join a community club. Some private schools—especially for Americans living in the country—tend to offer more after-school activities than public schools so that the children will more readily fit into American schools when their families move back to the United States.

**Student Free Time**

The youth of Paraguay love soccer, which is their favorite sport. For adult men, every town has a competitive soccer team, and the best teams compete with teams from Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. Young people enjoy supporting their favorite teams. They also enjoy such things as basketball, volleyball, horse racing, and swimming.

Children must often spend much of their time working to help support the family, but that does not prevent them from enjoying what time they can get to play games with their friends. Paraguayans are friendly and enjoy conversation as a sort of national pastime.

**Evenings**

Social life in Paraguay centers on the family—and soccer! Parents are protective of their children, especially in the evenings. Children are expected to tell their parents whenever they leave home, explain where they are going and with whom, and give a close estimate of when they will be home. Girls are especially watched over and protected, so they will probably have stricter curfews and rules than will their brothers.

Godparents are also very important to the family structure in Paraquay. If the parents cannot fulfill their responsibilities for some reason, it is up to the godparents to step in and take over. Thus, it is not uncommon for children to visit their godparents in the evening to chat about their lives and what they are doing. For teenagers, family and godparents also have a significant influence on their political views, since party loyalty is often the most important factor in getting as good a job as possible, especially in rural areas.

The wealthier people of Paraguay eat a lot of meat, especially beef. The rest of the population lives on a largely vegetarian diet made of cassava (sort of like a potato), corn, and beans. They also eat much chili and a wide variety of vegetables. A common meal is a porridge made of dried beans, peas, and peanuts. Paraguayans also enjoy baked corn souffles. Therefore, a common evening meal at home with family would often have one or more of these main dishes. Because the midday meal is the main meal for most of the country, the evening meal, usually eaten around six or seven o’clock, is lighter.

Families and communities are often poor, but they have simple but frequent celebrations in which they gather and share friendships and family relations. Socializing does not revolve around expensive pastimes, and helping one another is a part of surviving well.

**Education Culture**

Education in Paraguay, like many Latin American countries, is difficult. Despite that, 80% of all children over the age of five can read and write, and 92% of adults read and write.

Schooling is free and required for children from ages seven to fourteen years old. However, this rule is not strictly enforced, especially for children in rural areas. In those areas, many children never attend or will drop out to help their family attend to farming. The school year runs from March to October, with a two-week break in mid-winter (July).

Because of the challenge of getting a good education in Paraguay, wealthier families will often send their children to universities in Argentina or Brazil. Paraguay has two universities for those who are able to advance to that level (the National University and the Catholic University), but for those who do, the education is free—even at the universities.

In the early 1970s, more than 95% of all rural students dropped out of school before finishing the required six years of education. Soon after, however, education began a slow but determined improvement. Recent studies show that the overall percentage of children, both urban and rural, who finish six years of school has risen to nearly 40%. (For rural kids, only 25% finish elementary school.) Approximately one out of every four children will continue to secondary school, but only 1% will earn a university degree. One very encouraging fact is that young women make up half of all secondary school graduates, which reflects significant progress in education rights and possibilities for girls.

Following six years in elementary school, secondary school is divided into two separate three-year segments: one focuses on the humanities and is intended to prepare students for university and professional studies, while the other is focused on more practical interests such as a program in agriculture, commerce, or industry. Graduation from either program brings the student a baccalaureate degree.

**Paraguay Sport and Recreation**

*Futbol* is the most popular sport and is played in every town, fields and at formal clubs. Basketball is the second most popular sport in Paraguay, Paraguayans enjoy hunting and fishing, both for sport and for food. Horseback riding , a necessity on the ranches has become a widely practiced pastime in the capitals and major towns.