



Families of Mexico

Teacher's Guide

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Families of Mexico ----Hermaina 5 Years Old

My name is Hermaina and I'm five years old. I live in Vera Cruz, Mexico with my father, mother, and twin sister & brother.

It's early when my mother wakes me for school, and I'm still sleepy. Mornings are a busy time for our family and we all have jobs to do. Mother helps me put on my school uniform. My job is to be sure I have my books and lunch. My father's job is to bathe Jorge and Mariajosa and get them dressed. They're too young to go to school so they stay home with Thelma, who helps cook and take care of us. Thelma's job in the morning is to make breakfast, and today she's making orange juice and pancakes, my favorite! Most Mexicans don't eat so much for breakfast. They like coffee and tortillas or bread.

Families like ours often live with their grandparents, aunts and uncles, but our grandparents live in a different part of Mexico.

Before we leave for school, Mother helps me brush my teeth.

When I look out, I find it's raining. We have a rainy season and dry season here, and rainy season is just beginning. The weather is hot even when it rains, and a lot of this part of Southern Mexico is covered with jungles and rain forests.

Mariajosa wants to come with us.

Thelma lives in our upstairs apartment during the week. On the weekend, she goes home to see her own little girl.

We live about a mile from school, so Mother and Father drop me off on their way to work.

Children in Mexico have to go to school until they're 14, and all cities and town have free public elementary schools. I go to a Catholic school that my parents pay for. Most people in Mexico are Catholics.

Today we're having a special celebration to honor Mary, the mother of Jesus. We get to change into good clothes that our parents have brought to school for us. We have a parade and some of our parents come to watch.

The girl that's chosen as Queen of the festival crowns the statue of the Blessed Mother. Then each of us gets to put a flower by the statue.

After the program we go back to our classroom. Our class has a calendar that a student changes every day. Today, it's my turn to put up the new date. We do lots of our work at the blackboard, but we also use pencils and paper. My best friend sits behind me, and another friend sits in front.

During break, we eat snacks we brought from home. Some students buy their snacks at the school store. The weather is so hot that classes often meet outside.

At 10:30 we have a half-hour recess. Mexicans think education is very important, but many small towns don't have high schools. So it's harder for rural children to continue their education after primary school.

While I'm in school my mother's shopping for groceries. Lots of fruits and vegetables were first found in Mexico. Tomatoes, cocoa, vanilla, corn and peanuts came from here. In fact, the Inca Indians invented peanut butter hundreds of years ago!

When mother finishes shopping, she gets her food weighed to figure out how much each thing costs. Then she goes to the other line where she pays for what she bought with pesos.

Father and mother own an advertising agency and this is where Father works when I'm in school. They make advertisements for other businesses to use in magazines and on TV. My father spends a lot of time on the phone talking with his customers to see what they need.

Then he tells the people that work for him what kind of advertisement to make. When the artists get a magazine ad the way they want it on the computer, they print it out on big sheets of paper that they cut apart into pages. My father says I can learn all about computers too.

The last thing we do before we go home from school today is have a relay race in the gym. Players take turns running to each box, then tagging the next player so she can run. Elementary students go from 8 o'clock until 1 o'clock, when our parents pick us up.

Today Mother and I are going swimming at the country club. On the way we drive by the Port of Vera Cruz, where huge ships come and go every day taking things to trade with other countries, like fruits, vegetables, oil and gas.

Vera Cruz is on the Gulf of Mexico and it's the biggest port in Mexico. This kind of a ship is called a freighter. These tug boats are turning the freighter around so it can be unloaded. It's carrying big boxes called containers that are filled with all kinds of things companies want to buy and sell. Containers are easy to stack and to load and unload. They can be taken off the freighter or barge and added to a train or hooked to a truck.

Nearby is a famous old fort, San Juan de Ulua, which was built by the Spaniards to defend the city and later was used as a prison.

The city of Vera Cruz was started by Cortez, who was the first Spanish explorer to come here looking for gold. European diseases that they brought killed over half of the people Cortez found living here. Today most Mexicans are a mixture of Spanish and Native Indian peoples.

From the fort you can see the city of Vera Cruz across the harbor. Families like to walk along the harbor together in the evenings, when the weather is cooler. They also like to get together in the town square to talk, listen to music and to dance.

After we pass the port we stop at the aquarium because I love to watch the fish, especially the turtles.

When we get to the country club, we're surprised that nobody else is at the pool today. We have the whole thing to ourselves while Mother helps me practice swimming.

We get home at about 3 o'clock, and Mother and Thelma get lunch ready. They're making vegetable soup. Most people use bottled water, and Thelma is opening a new bottle so she can fix milk for Jorge.

Father comes home from work every day for lunch and a siesta. A siesta is a rest time when businesses close for a few hours so everybody can go home and relax during the hottest part of the day.

It's 6 o'clock and time for Father to go back to work. Mother goes to work now, too. She teaches dancing at the city cultural arts center.

First the dancers exercise to warm up their muscles. Then they practice different dance moves.

Mexicans love all kinds of art, and many people still practice the weaving, pottery, and metalworking that have been done in Mexico for hundreds of years.

When Mother gets back from work, we have a snack before the twins go to bed. Father eats later, when he comes home from work around 9 o'clock.

He still has lots of work to do, and I like to keep him company.

Before I go to sleep at about 10 o'clock, mother helps me say my prayers.

Goodnight!

Families of Mexico ----Brizia 8 Years Old

My mother wakes me up early in the morning because I have to walk so far to school.

My name is Brizia and I'm 8 years old. My brother, Hector, and I, my parents, and two aunts live in my grandparents' house, near a small town called Medellin.

Mother gets water for my bath from our well. Then she heats it on the stove. We have a little house just for taking showers. It's so warm in this part of Mexico that we don't need a heater in the shower or in our house.

Mother walks to school with us because we have to walk part of the way on a busy highway. Even though it's still early morning, it's already hot. Even our dog is too hot to walk with us.

We go to our town's public school, which means it's free for everyone. I'm in second grade. Today we're figuring the perimeter, or the distance, around different shapes.

Hector's in first grade.

Mother meets us after school. This time of day, we often use an umbrella to keep the sun off. On the way home I always check the big mango tree. In two weeks or so the mangos will be ripe. Then we pass my favorite tree.

When we get home from school we change our clothes. Mother has made us dinner. Today we're having chicken-rice stew and tortillas.

My father and grandfather can't come home for dinner or a siesta because they work in Veracruz, which is about 20 miles away. Father is a TV cameraman and Grandfather works at the Port of Veracruz.

After dinner we often rest together under the trees. These are the aunts that live in my grandparents' house. Lots of other relatives live in houses around ours.

Every day about this time we look forward to a visit from the water ice man. While the ice man shaves ice off the big block, we choose what flavor we want. Hector chooses mango. So the ice man pours mango syrup over the ice.

I share my cherry water ice with my friend Melissa, who lives next door. Melissa can't hear, so we use hand language to talk with each other. I ask her if she wants to visit the cats that live under her house.

Then we go see Aunt Rosa, who just finished making tamales. Another aunt dries hot peppers in the sun. My grandmother and cousin sift sesame seeds to remove little stones and sticks. Uncle Jose cuts cactus for all our relatives to use. We peel off the prickly outside and use the inside for a nice crisp salad.

Bananas and oranges grow in our yard. Mango and avocado trees also keep us cool on hot days. This is how we reach ripe fruit.

We have our own meat, milk and eggs. My uncle tied a stick to Maranda, our cow, because she kept jumping over the fence. Now the stick gets in her way when she tries to jump. When she learns not to do that, my Uncle will take the stick off.

We always have several dogs because we take in ones that don't have a home. My grandfather says we've had over 50 dogs through the years.

Sometimes we go to the river near our house, but only if a grown-up goes with us.

This spring our family took a 4-hour bus ride to Papantla, a city that's much bigger than Medellin.

Most cities in Mexico have a square in the center of the town where people can get together, especially in the evening. The trees around Papantla's town square are cut like big umbrellas that keep the sun off everyone underneath. Lots of people sell food and all kinds of things they've made. My father got his shoes shined.

It was Earth Day when we were in Papantla, and we saw a big parade. Students from all the schools carried signs about how important it is to take care of our environment. I know it's important because chemicals were sprayed on sugarcane growing near our house, and Grandmother thinks the chemicals made our pigs sick and caused our avocados to fall off the trees before they were ripe.

Near Papantla we visited a vanilla farm. Vanilla is made from pods that grow on long vines that are a type of orchid. These trees were planted just so they could shade and support the vanilla vines. The orchid flowers grow into long green pods. After they're picked they're dried in the sun and aged before they're soaked in alcohol to make vanilla.

We also visited El Tajin, which is an ancient city near Papantla. Anthropologists think rulers and religious leaders lived in the buildings, and ordinary people lived in homes in the hills around the city

I like to imagine what it must have been like when it was a busy place like Papantla today, with mothers buying food and kids playing on the stairs. Near El Tajin, we watched an ancient Aztec ceremony. The dancers wind ropes around the top part of this high pole. They fasten the ends of the ropes to their bodies and hang upside down as the ropes unwind from the pole. We wondered what would happen when they reached the ground.

It was a long bus ride home from Papantla, and when we got home, all I wanted to do was get into my own bed. Goodnight!

Glossary

anthropology: The study of the physical, social and cultural development and behavior of humans.

Aztec: Indian people of Central Mexico noted for their advanced civilization before Cortes invaded Mexico in 1519.

Inca: An Indian of the group of Quechuan people, who ruled Peru before the Spanish conquest.

peso: The basic unit of currency in Mexico.

pod: A fruit containing several seeds that usually dries or splits open.

rain forest: A dense, usually tropical, evergreen forest found in areas with an annual rainfall of at least 100 inches.

siesta: A rest or nap, usually taken after the midday meal.

tortilla: A round, thin, flat bread usually made from cornmeal or flour

Discussion and Activities After Viewing

1. Ask what things in the video indicate that the climate in Veracruz is hot.
2. Have children name or draw several fruits and vegetables commonly found in Mexico that are familiar to them.
3. Discuss why Spanish is the national language of Mexico.
4. What Spanish words do we commonly use in the U.S.? (patio, larriet,
5. If children have family or friends from Mexico, ask the children to interview them about growing up in Mexico and bring in photos, items, and stories from Mexico.
6. Invite someone from Mexico to talk with the class about their life in Mexico, play a traditional instrument, or tell a Mexican story.
7. Ask they saw in the video. children to draw a picture, make a list or write a paragraph on how their life and school are different and similar from those

Questions

- 1 What are Catholics?**
- 2 Why is there only a rainy season and a dry season?**
- 3 Did corn and peanut only grow in the Americas?**
- 4 What are forts?**
- 5 Why do people use containers to move things?**
- 6 Why do people take siestas?**
- 7 Who were the Aztecs?**
- 8 How does a person become deaf?**

Answers to Questions

1 What are Catholics?

Roman Catholicism is one of the largest religions in the world, with over a billion members distributed all over the world. It has a large amount of literature and a large organization. Catholicism's history began when some of people who initially had accepted Jesus Christ as a prophet, now saw him as the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Roman Catholicism traces its beginning to the Apostle Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Catholicism, which means *universal*, received the adjective "Roman" due to the Church's adoption of the same governing organization as that of the Roman empire. The adjective was also used because of the tradition that Peter had founded the Church in Rome and that he and Paul were buried there.

Roman Catholics are found throughout the world, with high concentrations in southern Europe, eastern Europe, the Americas and the Philippines. There are 100 million Catholics in Africa.

2 Why is there only a rainy season and a dry season in Veracruz?

In the tropics, which is where Veracruz is, the temperature is warm all year around, and there is no winter, spring or fall. The seasons are the rainy season from June through November and the dry season for the rest of the year.

3 Did corn and peanut only grow in the Americas?

The Amerindians domesticated chilies, corn, potatoes, cocoa tomatoes, peanuts to use as food crops. So there were no Irish potatoes, spicy Korean kimchi, Malaysian ketchup or Dutch chocolates before contact was made by the Europeans with the Amerindians in 1492.

4 What are forts?

Forts are protective structures used for defense against enemy attack. They are usually surrounded by tall walls, and can have weapons such as cannons to shoot at the enemy attackers.

5 Why do people use containers to move things?

Containers are used to simplify the loading of goods, to protect the goods from damage and pilferage, as well as to speed up the loading of ships. Before containers, individual boxes of various shapes and sizes have to be loaded one at a time. Now 5000 pairs of sneakers can be loaded quickly in one container.

6 Why do people take siestas?

Siestas are a natural human reaction to food and heat. It is a healthy practice as it allows people to make lunch the main meal and to rest during the hottest time of the day.

7. Who were the Aztecs?

The Aztecs were a powerful tribe that united much of Mexico from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. The Aztecs had come from the north at the end of the twelfth century as poor nomads. After founding their city in Tenochtitlan (present day Mexico City) around 1325 they built an empire covering the whole of Mexico.

The Aztec civilization was based on the heritage of the more ancient [Toltec](#) and Mixteca-Puebla civilization. They were advanced in engineering, architecture, art, mathematics, and astronomy. Aztec skill in engineering was evident in the fortifications of their island capital. The Aztecs further developed metalwork, music, and picture writing for historical records. Agriculture was well advanced and trade flourished.

The political and social organization was based on three castes—the nobles, the priests, and the soldiers and merchants. The Aztec king ruled and although many conquered chiefs retained political autonomy; they paid tribute and kept commerce open to the Aztecs. The Aztecs had a large and efficient army. Prisoners of war were sacrificed to the Aztec gods.

8. How does a person become deaf?

A person can be born deaf, which means that some of the hearing organ does not work or a person can become deaf through disease or injury to the ear through very loud sounds.

Quiz on Things We've Learned About Mexico

(Circle the correct answer).

1. T F The peso is the national currency of Mexico.
2. T F Veracruz is the biggest port in Mexico.
3. T F Veracruz is located on the Gulf of Mexico.
4. T F Vanilla is made from corn.
5. T F A siesta is an afternoon rest.
6. T F We think Cortez was the first European to reach the New World in search of gold.
7. Freighters, barges and tugs are types of _____.
8. Tamales, tortillas and tacos are kinds of Mexican _____.
9. _____ is the national language of Mexico.
10. The Mexican rural family grows much of its own food. What things do they have to buy?
11. These are some of the fruits and vegetables that came from Mexico:
12. Draw pictures about the different parts of Hermaina or Brizia's story. Try to include as many details as you can remember about each part.

Introduction

Mexico is famous for the rich mixture of her Amerindian and Hispanic cultures, her cuisine and her music. She is the home of the seaside resorts of Acapulco, the ruins of the Mayan city of Chichen Itza, and the great metropolis of Mexico City. It is the land of Montezuma, Benito Juarez and Rita Hayworth

The Land and the Climate

Mexico is bordered on the north by the United States and in south by the countries of Belize and Guatemala. A plateau that covers most of Mexico dominates the geography of Mexico. The plateau is flanked by two mountain ranges, the Sierra Madre Occidental in the west and the Sierra Madre Oriental in the east. Between the Sierra Madre Oriental mountain range and the Gulf of Mexico lie coastal lowlands of lagoons and swamp lands. There is a narrower strip of coastal lowland between the Sierra Madre Occidental and the Pacific Ocean.

The northern part of Mexico lies in an arid semi-desert climate. In the northern interior temperatures can exceed 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. The southern part is tropical with heavy precipitation during the summer months. Temperatures decrease with higher elevation so that many climates occur in the tropics.

Plant and animal life

The diverse environment supports desert scrub vegetation, coniferous forests, tropical rain forests and savanna grasses. Much of the natural vegetation has been disturbed by centuries of human habitation. Notable animal species include jaguars, pumas, monkeys and armadillos.

The People

There are over 100 million Mexicans, product of a great population boom that quadrupled the population since the 1930s. The majority of Mexicans can claim descent from both Amerindian and European ancestry. These people are called mestizos and comprise 60% of the population. Another 30% are Amerindians and 10% are considered white. The Amerindians

predominantly live in the south. Spanish is spoken by 95% of the population and there are more than 50 Indian languages that are widely spoken.

Daily Life

More than 70% of the population lives in the cities. There exists in Mexico a very skewed distribution of income. Some 20% of households earn 55% of the income. Some 40% of the population still lives below the poverty line. A quadrupling of the population since the 1930s has reduced the amount of agricultural land available. A quarter of the population still works in agriculture, the majority in subsistence farming. Education is required for those age 6 to 14, but 15% of school age children do not go to school. Education in the rural area are not well developed and often do not meet the legal requirements. Millions of Mexicans work illegally in the United States. Millions more move to the border cities where new factories process duty free imports for export to the United States. Millions have left the farms to live in the cities. Some 40% of urban dwellers there live below the poverty level, including many government workers. Shantytowns and slums are a common element in all Mexican cities.

At the other extreme there exist a well-educated middle and upper middle class. They run the modern economy of Mexico with its modern farms, factories, banks and government. Their children attend private schools, which are much superior to public schools. Their children are also more likely and better prepared to attend the universities. The lives of the upper class would be very familiar to Americans – it would include shopping malls, cars and the Internet.

Mexican food also has roots in the Amerindian and Spanish mixture. An example of the mix would be "antojitos". The Spanish, who brought the beef, pork and chicken meat, the cream of milk and the cheese, liked very much the original Mexican food such as the "tortillas", beans, chocolate, peppers, tomatoes, green tomatoes and aromatic herbs such as coriander (cilantro), and the chilies.

Cultural Life

Life revolves around the family and the church. Most people are Roman Catholics and celebrate the major passages of life in the church. One of the

most important figures in the Mexican religion is the miracle of the Lady of Guadalupe, where a dark Mary speaking in the Aztec tongue appeared to a convert. During the first week in November, many Mexicans celebrate the Day of the Dead. Families hold reunions at family gravesites, complete with music and food. Shops filled with candy skulls and calaveras (skeletons) made of wood, paper mache, clay, wax and sugar. Dressed as doctors, judges, teachers, tennis players and prostitutes, the calaveras engage in all kinds of activities from dancing and drinking to hair styling and singing. Every conceivable profession and pastime is burlesqued. Their antics draw smiles from passersby. And indeed, Mexicans view skeletons as funny and friendly rather than ghoulish and scary.

Medieval Catholic ideas on the universality of death fused with the pre-Hispanic customs and attitudes of commemorating the dead, resulting in a uniquely Mexican custom. The Day of the Dead reflects the Mexican belief in the duality of life and death. While they mourn and miss their dead loved ones, they also believe that death is just an extension of life. It's part of a natural progression, not an end. Thus the dead continue to exist and return annually to visit their loved ones. Many of the customs, such as home altars and cemetery vigils, are to help them find their way and to welcome them home.

There are also many regional festivals of Amerindian origins that are still celebrated. A Spanish tradition, bullfighting, is the national sport, and the largest bullfighting rings in the world is in Mexico City. Bullfighters from around the world come to give exhibitions. Soccer is the largest participatory sport, and there are several professional soccer leagues. Rodeos (Charrería) are also another important sport to Mexicans.

History

Human artifacts dating to 9000 BCE have been found in Mexico. It is believed that maize, beans, and squashes were cultivated as early as 5000 BCE. Permanent settlements and pottery appear around 2000 BCE. By 1000 BCE large ceremonial centers and monumental sculptures appear in a culture associated with the Olmecs in the southern part of Mexico. The Olmec people developed a hieroglyphic script and a complex calendar. By the first century CE, true cities appear with the Mayan civilization, which grew during the next seven to eight hundred years. When the Toltecs invade

from the north in 700 CE, it signaled the beginning of the end of the Maya civilization.

The Aztecs also came from the north in at the end of the twelfth century, and in less than one hundred years they built an empire covering the whole of Mexico. The Aztecs' religion required human sacrifice to the sun god, and their many wars were waged to gain prisoners to sacrifice. At their peak, the Aztecs were defeated by a small force of Spanish conquistadors allied with Amerindian tribes hostile to the Aztecs. The Spanish were armed with weapons of steel, horses and cannons against which the Aztecs fought with weapons of stone and wood.

An even more devastating weapon were the diseases that the Spanish brought with them. The diseases were unknown in the Americas and these decimated the native population. The Spanish brought few of their womenfolk to the New World and took Amerindian women as living partners. The Spanish sought the mineral wealth of Mexico; especially its silver mines which the surviving Amerindians worked. They also lived as large landowners farming and raising cattle.

Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821. Thence followed a hundred years of instability and civil wars. Would-be autocrats vied with republicans, liberal reformers with conservative forces. In the 1850s reformers led by Benito Juarez, a Zapotec Amerindian, abolished slavery, limited the power of the Catholic Church and the military. The reformers triumphed in a brief civil war, fought against a French attempt to install a puppet Emperor, and five years of republican rule.

In 1875 Porfirio Diaz, a Mixtec Amerindian, overthrew the government and established a long lasting dictatorship that brought some stability, a large amount of foreign investment and economic growth. The Mexican Revolution ended his dictatorship. The new government put in place a program for land reform, social welfare, and the right to strike, as well as constitutional guarantees for civil liberties. A political party formed that was to rule Mexico until the 21st century, it was an alliance of military strongmen, regional, labor and peasant leaders. The party was able to have its nominee for president elected for 70 years.

With the stability, investment and economic growth ensued. There was some fear of foreign investment and outside control of the country's natural

resources. In the wake of worker demand for greater management control and management refusal, the government nationalized the oil industry in 1938. The Second World War touched off the growth of light industry as traditional foreign suppliers were engaged in war material production. Over-reliance on oil cause borrowing to balloon, and balance of payment crisis in the early 1980s and again in the mid 1990s. The passage of the North American Free Trade Act in 1994 stimulated economic growth in Mexico by encouraging trade and investment.

Today Mexico has multi-party democracy and one of the highest per capita GDP in Latin America. But the development is highly unequal, much of the Amerindian population receive little education and have few avenues for economic advancement.

Map of Mexico



Flag of Mexico

Introduction

Geography

Location: Middle America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, between Belize and the US and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Guatemala and the US

Geographic coordinates: 23 00 N, 102 00 W

Map references: North America

Area:

total: 1,972,550 sq km

land: 1,923,040 sq km

water: 49,510 sq km

Area - comparative: slightly less than three times the size of Texas

Land boundaries:

total: 4,538 km

border countries: Belize 250 km, Guatemala 962 km, US 3,326 km

Coastline: 9,330 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm or to the edge of the continental margin

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: varies from tropical to desert

Terrain: high, rugged mountains; low coastal plains; high plateaus; desert

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Laguna Salada -10 m

highest point: Volcan Pico de Orizaba 5,700 m

Natural resources: petroleum, silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber

Land use:

arable land: 12.66%

permanent crops: 1.28%

permanent pastures: 39%

forests and woodland: 26%

other: 21% (2009 est.)

Natural hazards: tsunamis along the Pacific coast, volcanoes and destructive earthquakes in the center and south, and hurricanes on the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean coasts

Environment - current issues: natural fresh water 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; serious air pollution in the national capital and urban centers along US-Mexico border

Geography - note: strategic location on southern border of US

People

Population: 111,211,766 (July 2009 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 29.1%

15-64 years: 64.6%

65 years and over: 6.2% (2009 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.13% (2009 est.)

Birth rate: 19.71 births/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Death rate: 4.8 deaths/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Net migration rate: -3.61 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 18.42 deaths/1,000 live births (2009 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 76 years

male: 73.25 years

female: 79 years (2009 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.34 children born/woman (2009 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Mexican(s)

adjective: Mexican

Ethnic groups: mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 60%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian 30%, white 9%, other 1%

Religions: nominally Roman Catholic 89%, Protestant 6%, other 5%

Languages: Spanish, various Mayan, Nahuatl, and other regional indigenous languages

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 90%

male: 91.8%
female: 89.6% (2004 est.)

Government

Country name:

conventional long form: United Mexican States

conventional short form: Mexico

local long form: Estados Unidos Mexicanos

local short form: Mexico

Data code: MX

Government type: federal republic

Capital: Mexico

Administrative divisions: 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-Llave, Yucatan, Zacatecas

Independence: 16 September 1810 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 16 September (1810)

Constitution: 5 February 1917

Legal system: mixture of US constitutional theory and civil law system; judicial review of legislative acts; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory (but not enforced)

Executive branch:

chief of state: President Felipe de Jesus CALDERON Hinojosa (since 1 December 2006); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government

cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the president with consent of the Senate

Legislative branch: bicameral National Congress or Congreso de la Union consists of the Senate or Camara de Senadores (128 seats; half are elected by popular vote to serve six-year terms, and half are allocated on the basis of each party's popular vote) and the Federal Chamber of Deputies or Camara Federal de Diputados (500 seats; 300 members are directly elected by popular vote to serve three-year terms; remaining 200 members are allocated

on the basis of each party's popular vote, also for three-year terms)

Judicial branch: Supreme Court of Justice or Corte Suprema de Justicia, judges are appointed by the president with consent of the Senate

Political parties and leaders: Convergence for Democracy or CD; Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI; Mexican Green Ecological Party or PVEM; National Action Party or PAN; Party of the Democratic Center or PCD; Party of the Democratic Revolution or PRD; Party of the Mexican Revolution or PARM; Party of the Nationalist Society or PSN; Social Alliance Party or PAS; Social Democratic Party or PDS; Workers Party or PT

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chancery: 1911 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20006

telephone: [1] (202) 728-1600

FAX: [1] (202) 728-1698

consulate(s) general: Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, El Paso, Houston, Laredo (Texas), Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Nogales (Arizona), Phoenix, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, San Juan (Puerto Rico)

consulate(s): Albuquerque, Brownsville (Texas), Calexico (California), Corpus Christi, Del Rio (Texas), Detroit, Douglas (Arizona), Eagle Pass (Texas), Fresno (California), McAllen (Texas), Midland (Texas), Orlando, Oxnard (California), Philadelphia, Portland (Oregon), St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Bernardino, San Jose, Santa Ana (California), Seattle, Tucson

Diplomatic representation from the US:

embassy: Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc, 06500 Mexico, Distrito Federal

mailing address: P. O. Box 3087, Laredo, TX 78044-3087

telephone: [52] (5) 209-9100

FAX: [52] (5) 208-3373, 511-9980

consulate(s) general: Ciudad Juarez, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Tijuana

consulate(s): Hermosillo, Matamoros, Merida, Nuevo Laredo, Nogales

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

Economy

Economy - 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. Trade with the US and Canada has nearly tripled since the implementation of NAFTA in 1994. Mexico has 12 free trade agreements with over 40 countries including, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, the European Free Trade Area, and Japan, putting more than 90% of trade under free trade agreements. 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 more than 7% in 2009 as world demand for exports dropped and asset prices tumbled, but GDP is expected to post positive growth late in 2010. The administration continues to face many economic challenges, including improving the public education system, upgrading infrastructure, modernizing labor laws, and fostering private investment in the energy sector. CALDERON has stated that his top economic priorities remain reducing poverty and creating jobs.

GDP: purchasing power parity - \$1473 billion (2009 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: -7.1% (2009 est.)

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$13,200 (2009est.)

GDP - composition by sector:

agriculture: 4.1%

industry: 34.5%

services: 61.3% (2009)

Population below poverty line: 40% (2009 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 1.7%

highest 10%: 36.3% (2008)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 5.3% (2009 est.)

Labor force: 46 million (2009)

Labor force - by occupation: agriculture 18%, industry 24%, services 58% (2008)

Unemployment rate: 6.2% urban (2009); plus estimated 25% underemployment

Industries: food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel, petroleum, mining, textiles, clothing, motor vehicles, consumer durables, tourism

Industrial production growth rate: -9% (2009 est.)

Agriculture - products: corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, beans, cotton, coffee, fruit, tomatoes; beef, poultry, dairy products; wood products

Exports: \$223.6 billion (f.o.b., 2009), includes in-bond industries (assembly plant operations with links to US companies)

Exports - commodities: manufactured goods, oil and oil products, silver, coffee, cotton

Exports - partners: US 80.2%, Canada 2.1%, Germany 1.7%, Spain 1.3%, Japan 0.5%, Venezuela 0.3%, Chile 0.3%, Brazil 0.3% (2009 est.)

Imports: \$234.6 billion (f.o.b., 2009), includes in-bond industries (assembly plant operations with links to US companies)

Imports - commodities: metal-working machines, steel mill products, agricultural machinery, electrical equipment, car parts for assembly, repair parts for motor vehicles, aircraft, and aircraft parts

Imports - partners: US 49%, China 11.2%, Japan 5.3%, Germany 4.1%, Canada 1.9%, South Korea 2%, Italy 1.3%, France 1% (2008 est.)

Currency: 1 New Mexican peso (Mex\$) = 100 centavos

Exchange rates: Mexican pesos (Mex\$) per US\$1 – 13.64 (2009), 11.016 (2008), 10.4 (2007), 10.898 (2005), 9.4793 (2000), 9.5604 (1999), 9.1360 (1998), 7.9185 (1997), 7.5994 (1996), 6.4194 (1995)

Fiscal year: calendar year

Communications

Telephones - main lines in use: 20.5 million (2009)

Telephones - mobile cellular: 75.3 million (2009)

Transportation

Railways:

total: 18,048 km

Highways:

total: 356,977 km

paved: 178,473 km (including 6,335 km of expressways)

Ports and harbors: Acapulco, Altamira, Coatzacoalcos, Ensenada, Guaymas, La Paz, Lazaro Cardenas, Manzanillo, Mazatlan, Progreso, Salina Cruz, Tampico, Topolobampo, Tuxpan, Veracruz

Airports: 1,744 (2009 est.)

Airports - with paved runways: 233

Websites

www.nationalgeographic.com/mexico/index.html

travel.yahoo.com/t/North_America/Mexico/essent.html

Recipes

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Tortilla Dip | 1/2 cup shredded lettuce |
| Ingredients | 1 large chopped fresh tomato |
| 2 avocados | 2 green onions, chopped |
| 1 cup mayonnaise | 1/2 cup green bell pepper |
| 1 cup sour cream | 1/4 cup sliced black olives |
| 1/2 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning mix | |
| 2 (16 ounce) cans refried beans | |
| 3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese | |

green pepper and black olives if desired.

Directions

Spread refried beans evenly on a medium sized serving platter. If the beans are watery, chill For 20-30 minutes

Refrigerate until serving.

Serve with your favorite tortilla chips

Peel Avocados and remove the pits. In a Food processor, blend the mayonnaise, sour cream and taco seasoning until smooth. Pour over the Refried beans. Top with Cheddar cheese.

Add Lettuce, tomatoes, green onions,

Servings Per Recipe: 16

Hot Fruit Punch

Ingredients:

4 Tb cornstarch

1 quart cold water

2 quarts milk

1 1/3 cups sugar

3 pounds of fruit (strawberries, mangoes, peaches, raspberries, or blackberries)

2 cups light cream or 2 cans evaporated milk

2 ts vanilla

Combine 2 Tb corn starch and 1 quart cold water in a large saucepan and heat until mixture begins to thicken. Add 2 quarts milk and 1 1/3 cups sugar. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and set aside. Puree fruit in blender, a little at a time. Add to the milk mixture 2 cups of cream or 2 cans evaporated skim milk and 2 ts. vanilla. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until well heated, but do not boil.

Activities - Maracas

Materials list: few grains of rice or popcorn (unpopped)
small balloon
8"piece of 1/4 inch dowel or a one tongue depressor
strips of newsprint
papier-mâché mixture
poster paints

How to directions:

Put rice or popcorn into balloon and then inflate to about the size of a softball. Cover the balloon with strips of newsprint dipped in papier-mâché mixture. Cover with 3-4 layers. Let each layer dry before applying the next. Cut a slit in paper mache and insert stick. Seal over with a layer or two of papier-mâché. Pop the balloon after the last layer dries and paint as desired with poster or tempura paints (water soluble paints).
Shake & enjoy.