



# **More Families of Mexico**

## **Teacher's Guide**

**© 2010 Master Communications, Inc.  
Permission granted for distribution for classroom use only.**

## Table of Contents

<b>Script to Families of Mexico</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Questions</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Answers to Questions</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Quiz</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The Land and the Climate</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The Plant and Animal Life</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The People</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Daily Life</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Cultural Life</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	
<b>Flag</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Map</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Facts</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Websites</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Recipes</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>33</b>

## **More Families of Mexico ----Guadalupe 8 Years Old**

The sun is just starting to come up in Pacho Nuevo, where I live with my Mom and Dad, and my sister Ingrid. We put up lights for Christmas, and Dad says we'll take them down after Candelaria's Day.

Today is a school day, so I have to get up at 6 o'clock. My name is Guadalupe and I'm 8 years old. This is the uniform we wear in our school.

After I get dressed Mom combs my hair, which is a big job because it's so long.

Grandma brings me two magazines that I can use at school to cut out pictures for a class assignment. She says I can pick the one I think has the best pictures.

For breakfast I'm having toast with jelly, milk, and fresh papaya, which is a fruit that first grew here in Mexico, and now is grown all over the world.

Then I brush my teeth.

It's time to leave for school, but first I want to say goodbye to Grandma.

Ingrid wants to go, too, but she's only 4, so she has to stay home with Grandma until Mom and Dad get back. Grandma and Grandpa live next door.

Pacho Nuevo is near the top of a small mountain, and we walk for about 15 minutes to our school down in the center of town. This week Dad will be leaving to take a group of workers to Monterrey, where they're going to clean movie theaters. It takes more than a day to get there, and the job may take several weeks, so he may not be home for almost two months. The walk seems short going to school. But it seems a lot longer coming home!

A parent usually walks younger children to school. This is a public school, so that means my parents don't have to pay for me to go here. School starts at 7 and we get out at noon. We have 29 students in our third grade class.

Today we're studying history. Mexico had some of the greatest cultures in the world way before the Spanish conquerors came 500 years ago. Our

teacher says 1500 years ago the city of Teotihuacan near Mexico City had more than 200,000 people living there, which made it one of the largest cities in the world. At about that time a huge fire burned almost all of the buildings that weren't stone, where families and craftspeople lived. For some reason it seems the city was never rebuilt, but we don't know why. Our teacher says archaeologists are studying questions like this.

She says old cities like this show the same love of art that we still have in Mexico today.

Now we're talking about some of the things the Spanish soldiers and explorers brought to Mexico, like horses, gunpowder and steel. The Spanish had never seen corn, chocolate, beans, tomatoes or vanilla before, and they took them back to Europe.

At about 11 o'clock some parents set up tables in the school yard to sell food that they've made for the students. I'm getting tacos, which are tortillas filled with things like meat, cheese and beans. They cost two pesos. The money we pay goes to buy things for the school.

All grade school kids in Mexico get free books from the government, but we have to pay for our uniforms and lunches. I'll go to high school in a nearby town, but some kids will have to quit school before then to help their families.

It's wintertime here, and we often start out the day in sweaters or jackets, but by noon we usually don't need them. It never freezes in our area, but there's always snow on top of the mountain that we can see from here, because it's a lot higher than our village.

After lunch we line up to go back to class. We take turns cleaning the school yard.

Keeping things clean is also what Mom's doing while I'm in school. She washes our clothes by rubbing them with soap and water. Dad carries the water from Grandpa and Grandma's faucet next door.

She rinses the clothes with clean water. Then she hangs them to dry. The clothesline is made with two plastic ropes that are twisted together. Mom just unwinds a little spot in the line and tucks an edge of the wet clothing in

between the two lines. When she lets go, the lines twist back together and hold the clothes. When they're dry, she can take them down with a little tug.

Most of Mexico is pretty dry, but we're lucky because our state, Veracruz, has plenty of water. Our teacher says that's because hot air picks up moisture over the Gulf of Mexico, and when it blows towards us and hits our mountains, it rises and cools. Cool air can't hold as much moisture, so we get rain. Some times of the year....like in August...we get lots and lots of rain.

But even though we sometimes feel we have too much water, we're careful not to waste it. When Mom finishes the laundry or dishes, she uses the left over water to clean our patio.

Our village is surrounded by fields of coffee trees, and most men here pick coffee for a living. The small coffee trees are usually grown in the shade under taller trees. Inside each coffee berry are the seeds, which we call beans, and that's the part that's sold. Our neighbors are selling the coffee beans they picked today to a buyer just down the street from us. The buyer pays them according to the weight of the coffee they've picked. This buyer will sell the beans to a company that roasts and packages the coffee for sale. Some towns have several places that roast coffee, and the neighborhoods around them smell wonderful!

After school I change clothes. Then we go to a nearby town to a big market for the Candelaria's festival, the day baby Jesus was presented to the Church.

After we walk through the market we stop at the church where Mom asks the Blessed Virgin to bless and protect us.

When we get home from the festival we have an early dinner.

My cousins Antonia and Sinai live in a town nearby and they're visiting for the day. We take a walk down to the coffee plantation or hacienda near the school. Our whole village is built on land that used to be part of the hacienda. It's still here, but it's smaller now. The hacienda has its own family chapel.

When we get home, we play picture bingo. If you have a picture that matches the card that's drawn, you put a bean to mark that picture. Whoever matches all the pictures in a row wins the game.

Sinai and I like to play with our computer games. They can speak three languages!

Mom buys us a few tamales that are a little different from the kind she makes. That will hold us for awhile.

Lots of people in Mexico like football, which some people call soccer. Ingrid doesn't mind chasing balls; she even likes to chase after an old soda bottle!

I like to spin around and then try to walk in a straight line.

The whole family is having supper with Grandma and Grandpa tonight so this is a busy place. Grandma is fixing tortillas for supper. She's patting dough made from cornmeal and a little water into flat circles that she fries. These gorditas are made with beans and cheese or tomato and cheese.

Kids get to eat first, so we can start to get ready for bed. While we eat, Ingrid and our cousins are having a good time in the living room.

After I finish eating and come back home, Mom heats some water on the stove and adds a little cold water to get the temperature just right to wash my hair.

I brush my teeth again before I go to bed. Then I say goodnight to Grandma. I say my prayers and it's lights out.

Good night!

## **More Families of Mexico Maurice 12 years old**

### **Monday**

This is Jalapa, the city where I live. It's the capital of the state of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico. I live here with my Mom and Dad, my younger

sister Carolina, Eloise, who helps with the housework, and our dog, Megara. My name is Maurice and I'm 12 years old.

It's 6:30 on Monday morning and I'm getting ready to go to school.

Mom fixes breakfast for all of us. I'm having yogurt and cereal. I like to watch cartoons while I'm eating, but Dad likes the news. He'll drop me off at school on his way to work.

I go to a private school, and that means Mom and Dad have to pay for me to go there. Carolina is 5 so she goes to a private kindergarten right next door to my elementary school. Mom will drop her off later this morning.

On Mondays every school in Mexico has a flag ceremony to honor our country. We sing our school song, the state song, and the national anthem. Each week one grade is responsible for putting on a program. This time a class of first graders acts out a story where hunters come to the forest, but when they see that the animals they were going to kill have feelings and love life like we do, they decide not to harm them, and everyone celebrates by dancing together. This is a good time for parents to come to school to watch and to photograph their kids.

Our school has about 250 students in grades one through six, and my 6<sup>th</sup> grade class has 24 students.

Our first class is English, which is one of my favorite subjects. I even take English lessons twice a week after school. Today we're going to have a competition to see which team is best at remembering how to spell the list of words we had for our last homework assignment.

After English we have computer class. We learn to use the computer to review or do research on what we're studying in our other classes. When our teacher gives us an assignment, we put up the green cone when we finish. We put up the red cone if we have any questions or need help.

At 11 o'clock we have a half hour break. Today I brought some cookies for a snack. Sometimes I buy something from the school store. During our break we like to play games or sometimes just talk.

Carolina's in class, too. They've just come in from recess and she's leading them in a song.

While I'm at school Mom is at a neighborhood farmers' market buying fresh fruit and vegetables. All these kinds of cheese are made by a village near Jalapa. Mom says this area grows more fruit, vegetables and coffee than any other state in Mexico. One reason is that we get more rain than most other places in the country.

One of the things Mom likes here is that many of the sellers give samples of whatever they're selling. Even though Jalapa is pretty large, Mom sometimes bumps into friends when she's shopping.

Dad's working, too. The company he works for has more than 100 stores all over Mexico that sell almost anything you might want to buy. Dad says each store is really two stores, the store you see, where salespeople wait on customers, and the store that you don't see, where people like Dad work to be sure everything runs smoothly. Dad is an auditor, which means he keeps track of the money that the store takes in and the money it pays out to the companies that supply what the store sells.

After school it's time for my karate lesson, which I have three times a week. Today after we do warm up exercises, we spar with each other. That means we practice karate movements we're learning until our body knows them so well we can do them without thinking.

After my lesson we look at some pictures of the karate school that were taken when we were all together. After mom pays for my lesson, we head home.

Before I go to bed I usually do homework for about a half hour. Tonight I'm working on an English assignment. We're learning medical terms like chills, headache, infection and cough. I'm drawing a little picture next to each word to help me remember what it means. I know about coughs because I have one, and tomorrow I have to go to the doctor to have her check it out.

See you later!



## **Saturday**

It's Saturday morning, and we don't have school, but it's going to be a busy day. I have doctor's and dentist's appointments, and Mom and Dad usually do something special with Carolina and me on Saturday. This afternoon Dad is going to take us to the park to ride our bikes. Then we're all going to a restaurant to eat.

But before anything else, I want to play with my electric car for a few minutes. I'm into cars...I've even invented a special car lock where you use your fingerprint to unlock the door and start the car.

Well, time to give Megara her bath. This spray-on shampoo doesn't use any water. All I have to do is rub it into her coat, and when I'm done just wipe it off with a damp towel. She doesn't seem to mind.

While I'm working on Megara, Mom and Eloise are doing the laundry. At noon every Saturday Eloise catches a bus to visit her mother in her home village about two hours away. She'll come back on Monday.

When the laundry's done, Mom and Carolina take me to my dentist. I have braces on my teeth, and every month the dentist tightens my braces so my teeth move a little bit at a time, until they're finally straight. I get to play monster for a few minutes. This looks goofy, but it doesn't really hurt. My teeth will be sore for a couple of days though. Carolina likes the 'giant tooth' chairs in the waiting room.

My doctor's office is in a neighborhood with lots of colorful houses. A lot of people in Mexico like to paint their houses and buildings in bright colors. When you look down some streets it's like looking at an artist's painting.

Anyway, here's my doctor checking out my cough. I think little kids like her stethoscope, because it looks like a lizard. After she listens to my heart and breathing and checks out my ears, nose and throat, she gives Mom a prescription for medicine she thinks I should take.

We get the prescription filled and Mom pays for it.

Now it's time to have some fun! Before Dad takes us to the park, Carolina and I check the air in our bicycle tires to be sure they're not too soft. We use

this hand pump to put more air in the ones that need it. Loading our bikes is like putting together a puzzle.

The park is just a few minutes from our house. It's nice and level and we don't have to watch out for traffic. This family is finding little clams in the stream that flows through the park.

We like the stream because you can see some really neat things. Dad found some tadpoles. At first they're hard to see because they don't move around much. As they grow the tadpoles will lose their tails and turn into frogs.

Time for our taco dinner. Mom opens the medicine we picked up and finds something we've never seen before. The medicine is inside a straw so it will mix with whatever I'm drinking. Cool!

After we finish dinner it's time to head home for a rest. Tomorrow is Sunday and we'll go to church. See you then!

## **Sunday**

It's Sunday morning and we're going to Mass. Most people in Mexico are Catholics.

Today some of us help collect donations for the church. Then everyone shakes hands with the people around them and we wish each other peace. At the end of the service, people line up to receive communion.

After church we'll go home and rest until later in the afternoon, when one of Carolina's friends is having a birthday party. Our whole family's invited.

It's four o'clock....time for Paloma's birthday party. Some families rent a place like this for their parties so parents can sit at tables while us kids play. We have lots to do here even if it's raining, because there's a whole indoor playground.

Some kids like to use the stage to pretend they're putting on a show for an audience.

But the biggest event at the party is breaking the piñata, which is filled with candy. The trick is to break it open so the candy or prizes will spill out and the kids can pick them up.

It's not as easy as it sounds, because the piñata is attached to a rope to move it up and down. If older or stronger kids look like they'll break it open right away, the man with the rope pulls the piñata up to make it harder to hit. For the smaller kids the operator just lets the kids whack away. This way the piñata lasts longer and everybody gets a chance to try their luck. During each person's turn we sing a song that encourages them to break the piñata before we finish the song. Finally the piñata is torn open enough for the candy to spill out.

Today we have two piñatas, so if you didn't get tired enough with the first one, you can start all over again on this one!

Dad has to leave the party to catch a plane to Mexico for his work. I bet you're thinking....'How can he go to Mexico when we're already in Mexico??' Well, when someone here says they're going to Mexico, they mean they're going to Mexico City, which is the capital of our country. Dad has to go there for business every two weeks for a couple of days.

The birthday cake is ready and it's time for Paloma to make a wish, and...(alternative: oh)! This is messy, but it's fun.

When we get home I have a bedtime snack, then I play with my palm pilot for a little while. But I have to be in bed by 9 because I have school tomorrow.

After I brush my teeth, I say my prayers. And say goodnight to Mom. Then it's lights out.

Goodnight!

## Glossary

**Appointment:** an agreed upon time to meet with someone

**archeology:** The study of the way humans lived by looking at the remains of their buildings, living areas, environment and other remains.

**braces:** metal or plastic bands that help shape the way teeth grow.

**capital:** the city that is the center of government for the entire region.

**fingerprint:** The lines in the skin on the tip of one's fingers. No two set of lines are exactly the same.

**gunpowder:** a mixture that can produce an explosion and was used in the first firecracker, guns and cannons

**hacienda:** an large estate with a productive purpose. Originally these were royal grants in colonial Spanish America, where the owner would have life and death power over the natives on the land.

**karate:** an art form and a sports that started out in Okinawa as a means for self defense .

**stethoscope:** A device to help listen to the insides of bodies.

## **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, rodeo)
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 had 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mexico/index.html)

[travel.yahoo.com/t/North\\_America/Mexico/essent.html](http://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.