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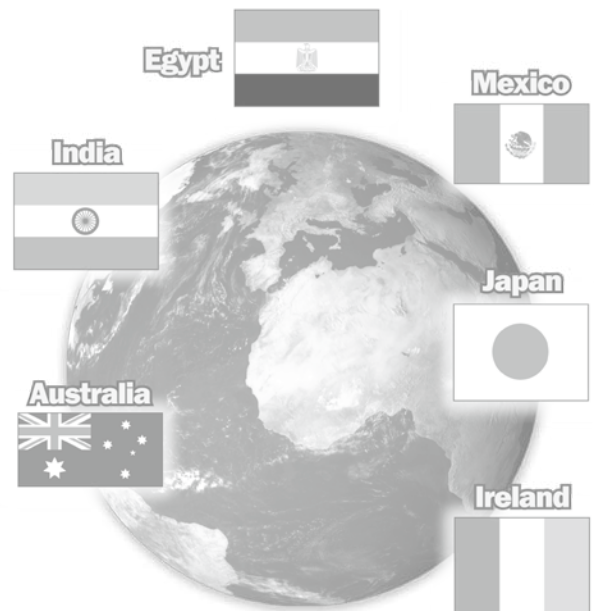
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FAST FACTS: Mexico

Full Name: *United Mexican States (Estados Unidos Mexicanos)*

Capital City: *Mexico City*

Currency: *Mexican peso*

Location

Mexico is located at the southern part of North America. Covering nearly 760,000 square miles, Mexico shares a northern border with the United States and a southeastern border with Guatemala and Belize in South America. To the west of Mexico lies the Pacific Ocean, and the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea run along much of the country's eastern coastline.



The People

Throughout history, many groups of Native Americans have lived on the land we now call Mexico. Descendants of many of these groups, including the Aztecs, Mayans, and Toltecs, continue to live in Mexico today. But *mestizos*, or people of European and Native American ancestry, make up the largest part of the Mexican population. Today, more than 100 million people of all backgrounds live in Mexico.

Spanish is the official language of Mexico, but nearly 100 native languages are also spoken. Mayan and Nahuatl (noo-WAHT-uhl) are both languages commonly heard in different parts of the country.

The Government

Mexico's government is very similar to the United States government in many ways. It is divided into 3 branches: the executive branch, consisting of the president and his/her cabinet; the legislative branch, made up of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies; and the judicial branch, which has a Supreme Court at its highest level. The country is divided into 31 states and a federal district that contains the capital—Mexico City.

The Land

Nearly 2/3 of Mexico is covered with hills and mountains. The Sierra Madre is the largest mountain range in the country, and it is divided into 3 smaller ranges. A group of more than 20 volcanoes called the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt links sections of the ranges of the Sierra Madre. Mexico is home to more than 40 volcanoes, many of which remain active.

Mexico is also home to hot deserts, sandy beaches, vast canyons, and ancient ruins. Popular tourist attractions include the beaches of Acapulco and Cancun, the ruins of Chichén Itzá (chee-CHEN eet-SAH), and the historic city of Guadalajara.

The Flag

The Mexican flag is filled with symbolism:



Green stripe—hope and victory

White stripe—purity

Red stripe—blood shed by heroes

Eagle emblem—According to legend, an Aztec god described the location of the new empire as the place where an eagle stands on a prickly pear tree with a serpent in its mouth. The Aztecs found the eagle on a small island in the middle of a lake. This is where the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan (tay-NOWSH-teet-LAHN), now Mexico City, was built.

A History of Mexico

Mexico's history is a long and often tragic one. From the Mixtecs to the Aztecs, the Spanish conquerors to the Mexican rebels, Mexico has remained strong in times of great conflict.

Mesoamerica, an area that is now southern Mexico and Central America, was home to many different groups of people. While some of these groups were very small, others were larger and made major changes to the history of the country. Today, many people living in Mexico are descendents of these groups. Below is a short introduction to the major groups of Native Americans and their place in the history of Mexico.



The Olmecs, Zapotecs, and Mixtecs

These three cultures are some of the earliest to occupy Mesoamerica. Focused mainly on farming and fishing, the Olmec society was known for its giant stone sculptures of human heads. Although the exact years of the Olmec's presence are unknown, it is thought that they lived around 1300 B.C.E. to 400 B.C.E..

The Zapotec people were in Mesoamerica from around 200 B.C.E. to 800 C.E. They designed the first system of writing in North America and were skilled pottery-makers. The Zapotecs also had their own language.

Using pictures drawn on deerskin or bark paper, the Mixtecs recorded a very detailed history of their life in Mesoamerica. From 700-1500 C.E., they produced some of the finest products of stone and metal in ancient Mexico. The Mixtecs were engaged in constant warfare with other tribes in the area, including the Zapotecs, and later, the Aztecs.






















The Mayans and the Toltecs

Considered to be the most advanced empire of Mesoamerica, the Mayan people were known for their work in math, astronomy, and architecture. This powerful nation created large cities and built pyramids that stood over 200 feet tall. The Mayans were also responsible for creating a complex calendar system to mark important dates. From around 300-900 C.E., the Mayan culture lived in what is now southern Mexico and Central America.
















The Toltec people were excellent builders and metalworkers during their history in Mexico (900-1200 C.E.). They are thought to have been related to the Zapotec and Mixtec people. Even though the Toltecs took over parts of the Mayan empire, their reign only lasted a few hundred years.

Mathematics... Mayan-Style!











The Mayan system of writing numbers used dots, bars, and a symbol that looks like a shell. A Mayan numbering chart is listed below. Use this chart to solve the various math problems. Be sure to write your answers in Mayan numerals!

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
|  = 0 |  = 5 |  = 10 |  = 14 |  = 18 |
|  = 1 |  = 6 |  = 11 |  = 15 |  = 19 |
|  = 2 |  = 7 |  = 12 |  = 16 |  = 20 |
|  = 3 |  = 8 |  = 13 |  = 17 | |
|  = 4 |  = 9 | | | |














Addition

 +  +  = _____
 +  +  = _____
 + _____ +  = 
 _____ +  +  = 
 +  + _____ = 










Multiplication

 x  = _____
 x  = _____
 x _____ = 
 _____ x  = 
 x _____ = 

Subtraction

 -  = _____
 -  -  = _____
 _____ -  -  = _____
 -  - _____ = 
 - _____ -  = 

Division

 ÷  = _____
 ÷  = _____
 ÷ _____ = 
 _____ ÷  = 
 ÷ _____ = 