

Mexico

Capital: Mexico City (Ciudad de Mexico)

Population: 100,000,000

GDP/capita: 10,000 USD (2006)



The colourful land of Mexico was once home to the golden civilizations of the Maya and Aztecs. These ancient empires were destroyed by the Spanish, who invaded in the 1500s and ruled the country until its independence in 1821. Descendants of the native peoples still live in Mexico, but most people are *mestizo*, of mixed Spanish and Indian descent. Almost half of all Mexicans are under 19 years old, and population is growing rapidly, leading to overcrowding in the cities. Mexico has limited farmland, and cannot produce enough food for the growing population.

Relief: Sierra Madre Oriental, Sierra Madre Occidental, Baja California,

Largest cities: Mexico City, Monterrey, Tijuana, Guadalajara, Acapulco, Cancún

Rivers: Rio Grande

Mexico City

More than 20 million people live here => 1 of the largest cities in the world. But it lies in high altitude and is ringed by mountains, so pollution from cars and factories cannot escape and poisons the air. It's very overcrowded and the area is prone to earthquakes. The last destroyed the city center in 1985.

Made in Mexico

US-Mexican border = >2000 factories (*maquiladoras*). *Cars, computers, shoes, musical instruments, shoes* and other manufactured goods are processed there. Most of the factories are owned by foreign companies that are attracted by the cheap labour costs. *Maquiladoras* are an important source of income for the Mexicans and help prevent its economy from being too dependent on oil.

Oil from the gulf

1976 = huge reserves of oil were found there. MEX = *5th largest producer of oil in the world*. It has at its disposal reserves of other minerals, e.g. iron, zinc, copper and especially *silver* (the greatest producer of silver in the world).

Mexican food and traditional crafts

Spicy food flavoured with chillies => avocado, beans, tomatoes, corn and wheat => tortillas (pancakes). *Weaving* and *embroidery* = traditional crafts of Mexico's native Indians => images of gods, flowers and birds are often used in their designs. Just like their ancestors, women bring brightly decorated clothes into the towns and to sell them in the markets.

A land of contrasts

North = deserts, e.g. Sonoran desert (rattlesnakes, scorpions, etc.)

Central part = snowcapped mountains and plateaux

South = tropical wet forests (equatorial rainforests)

Keywords

mestizo, Aztecs, Maya, maquiladoras, silver, oil, weaving, embroidery, rattlesnake