

Key Vocabulary	Definition
Physical geography	Physical geography is the study of the processes that shape the Earth's surface, the animals and plants that inhabit it, and the spatial patterns they exhibit
Human geography	The study of the interrelationships between people, place, and environment, and how these vary spatially and temporally across and between locations
fiesta	A fiesta is a time of public entertainment and parties, usually on a special religious holiday, especially in Spain or Latin America.
settlement	Settlement: is a place where people live. A settlement may be as small as a single house in a remote area or as large as a mega city (a city with over 10 million residents)
natural resources	Natural resources are materials from the Earth that are used to support life and meet people's needs. Any natural substance that humans use can be considered a natural resource. Oil, coal, natural gas, metals, stone and sand are natural resources. Other natural resources are air, sunlight, soil and water.
culture	Culture can be defined as all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation. Culture has been called "the way of life for an entire society."

Mexico

Knowledge Bank

Mexico facts

OFFICIAL NAME: United Mexican States

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: Republic of federated states

CAPITAL: Mexico City

POPULATION: 120,286,655

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: Spanish

MONEY: Peso

AREA: 1,964,375 square kilometers

MAJOR MOUNTAIN RANGES: Sierra Madre

MAJOR RIVERS: Rio Grande, Yaqui



Mexico's geography

Mexico is a land of **extremes**, with high mountains and deep canyons in the centre of the country, sweeping deserts in the north and dense rainforests in the south and east. Mountains cover much of Mexico. Between the **Sierra Madre Oriental** mountain range in the east and the **Sierra Madre Occidental** in the west lie small mountain ranges on the **Central Plateau**. These regions are rich with valuable **metals like silver and copper**.

The stretch of land called the **Yucatán Peninsula** juts into the **Gulf of Mexico** from the country's south eastern tip. It was once the home of the **Maya civilization**, an ancient culture whose amazing buildings can still be seen today.

Mexican people & culture

Mexico is the product of a **rich Indian heritage, three centuries of Spanish rule, and a shared border with the United States of America**. Today, most Mexicans are mestizos, which means they have a mix of Indian and Spanish blood.

Throughout its history, Mexico has been home to great artists. The Maya and other Indians made impressive murals, sculptures, and jewellery. Modern Mexican artists include great painters, photographers, sculptors and muralists (people who create artwork on walls).

Mexicans take sports seriously. In ancient times, losers of a ritual ball game were once put to death. Yikes! In some dangerous sports, like bullfighting and rodeo (which was invented in Mexico), competitors still put their lives on the line.

Mexico's nature

Few nations on Earth support as many plant and animal species as Mexico does. Located partway between the Equator and the Arctic Circle, it is a refuge for animals fleeing extreme cold in the north and intense heat in the south.

In northern Mexico, deserts are full of plant and animal species that have found ways to survive the harsh environment. On Mexico's west coast, **gray whales swim thousands of miles each year from Alaska to breed in the waters off Baja California**.

The **rainforests** and coastal wetlands of eastern Mexico are home to thousands of tropical plant species and elusive animals like **jaguars** and quetzal birds.

Mexican government & economy

Mexico is a country with great problems and great potential. It has lots of valuable, natural resources like oil, silver, copper and agricultural products, too. But political and economic problems have kept much of the population in poverty.

The Mexico-United States border is the largest economic divide on Earth. For many Mexicans, the best chance for a better life lies in the much more prosperous United States. Hundreds of thousands of Mexicans come to the **U.S., legally and illegally**, each year in search of work.

Mexican history

The **Olmec people**, Mexico's first complex society, emerged in the southeastern part of the country around **1200 B.C.** They were later followed by the **Maya**, the **Toltec**, and the **Aztec** peoples.

Mexico's ancient societies built great cities and **huge pyramids, created remarkable works of art**, and even studied the stars and planets to determine when to plant crops and hold ceremonies.

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In the early **1500s**, the Spanish arrived in Mexico. The Aztec people got sick from smallpox and other diseases that the Spanish brought with them. The Spaniards also seized and destroyed the Aztec capital, called **Tenochtitlán**. The Spanish ruled the country until **1821**, when Mexico gained independence.