MEXICO

HISTORY

Mexico's story began with great Native cities. Spain ruled for about 300 years. Then Mexicans built their own country.



The First Peoples

People here learned to grow corn, beans and squash thousands of years ago. The Olmec, on the Gulf coast, carved giant stone heads about 3,000 years ago. The Zapotec built the mountain city of Monte Albán. The Maya built cities of stone in the south and on the Yucatán Peninsula. They had writing, a calendar and a sign for zero.

The Aztec Empire

The Mexica people, often called the Aztecs, came from the north. In 1325, they founded the city of Tenochtitlan (teh-noch-TEET-lahn) on an island in Lake Texcoco. They built causeways across the lake and farmed on chinampas, gardens built up from the lake bed. Their armies conquered many nearby peoples. Those peoples became part of an **empire** and paid the Aztecs in goods such as cloth, corn and cacao.

The Spanish Arrive

In 1519, Hernán Cortés landed with a few hundred Spanish soldiers. Many Native peoples, such as the Tlaxcalans, wanted to be free of Aztec rule and joined him. The Aztec ruler Moctezuma II welcomed the Spanish into Tenochtitlan, but fighting soon broke out. Smallpox, a disease from Europe, spread through the city. In 1521, the Spanish and their allies captured Tenochtitlan, and the Aztec Empire ended.



New Spain

Mexico became a Spanish **colony** called New Spain. The Spanish built Mexico City on top of Tenochtitlan. Settlers brought horses, cattle, wheat and the Spanish language. Priests built churches and missions. After silver was found at Zacatecas in 1546, mining towns grew in the north. Many Native people were made to work on Spanish farms and in mines. The Spanish also brought enslaved Africans to work in mines, sugar fields and homes.

Independence

On September 16, 1810, a priest named Miguel Hidalgo rang the church bell in the town of Dolores. He called on people to rise up against Spanish rule. Hidalgo was captured and executed in 1811, but others, such as Vicente Guerrero, kept fighting. In 1821, Mexico won its **independence**. Mexico ended slavery in 1829.

Building Modern Mexico

From 1846 to 1848, Mexico and the United States fought the Mexican-American War. The United States won, and Mexico gave up land that is now California, Nevada, Utah and parts of other states. On May 5, 1862, Mexico's army beat a French army at Puebla, a day remembered as Cinco de Mayo. In 1910, the Mexican **Revolution** began and lasted about ten years. Today, millions of Mexicans still speak Native languages such as Nahuatl (NAH-wah-tul) and Maya.

MEXICO THROUGH TIME

500 BC	1325	1519	1521	1546	1810	1821	1848	1910
Monte Albán is founded	Aztecs found Tenochtitlan	Cortés lands in Mexico	Tenochtitlan falls	Silver is found at Zacatecas	Hidalgo calls for independence	Mexico becomes independent	The Mexican-American War ends	The Revolution begins

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Moctezuma II	Aztec ruler when the Spanish arrived
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz	Nun who wrote famous poems in the 1600s
Miguel Hidalgo	Priest who called for independence
Benito Juárez	Zapotec from Oaxaca who became president
Frida Kahlo	Painter known for her self-portraits

WORDS TO KNOW

empire	many lands and peoples ruled by one government
colony	land ruled by a faraway country
independence	freedom from being ruled by another country
revolution	a fight to change who runs a country