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MEXICO - INFORMATION SHEET

BACKGROUND

Mexico is the largest country in Central America. The Official name is Estados Unidos Mexicanos.

LANGUAGE

Spanish is the official language of Mexico, however, various Mayan, Nahuatl and other regional indigenous languages are also spoken.

RELIGION

Roman Catholic 89% Protestant 6% Other 5%

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

Mexican observance of religion and tradition are linked in everyday life.



AÑO NUEVO (NEW YEAR'S DAY) - is an official Mexican holiday.

DÍA DE LOS SANTOS REYES - January 6 is the day when Mexicans exchange Christmas presents in accordance with the arrival of the three gift-bearing wisemen to Jesus Christ. This day culminates with the Christmas festivities.

FEAST DAY OF DE SAN ANTONIO DE ABAD - January 17 is a religious holiday when the Catholic Church allows animals to enter the church for blessing.

DÍA DE LA CANDELARIA or CANDLEMAS - February 2 is a religious holiday that is celebrated with processions, dancing, bullfights in certain cities, and the blessing of the seeds and candles.

CARNAVAL - (February) is an official Mexican holiday that begins a five-day celebration of the libido before the Catholic lent. It is celebrated exuberantly with parades, floats and dancing in the streets.

DÍA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN - February 5 is an official holiday that commemorates Mexico's Constitution.

FLAG DAY - February 24 is the Mexican national holiday honouring the Mexican flag.

SEMANA SANTA - is the holy week that ends the 40-day Lent period. This week includes Good Friday and Easter Sunday. It is Mexican custom to break confetti-filled eggs over the heads of friends and family.

PRIMERO DE MAYO - May 1 is the Mexican national holiday that is equivalent to the U.S. Labor Day.

HOLY CROSS DAY DÍA DE LA SANTA CRUZ - May 3 when construction workers decorate and mount crosses on unfinished buildings, followed by fireworks and picnics at the construction site.

CINCO DE MAYO - May 5 is the Mexican national holiday that honours the Mexican victory over the French army at Puebla de los Angeles in 1862.

MOTHER'S DAY - May 10 Due to the importance of the mother in Mexican culture, Mother's Day is an especially significant holiday.

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST DAY - June 24 is celebrated with religious festivities, fairs and popular jokes connected to getting dunked in water.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY - September 16 celebrates the day that Miguel Hidalgo delivered El Grito de Dolores, and announced the Mexican revolt against Spanish rule.

DÍA DE LA RAZA - October 12 This day celebrates Columbus' arrival to the Americas, and the historic origins of the Mexican race.



DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS (DAY OF THE DEAD) - November 1&2, an important Mexican holiday that merges Pre-Columbian beliefs and modern Catholicism. The dead spirits are welcomed with food, sweets, decorated skulls, and lighted candles to guide them home.

It is a day to honour the dead and gravestones are decorated. The whole family gather in the graveyard to await and pay respects to the deceased.

MEXICAN REVOLUTION DAY - November 20 This official Mexican holiday celebrates the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

DÍA DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE - December 12 or the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe is celebrated with a feast honouring Mexico's patron saint.

LAS POSADAS - December 16 celebrates Joseph and Mary's search for shelter in Bethlehem with candlelight processions that end at various nativity scenes. Las Posadas continues through January 6.

NAVIDAD - December 25 the Christmas holiday

CUISINE

Mexico's culinary history is influenced by the Mayan Indians who used corn tortillas and tamales. After the Spanish conquest in 1521 new livestock, dairy products and herbs were introduced. Its rich history has left a legacy of tasty and diverse dishes.

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Bicultural Inclusion Support Services (**BISS**) in Western Australia and the Northern Territory are proudly supported by CHILD Australia through its Professional Support Coordinators in WA (**PSCWA**) and the NT (**PSCNT**). The Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (**DEEWR**), funds the Professional Support Coordinator Initiative as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP).