

Mexico

Country name	Mexico
State title	United Mexican States
Name of citizen	Mexican
Official language (de facto)	Spanish (<i>spa</i> ¹)
Country name in official language	México
State title in official language	Estados Unidos Mexicanos
Script	Roman script
Romanization System	Not required, see <i>Languages</i>
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	(MX/MEX)
Capital (Conventional name)	Mexico City
Capital in official language	Ciudad de México ²
Population/Area ³	126 million ⁴ / 1,964,375 km ²

Introduction

Mexico is located in the southernmost part of North America, bordered by the United States of America to the north and Belize and Guatemala to the south. Mexico has coastline on the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Gulf of Mexico to the east, and the Caribbean Sea to the southeast.

During the colonial era (1521–1821) Mexico was known as New Spain. It achieved independence from Spain in 1821 and is now a Federal Republic. The name Mexico comes from the pre-Colombian name for the area around Mexico City, which was the former Aztec capital Tenochtitlan.

Geographical names policy and sources

PCGN policy for geographical names in Mexico is to use official sources from the country, retaining any special letters and diacritical marks. Geographical names on official Mexican sources will be written according to Spanish orthography.

The *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (INEGI) serves as Mexico's geographical names authority⁵. An online database of geographical names is available at:

<https://www.inegi.org.mx/app/geo2/cng/>.

¹ ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² Previously known as El Distrito Federal, or DF. Since 2013, the city has used the abbreviation CDMX (Ciudad de México).

³ CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mexico/#geography>

⁴ <https://en.www.inegi.org.mx/default.html>

⁵ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/uneggn/naa/documents/Authorities_list_July_2021.pdf

INEGI also maintains the [Norma Técnica de Nombres Geográficos Continentales e Insulares de México](#), a reference document that serves as a technical standard for the compilation and standardization of geographical names of Mexico. The *Archivo histórico de localidades*⁶ displays historical and variant names of populated places and can also be a helpful resource for geographical names.

Some Mexican states and populated places may have both short and long forms of their names, e.g. Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo/Estado de Michoacán; San Francisco de Campeche/Campeche. Both forms are official and either can be used. The long form can be used if more specificity is required.

Languages

The Constitution of Mexico does not declare an official language, however Spanish (ISO 693-3: *spa*) serves as the *de facto* official language of Mexico. Additionally, numerous Indigenous languages are spoken in Mexico, over 60 of which are recognized by the Mexican government as national languages.

The first Law of the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (*spa: Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*) came into effect in March 2003, officially protecting Indigenous languages, and recognising them as part of the national cultural and linguistic heritage. Updated versions of the law have been published with the most recent being October 2023⁷.

Many of Mexico's toponyms have their origins in the country's Indigenous languages. These names have usually been written according to Spanish orthography.

Some of the most widely-spoken Indigenous languages (those estimated to have 500,000 or more speakers) can be found in the table below. For a comprehensive list, please consult https://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/hipertexto/todas_lenguas.htm.

Indigenous Languages of Mexico

Language	Language Classification	ISO 693-3 Language code	Estimated number of speakers	States where language is spoken
Náhuatl	Uto-Aztecan	nhi	1,651,958	Puebla, Veracruz, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí, Guerrero, México (state), Tlaxcala, Morelos and Oaxaca
Maya	Mayan	yua	774,755	Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán
Tzeltal (Tzeltal)	Mayan	tzh	589,144	Chiapas
Tsotsil (Tzotzil)	Mayan	tzo	550,274	Chiapas, Oaxaca, Veracruz

⁶ <https://www.inegi.org.mx/app/geo2/ahl/>

⁷ <https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGDLPi.pdf>

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁸):

In addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script, the following characters are found in geographical names of Mexico:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Á	00C1	á	00E1
É	00C9	é	00E9
Í	00CD	í	00ED
Ñ	00D1	ñ	00F1
Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
Ú	00DA	ú	00FA
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC

Map of Mexico



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

⁸ See www.unicode.org

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Administrative structure

At the first-order administrative division (ADM1) level, Mexico is divided into 31 states (spa: estado) and 1 federal entity (spa: entidad federal)⁹. Each state is officially called ‘the Free and Sovereign State of...’ (spa: Estado Libre y Soberano de...), but this is usually shortened to ‘Estado de...’.

State (ADM1)	Long form name, including generics	ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	State website	Administrative Seat (PPLA)	Location of PPLA
Aguascalientes	Estado de Aguascalientes	MX-AGU	https://www.aguascalientes.gob.mx/	Aguascalientes	21° 52' 56" N 102° 16' 57" W
Baja California	Estado de Baja California	MX-BCN	https://www.bajacalifornia.gob.mx/	Mexicali	32° 39' 00" N 115° 27' 40" W
Baja California Sur	Estado de Baja California Sur	MX-BCS	https://www.bcs.gob.mx/	La Paz	24° 08' 40" N 110° 18' 02" W
Campeche	Estado de Campeche	MX-CAM	https://campeche.gob.mx/	Short name: Campeche Long name: San Francisco de Campeche	19° 50' 38" N 90° 31' 32" W
Chiapas	Estado de Chiapas	MX-CHP	https://www.chiapas.gob.mx/	Short name: Tuxtla Long name: Tuxtla Gutiérrez	19° 19' 09" N 98° 11' 59" W
Chihuahua	Estado de Chihuahua	MX-CHH	https://www.chihuahua.gob.mx/	Chihuahua	28° 38' 00" N 106° 05' 00" W
Ciudad de México¹⁰	-	MX-CMX	https://www.cdmx.gob.mx/	Conventional name: Mexico City Spanish name: Ciudad de México	
Coahuila	Estado de Coahuila de Zaragoza	MX-COA	https://coahuila.gob.mx/	Saltillo	25° 25' 24" N 101° 00' 19" W
Colima	Estado de Colima	MX-COL	https://www.col.gob.mx/	Colima	19° 15' 00" N 103° 43' 38" W

⁹ <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:code:3166:MX>

¹⁰ Formerly known as Distrito Federal or México D.F. The abbreviation CDMX is also used to refer to Ciudad de México.

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State (ADM1)	Long form name, including generics	ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	State website	Administrative Seat (PPLA)	Location of PPLA
Durango	Estado de Durango	MX-DUR	https://www.durango.gob.mx/	Short name: Durango Long name: Victoria de Durango	24° 01' 10" N 104° 39' 38" W
Guanajuato	Estado de Guanajuato	MX-GUA	https://www.guanajuato.gob.mx/	Guanajuato	21° 01' 06" N 101° 15' 25" W
Guerrero	Estado de Guerrero	MX-GRO	https://www.guerrero.gob.mx/	Short name: Chilpancingo Long name: Chilpancingo de los Bravo	17° 33' 02" N 99° 30' 21" W
Hidalgo	Estado de Hidalgo	MX-HID	https://www.hidalgo.gob.mx/	Short name: Pachuca Long name: Pachuca de Soto	20° 07' 03" N 98° 44' 34" W
Jalisco	Estado de Jalisco	MX-JAL	https://www.jalisco.gob.mx/	Guadalajara	20° 40' 01" N 103° 23' 31" W
Michoacán	Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo	MX-MIC	https://michoacan.gob.mx/	Morelia	19° 42' 10" N 101° 11' 36" W
Morelos	Estado de Morelos	MX-MOR	https://morelos.gob.mx/	Cuernavaca	18° 56' 01" N 99° 13' 43" W
México	Estado de México	MX-MEX	https://edomex.gob.mx/	Short name: Toluca Long name: Toluca de Lerdo	19° 17' 14" N 99° 38' 42" W
Nayarit	Estado de Nayarit	MX-NAY	https://www.nayarit.gob.mx/	Tepic	21° 30' 34" N 104° 53' 44" W
Nuevo León	Estado de Nuevo León	MX-NLE	https://www.nl.gob.mx/	Monterrey	25° 40' 30" N 100° 19' 06" W
Oaxaca	Estado de Oaxaca	MX-OAX	https://www.oaxaca.gob.mx/	Short name: Oaxaca Long name: Oaxaca de Juárez	17° 03' 56" N 96° 43' 25" W
Puebla	Estado de Puebla	MX-PUE	https://www.puebla.gob.mx/	Short name: Puebla Long name: Heróica Puebla de Zaragoza	19° 02' 17" N 98° 12' 12" W

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State (ADM1)	Long form name, including generics	ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	State website	Administrative Seat (PPLA)	Location of PPLA
Querétaro	Estado de Querétaro de Arteaga	MX-QUE	https://www.queretaro.gob.mx/en/	Santiago de Querétaro	20° 36' 00" N 100° 23' 59" W
Quintana Roo	Estado de Quintana Roo	MX-ROO	https://qroo.gob.mx/	Chetumal	18° 30' 51" N 88° 18' 14" W
San Luis Potosí	Estado de San Luis Potosí	MX-SLP	https://slp.gob.mx/	San Luis Potosí	22° 08' 59" N 100° 58' 45" W
Sinaloa	Estado de Sinaloa	MX-SIN	https://sinaloa.gob.mx/	Short name: Culiacán Long name: Culiacán Rosales	24° 47' 25" N 107° 23' 16" W
Sonora	Estado de Sonora	MX-SON	https://www.sonora.gob.mx/	Hermosillo	29° 06' 09" N 110° 58' 38" W
Tabasco	Estado de Tabasco	MX-TAB	https://tabasco.gob.mx/	Villahermosa	17° 59' 13" N 92° 55' 49" W
Tamaulipas	Estado de Tamaulipas	MX-TAM	https://www.tamaulipas.gob.mx/	Ciudad Victoria	23° 44' 30" N 99° 08' 46" W
Tlaxcala	Estado de Tlaxcala	MX-TLA	https://www.tlaxcala.gob.mx/	Short name: Tlaxcala Long name: Tlaxcala de Xicohténcatl	19° 19' 09" N 98° 11' 59" W
Veracruz	Estado de Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave	MX-VER	https://www.veracruz.gob.mx/	Short name: Xalapa Long name: Xalapa-Enríquez	19° 32' 38" N 96° 55' 18" W
Yucatán	Estado de Yucatán	MX-YUC	https://www.yucatan.gob.mx/estado/	Mérida	20° 58' 31" N 89° 37' 01" W
Zacatecas	Estado de Zacatecas	MX-ZAC	https://www.zacatecas.gob.mx/	Zacatecas	22° 46' 08" N 102° 34' 18" W

Border Crossings

There are over 50 official border crossings between Mexico and the United States of America, several of which are bridges across a river. Details on these crossings can be found here: <https://portales.sre.gob.mx/mex-eua/images/stories/PDF/GpoBilateraldePtesyCruces.pdf>.

Mexico also shares border crossing points with Belize and Guatemala. A list of formal crossing points between Mexico and Belize can be found here: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/acciones-y-programas/cruces-formales-mexico-belize>, and Mexico-Guatemala crossing points are listed here: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/acciones-y-programas/cruces-fronterizos-entre-mexico-y-guatemala>.

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name	Conventional Name	Other Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Altiplano Mexicano	Mexican Plateau	Central Mexican Plateau, Central Plateau, Altiplanicie Mexicana, Gran Altiplanicie Mexicana, Gran Meseta Mexicana, Mesa Central, Meseta de México, Plateau of Mexico	24°00'00"N 102°00'00"W	Plateau
Chichén Itzá	Chichen Itza	-	20°40'00"N 88°34'00"W	Ancient site
Ciudad Juarez	-	-	22°18'58"N 104°10'52"W	Populated place
Golfo de California	Gulf of California	Sea of Cortés (Mar de Cortés), Sea of Cortez, Vermilion Sea (Mar Vermejo)	28°00'00"N 112°00'00"W	Gulf
Gulf of Mexico	Gulf of Mexico	Golfo de México (<i>Mexico name</i>) Gulf of America (<i>US name</i>)	25°00'00"N 90°00'00"W	Gulf
Península de Yucatán	Yucatan Peninsula	Yucatan	19°30'00"N 89°00'00"W	Peninsula
Pico de Orizaba/Citlaltépetl	-	-	19°01'50"N 97°16'06"W	Volcano
Popocatepetl	-	-	19°01'25"N 98°37'21"W	Volcano
Río Grande (US); Río Bravo del Norte (MX)	Río Grande	Río Bravo	25°57'22"N 97°08'43"W	River
Sierra Madre Occidental	-	Sierra Madre Western Sierra Madre	25°00'00"N 105°00'00"W	Mountains
Sierra Madre Oriental	-	Eastern Sierra Madre	22°00'00"N 99°30'00"W	Mountains
Cancún	-	-	21°10'20"N 86°49'46"W	Populated place
Tijuana	-	-	32°23'55"N 116°47'37"W	Populated place
Teotihuacán	-	-	19°41'33"N 98°34'38"W	Ancient site

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18095241>
 - BGN Mexico Country Policy: https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSSearch/GNSDocs/policies/Mexico_Country_Policy_webversion_Latest.pdf
 - CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mexico/>
 - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/mexico>
 - International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
 - ISO Online Browsing Platform: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui>
 - Languages: www.ethnologue.com / www.omniglot.com
 - Mexican government website: <https://www.gob.mx/>
 - Mexico National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) <https://www.inegi.org.mx/>
 - PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
 - US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) Geographic Names Server: <https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GeographicNamesSearch/>
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