

MEXICAN FLAG AND OTHER SYMBOLS

National Flag



Everybody probably knows that the most respected symbol among Mexican people is the Mexican flag. However, not many people know how symbolic the flag of Mexico really is; this small article will show you some of the most important points on the history of the Mexican flag.

The proportion of height versus width of the Mexican flag is 4:7. It is vertically divided into three sections, which have the same size. Each one of these sections has a distinctive color, which symbolize different aspects of the Mexican ideal of a nation. The middle band, colored white, contains the National Mexican Crest, a symbol that is very important to Mexican people.

The Mexican flag colors are three: green, white and red.

Green: represents hope for a better nation, where people join together to achieve and maintain peace between them.

White: represents the purity of catholic faith.

Red: the color of blood. With the inclusion of this color on their flag, Mexican people pay a tribute to those who died during the terrible war for independence.

Of course, the flag of Mexico was not always as it is now. Through history, there have been many different Mexican flags.

From the beginning of Mexican history, the people who lived on the central part of Mexico already used different emblems to represent themselves and their neighbors. When the Spaniards arrived to the Mexican territory, they introduced their own flags and symbols as well. Some central regions of Mexico also had distinctive flags, like the Aztec flag or the Tlaxcalteca flag.

During the colonial years, there wasn't any flag to represent the territory of "New Spain", but it was common to find crests of the Spanish Monarchy used as a symbol of their lands on the Americas.

During the beginning of the War for Independence, the Mexican troops used a flag with a drawing of the "Virgen de Guadalupe", while the Spanish troops had a flag with the "Virgen de los Remedios" on it.

The Mexican flag experienced many more changes through the War of Independence period. Finally, in 1823, the Mexican flag was declared a unique national symbol by a Constitutional Congress, and its overall design was based on a 1821 decree that specified the Mexican flag size and colors, and established that the symbol on the center of the flag had to be an eagle.

This eagle was replaced with many other symbols later, until the National crest was chosen. The last decree that specifies the design of the Mexican flag was promulgated in 1983 by who was the President of Mexico at that moment, Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado.

Coat of Arms



According to the official story of Mexico, the coat of arms of Mexico was inspired by an [Aztec](#) legend regarding the founding of [Tenochtitlan](#). The Aztecs, then a [nomadic](#) tribe, were wandering throughout [Mexico](#) in search of a divine sign that would indicate the precise spot upon which they were to build their capital.

The bird featured on the Mexican coat of arms is the [Golden Eagle](#). This bird is known in Spanish as *águila real* (literally, "royal eagle"). The Golden Eagle is considered the Mexican eagle for official purposes, and for the same reason is considered the official bird of Mexico.

National Anthem

The National Anthem of Mexico ([Spanish](#): *Himno Nacional Mexicano*) was officially adopted in 1943. The lyrics of the [national anthem](#), which allude to [Mexican](#) victories in the heat of battle and cries of defending the homeland, were composed by poet [Francisco González Bocanegra](#) in 1853, after his [fiancée](#) locked him in a room. In 1854, [Jaime Nunó](#) arranged the music which now accompanies González's poem. The anthem, consisting of ten [stanzas](#) and a chorus, entered into use on September 16, 1854. From 1854 until its official adoption, the lyrics underwent several modifications due to political changes in the country. Officially since 1943, the full national anthem consists of the chorus, 1st stanza, 5th stanza, 6th stanza and 10th stanza.

Lady of Guadalupe



Our Lady of Guadalupe (Spanish: *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*), also known as the Virgin of Guadalupe is a celebrated Catholic icon of the Virgin Mary.

Two accounts published in the 1640s, one in Spanish and the other in Nahuatl, tell how, during a walk from his home village to Mexico City early on the morning of December 9, 1531 (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in the Spanish Empire), the peasant Juan Diego saw a vision of a young girl of fifteen or sixteen, surrounded by light, on the slopes of the Hill of Tepeyac. Speaking in the local language, Nahuatl, the Lady asked for a church to be built at that site in her honor, and from her words Juan Diego recognized her as the Virgin Mary. Diego told his story to the Spanish Archbishop, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, who instructed him to return and ask the Lady for a miraculous sign to prove her claim. The Virgin told Juan Diego to gather some flowers from the top of Tepeyac Hill. It was winter and no flowers bloomed, but on the hilltop Diego found flowers of every sort, and the Virgin herself arranged them in his tilma, or peasant cloak. When Juan Diego opened the cloak before Zumárraga on December 12, the flowers fell to the floor, and in their place was the Virgin of Guadalupe, miraculously imprinted

on the fabric. Today the icon is displayed in the Basilica of Guadalupe nearby, one of the most visited Catholic shrines in the world. The Virgin of Guadalupe is Mexico's most popular religious and cultural image, with the titles "Queen of Mexico", "Empress of the Americas", and "Patroness of the Americas"; both Miguel Hidalgo (in the Mexican War of Independence) and Emiliano Zapata (during the Mexican Revolution) carried flags bearing the Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Guadalupe Victoria, the first Mexican president changed his name in honor of the icon.

Popocatepetl from near the Summit of [Iztaccíhuatl](#).



"Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl" refers to a number of [mythical](#) and [folkloric](#) explanations of the origins of the [volcanoes Popocatepetl](#) ("the Smoking Mountain") and [Iztaccíhuatl](#) ("white woman" in [Nahuatl](#), sometimes called the Mujer Dormida "sleeping woman" in Spanish) which overlook the [Valley of Mexico](#). The most common variety relates the [Nahua romance](#) of the [princess](#) Iztaccíhuatl and the [warrior](#) Popocatepetl. This tale is recorded in several different versions. A summary based on one version as recounted at a September 2006 "Myth, Mortals and Immortality: Works from the [Museo Soumaya de México](#)" exhibition at the [Smithsonian Institution](#).

The Legend of Popocatepetl

Iztaccíhuatl's father sent Popocatepetl to war in [Oaxaca](#), promising him his daughter as his wife if he returned (which Iztaccíhuatl's father presumed he would not). Iztaccíhuatl's father told her that her lover had fallen in battle and she died of grief. When Popocatepetl returned, and discovered the death of his lover, he committed suicide by plunging a dagger through his heart. God covered them with snow and changed them into mountains. Iztaccíhuatl's mountain was called "La Mujer Dormida, (the "Sleeping Woman"), because it bears a resemblance to a woman sleeping on her back. Popocatepetl became the volcano Popocatepetl, raining fire on [Earth](#) in blind rage at the loss of his beloved.

[A different tale](#) was told by the Nahuatl-speakers of Tetelcingo, Morelos, according to whom Iztaccíhuatl (or *Istācsohuātl*, as they pronounce the name) was the wife of Popo, but [Xinantécatl](#) wanted her, and he and Popocatepetl hurled rocks at each other in anger. This was the genesis of the rocky mountain ranges of the continental divide and the [Trans-Mexican volcanic belt](#) that lie between the two mountains. Finally Popocatepetl, in a burst of rage, flung an enormous

chunk of ice, decapitating the Nevado de Toluca. This is why the Nevado is flat-topped, with wide shoulders but no head. Conceivably this legend preserves the memory of catastrophic eruptions. (Pittman 1954:59)

The most popular legend about Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatépetl comes from the ancient Náhuas. As it comes from an oral tradition, there are many versions of the same story. There are also poems and songs telling this story.

Many years before Cortés came to Mexico, the Aztecs lived in Tenochtitlán, today's Mexico City. The chief of the Aztecs was a famous Emperor, who was loved by all the natives. The Emperor and his wife, the Empress, were very worried because they had no children. One day the Empress said to the Emperor that she was going to give birth to a child. A baby girl was born and she was as beautiful as her mother. They called her Iztaccíhuatl, which in Náhuatl means "white lady". All the natives loved Izta and her parents prepared her to be the Empress of the Aztecs. When she grew up, she fell in love with a captain of a tribe, his name was Popoca.

One day, a war broke out and the warriors had to go south to fight the enemy. The Emperor told Popoca that he had to bring the head of the enemy chief back from the war, so he could marry his daughter. After several months of combat, a warrior who hated Popoca sent a false message to the Emperor. The message said that his army had won the war, but that Popoca had died in battle. The Emperor was very sad when he heard the news, and when Izta heard she could not stop crying. She refused to go out and did not eat any more. A few days later, she became ill and she died of sadness.

When the Emperor was preparing Izta's funeral, Popoca and his warriors arrived victorious from war. The Emperor was taken aback when he saw Popoca, and he told him that other warriors had announced his death. Then, he told him that Izta had died. Popoca was very sad. He took Izta's body and left the town. He walked a long way until he arrived at some mountains where he ordered his warriors to build a funeral table with flowers and he put Izta lying on top. Then he kneeled down to watch over Izta and died of sadness too.

The Gods were touched by Popoca's sacrifice and turned the tables and the bodies into great volcanoes. The biggest volcano is Popocatépetl, which in Náhuatl means "smoking mountain". He sometimes throws out smoke, showing that he is still watching over Iztaccíhuatl, who sleeps by his side.

Another tale is much like the one before. Some warriors who did not want Popoca to be with Izta, since they liked her themselves, sent a message to the emperor saying that Popoca died. Izta was very sad. She then died of sadness. When Popoca returned he heard about Izta's death. He was also very sad. He went out of town with Izta's body and ordered his soldiers to make a mound for him and Izta. He put Izta's body on one mound and got onto the other with a smoking torch. He stays there forever looking after Izta. Over time dirt, snow, rocks, and Mother Nature covered them turning them into great mountains. Popoca's torch is still smoking as a reminder of what happened.

El Ángel de la Independencia



El Ángel de la Independencia ("The Angel of Independence"), most commonly known by the shortened name *El Ángel* and officially known as *Columna de la Independencia*, is a victory column located on a roundabout over Paseo de la Reforma in downtown Mexico City.

El Ángel was built to commemorate the centennial of the beginning of Mexico's War of Independence, celebrated in 1910. In later years it was made into a mausoleum for the most important heroes of that war. It is one of the most recognizable landmarks in Mexico City, and it has become a focal point for both celebration or protest. It bears a resemblance to the July Column in Paris and the Victory Column in Berlin.

The base of the column is quadrangular with each vertex featuring a bronze sculpture symbolizing Law, War, Justice and Peace. Originally there were nine steps leading to the base, but due to the sinking of the ground fourteen more steps were added. On the main face of the base, which faces downtown Mexico City, there is an inscription reading *La Nación a los Héroes de la Independencia* ("The Nation to the Heroes of Independence"). In front of this inscription is a bronze statue of a giant lion led by a child, representing strength and the innocence of youth during War but docility during Peace. Next to the column there is a group of marble statues of some of the heroes of the War of Independence. The column itself is 36 metres (118 ft) high. The structure is made of steel covered with quarried stone decorated

with garlands, palms and rings with the names of Independence figures. Inside the column is a two-hundred step staircase which leads to a viewpoint above the capital. The Corinthian-style capital is adorned by four eagles with extended wings from the Mexican coat of arms used at the time.

Crowning the column there is a 6.7 metres (22 ft) statue by Enrique Alciati of Nike, the Greek goddess of Victory, like other similar victory columns around the world. It is made of bronze, covered with 24k gold (restored in 2006) and weighs 7 tons. In her right hand the Angel, as it is commonly known, holds a laurel crown above Miguel Hidalgo's head, symbolizing Victory, while in her left she holds a broken chain, symbolizing Freedom.

Traditional Horseman



Charro (from Basque Txarro: bad person, despicable) is a term referring to a traditional horseman from Mexico, originating in the central-western regions primarily in the state of Jalisco including: Zacatecas, Durango, Guanajuato, Morelos, Puebla. The terms Vaquero and Ranchero (Cowboy and Rancher) are similar to the Charro but different in culture, etiquette, mannerism, clothing, tradition and social status.

National Dance – Mexican Hat Dance



The Jarabe Tapatío, known in English as the Mexican Hat Dance, is the title of the musical piece and the dance that accompanies it, which is accorded the title of the "national dance of [Mexico](#)". First choreographed by the [Mexican](#), in the early twentieth century to celebrate a government-sponsored fiesta that commemorated the successful end of the [Mexican Revolution](#). Since then, it has become a [folk dance](#) popular throughout Mexico and the [Southwestern United States](#). It serves as a symbol of the national pride and honor of the Mexican people.

National Music



Mariachi music has become emblematic of Mexican music by appropriating various Mexican regional song forms, experimenting in popular radio programs, appearing in the first Mexican films, and performing during presidential campaigns. The mariachi ensemble generally consists of [violins](#), [trumpets](#), a [classical guitar](#), a [vihuela](#) (a high-pitched, five-string guitar), a [guitarrón](#) (a large acoustic bass) and, on occasion, a harp or two. They dress in silver studded [charro](#) outfits with wide-brimmed hats. Original mariachi bands were street musicians but grew to be hired to play at weddings and other formal occasions. They are very often used to serenade women because many of the songs in a typical repertoire have as a theme the desire to touch the heart of a woman.

Most Popular Legend

The legend of *La Llorona*, or The Weeping Woman, is probably the most popular one in the country. It goes on about a woman, who drowned her children, so that she could be with the love of her life, who had left her for another woman. When she went to him, he spurned her love, and she killed herself. When she reached the gates of heaven, God questioned her about her children and refused to let her enter without them. So, now she roams on earth, looking for her long lost children, and weeping while she roams about.

National Tree - Montezuma Cypress, Sabino, or Ahuehuete



Taxodium mucronatum, also known as Montezuma Cypress, Sabino, or Ahuehuete is a species of *Taxodium* native to much of Mexico (south to the highlands of southern Mexico). Ahuehuete is derived from the Nahuatl name for the tree, *āhuēhuētl*, which means "upright drum in water" or "old man of the water."

It occurs from 300 to 2,500 m (980 to 8,200 ft), in Mexico mainly in highlands at 1,600 m (5,200 ft) and 2,300 m (7,500 ft) altitude. It is a large [evergreen](#) or semi-evergreen [tree](#) growing to 40 m (130 ft) tall and with a trunk of 1–3 m (3.3–9.8 ft) diameter (occasionally much more; see below). The [leaves](#) are spirally arranged but twisted at the base to lie in two horizontal ranks, 1–2 cm (0.39–0.79 in) long and 1–2 mm (0.039–0.079 in) broad. The [cones](#) are ovoid, 1.5–2.5 cm (0.59–0.98 in) long and 1–2 cm (0.39–0.79 in) broad.

Trees from the Mexican highlands achieve a notable stoutness. They are very [drought](#)-tolerant and fast-growing and favor climates that are rainy throughout the year or at least with high summer rainfall. One specimen, the [Árbol del Tule](#) in [Santa María del Tule, Oaxaca](#), Mexico, is the second stoutest tree in the world with a diameter of 11.42 m (37.5 ft). Several other specimens from 3–6 m (9.8–20 ft) diameter are known. The stoutest tree in the world is the Big Baobab, an African Baobab

Ahuehuete became the [national tree](#) of [Mexico](#) in 1910. The tree is sacred to the [native peoples of Mexico](#), and is featured in the [Zapotec creation myth](#). To the [Aztecs](#), the combined shade of an *āhuēhuētl* and a *pōchōtl* ([Ceiba pentandra](#)) metaphorically represented a ruler's

authority. According to legend, [Hernán Cortés](#) wept under an ahuehuete in [Popotla](#) after suffering defeat during the [Battle of La Noche Triste](#).

National Flower – Dahlia



Dahlia is a genus of bushy, tuberous, perennial plants native to Mexico, Central America, and Colombia. There are at least 36 species of dahlia. Dahlia hybrids are commonly grown as garden plants. The Aztecs gathered and cultivated the dahlia for food, ceremonies, as well as decorative purpose and the long woody stem of one variety was used for small pipes.

Francisco Hernández visited Mexico in 1615 and noticed two spectacular varieties of dahlias, which he mentioned in his account of medicinal plants of New Spain, not published until 1651. The French botanist Nicolas-Joseph Thiéry de Menonville, sent to Mexico to steal the cochineal insect valued for its scarlet dye, noted the strangely beautiful flowers he had seen in his official report, published in 1787. Seeds sent from the botanical garden of Mexico City to Madrid flowered for the first time in the botanical garden in October 1789, and were named *Dahlia coccinea*. A few seeds were sent to England, where *they* flowered but were lost.

The introduction of the dahlia to the florists of the Netherlands was effected about the same time, when a box of dahlia roots was sent from Mexico to the Netherlands. Only one plant survived the trip, but produced spectacular red flowers with pointed petals. Nurserymen in Europe crossbred from this plant, which was named *Dahlia juarezii*, with parents of dahlias discovered earlier: these are the progenitors of all modern dahlia hybrids.

Since 1813, commercial plant breeders have been breeding dahlias to produce thousands of cultivars, usually chosen for their stunning and brightly coloured waxy flowers. Dahlia was named the national flower of Mexico in 1963. Dahlia plants range in height from as low as 12 in (30 cm) to as tall as 6–8 ft (1.8–2.4 m). The flowers can be as small as 2 in (5.1 cm) in diameter or up to 1 ft (30 cm) ("dinner plate"). The great variety results from dahlias being octoploids (they have eight sets of homologous chromosomes, whereas most plants have only two).

Most Unpopular Flower



Marigold, in Mexican culture symbolizes death, so don't try to impress a *guapa chica* by giving her a bunch of marigolds.