

# UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

## MEXICO

Submitted by Sylvia Mazuera. Source: Culture Grams.

- ⇒ Mexico is about three times the size of Texas. There are about 103 million people in Mexico; over 20 million alone in Mexico City and it is the world's largest City. About 60% of that population is mixed Spanish and Indian, 30% belong to various Amerindian groups and about 9% is of European ancestry.
- ⇒ Spanish is the official language. The Spanish spoken in Mexico is unique in pronunciation and the use of idioms. A lot of diminutives are commonly used.
- ⇒ Mexicans value friendship, humor, honesty, hard work and personal honor. Power, wealth, family name and education are all measures of social status. Mexicans respect individuals who, regardless of level of education, use their ingenuity to solve daily problems. The elderly are respected. Mexicans are patriotic and generally proud of their country. They have a relaxed attitude towards time: they believe individuals are more important than schedules.
- ⇒ Mexicans usually greet by a handshake or nod of the head, although friends commonly embrace. Common verbal greetings include: *¡Buenos días!* (Good morning) *¡Buenas tardes!* (Good afternoon) *¡Buenas noches!* (Good evening/night) and *¿Cómo está?* (How are you?). A casual greeting is *¡Hola!* (Hello).
- ⇒ Mexicans commonly have more than one given name and two surnames (e.g., *José Luis Martínez Salinas*). The first surname comes from the father and the second from the mother. If you ask "what is your last name?" a Mexican would answer the father's surname (Mr. Martinez).
- ⇒ Mexicans are very hospitable. Unexpected visitors usually are welcomed and served refreshments.
- ⇒ Mexicans enjoy conversing and socializing with relatives and friends. At a dinner party, the meal might not be served until after 8 p.m. because people work late and enjoy socializing before eating. Guests are expected to relax and do not offer to help the host unless it is evident some help is needed. Meals are usually not rushed. Eating as a family is common. The most important meal of the day is between 2:00 and 4:00 PM. Food is a very important social tool.
- ⇒ Spicy food is called *picante*, while hot (temperature) food is called *caliente*. *Picante* food is often eaten with bland foods such as bread, tortillas, or rice to relieve the burning sensation. Many people also use a pinch of salt for relief.
- ⇒ *Fútbol* (soccer) is the most popular sport in Mexico; the national team has competed in several World Cups. Bullfighting draws the next highest number of spectators.