

Mexico City

Mexico City, the political capital and business centre of Mexico, is home to about 20 million people. The city is at an altitude of 2,240 metres, and is surrounded by mountains.

The Spanish founded the city in 1521 on the ruins of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital. The city's town council was recognized in 1522, and it became the capital of Spanish America as far south as Panama.

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, the city was modernized and restructured, adopting largely European architectural styles. By 1930, Mexico City's population reached one million people, and this figure doubled by 1950. In the second half of this century, rapid growth has continued. The majority of the city's population is *mestizo* (mixed European and American Indian origins).

A large segment of Mexico's economic life is concentrated in Mexico City. Main industries include construction and the production of iron and steel, chemicals, plastics, cement and textiles.

Mexico City is a leading cultural centre of Latin America, home to numerous museums, such as the National Museum of Anthropology. The city also has numerous newspapers and magazines, many of which have national circulation. Major education centres include the National Autonomous University of Mexico, founded in 1551, and the National Polytechnic Institute.

The climate is tropical and high-altitude: cool and dry, except during the May to September rainy season.