

CULTURA

MEXICO: ESTA PADRÍSIMO

By Julia Perry

Rites of Passage

When they aren't studying for tests, students in Mexico like to hang out at pool halls located atop buildings, where they can watch the sunset over the entire town. Scholars relax at *café*s and downtown at the *plaza*, while they take in *mariachi* tunes. *Mariachi* is the traditional Mexican music, and the men in the band wear elegantly adorned matching outfits and *sombreros*. The music is known for its upbeat tunes strummed by guitars, cellos, and violins. Teenagers also enjoy listening to the more mainstream beats of Daddy Yankee, Juanes, Shakira and U.S. based artists like Usher and 50 Cent.



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Out 'n' About

After church, Sunday afternoon is often spent with *la familia* and visiting the flea market known as *el teradero*, a place to bag good stuff for cheap prices. A lot of people don't go to department stores to buy what they need. They simply save their money and wait until Sunday. *El teradero* stretches through the town for miles, offering everything from shoes to jewelry.



Cuernavaca, a city in Morelos state is a favorite city among international students. El Centro is where many college students spend time savoring the flavor of Latino life. "There are people break-dancing and mariachi bands," says Jennifer Kelly, from New Derry, PA, who studied in Cuernavaca for five months.



Visitors and natives like to relax by the ocean at tropical beaches like Puerto Vallarta, Cozumel, and Mazatlán. Many who vacation here stop to view the breathtaking pyramids of Chichén Itzá.

Customs

In Mexico, celebrations are deeply rooted in Catholicism and tradition. To honor loved ones who were younger than 18 when they passed away, families observe All Saints Day every November 1 by decorating their tombstones. "[The deceased] are considered to be angels," says Sonia Ponce, native of Baja California.



Day of the Dead is on November 2, when other relatives who passed away are remembered. Every year as a tradition, marigold flowers are placed on grave sites. "People pay tons of money to get it pretty. A lot of people cook for the dead and make altars for them," says Ponce.



For Independence Day, celebrated September 16, Rocío Villalobos from Guadalajara says, "Everything is decorated in red, green and white and at 11:00 p.m., we have the independence scream. Somebody screams "¡Viva Mexico!" and everyone yells "Que Viva!" We eat typical Mexican

food and the party begins." Cinco de Mayo, a day to enjoy fiestas, is perhaps the most widely known Mexican holiday and is even embraced in the United States. The holiday marks an important battle victory in Mexico prior to the revolution.

History

Some of the most legendary artists like Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera trace their roots to Mexico. Known for his role as a general in the Mexican revolution, Francisco (Pancho) Villa was born in this country. Emiliano Zapata, whose slogan was "*Tierra y Libertad*," is another important figure who was a leader of the peasants during the revolution. Former Mexican President Benito Juárez was widely favored by the poor because he treated them well. Besides history, Mexican students study



many of the same subjects as students in the U.S. like biology, calculus, chemistry, literature, English, and Spanish. Students take their education very seriously. "If you don't pass one class, you don't pass the whole year," says Ponce.

