

# HISTORY OF CIUDAD JUAREZ

In 1581 the first Spanish explorer, Don Juan de Onate, crossed the Rio Grande River at what would later become El Paso del Norte (the Pass of the North). This was more than 60 years after Cortez first landed in the Yucatan and nearly 40 years before the Pilgrims would land at Plymouth Rock.

It would be nearly 20 more years before the first settlers would establish a village at this location. Father Garcia de San Francisco would later found the Mission of Our Lady of Guadeloupe completed in January of 1668. The Mission still stands in downtown Juarez today where it is used daily as a place of worship.



Mission of Our Lady of Guadeloupe next to the Cathedral

The Rio Grande River (or Rio Bravo to Mexicans) gave the area its' name and prosperity. Contrary to popular belief, El Paso does not refer to a passage through the mountains but rather the place to cross the river.

The center of the river today serves as the boundary between the US and Mexico. In the past it served as a watering point for the numerous cattle drives from Chihuahua City to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

During this period El Paso was the major stopping point along the Camino Real (Royal Road). The drovers and their charges would often spend weeks or even months waiting here to cross what was often a raging river. This was truly a town of the Wild West with cattle drives, gun fights, saloons, and bawdy houses. Over the years it has known such notable residents as Billy the Kid, John Wesley Hardin, Pancho Villa, and others.

For a short period of time in 1865 the city was the capital of the Mexican government. Fleeing from the French forces of Maximilian (then occupying the country), the elected Mexican President, Benito Juarez, established his government here. Eventually the Mexican army defeated the French forces and Maximilian was executed. Following his death in 1872, the city would honor this great president of Indian heritage (in 1888) by re-naming the city Ciudad Juarez.



Our namesake Benito Juarez

The old Customs House (now a museum) in downtown Juarez was the site of talks between then US President, William H. Taft, and Mexican President, Porfirio Diaz. This same building would soon see the signing of the treaty ending the Mexican Revolution and resulting in the resignation of President Diaz. Much of the fighting during the Revolution took place in the Juarez-Chihuahua area conducted by such well known Mexican Heroes as Emilio Zapata, Francisco Madero, and Francisco "Pancho" Villa.



The new Presidencia or Municipal Building

Most recently, following a course change by the Rio Grande river, lands once belonging to the US were returned to Mexican control. Begun during the Kennedy administration in 1963, the Chamizal Treaty was finalized, in 1967 by President Lyndon Johnson and the lands were officially turned over to Mexican control. The

results are the Chamizal National Monument and Chamizal Parks on both sides of the border.

Ciudad Juarez today is enjoying one of its greatest periods of prosperity of a boom and bust history. Following the recent signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Juarez became the major manufacturing location in Mexico. Today's Juarez has four universities, approximately 400 factories or maquiladoras, traditional shopping areas and modern shopping malls, museums, missions, public libraries, sports complexes, the fourth largest bullfighting arena the world, a country club, off track betting, world class hotels and restaurants, an international airport, cock fights, nightclubs, and a thriving red light district. If there is something you want, you can probably find it here.



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in

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**The Emblem of the City of Juarez**

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