

VENEZUELA



Description: three horizontal bands of yellow, blue, and red with coat of arms on the upper left side of the yellow band with an arc of eight white five-pointed stars centered in the blue band in the middle.



Venezuela is bordered by the Caribbean Sea on the north, Guyana on the east, Brazil and Colombia on the south, and Colombia on the west.

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| NAME: | República Bolivariana de Venezuela Etymology: Alonso de Ojeda (1499) found Lake Maracaibo and called the land Venezuela because he saw Indian houses on stilts in the water like those in Venice (Venezia); the "-uela" ending denotes "little" or "small" (i.e., little Venice). |
| POPULATION: | 22,000,000 (1997); 26,100,000 (2007); 31,000,000 (2016) |
| ETHNIC GROUPS: | Mestizo (67%); Spanish (21%); African (10%); Amerindian (2%) |
| CAPITAL: | Caracas (1,800,000) Other cities: Maracaibo (1,300,000); Valencia (910,000) |
| LANGUAGES: | Spanish (official) |
| RELIGION: | Roman Catholic (96%) |
| LIFE EXPECTANCY: | men (69); women (75) |
| LITERACY: | 93% |
| GOVERNMENT: | Democratic federal republic |
| MILITARY: | 87,500 active troops |
| ECONOMY: | Steel, petroleum, coffee, rice, corn, gas |
| MONEY: | Bolívar (VEB): 470 = \$1.00 USD (1997); 2,200 VEB = 1.00 USD (2007) |
| GEOGRAPHY: | Caribbean coast; Orinoco River; Andes mountain chain (Pico Bolívar, 16,427 feet); Sabana grasslands |
| INTERNET CODE: | .ve |
| HISTORY: | |

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| 13,000–7,000 BCE | Human habitation flourished in the territory of present-day Venezuela. |
| 1498 C.E. | July 31 Columbus discovers Venezuela on his third voyage. Columbus thought that the Orinoco River in Venezuela proved he had found the “Earthly Paradise.” |
| 1521 | Bartolomé de las Casas (1474-1566) attempted and failed to found a Renaissance-style utopian colony. |
| 1525 | Rodrigo de Bastidas founded Santa Marta, first permanent settlement in Venezuela. |
| 1536-1538 | Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada (1495-1576) conquered the Chibchas, the main indigenous tribe in Venezuela. Quesada founded Santa Fe de Bogotá, Venezuela’s capital. |
| 1549 | The Spanish colonial office of the Audiencia of Nueva Granada (the name for the northern region of South America) created. |
| 1567 | Caracas founded. |
| 1750-1816 | Francisco de Miranda, precursor of Venezuelan independence. |
| 1781-1865 | Andrés Bello, progressive educator, intellectual, writer, and grammarian. |
| 1783-1830 | Simón Bolívar , <i>el Libertador</i> of South America, son of rich, slave-holding criollo family. |
| 1799 | Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1759) landed in Cumaná (founded 1523) on the Venezuelan coast; from there he undertook the most extensive trip of science and exploration through northern South American, Mexico, Cuba, and even a visit to see President Jefferson in Washington, D.C. He went to Caracas and then travelled up the Orinoco River to the Río Apure, and across Venezuela’s inland region of the Llanos. |
| 1800 | Bolívar marries niece of the marqués de Toro in Spain (she dies 1801). |
| 1811 | Independence declared for Gran Colombia (Nueva Granada, Venezuela, and Quito). Bolívar begins independence war against Spain. |
| 1811-1812 | Miranda leader of independence army and ruler of Gran Colombia; Bolívar, thinking Miranda is traitor, delivers him to the Spanish royalists. |
| 1813-1824 | Bolívar leads independence army and movement. |
| 1814-1816 | Bolívar named dictator of Gran Colombia, but he flees to Curaçao, Colombia, Jamaica, and Haiti from the advancing criollo royalists and Spanish army. |

- 1817 The rebellious *Llaneros* from Venezuelan hinterlands join Bolívar.
- 1819 Bolívar's battered army crosses the Andes mountain range and he reaches Colombia.
- 1820 Liberal revolt (under Spanish general Riego) in Spain against King Fernando VII of Spain helps Bolívar recruit criollos to the independence cause.
- 1821 Bolívar wins Venezuelan independence and is named president.
- 1825 Bolívar returns to Caracas but is forced out by uncontrollable factionalism.
- 1827 Bolívar leaves Venezuela, goes to Colombia.
- 1830 Venezuela is separated from Gran Colombia. Bolívar dies alongside the Magdalena River in Colombia.
- 1854 Slavery abolished in Venezuela.
- 1884-1969** **Rómulo Gallegos**, author, novelist, and politician.
- 1909-1935 Juan Vicente Gómez dictator.
- 1947-1948 Rómulo Gallegos (the author) president.
- 1949-1958 Military dictatorship; Marcos Evangelista Pérez Jiménez (1914-2001) had participated in a coup that made Rómulo Betancourt President of the Revolutionary Government Junta in 1945. In 1948 Pérez Jiménez was involved in a new coup, this one against Gallegos, whom the military thought was too democratic and populist.
- 1952-1958 Pérez Jiménez was president (dictator) of Venezuela. He ordered a major modernizing campaign: roads, bridges, government buildings, public housing; he suppressed criticism ruthlessly and he outlawed the opposition. The U.S. government awarded him the U.S. Legion of Merit.
- 1974-1979 Carlos Andrés Pérez, president: petroleum and minerals nationalized.
- 1984-1989 Jaime Lusinchi, president.
- 1989 Carlos Andrés Pérez re-elected president.
- 1992 Failed coup attempt by Gen. Hugo Chávez against President Pérez.
- 1993 Pérez removed from office on corruption charges and put under house arrest at his home in Caracas.
- 1994 Rafael Caldera (populist) elected president.
- 2002 Hugo Chávez elected president in free elections as reaction against corruption in inequities among other political parties.

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| | Chávez' policy is to implement his version of a "Bolivarian Revolution" by ruling by decree. Chávez also calls his political plan "Twenty-first century socialism". |
| 2006–2013 | Chávez re-elected president in 2006 and 2012. |
| 2007 | Chávez loses a national referendum in which he proposed changing the constitution and dramatically increasing his presidential powers including the right to seek reelection to succeed himself. |
| 2011-2013 | Chávez dies after two year struggle against cancer; he was operated on and received intensive treatment in Cuba. |
| 2013 | Nicolás Madura, Chávez' hand-picked successor, elected president; Madura attempts to continue Chávez's self-styled "21 st century socialist Bolivarian revolution." |
| 2015 | (Dec. 6) The Madura regime suffered a serious defeat in parliamentary elections, which gave the united opposition parties (MUD: Movimiento de Unión Democrático) 67% of the seats (112 of 167) in Venezuela's National Assembly. |
| 2016 | Political deadlock, social unrest, and economic crisis dominate Venezuela with 141% inflation (predicted to grow to 720% by year's end); 20% fiscal deficit of GDP; 76% of Venezuelans below poverty line; scarcity of medical supplies; food shortages. August 15: Major New York Times article about the malaria epidemic in Venezuela due to economic breakdown and the wildcat gold rush where thousands of Venezuelans are trying to make money even in terrible malarial gold mines: see: => NYT article . |

MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES: (16 total parties)

United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Nicolás Madura, leader
Democratic Unity Table (MUD: coalition of opposition parties), Jesús "Chuo" Torrealba, leader.

Acción Democrática (social democrat party), Henry Ramos Allup, leader, and speaker of the assembly

PODEMOS (leftist progressive party), Didalco Antonio Bolívar Graterol

PRINCIPAL HISTORICAL MEMBERS OF INTELLIGENTSIA:

Simón Bolívar (1783–1830). Known as "El Libertador"; Political theorist, national hero.

Rómulo Gallegos (1884–1969). *Doña Bárbara* (1929) (national-regionalist novel)

Arturo Uslar Pietri (1906–1992). *Las lanzas coloradas* (1931), *El camino de El Dorado* (1948)

Mariano Picón Salas (1901–1965), diplomat, essayist, literary critic

Andrés Bello (1781–1865). Romantic humanist, poet, and grammarian (*Gramática de la lengua castellana*)