Hispanic Holidays/ Días de Fiesta Hispanas

JANUARY

Jan 1
Año Nuevo, New Year's Day.

Jan 6
Día de los Reyes Magos or Día de los Santos Reyes, Epiphany. In many Catholic countries, this is the time for Christmas fun. Traditionally the children receive gifts on this day rather than on Christmas. Since the Three Kings brought gifts, people exchange presents and children put out their shoes for the magi to leave the presents inside.

Jan 10
Birthday of Eugenio Maria de Hostos (Puerto Rico). An educator and writer who fought Spanish colonial rule and helped abolish slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Jan 21
Feast of Nuestra Sra. de Altagracia, or Our Lady of Highest Grace, the patron virgin of the Dominican Republic.

Jan 26
Juan Pablo Duarte Day (Dominican Republic). Commemorates the hero of Dominican independence from Haiti.

Jan 28
Birth of José Martí (Cuba). A political activist, independence hero and poet who led the fight for Cuba’s independence from Spain.
FEBRUARY

Feb 2

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Mexico). This treaty, which marked the end of the Mexican War, established U.S. sovereignty over 1,193,061 square miles of formerly disputed or Mexican territory, including the present states of Texas, Arizona, California and Utah, and parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Feb 5

Constitution Day (Día de la Constitución), Mexico.

Feb 24

Flag Day (Mexico).

Feb 27

Dominican Republic Independence Day and beginning of Dominican Carnival. The pre-Lenten celebration coincides with the anniversary of the Dominican Republic’s Independence from Haiti.

MARCH

March 5

Carnaval, an official Mexican holiday that kicks off a five-day celebration of the libido before the Catholic Lent. Beginning the weekend before Lent, Carnaval is celebrated exuberantly with parades, floats and dancing in the streets.

March 9

Baron Bliss Day (Belize). Honors the Englishman Sir Henry Edward Ernest Victor Bliss, who left his entire fortune to the city of Belize.
March 21

Birth of Benito Juarez (Mexico). One of the national heroes of Mexico, Juarez served his country as president during the turbulent period from 1855 until his death, and instituted a number of civil reforms. He led the military resistance to the French emperor’s attempt to impose Maximilian of Austria as emperor of Mexico.

March 22

Emancipation Day (Puerto Rico). Slaves in Puerto Rico were freed on this date in 1873.

March 31

Cesar Chavez holiday (California, Arizona and Texas). This holiday honors the Mexican-American labor and civil rights activist who gained attention in the 1960s as the leader of the United Farm Workers. His non-violent advocacy approach earned him worldwide respect. California, Arizona and Texas have made the day a state holiday; other states are considering doing so.

APRIL

La Semana Santa or Easter and the Holy Week: Observed in Spain, Mexico and all of Latin America. Easter is one of the highest holy days of the year. The week leading up to Easter involves solemn processions, prayer, masses and other preparation for Jesus’ rebirth. Customs in the United States include Mexicans’ cascarones, the Mexican version of an Easter egg or eggshells, filled with confetti. They are meant to be cracked on someone’s head as a funny surprise.
April 11

Battle of Rivas Day (Costa Rica): Anniversary of victory over Confederate invaders in 1856. An army consisting mainly of farmers armed with machetes forced William Walker, an American who planned to enslave Central American countries, back into Nicaragua.

April 19

Landing of the 33 Patriots Day (Uruguay). Anniversary of the landing of thirty-three exiles in 1825, who began a campaign leading to Uruguay’s independence.

MAY

May 1

Primero de Mayo or Día del Trabajo or Día del Trabajador; a national holiday celebrated in most Spanish-speaking countries, equivalent to the U.S. Labor Day.

May 5

Cinco de Mayo (México). Commemorates victory of Mexican forces over the French army at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. It is primarily a regional holiday celebrated in the Mexican state capital city of Puebla, and in other parts of Mexico. It is also celebrated in U.S. cities with a significant Mexican population. It is not, as many people think, Mexico’s Independence Day, which is actually September 16.

May 10

Día de las Madres, or Day of the Mothers, observed on this date in Mexico and other Latin-American countries.
May 15

Independence Day for Paraguay.

May 18

Battle of Las Piedras (Paraguay). Anniversary of the end of the conflict between Uruguay and Brazil in 1828.

May 20

Cuba’s birth as an independent republic in 1902.

May 25

Independence Day for Argentina. It commemorates the establishment of an autonomous government resulting from the revolution on this day in 1810. Known in Argentina as Revolución de Mayo.

JUNE

June 19

Artigas Day (Uruguay). Celebrates the birthday of General José Gervasio Artigas, forefather of Uruguay.

June 24

Feast of San Juan Bautista, or St. John the Baptist, patron saint of Puerto Rico’s capital, San Juan. Other Latinos celebrate the day as el Día de San Pedro.
June 29

Saint Peter and St. Paul, known as San Pedro y San Pablo. Celebrated in Spain and many Latin-American countries.

JULY

July 5

Independence Day for Venezuela.

July 6-14

Los Sanfermines, or the San Fermin Festival or the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona, Spain.

July 9

Independence Day for Argentina.

July 19

Revolution Day (Nicaragua). Anniversary of the day the National Liberation army declared victory over the Somoza dictatorship.

July 20

Independence Day for Colombia.

July 24

Birth of Simon Bolivar (Colombia, Venezuela, Panama). Known as The Liberator, El Libertador, he led the rebellion against Spanish rule that established the independence of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.
July 25
Constitution Day in Puerto Rico.

July 25
St. James or Santiago Apostol (Spain). Celebrates the patron saint of Spain.

July 26
Revolution Day, Cuba.

July 28
Independence Day for Peru.

AUGUST

Aug 1-6
Feast of the Savior of the World or El Salvador del Mundo, patron saint of El Salvador. San Salvadoreans celebrate with street fairs and a “bajada”, a procession honoring the saint.

Aug 6
Independence Day for Bolivia.

Aug 7
Battle of Boyacá (Colombia): A public holiday celebrating the anniversary of the defeat of the Spanish in 1819 in the province of Boyacá.
Aug 10
Independence Day for Ecuador.

Aug 15
Feast of the Assumption, celebrated in by Catholics in Spanish-speaking countries. It celebrates the belief in Mary's ascending to heaven.

Aug 17
San Martín Day. Anniversary of the death of General José Francisco de San Martín, liberator of Argentina.

Aug 25
Independence Day for Uruguay.

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 2
Independence Day for Belize. Belize was known as British Honduras prior to their independence from the United Kingdom on September 21, 1981.

Sept. 8
Feast of Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre, patron of Cuba.
Sept. 10

St. George’s Cay Day (Belize). The Battle of St. George’s Cay in 1798 was won by a handful of locals over a superior Spanish force.

Sep 15

Independence Day for Central American nations (El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua). Commemorates the declaration of independence from Spain in 1821.

Sep 16

Mexican Independence Day or 16 de septiembre, celebrates the day that Miguel Hidalgo delivered El Grito de Dolores, and announced the Mexican revolt against Spanish rule.

Sep 18

Independence Day for Chile. Also known as Fiestas Patrias and El Dieciocho.

Sept 23

Grito de Lares. Anniversary of the uprising that initiated the movement for Puerto Rican independence from Spain.

Sep 21

Independence Day for Belize.
OCTOBER

Oct 10

Grito de Yara (Cuba). The revolt of Yara begun Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain on this day.

Oct 12

Spanish National Day, also known as Día de la Hispanidad (Spain). In most of the Spanish-speaking countries celebrated as Día de la Raza, Columbus Day, or Panamerican Day. This holiday commemorates the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America. A holiday with complex and changing meanings. Hispanics in the U.S. are split on their political feelings about the holiday.

Oct 18

Señor de los Milagros or Our Lord of Miracles (Peru). Also called the holiday of the Purple Christ. The holiday stems from the 1700s when a huge earthquake destroyed Lima, but a painting of the Purple Christ was not affected.

NOVEMBER

Nov 1 & 2

Día de los Muertos or Day of the Dead (Mexico, Central America). In most regions of Mexico, November 1 is to honor children and infants, whereas deceased adults are honored on November 2. This is indicated by generally referring to November 1 mainly as Día de los Santos Inocentes* ("Holy Innocents Day") but also as Día de los Angelitos ("Day of the Little Angels") and November 2 as Día de los Muertos or Día de los Difuntos ("Day of the Dead").

Traditionally, it is an observance festivity to celebrate and honor one's ancestors. It’s based on the belief that there is interaction between the living world and the world of spirits. On the Día de los Muertos, the almas, or the spirits of the dead, are said to come back for family reunions. Many celebrate setting up ofrendas (altars) in their homes to honor the memory of deceased loved ones and to welcome their visiting souls. Others visit their loved one’s cemetery plot and decorate it with flowers, candles and food. The holiday is celebrated with family and community gatherings,
music, and feasting, and the festivity of its observance acknowledges death as an integral part of life.

* Día de los Santos Inocentes is not to be confused with Día de los Inocentes (April Fool's or All Fools' Day) which is celebrated on April 1st.

Nov 2
All Souls' Day or Día de los Difuntos. This Catholic observance celebrates the memory of all early martyrs, saints and the faithfully departed.

Nov 3
Independence Day for Panama.

Nov 5
First Call for Independence (El Salvador): Commemorates the first battle for independence in 1811, led by Padre José Matías Delgado.

Nov. 11
Cartagena Independence Day (Colombia). Commemorates the city of Cartagena's declaration of independence made in 1811.

Nov 19
Feast of Nuestra Señora de la Divina Providencia or Our Lady of Divine Providence, Puerto Rico's patron virgin.

Nov 20
DECEMBER

Dec 6
Day of the Constitution, Spain.

Dec 8
Immaculate Conception, celebrated in many Spanish-speaking countries.

Dec 12
Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe or the Feast Day of our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico. The Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to an Indian, Juan Diego on this date in 1531.

Dec 16-24
Las Posadas (Mexico, Guatemala and other Central American countries). Las Posadas commemorate the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and their search for a place to stay. Family and friends visit one another in their homes and enjoy conversations and traditional foods, and visitors sing carols. Colombians celebrate a similar holiday called "La Novena", and for nine days, families pray and sing traditional carols.

Dec 24 & 25
La Nochebuena y la Navidad, Christmas Eve and Christmas. In many Catholic countries, people attend midnight mass on Christmas Eve. Preparing traditional foods is also an integral part of the holiday. Mexicans get together for a “tamalada" or a tamal-making session. A tamal is usually made of shredded pork and corn meal called masa, and tucked into a corn shuck or leaf. Puerto Ricans prepare pasteles puertorriqueños which are tamales-like encased in plantain leaves and stuffed with pork, beef, or seafood.