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.

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); 29,000,000 (2014)
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:

Venezuela —1—
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 Bolivar, el Libertador of South America, son of rich, slave-holding criollo family.

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).

Bolivar begins independence war against Spain.

1811-1812 Miranda leader of independence army and ruler of Gran Colombia; Bolivar, 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 Curação, Colombia, Jamaica, and Haiti from the advancing criollo royalists and Spanish army.

1817 The rebellious Llaneros from Venezuelan hinterlands join Bolivar.

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.

Venezuela —2—
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.
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.
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. 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".
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 “21st 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.

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)
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)