

Time chart

As an aid to orientation, below are listed selectively the dates of some key moments in Latin American history together with the dates for some selected moments of cultural significance.

- 1492 Columbus lands on the continental land mass now known as the Americas, thinking he has found a western route to India. Columbus's subsequent voyages to the Indies are in 1493, 1498, 1502.
- 1500 First Portuguese landing on the continent.
- 1519–20 Hernán Cortés reaches and conquers Mexico, overcoming Aztec emperors (including Montezuma and Cuauhtemoc) and taking Tenochtitlán or Mexico City (the Viceroyalty of New Spain is created in 1535).
- 1524 The Council of the Indies is created. The first missionaries arrive to begin the conversion of the Indians.
- 1530 First Portuguese colony founded.
- 1532–72 Francisco Pizarro begins the conquest of Peru and has the Inca leader Atahualpa executed.

Lima is founded as capital. Inca rebellions and internal conflicts between the Spanish conquistadors follow, but royal authority is restored by 1548. The remnants of the Inca state are crushed and the leader Tupac Amaru is executed.

- 1535 A printing press is established in Mexico (1583 in Lima).
- 1537–61 The Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas defends the rights of the Indians. In this period key debates take place involving him and influential writings are produced by him.
- 1538 The first Spanish American university is established, in Santo Domingo.
- 1542 The New Laws of the Indies are promulgated; these regulate the processes of the conquest, reform the *encomienda* system and outlaw slave raids, but provoke rebelliousness amongst Spanish settlers.
- 1567–1615 Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala produces *El primer nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*.
- 1570–71 Tribunals of the Inquisition are set up in Lima and Mexico.
- 1595 The Spanish crown awards contracts to Portuguese slave traders, resulting in a massive rise in the numbers of slaves.

- 1609 'Inca' Garcilaso de la Vega produces *Comentarios reales que tratan del origen de los Yncas*.
- 1648 Sor Juana born (died 1695).
- 1750–74 Brazil's borders are agreed and the whole territory comes to be administered from Rio de Janeiro.
- 1754–56 Conflict with the Jesuits over their and the Guaraní Indians' resistance to Portuguese authority.
- 1759 Jesuits expelled from Brazil (1767 from Spanish America).
- 1776 Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata is created, administered from the port of Buenos Aires.
- 1781–1811 A series of significant Indian, Negro and republican revolts throughout the subcontinent.
- 1805 Battle of Trafalgar marks the end of the Spanish trade monopoly with the Indies.
- 1808–13 Joseph Bonaparte installed as King of Spain; this creates constitutional uncertainty in the Indies and encourages *criollo* aspirations towards autonomy.
- 1810 Independence struggle begins in earnest. Part of the Indies (Buenos Aires) is declared independent for the first time; independence is largely complete in most cases by 1828 (Brazil in 1822).

By mid-century a pattern of nations similar to the current situation is more or less in place.

- 1823 Monroe Doctrine.
- 1823–72 Slavery is largely abolished country by country, except for Cuba and Brazil.
- 1829–52 Juan Manuel de Rosas takes Buenos Aires and later becomes dictator of the Argentine Federation (from 1835).
- 1831–89 Pedro I abdicates in Brazil and after an interregnum Pedro II becomes Emperor from 1841.
- 1833 Britain seizes Las Malvinas (the Falkland Islands).
- 1845 Domingo Faustino Sarmiento produces *Facundo*, with its famous allusion to *Civilización y barbarie*. The USA annexes Texas, marking an era of interventionism in Latin America that will escalate over the next century.
- 1849–61 Wars between Liberals and Conservatives in Colombia.
- 1862–67 French intervention in Mexico.
- 1868–74 Sarmiento is President of Argentina.
- 1886 and Slavery is abolished in Cuba and Brazil
1888 respectively.
- 1889 First Republic of Brazil created.

- 1893–96 Revolt of messianic loyalist peasants against Republic at Canudos in Brazil.
- 1895–1902 Cuban War of Independence, followed in 1898 by Hispano- Cuban-American War and US occupation of Cuba and Puerto Rico (the latter until 1952).
- 1896 Publication of *Prosas profanas* by Rubén Darío, often seen as the quintessential work of Spanish American *Modernismo*.
- 1899–1901 War of a Thousand Days in Colombia.
- 1904 Roosevelt Corollary.
- 1908 Juan Vicente Gómez assumes power in Venezuela and rules as a dictator until 1935. Similar strongman leaders of different sorts emerge elsewhere in the first part of the twentieth century, such as Getulio Vargas (Brazil, 1930–45), Rafael Trujillo (Dominican Republic, 1930–61), Jorge Ubico (Guatemala, 1931–44), Fulgencio Batista (Cuba, 1934–44 and 1952–59), Anastasio Somoza (Nicaragua, 1937–56), Juan Perón (Argentina, 1946–55), Alfredo Stroessner (Paraguay, 1954–89) and François Duvalier (Haiti, 1957–71).
- 1910–20 Mexican Revolution.
- 1914 Panama Canal opens.
- 1922 *Semana de arte moderno* in São Paulo; launches Brazilian *Modernismo*.

- 1923 Diego Rivera starts producing his first murals in Mexico and continues into the 1950s.
- 1934–40 The popular Lázaro Cárdenas is President of Mexico and nationalizes oil in 1938.
- 1935 Tango star Carlos Gardel dies in an air crash.
- 1939 Mexico's Frida Kahlo (the wife of Diego Rivera) paints *Las dos Fridas*, considered by many to be her greatest work.
- 1944 Publication of *Ficciones* by Jorge Luis Borges, one of the most influential works in the history of the Latin American new narrative.
- 1946 Publication of *El Señor Presidente* by Miguel Angel Asturias, regarded by some critics as a key moment in the birth or development of the Latin American new novel.
- 1948 Riots (referred to as the *bogotazo*) in Colombia following the assassination of a Liberal leader and leading to a civil war known as *la violencia* that lasts up to the 1960s (and even beyond). In Cuba *El derecho de nacer* is broadcast as a *radionovela* or radio series: this would become a model for the *telenovela*.
- 1952 Puerto Rico becomes a sovereign state of the USA. Eva Perón (Evita) dies at the age of only 33.
- 1956–59 Cuban Revolution, with Fidel Castro emerging as leader.

- 1961 and Invasion of the Bay of Pigs (known as the Battle
1962 of Girón in Cuba) and the Cuban Missile Crisis,
both in the context of the Cold War.
- 1962 Publication of *La ciudad y los perros* by Mario
Vargas Llosa; the novel went on to win the
Spanish literary prize the *Biblioteca Breve* from
the Seix Barral publishing house, something seen
as a key moment in the internationalization of the
Latin American novel and often seen as marking
the beginning of the so-called Boom of Latin
American fiction. The first Taco Bell is opened
(in Downey, California) – at the time of writing
there are now approximately 4,800 Taco Bell
locations.
- 1964 A military junta rules in Brazil until 1985.
Military dictatorship becomes a feature of
political life in Latin America up to the 1980s,
e.g. in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Panama (Peru
has a more reformist military leadership along
socialist lines from 1968–75).
- 1967 Publication of *Cien años de soledad* by Gabriel
García Márquez. Che Guevara is killed (in
Bolivia).
- 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico. The international
focus on Mexico is exploited by the radical
student movement to protest against the
government; clashes between students and troops
culminate in the Tlatelolco massacre which is

seen by many as discrediting the PRI's revolutionary credentials.

- 1970 There is a split within the Barcelona publishing house Seix Barral and the Premio Biblioteca Breve is cancelled – an event sometimes seen as marking an end to the Boom of Latin American fiction.
- 1971 Pablo Neruda wins the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Cuban poet Heberto Padilla is arrested as a 'counter-revolutionary' – an event that divides Latin American writers and intellectuals and which is sometimes seen as also marking an end to the literary Boom.
- 1973–90 General Augusto Pinochet is military dictator of Chile; a bloody coup is followed by intense repression and dramatic economic reform.
- 1976–83 Military rule in Argentina, characterized by intense repression.
- 1978 Soccer World Cup in Argentina, exploited by the military junta for political purposes.
- 1979 *Sandinista* Revolution in Nicaragua, followed by the *Contra* war 1981–87.
- 1979–90 Figures show that the rate of destruction of the Brazilian rainforest for this period is 5.4 million acres per year; by 1992 less than 200,000 indigenous people remain in the rainforest (in 1500 there were 6 to 9 million); the rainforest becomes an

increasing focus of global concern, especially from the late 1970s and early 1980s onwards.

- 1982 Falklands War. García Márquez wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 1985 Democracy restored in Argentina, as well as in Brazil and Uruguay. The consolidation of democracy becomes a feature of the late twentieth century.
- 1990 Democracy restored in Chile. In Peru, Alberto Fujimori defeats the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa in presidential elections (Fujimori's later internal coup or *autogolpe*, in which he dissolves the Congress with the support of the military, is one of the last major manifestations of authoritarianism in the twentieth century). Octavio Paz wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 1992 Quincentenary celebrations of the 'discovery of America' prompt a widespread re-examination and rethinking of Latin America's relationship with Europe.
- 1993 Colombian drugs baron Pablo Escobar is killed by a police team.
- 1994 NAFTA is agreed. *Zapatista* revolts begin in Chiapas in Mexico.
- 1999 Puerto Rican Ricky Martin's first English-language single 'Livin' la vida loca' makes Number 1 in the US and UK charts (as well as in Canada, New Zealand and Ireland). In

California, the population figure for non-Hispanic whites falls below 50 per cent for the first time (Hispanics are at 31 per cent of the population).

- 2000 PRI loses presidential elections for the first time in Mexico. Alberto Fujimori flees Peru in disgrace (Alejandro Toledo is democratically elected President the year after).
- 2001 A Colombian *telenovela* called *Betty la fea* is a huge success in Latin America and the USA. Argentina is plunged into massive economic crisis, which worsens in 2002.
- 2002 Shakira has a Number 1 hit in the UK. The Mexican film *Y tu mamá también* becomes the biggest box-office hit in the nation's history – at the time of writing, its director Alfonso Cuarón is reported to have signed to direct the third Harry Potter movie.