

CENTRAL AMERICA

MEXICO



AREA 1,958,201 sq km
POPULATION 113,714,000
MONEY Mexican peso

Mexico is by far the most important country on this map. Over 113 million people live in Mexico – more than in any country in Europe. Mexico City has a population of about 19 million: it is one of the biggest cities in the world. A major earthquake did much damage there in 1985.

GUATEMALA



AREA 108,889 sq km
POPULATION 13,824,000
MONEY Quetzal

Most Mexicans live on the high plateau of central Mexico. Industries are growing fast in Mexico City and near the border with the USA. There are very few people in the northern desert, in Lower California in the north-west, in the southern jungle, or in Yucatan in the east. But tourist resorts thrive on the Yucatan and Pacific coasts.

PANAMA



AREA 75,517 sq km
POPULATION 3,460,000
MONEY Balboa

The other seven countries on this map are quite small. None of them has as many people as Mexico City! These countries were once ruled by Spain, but they have been independent since the 1820s. Civil wars have caused many problems in Central America. But the climate is good for growing many tropical crops, so lots of forest has been cut down for farmland.

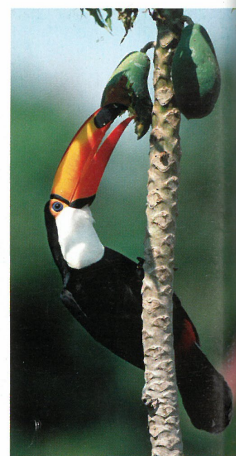


▲ **Ruins at Chichen Itza, Mexico.** Great temples were built by the people known as Mayas over a thousand years ago. These amazing ruins are in Yucatan, the most easterly part of Mexico. The tourists look tiny, which shows you how HUGE the pyramid is!

BELIZE

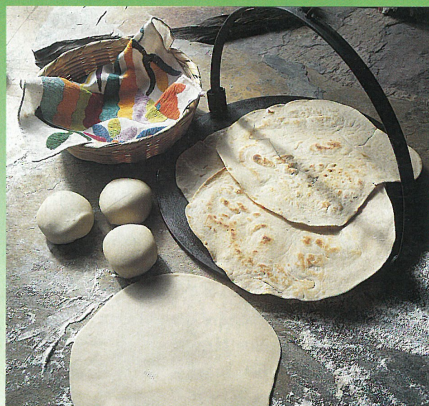


AREA 22,966 sq km
POPULATION 321,000
MONEY Belize dollar



▲ **The Toucan** is sometimes called the 'banana-beak bird', for an obvious reason! It eats fruit and lives in the forest, nesting in a hole in a tree. If the forest is cleared, it will have nowhere to live.

TORTILLAS - A RECIPE FOR YOU TO COOK



Ingredients: 225 grams of maize flour (sweetcorn flour); salt and water

- 1 Mix the maize flour, salt and water into a soft dough.
- 2 Pat into round shapes about ½ centimetre thick, and 12 centimetres across.
- 3 Melt a little margarine in a frying-pan.
- 4 Place the tortillas in the hot frying-pan.
- 5 For best results, turn the tortillas over.
- 6 Serve at once!

You have now cooked one of the most important meals of Central America. Maize (sweetcorn) was developed as a crop in the Americas, and is now grown in many parts of the world. You eat maize often as Corn Flakes and semolina.