



POSTAL NEWS

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U.S. Postal Service Honors Mariachi, the Traditional Music of Mexico

ALBUQUERQUE, NM — Today, the U.S. Postal Service celebrated the sounds of mariachi, the traditional music of Mexico that has become widely popular in the United States, with a first-day-of-issue ceremony unveiling a pane of 20 Mariachi Forever stamps at the [30th Annual Mariachi Spectacular de Albuquerque](#).

News of the Mariachi stamps is being shared with the hashtag **#MariachiStamps**.

“The Postal Service is proud to unveil these new Mariachi stamps to celebrate the exuberant sounds of this music that is an integral part of Mexican American culture and has fans around the world,” said Peter Pastre, the Postal Service’s government relations and public policy vice president, who served as the stamp ceremony’s dedicating official.

“Today, the sound of mariachi is in the air, with singers infusing the music with tales of life and love and vibrant dancing as this celebration will continue with these 18 million postage stamps that are now on sale at Post Offices across America,” he said.

Other participants at the stamp ceremony were Monica Trujillo, the Mariachi Spectacular de Albuquerque’s educational and artistic conference director; Brian O’Connell, chief financial officer and chief operating officer of Atrisco Cos.; and Amelia Garcia, assistant principal of Ysleta High School in El Paso, Texas.

Rafael López designed the stamps and created the art. Derry Noyes served as art director.

Each of the five new stamps in the pane of 20 features a musician, dressed in the traditional outfit of mariachi performers, playing one of five iconic mariachi instruments: guitar, guitarrón, vihuela, violin and trumpet. The geometric shapes in the background of each stamp are a nod to Mexican villages, where mariachi music originated.

“It is our honor and pleasure to have Mariachi Spectacular de Albuquerque's 30th Annual mariachi conference selected to partner with the U.S. Postal Service to launch this exquisite Mariachi Forever Stamp collection.” said Monica Trujillo. “Through our music and the special memories evoked by these skillfully rendered works of art, it is our hope that each and every person that comes across these stamps can experience some of the magic that we get to experience with every note, lyric, and nuance that is mariachi.”

“Mariachi” refers to several things: to the music itself; to an individual musician or an ensemble of musicians; and, when used as an adjective, to anything identified with the music — be it dance or costume or culture. The first known written reference to the word “mariachi” was made in the 1850s, but the music’s roots stretch back long before.

“Growing up, I remember nostalgic weekends listening to the uniquely Mexican sound of mariachi music in Plaza Garibaldi in Mexico City,” said stamp artist Rafael López. “Mariachi music is an emblem of Mexican cultural heritage with roots in the United States and followers around the globe and I’m excited and honored to share the vibrant spirit of this music with these stamps.”

Though mariachi’s exact origins are obscure, it appears to have begun in western Mexico, where itinerant musicians made their living traveling from village to village and visiting ranches in the countryside to perform. The music of early mariachi included folk traditions from Spain, Mexico and Africa that melded to create a new indigenous musical form, the *son*. The *sones* developed in various regional styles, including the *son jalisciense* from Jalisco; the *son huasteco*, from northeastern Mexico; and the *son jarocho* or *veracruzano*, from the region around the Gulf port of Veracruz. The most well-known example of the *son jarocho* is the song “La Bamba.”

Beginning in the 1930s, mariachi music reached a new, wider audience as it was embraced by urban radio stations and used on soundtracks by Mexican filmmakers. It soon became one of the most popular musical genres in Latin America.

Mariachi bands traditionally used the round-backed guitar called the *vihuela*, which gives the mariachi music its rhythmic vitality; the *guitarrón*, which is a bass guitar; and the Mexican folk harp, the *arpa*. By the 1940s and 1950s, the modern urban mariachi sound emerged with the expanded instrumentation including violins and trumpets. Today, ensembles continue to broaden the use of instruments, with some groups adding six to eight violins, two to four trumpets, an accordion, and the arpa, which had fallen out of use but has made a comeback among professional groups. This combination of instruments creates a unique music that is exuberant and expressive.

While mariachi music had been in the United States for many years, by the 1960s, American churches, schools and universities began to develop and sponsor mariachi programs that produced new generations of musicians and enthusiasts. Immigrants to various parts of the United States created vibrant regional mariachi cultures that widened the appeal of this traditional music to new audiences. In addition, the American mariachi movement is being disseminated by first-, second- and third-generation Mexican Americans as a way of expressing ethnic pride and of staying connected to their heritage.

Mariachi musicians are immediately recognizable in their traditional costume called *traje de charro* or charro suit. An adaptation of a Spanish horseman’s riding outfit, it consists of fitted trousers adorned with silver buttons for men and full-length skirts for women, a short jacket, an embroidered belt, a wide bow tie, and a wide-brimmed hat. Though black with silver embellishments is traditional, today mariachi wear costumes in many colors.

A beloved aspect of mariachi culture is dance, as this is music that is meant to get audiences moving. Each of the regional variations of the *son* has its traditional style of dance. While several dance styles are

avored by mariachi fans, the most well-known folk dance is the *Jarabe Tapatío* — the Mexican Hat Dance. Highly stylized with traditional steps and movements, it is the national folkloric dance of Mexico. This dance made its way from Mexico to the United States, where it is popularly celebrated at festivals and public performances and in dance competitions. Enjoyed around the world, mariachi has reached a global audience through recordings, films, live concerts, and television programs.

In recognition of the importance and widespread appeal of mariachi music and culture, UNESCO added them to its Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list in 2011.

Postal Products

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Forever stamps will always be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail 1-ounce price.

A feature story about the stamp will be available at facebook.com/usps following the ceremony. Information for ordering first-day-of-issue postmarks and covers is at usps.com/shop.

The Postal Service generally receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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