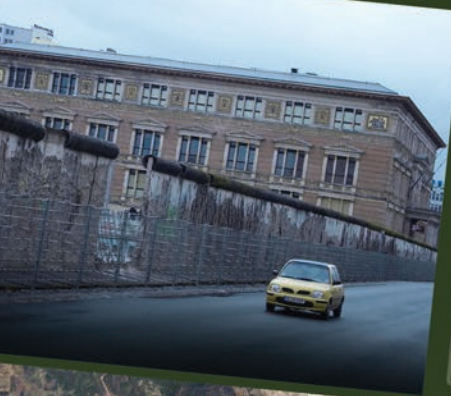


Cities Divided By A Common Fate

The world is a strange place. Where but on Planet Earth will you find one city that is situated in two different states? In two different countries?? On two different continents?! In two different time zones?!? In two different nuclear superpowers?!?!? Learn the curious stories of various cities around the world that are divided by strange twists of fate.



The City Split in Two by a War

On one side of the border a terrible war is being fought and violence mars the lives of residents daily. On the other side is one of the calmest and safest locales in America.



The city of El Paso, Texas, lies along the Mexican-American border, where the sharp contrast between the two nations is deeply underscored. On one side, people enjoy the relaxed and easygoing pace and privileged lifestyle favored by Texans. Even in today's recession the local economy is booming.

On the other side, in the Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez, citizens live in constant fear, plagued by gang wars, kidnapping and murder. Mexico's long-simmering drug war is reducing the once-proud city to a virtual rubble heap. Federal authorities battle the mercenaries of the drug cartels, and internal fights often break out between the drug lords and their runners. Entire neighborhoods have been devastated and tens of thousands of residents have fled the city to become refugees.

Not long ago businessmen used to cross the border with their families to visit and share dinner with friends and business partners on the other side. A committee of businessmen from both countries lobbied to build a high-speed train to connect the two cities. Today, all such talk has been silenced. Few people from El Paso dare enter the war zone across the river.

As a result, most of the upper- and middle-class residents of Ciudad Juárez have already packed their belongings and headed out in search of safer territory. Many crossed into America, bringing with them their money and business acumen. They developed a Mexican community in exile.

However, the poorer among Ciudad Juárez's residents are trapped. US citizenship was always a prized accomplishment, but never more so than today. However, they cannot flee. Some have "made peace" with the violence as an everyday part of their lives. Yet, even they hope that their children will someday succeed in escaping the terror for a better life. They know that, under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, any baby born on US territory is automatically granted American citizenship. Therefore, they try any way they can to give birth to their children in hospitals on the American side so that their children will be granted US citizenship.

El Paso and Ciudad Juárez share such deep historical and economic ties that they are sometimes referred to as one: El Paso-Juárez. The only physical barrier separating the two is the Rio Grande River, which runs between them through a cement sluice. They



El Paso in 1908.

are surrounded by mountains and desert that ought to classify them as a single city.

Yet, they are cities torn asunder. The divide that separates them is more than physical. In order to properly understand that divide it is important to learn a little about the single historical root from which they spring.

History of the Double-City

El Paso was founded in 1659 by Spanish conquistadors. The site was strategically located along the path between the mountains that ring the area, thus its Spanish name "El Paso" (meaning "Gateway"). At first, most of the city was settled along the southern bank of the Rio Grande, in present-day Mexico, and belonged to the Spanish-controlled province of New Mexico.

In 1810, a group of Mexican-born Spaniards and natives declared independence from Spain, setting off what would become known as the Mexican War of Independence. Eleven bloody years later, in 1821, they won their independence from Spanish colonial authorities, incorporating into their territory New Mexico and Texas (as well as California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona and Colorado).

But the revolution that brought Mexico its independence also left the new land tottering on the verge of bankruptcy. There were few resources for maintaining a strong army. To help control its lands, Mexico encouraged Anglo-Americans to settle Texas and New Mexico. The settlers developed the land by farming it and opening it up to commerce, as well as by forming militias to defend themselves against raids by Native Americans.

In time, the Anglo-Americans became a majority in the territories, and tensions began to grow between them and the Mexican government. Their resentment growing, Texan Americans began to consider declaring independence from Mexico and forming their own republic. In 1835, they revolted and a bloody war followed, lasting seven months.

After several Texan victories, a Texan

garrison was massacred by Mexican General Santa Anna at the historic Battle of the Alamo (February 23–March 6, 1836). Texan General Sam Houston then rallied his army to surprise Santa Anna and swiftly defeated the much larger Mexican force at the battle of San Jacinto. Santa Anna signed a surrender document that included a clause granting Texas its independence.



US border guards patrol the river that separates the US from Mexico.



El Paso is separated from Ciudad Juárez by the Rio Grande River.



American soldiers in the Mexican War.