

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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**seattle**

## LATINO CULTURAL HERITAGE GUIDE

MUSEUMS • PUBLIC ART • HERITAGE SITES • SPECIAL EVENTS



Fiesta Patrias. Photo: Joe Mabel



Our Name is Panama dance group at El Centro de la Raza Cinco de Mayo celebration, photo by The Seattle Times

**SEATTLE CULTURAL HERITAGE GUIDES** are a resource for visitors who want to explore the city's rich cultural heritage. Learn about museums, historic sites, public art and neighborhoods that will give you an insider's view of Seattle's vibrant ethnic communities and unique history.

The guides are produced by the Cultural Tourism program of Visit Seattle, and supported by funding from **4Culture** (King County Lodging Tax) and the **Office of Arts and Culture**.

Learn more about Seattle and access expert travel advice at [visitseattle.org](http://visitseattle.org). Or stop by one of our Visitor Information Centers at 1st & Pike in downtown Seattle or the main floor of the Washington Convention Center at 7th & Pike.

Our sincere thanks to all the community members who helped contribute to this project and who preserve and protect Seattle's cultural legacies.

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[visitseattle.org/culturalheritage](http://visitseattle.org/culturalheritage)

Content by Past Forward NW Cultural Services, second edition 2016

Cover photo: Judy Leon of Mariachi Huenachi, Wenatchee High School, Fiestas Patrias at South Park. Photo: Edgar Lopez

## INTRODUCTION

After colonizing Mexico in the 15th and 16th centuries, Spain claimed all of the west coast of North America. Spanish and Mexican maritime explorers made numerous expeditions to the Pacific Northwest beginning in 1774, calling the region Nueva Galicia after Spain's rugged northwest coast.

These representatives of the Spanish crown were the first Europeans to map the coast of what became Washington State, and to trade with Native Americans. In 1792, the first European settlement in the state was established among the Makah Tribe at Neah Bay, called **Fort Nuñez Gaona**.

Spain withdrew claims to the Pacific Northwest under the terms of an 1819 treaty, and the legacy of Spanish exploration, cartography and scientific discovery in the area has long been overshadowed by British and American expeditions. Many place names commemorate Spanish exploration, including the San Juan Islands, Port Angeles, Fidalgo Island, Camano Island and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

East of the Cascade Mountains, Mexican **vaqueros**, or cowboys, played a central role in the development of cattle ranching and mule packing. The word buckaroo derives from vaquero, and these skilled horsemen brought their tools and cultural traditions from California, Texas, and other southwestern states that remained part of Mexico until the 1840s.

Large-scale reclamation projects in the 1930s expanded agricultural production of sugar beets, potatoes, and other labor-

intensive crops in Eastern Washington, and growers recruited **farm workers** from places such as the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. During World War II, the Bracero program brought guest workers directly from Mexico. Migrant workers also came from the southwestern U.S., and many families relocated permanently to the Yakima Valley, and other farming regions such as north central Washington and the Skagit Valley north of Seattle.

Following World War II, many rural Latino families migrated to the urban Puget Sound region, seeking employment in Seattle's booming post-war economy. The civil rights era or **El Movimiento** brought widespread activism in the Latino community, and activists established organizations such as MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán) at the University of Washington in 1968, and the community multi-service center El Centro de la Raza in the Beacon Hill neighborhood in 1972. A **Chicano arts movement** grew out of this political activism.

Political turbulence in Central and South America in the 1970s and 80s brought new immigrants to Seattle from Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Nicaragua and other countries, and area churches participated actively in the Sanctuary Movement to protect those fleeing violence and starting new lives in the Pacific Northwest. The 2010 census showed that over 10% of Washington's population are persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, the largest minority group in the state, and many people maintain strong cultural ties to Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.



# SPECIAL EVENTS



Photo: Josh Trujillo, seattlepi.com

### CINCO DE MAYO

May 5, Various locations

Cinco de Mayo has become a global celebration of Mexican culture and pride, but the origin of this holiday commemorates Mexico's unlikely victory over the invading French army at the Battle of Puebla in 1862, the last invasion of Mexico by a foreign country. Mariachi music, folklorico dancing and other activities are part of celebrations at El Centro de la Raza, in South Park, and at many restaurants, libraries and community centers.

### GUELAGUETZA FESTIVAL

June, Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park, Central District

Guelaguetza is a festival celebrating the Zapotec heritage of Oaxaca, Mexico, which features traditional dances and a live brass ensemble. [casa-latina.org](http://casa-latina.org)

### HISPANIC SEAFAIR

July, Seattle Center

Part of the city-wide summer celebration, this festival offers music, arts and crafts, regional cuisine and family activities, and is presided over by the Hispanic Seafair Queen selected each year from local college student contestants. [hispanicseafair.org](http://hispanicseafair.org)

### FIESTAS PATRIAS

September, Various locations

A fiesta and parade in the community of South Park, and an arts festival at Seattle Center, both sponsored by SeaMar CHC, celebrate the independence from colonial rule of Mexico and several countries in Central and South America. This patriotic holiday also recognizes the diversity of Latino heritage in the Pacific Northwest, while honoring a shared language and a shared spirit of freedom. [seattlefiestaspatrias.org](http://seattlefiestaspatrias.org)

### HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

September 15 to October 15, Various locations

The month encompasses independence anniversaries for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Chile, as well as Columbus Day and El Dia de la Raza on October 12. Events take place each year at libraries, museums, colleges and other community gathering places.

### SEATTLE LATINO FILM FESTIVAL

October, Multiple locations

The Seattle Latino Film Festival celebrates the art and culture of Latino film globally, showcasing domestic and international films, as well as selected films from each year's pais invitado or featured country. [slff.org](http://slff.org)

### DIA DE MUERTOS

October 31 and November 1, Seattle Center and other locations

The Mexican Day of the Dead celebration honors departed loved ones, traditionally by making altars and bringing special foods, marigolds, toys and other enjoyable items to the cemetery for a festive day of remembrance. Observations of this holiday take place at Seattle Center as part of the Festal Cultural Festivals series. Events are also held at El Centro de la Raza, Seattle Art Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, and other area museums and community centers. [diademuertosenSeattle.org](http://diademuertosenSeattle.org)

Above, left to right: Dia de Muertos musician, photo by Jonathan P. Beck, courtesy of Festal; Fiestas Patrias parade, photo by Bill Edgar courtesy of SeaMar CHC; Dia de Muertos dancers, photo by Jonathan P. Beck, courtesy of Festal

# SEATTLE'S SOUTH PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

On the west bank of the Duwamish River approximately 15 minutes south of downtown is the community of South Park, which has the largest Latino population of any Seattle neighborhood.

Once home to Italian and Japanese farmers, the community became more industrial when Boeing opened a factory across the river in the 1930s. In the latter decades of the 20th century, South Park became more ethnically diverse, with the influx of many Latino families.

The commercial district centered around **Fourteenth Avenue S and S Cloverdale Street** includes many Mexican and other Hispanic restaurants, markets and businesses. The South Park branch library offers an extensive Spanish language collection and bilingual programs.

On the west side of the neighborhood, a small park honors activist **Cesar Chavez** who championed the rights of farm workers. Nationally recognized artist Jesus Bautista Moroles created a sculpture for the park titled Musical Steles, comprised of three

basalt columns which evoke ancient inscribed standing stones, such as those created by the Mayan civilization.

**Sea Mar Community Health Center** was founded in 1978 in South Park, and now has a statewide network of clinics serving Latinos and people of all ethnicities, especially in agricultural communities. Sea Mar's central offices on S Henderson Street showcase work by local artists, and the organization's mission also includes housing and education. A new **Latino Cultural Museum** is being developed at the Sea Mar Community Health Center campus.

Also on Fourteenth Avenue S, **Consejo Counseling and Referral Service** has a colorful exterior mural by artist Fulgencio Lazo featuring a Mayan leader whispering words of wisdom about integrating Latino ancestry and cultural values into contemporary American society.

The **Duwamish River Festival** in August and **Fiestas Patrias** in September bring the community together. Info at [allaboutsouthpark.com](http://allaboutsouthpark.com)





## FURTHER AFIELD

### WHITE CENTER & BURIEN BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Off the beaten path for visitors, but just 15 minutes southwest of downtown, the communities of White Center and Burien boast numerous Latino businesses, including panaderias, carnicerías, mercados and taquerías. White Center is one of the most ethnically diverse communities in the region, with a gritty but vital commercial district centered around Sixteenth Avenue SW. Closer to Sea-Tac Airport, Burien's business district is centered along SW 152nd. [visitwhitecenter.com](http://visitwhitecenter.com) and [discoverburien.com](http://discoverburien.com)

### FORT NUÑEZ GAONA, NEAH BAY

At the northwestern tip of Washington State is the community of Neah Bay on the Makah Indian Reservation. Spanish explorers first visited the region in 1774, and the first European settlement in the continental U.S. north of San Francisco and west of the Rocky Mountains was established at Neah Bay by Mexican, Peruvian and Spanish-born sailors in 1792. Following a treaty of reconciliation between the Makah Nation and the Spanish government, a monument was constructed in 2008 to mark the site of the Spanish fort, and to honor Makah veterans. [nps.gov/nr/travel/american\\_latino\\_heritage/Olympic\\_National\\_Park.html](http://nps.gov/nr/travel/american_latino_heritage/Olympic_National_Park.html)

### YAKIMA VALLEY

Eastern Washington's major agricultural valley has been home to a significant Spanish speaking population for decades. Though the region has few tourist attractions connected with Latino heritage, many communities in the valley have a majority Hispanic population which is reflected in the local culture.

Best known as the gateway to Washington's wine country, the city of Yakima boasts the largest Cinco de Mayo celebration in the Pacific Northwest, and other events such as a Día de los Muertos festival. The town of Wapato hosts an annual Tamale Festival, and the town of Granger hosts a Menudo Festival. Granger is also home to KDNA 91.9 La Voz del Campesino (the Voice of the Farmworker), the first full-time Spanish-language public radio station in the U.S., established in 1979.

Historic business districts in Grandview and other valley towns are home to many Mexican and Chicano-owned businesses, and Latino farmers throughout the valley stock local farm stands and farm market stalls with orchard fruits and other fresh produce. [visityakima.com/cinco-de-mayo](http://visityakima.com/cinco-de-mayo)



## LATINO HERITAGE SITES

### EL CENTRO DE LA RAZA

2524 – 16th Avenue S, 206.957.4634

Activists took over the abandoned Beacon Hill School in 1972 with the intent of establishing a Latino community service center. The occupation was a watershed moment for the Latino civil rights movement in Seattle, and led to the creation of El Centro de la Raza or the Center for People of All Races. More than four decades later, El Centro provides a wide range of multi-ethnic social services, and is involved in civil rights issues and educational and cultural programs.

The main entryway features a large interior mural by Daniel DeSiga titled *Explosion of Chicano Creativity*, and other murals are found throughout the renovated facility. A new housing development and Latino-style public plaza honors founding director Roberto Maestas, and the Centilia Cultural Center hosts multicultural events.

The property also includes an outdoor kiosk or bandstand, and Santos Rodriguez Memorial Park, named in honor of a Texas youth killed by police. Several arts groups are based at El Centro, including Ameyaltonal Danza Azteca and the Seattle Fandango Project. [elcentrodelaraza.org](http://elcentrodelaraza.org)

### MURALS AT UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

University of Washington Campus

Artist Pablo O'Higgins created the monumental work *The Struggle Against Racial Discrimination* (above) in 1945 for the Local 541 Union Hall serving Seattle maritime workers. When the hall was demolished in 1955, the mural was donated to the University of Washington. The restored work was reinstalled on the second floor of Kane Hall in 1977. Several murals by Latino artists are part of the University's Ethnic Cultural Center collection. [uw.edu/visit](http://uw.edu/visit)

### BURKE MUSEUM

17th Avenue NE & NE 45th Street, 206.543.5590

The Burke Museum is located at the northwest corner of the University of Washington campus. The museum's long term exhibit *Pacific Voices* features a Day of the Dead altar, and ethnology collections include textiles and other artwork from Mexico, Central and South America. [burkemuseum.org](http://burkemuseum.org)

### PIKE PLACE MARKET

First Avenue & Pike Street

Latino farmers, artists and craftspeople are well represented in market stalls, where vendors sell everything from organic peaches and peppers to jewelry and paintings. Restaurants feature Bolivian, Mexican and other Latin American cuisines, mercados stock specialty foods year-round, and folk art galleries offer hand-made gifts. [pikeplacemarket.org](http://pikeplacemarket.org)



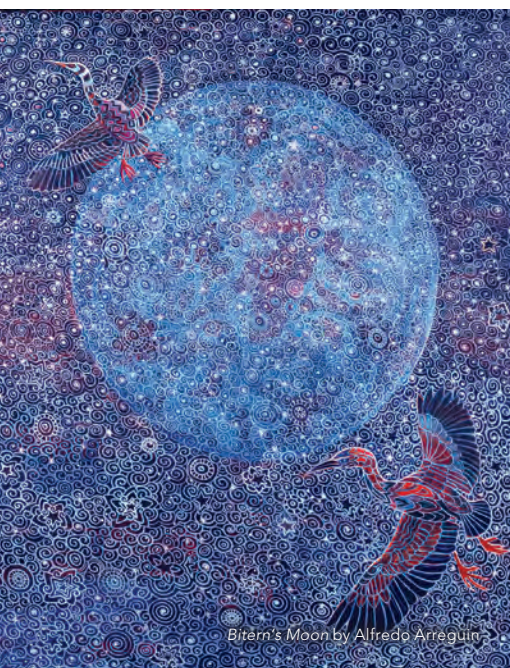
Above: *The Struggle Against Racial Discrimination* (1945) by Pablo O'Higgins, now located at the University of Washington's Kane Hall. Photo: Holly Taylor.

## VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS



Artists from throughout Latin America have chosen to make Seattle their home, and many Chicano and other Latino artists with deep roots in the U.S. draw on their Hispanic heritage as visual artists, writers and performers.

- **Bailadores de Bronce** has been teaching and performing Mexican folkloric dance in Seattle and throughout the region since 1972. The group is known for the intricate footwork of the dancers, refined choreography and beautiful costumes from the various regions of Mexico. [bailadoresdebronze.org](http://bailadoresdebronze.org)
- **Latino Theatre Projects** present Latin American and Spanish theatre in the Puget Sound region. [latinotheatreprojects.org](http://latinotheatreprojects.org)
- **eSe Teatro** is a drama collective affiliated with ACT Theatre. [eseteatro.org](http://eseteatro.org)
- **La Sala** connects and supports Latino and Latina artists in a network in and around Seattle. [lasalaseattle.org](http://lasalaseattle.org)



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**Latino? Hispanic?** What's in a name? Many different words are used to identify people whose ancestors came from the southwestern U.S., Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean and Spain.

The western hemisphere south of the U.S. is sometimes referred to as **Latin America**, and the terms **Latino** and **Latina** are used inclusively to capture the blending of Spanish and other European, Indigenous and in some places African traditions that characterize this diverse region. Many people prefer to identify themselves more precisely, for example as Cuban or Peruvian or Mexican American.

The term **Hispanic** came into widespread usage as a U.S. Census category in the late 20th century, as a variant of the more traditional term Hispano. **Chicano** or **Chicana** refers specifically to Americans of Mexican origin or descent, reflecting the fact that the territory from California to Texas belonged to Spain and Mexico before it belonged to the U.S.

In this guide, Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably to reflect the preference of the person or organization being described, and Latino is generally used inclusively to refer to both men and women.

## DID YOU KNOW?



- **Lucy Lopez** is recognized as the pioneer of the local Mexican restaurant industry. Originally from the town of Cuautla, in the state of Jalisco, she came to Seattle in 1957, and later opened her own restaurant. Since then, hundreds of Cuautla residents have come to the Seattle area and with Lucy's help established restaurants including Azteca, Las Margaritas, Mazatlan, Tacos Guaymas, El Tapatio and many others.
- The bustling port city of **Mazatlan** in Mexico's Sinaloa State has been a sister city to Seattle since 1979, and the Mexican state of Jalisco has been recognized as Washington's sister state since 1996.
- Beloved baseball player **Edgar Martínez**, who grew up in Puerto Rico, spent his entire 18-year Major League career with the Seattle Mariners. Martínez was inducted into the Hispanic Heritage Baseball Museum Hall of Fame in 2003, and has been widely recognized since retirement for his humanitarian work. In 2004, the street south of Safeco Field was renamed in his honor.
- Not everyone with roots in Latin America speaks **Spanish** as a first or even second language. **Portuguese** is spoken in Brazil, and **French** is the official language in some Caribbean nations. Many **indigenous languages** are spoken in the region, and indigenous immigrant communities in Washington State speak languages such as **Mixteco** and **Aguacateco**.