

Inside the "split city" of El Paso-Juárez

By Sophie Eastaugh, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 09.05.17

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Schoolchildren travel every day between the two cities of Juárez and El Paso. Juárez is in the country of Mexico. El Paso is a U.S. city in Texas. Photo by: U.S. Customs and Border Protection/Flickr

Ashley Delgado is 14 years old. She lives in Juárez, Mexico, but goes to school in El Paso, Texas. The two cities are separated by the Rio Grande.

Ashley gets up before dawn so her mother can drive her to the border. It takes on average half an hour, but sometimes it can be double that.

The Dividing Line

A low electric fence marks the dividing line between the two cities, separating Mexico from the United States. Together, they have a total population of over 2.5 million. It is the second largest crossing point on the U.S.-Mexican border after Tijuana and San Diego.

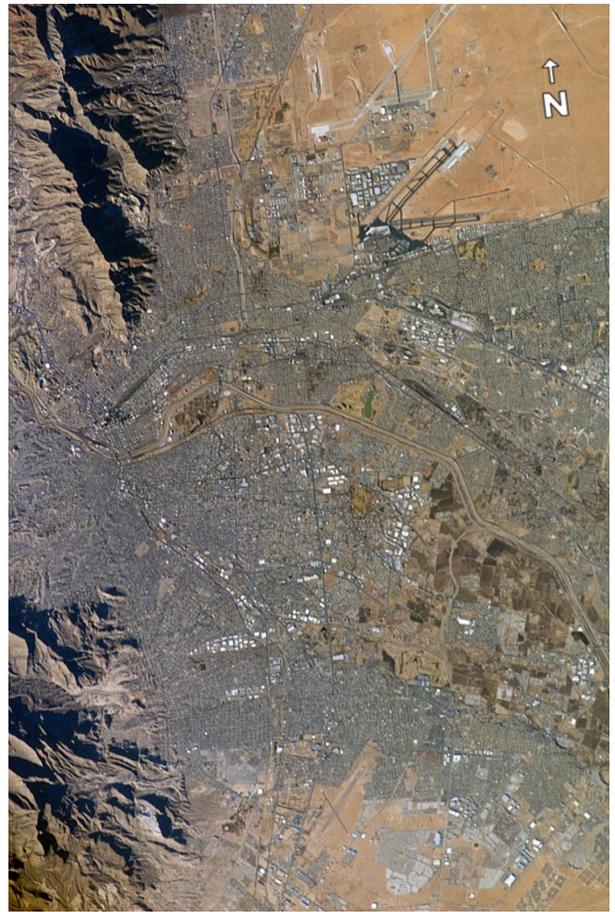
El Paso was part of Mexico until 1846. In fact, El Paso and Juárez were not even two separate cities. Today, the two cities depend on each other, even though they are separated by an international border. In El Paso, shops offer mattresses, blankets and rugs in Spanish. Nearby, a gas station accepts pesos, the Mexican currency, and gives U.S. dollars in return.

Factories Churning Out Products

Juárez has become a major manufacturing center. Many things we used are made in factories in Juárez. There are more than 350 factories that make car parts, medical devices and electronics. Workers in Juárez do not make much money. Most factory workers earn less than \$11 a day.

Ashley is a citizen of both Mexico and the U.S., and can move freely between the two countries. For people like Ashley, there are many advantages to being able to cross into the U.S. easily, like better shopping and better jobs. Like many Mexican women living near the border, her mother came the U.S. to give birth to Ashley. That way, Ashley would be a U.S. citizen. "More options, better opportunities," said Dora, her mother. "I was afraid of how the situation is in Juárez."

Between 2008 and 2012, Juárez was one of the most violent cities in the world. In contrast, El Paso is calm and clean. It was named the safest large city in the U.S. for four years. Now the violence in Juárez has been going down, and people from El Paso are visiting once again.



The Benefits Of Living In Split City

The University of Texas at El Paso has a large number of Mexican students. Josiah Heyman leads the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies there. He says El Paso's residents appreciate the benefits of Juárez. Many Americans cross the border to go to Mexican doctors and hospitals. It is much cheaper than going to the doctor in the United States. Also many Mexicans cross the border to El Paso to go shopping. Electronics, for instance, are cheaper in the U.S.

Julio Chavez was born in El Paso but raised in Juárez. Like Ashley, he went to school in the U.S. When he was 14 years old, his mother took him to live in El Paso. Visits back and forth became a regular part of family life.

For Thanksgiving dinner, Chavez cooked his turkey in El Paso then drove it over to his father's house in Juárez to eat it. "This has been my life, I grew up like this. I can't imagine how there would be one [city] without the other," he says.

Crossing The Border Can Take Some Time

All along the border, waiting times are frustrating. Between Juárez and El Paso, delays range from 30 minutes up to two hours. An app predicts crossing times. Residents use a Facebook page to share tips on the fastest line. Meanwhile, cars and pedestrians usually move freely into Mexico, and their passports are rarely checked.

Though crossing the border can be frustrating, many groups are discussing plans to connect both sides on a larger scale.

Just south of San Diego, the city of Chula Vista has plans for a binational university and innovation district. It would have a focus on cross-border opportunities. Nearby in Otay Mesa, the world's first binational airport terminal opened in November 2015. There, a 150m footbridge leads straight over the border into the Tijuana airport.



Ambitious Plans For "Border City"

Twenty-five minutes' drive from El Paso is Santa Teresa, New Mexico. There, Mexican architect Fernando Romero has even bigger ideas for change. He created a plan for "Border City." His plan includes smart technology to speed up crossings.

He wants to help people and businesses connect across both sides of the border.

"The border is in some ways more symbolic than it's ever been," he said.

Quiz

1 Examine the images included with the article.

What do the images show about Juárez and El Paso?

- (A) why many people cross the border daily
- (B) why there can be long waits at the border
- (C) how close and connected they are
- (D) how many businesses they share

2 Examine the image in the section "The Dividing Line" and read the selection below.

El Paso was part of Mexico until 1846. In fact, El Paso and Juárez were not even two separate cities. Today, the two cities depend on each other, even though they are separated by an international border.

HOW does the image support the information in the selection above?

- (A) by showing the reasons why El Paso stopped being part of Mexico
- (B) by showing how the border cuts what looks like a single city in half
- (C) by showing the reasons why the two cities depend on each other
- (D) by showing how the border affects the people who live in Juárez

3 Read the paragraphs from the section "The Benefits Of Living In Split City."

Julio Chavez was born in El Paso but raised in Juárez. Like Ashley, he went to school in the U.S. When he was 14 years old, his mother took him to live in El Paso. Visits back and forth became a regular part of family life.

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HOW do these paragraphs support a MAIN idea of the article?

- (A) They show that Julio Chavez and Ashley Delgado have many things in common.
- (B) They show that crossing the border is a regular part of life for people in El Paso and Juárez.
- (C) They describe the relationship of Julio Chavez and his family during the holidays.
- (D) They show that many people in El Paso like to celebrate Thanksgiving in Juárez.

4 Read the summary of the article's MAIN ideas below.

El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico, are connected in many ways. Many people cross the border between the cities to shop, work and go to school. This can often take a long time.

What additional sentence would COMPLETE the summary?

- (A) Some people and groups are trying to make it easier to connect international border cities.
- (B) Cars and pedestrians usually move freely into Mexico without having their passports checked.
- (C) Many Americans cross the border each day to go to Mexican doctors and hospitals.
- (D) There are more than 350 factories that make car parts and medical devices in Juárez.