



# Venezuela

Status: Republic in northern South America  
Area: 352,144 sq mi  
Population: 29,275,460 (2015 est.)  
Currency: 100 Centimos = 1 Bolivar (US\$1=Bs6.30) (2015)



Venezuela's first stamps were issued in 1859, including the ½ reale yellow, Scott 1.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is about twice the size of California. Columbus landed in eastern Venezuela on his third voyage in 1498 — the only place he actually came ashore on the South American mainland. The following year, a Spanish expedition under Alonso de Ojeda, which included the famous Italian Amerigo Vespucci, sailed into Lake Maracaibo in the west, where they saw the local Arawaks living in thatched huts on stilts in the water. They named it Venezuela — “Little Venice.” Beginning in the 1520s, Spain began permanent settlement of the coastal areas. But without gold or silver, agricultural Venezuela remained in the shadows of Spain’s American dominions.

In the early 19th century, Caracas-born Simon Bolivar emerged as the great Latin American liberator. On December 17, 1819, he proclaimed the independence of the Spanish viceroyalty of New Granada as Republic of Gran Colombia, composed of the modern countries of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama. Bolivar’s dream of a grand union fell apart with Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela declaring their independence before his death in 1830.

After independence, Venezuela was ruled by a series of strongmen. One of the most durable was Juan Vincente Gomez, who took power in 1908 and remained until his death in 1935. The discovery of oil in 1910 helped Gomez stabilize the national economy and pay off its international debts. By the 1920s, Venezuela was the world’s largest oil producer. A 1958 military coup led to the first democratically elected president to complete a five-year term. The populist Hugo Chavez was elected president in 1998. Chavez died in office in 2013. Chavez’s polarizing policies have been continued by Nicolas Maduro, his hand-picked successor.

In the 18th century, Spain attempted to improve communications with its American colonies. Administrative postal centers were set up in the major ports by 1721. In 1765, regular mail routes were established between Caracas and the motherland.

A decree of June 28, 1858, authorized the first issue of postage stamps. Three denominations depicting the national coat of arms were printed, probably in the United States, in yellow, blue and red — the national colors. The stamps were issued January 1, 1859. Little is known about the printer or the quantities printed but the stamps were printed again in 1859 and 1861 in Caracas from the original stones. In the 1870s, to satisfy a postal need, stamps originally designed to raise revenue for schools (escuelas) were validated for postal as well as fiscal use.

Stamp shortages during periods of civil strife resulted in provisionals around the turn of the last century. A local issue was issued in La Guaira, the main port for Caracas, to pay for transporting mail to St. Thomas to connect with steamship service to Europe. The British also operated a post office in La Guaira from 1865 to 1880.



A handsome set of five airmails from 1950 feature the Signing of Independence, including the 1 bolivar stamp, Scott C315.



South American hero Simon Bolivar appears on several Venezuelan stamps, Scott 79.



Simon Bolivar reappeared on a series of 27 stamps in 1976, Scott 1133.



In 1943, stamps of 1937 (Scott 311 to 317) were overprinted and sold only in sets to philatelists. Scott 383 is the four-stamp set’s high denomination.



A 1947 overprinted airmail of 10 cents on a 20-cent Bolivar’s birthplace, Scott C238.



Gen. José Antonio Sucre, on a stamp in 1980, Scott 1241.

For expanded text and additional illustrations, see [www.stamps.org/AP-Album](http://www.stamps.org/AP-Album).

For expanded text and additional illustrations see www.usps.gov/zip/zip.htm

on postage, Scott C329.  
on a 20-cent Bolívar  
issued in 1957  
A 1957 overprinted

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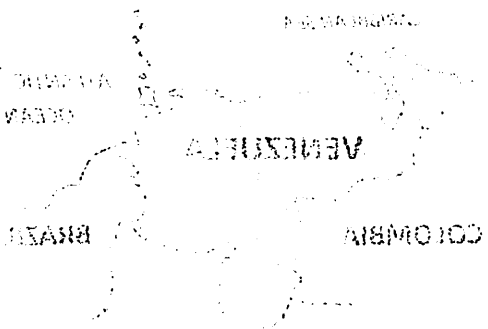
Resolvido  
1943

stamps, Scott 39.  
Venezuelan  
on coastal  
Bolívar appears  
from Simon  
Pacific American

Scott 7.  
yellow,  
five to reds  
including  
in 1859.  
were issued  
first stamps  
Venezuela's

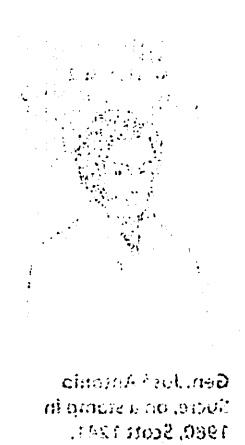
# Venezuela

Country: 100 Centimos = 1 Bolívar (U25 f=85c.30) (5012)  
Population: 59,375,400 (1970 est.)  
Area: 352,144 sq mi  
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A handsome set of five stamps  
from 1950 feature the signing of  
independence, including the  
Bolívar stamp, Scott C315

Scott 1133.  
of 27 stamps in 1956,  
reissued on a series  
Simon Bolívar



Scott 1361.  
Section on a series in  
General Antonio