



Two fake skeletons are posed playing instruments.

Day of the Dead

This lively Mexican celebration helps families honour their ancestors.

Skeletons are scary, right? Not if you're celebrating Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead.

REMEMBERING RELATIVES



A woman celebrates with festive face paint.

Day of the Dead combines the ancient Aztec custom of celebrating ancestors with All Souls' Day, a holiday that Spanish invaders brought to Mexico starting in the early 1500s.

The holiday, which is celebrated mostly in Mexico on November 1 and 2, is like a family reunion—except dead ancestors are the guests of honour. Day of the Dead is a joyful time that helps people remember the deceased and celebrate their memory.

TREATS FOR THE DECEASED



An altar shows some of a relative's favourite items.

First, people set up a candlelit altar in their homes so spirits can find their way back to their relatives. The altar also offers some of the favourite foods of the deceased—just in case they get hungry. Items that were

important to the ancestors when they were alive, such as a favourite book or musical instrument, are placed on the altar as well.

Then it's off to the graveyard for a big party. Families bring a huge feast to eat while they clean tombstones, sing songs, and talk to their ancestors. Parents might even introduce a baby to a grandparent who died before the baby was born.

FUNNY BONES



A colourful fake skeleton is posed for Day of the Dead.

And don't forget the skeletons. During Day of the Dead, life-size papier-mâché skeletons and miniature plastic or clay skeletons are everywhere. Why? Mexicans honour their ancestors on Day of the Dead, but they're also reminding themselves that death is just a part of life. Hanging out with skeletons reminds people that one day they will be skeletons—but not for a very long time!

The skeletons are posed doing all sorts of wacky things, such as playing guitar, taking a bath, or making tortillas. Apparently people aren't the only ones who get to have fun on Day of the Dead!



A stack of colourful plastic skeletons