

Where do Chihuahuas come from?

Today, the Chihuahua is one of the most popular small-dog breeds. With their giant personalities and indomitable approach to life, these tiny dogs are beloved pets all over the world.

But where did they come from? The Chihuahua origin story is fascinating, and unlike any other history canine genealogists have yet encountered.

After you've learned about the Chihuahua's history, if you'd like to learn more about the breed as a pet, [this guide](#) is an excellent resource.

Where did the Chihuahua come from originally?

Less than ten years ago, the prevailing theory on Chihuahua history was that the breed originated from China, and that they were likely brought here by explorers some time before Columbus' arrival in the Americas.

In 2013, a team of geneticists from Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology analyzed the genetic origins of Native American dog breeds in an attempt to learn more of their origins.

[The study](#) gave compelling support to a long-held theory on the origins of canines in the Americas. Namely, that dogs were brought to the Americas thousands of years ago across a land-bridge which then connected north-east Asia and North America.

The Chihuahua's genetic signature, however, revealed something very different.

The research shows the Chihuahua has no genetic connection whatsoever to early Chinese dog breeds. Modern Chihuahuas are actually direct descendants of the Techichi, a small breed of dog that was [completely native to the Americas](#).

While not a great deal is known about the Techichi, it's believed to have been [bred for hunting purposes](#) by the Toltec people, a powerful civilization who inhabited present day Mexico during the Mesoamerican period.

Representations of the Techichi have been found on [burial pots](#) in Mexico dating back as far as 300 BCE. Evidently, the Techichi breed was as successful at human companionship as its Chihuahua descendants would later become.

As a canine that is truly native to the Americans from its very beginnings, Chihuahua history is both venerable and unique.

Chihuahua history: how the world's smallest dog became a household name

So how did this tiny, indomitable canine with such unique genetic origins come to be a household name and one of the world's most popular toy breeds?

It was some time in the early to mid-1800s that Americans first began to notice these tiny, appealing dogs and to take them as pets. Found mainly in Chihuahua City in Northwestern Mexico, they rapidly became known as Chihuahuas.

The breed was officially recognized in 1903 by the American Kennel Club. Despite being one of the first recognized breeds in the US, for the first half of the Twentieth Century, the Chihuahua languished in relative obscurity.

After all, at the time dogs were seen as practical companions and the tiny Chihuahua had little to offer as a working dog.

By the 1960s, Chihuahua history took a sharp turn and the breed was thrust into the limelight. Urbanization had taken hold and with it came a massive expansion of suburbia, inner-city living and apartment life.

The Chihuahua's small size, exuberant personality and prodigious intelligence made it the perfect companion for city and suburb dwellers. As a modern city companion, the Chihuahua's star was on the rise.

By the mid 1960's, the Chihuahua had become the United States' twelfth most popular dog breed overall.

An ever increasing proportion of the world's population are living in cities, and the Chihuahua's popularity followed in the wake of this urban expansion. By 2002, the Chihuahua had become the ninth most popular dog breed, worldwide. Today it is one of the UK's most popular breeds, and is currently ranked [second place](#).

From Mexico, to the US to the whole world, the Chihuahua's origins are something of a David and Goliath story.

The Chihuahua in pop culture

Somewhere along the line, the Chihuahua (just like the ancient Techichi which came before it) grew to occupy an important role in culture and civilization.

In the 1990s, a rambunctious Chihuahua named Gidget was featured in a long-running series of Taco Bell commercials. The Chihuahua mascot became so popular it inspired a line of toy figurines

and inspired several pop culture references, including an improbable movie series titled "[Beverly Hills Chihuahua](#)."

In 2007, actress and personality Paris Hilton made regular television appearances with a pet Chihuahua, further bolstering the breed's pop culture appeal.

Sadly, in recent years the Chihuahua breed has become the [victim of its own pop culture success](#), particularly in the United States though to a lesser extent in the UK and Europe.

Their popularity as a symbol of city life has caused them to end up in homes not suited to providing the right care. Many city animal shelters are therefore inundated with abandoned and neglected Chihuahuas.

Nevertheless, they remain a popular canine companion and a much loved toy breed.

The Chihuahua breed has a complicated and fascinating history. From its origins in Chihuahua, Mexico history, to its burgeoning popularity as the perfect inner-city canine companion, and then to its present day prominence in popular culture, the Chihuahua has been on an interesting journey!

With their natural charm and personality, we can be confident they'll remain a much loved breed for a long time to come.

Sources

[American Kennel Club](#)

[UK Kennel Club](#)

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