

Hearing Latin American & Caribbean Countries In the Pacific Northwest

by Bruce Portzer

Recently there was an article by Mark Connelly et al in DX Monitor on how to hear each of 46 Latin American and Caribbean countries from the Northeast Corner of North America. Following in that same vein is this article, which covers reception of those same countries from another corner of North America, the Pacific Northwest.

Rankings and choice of the easiest to receive stations are based on reception patterns and dial conditions (co-channel and adjacent channel interference) in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia. However, with a few exceptions, this article should be valuable to persons living anywhere in the western U.S. and Canada. There are a few differences which DXers in other parts of the west should keep in mind. One of course is their own adjacent and co-channel interference situations, which vary from one city to another. For example, it may be relatively easy to null KFI to hear Cuba for a British Columbia DXer; however, a Los Angeles DXer would have a much rougher time performing this feat. Also bear in mind that Caribbean stations are heard more easily in southern California than in the northwest. Thus, while the Cayman Islands are ranked far down on this list, they might rank in the top ten for southern California DXers.

As a general rule, Latin American and Caribbean stations are more difficult to hear in the northwestern corner of the continent than in the rest of North America. One of the main reasons is because of distance; this part of the country is farther from Latin America than other regions. Another is that signals arrive here over paths that travel mainly over land and thus are not received as well as if they had arrived over sea water. Finally, there is almost no time when co-channel domestic interference is in daylight and Latins are still in darkness. The only exception worth mentioning is during late spring/early summer, when a few parts of Mexico and the west coast of South America receive daylight later than the midwestern U.S. and Canada.

On the following pages, I've ranked the Latin American and Caribbean countries from the easiest (1) to most difficult (46) to receive. I've also broken the countries into categories (easy, moderate, etc.) which will be explained as I go along.

EASY - The following countries can be heard by relatively inexperienced DXers on relatively unsophisticated equipment (such as a GE Superradio or Realistic TRF with air- or ferrite- core loop). Most can best be heard during the evening hours (before midnight PST) and some have stations which broadcast in English.

- México. As if it wasn't obvious, the English language border stations make this country numero uno. XETRA-690, XEMO-860, XEROK-800, and XEG-1050 lead the pack. If you want some "authentic" Mexican reception (i.e. not beamed to U.S. audiences), XEWA-540 and XERPM-660 can be received most evenings. Dozens of other Mexican stations can also be heard here at various times of the evening and night.
- Nicaragua. Radio Sandino-750 overpowers WSB most evenings and is probably the easiest non-Mexican foreign station to receive in these parts.
- Cuba. The 880 kHz outlet is in every night after KRVN signs off. IDs are difficult to pick out at times, but the syrupy instrumental music and female announcer are distinctive. The 780 kHz outlet battles WBBM every Sunday morning when KCRL is off. CMQ-640 can often be heard with KFI nulled. Other outlets sometimes heard here include 590, 660, 670, 840, 1180, and 1210 kHz.
- Colombia. HJAJ-760, HJCE-890, and HJBI-840 are received here quite often during the evening. HJAQ-1000 and HJJR-1005 are heard regularly on Monday mornings with KOMO off. HJFF-1210 sometimes is heard if CKDA sloop happens to be merciful. HJCY-810 is heard during rare KGO silent periods. And many other outlets can be heard under good conditions.

- Belize. R. Belize-834 eludes many a DXer due to its shallow modulation and TV sync birdies on the same frequency. However, it is heard fairly often during the evenings or after it's 1100 s/on.
- Costa Rica. Titania-825 often makes a good showing with its mixture of U.S. and Latin pop music and a sweet young lady intoning "Titania" in the middle of most songs. TIW-775 and Sonora-675 sometimes poke through the splatter from West Coast 50 kwers. TIHB-700 is another good target to shoot for, as is TISRHB-1125.
- Netherlands Antilles. PJB-800 sometimes makes a respectable showing around 0500 UTC (9 pm PST) through the Canadian and Mexican QRM. This station has been heard by several relatively inexperienced DXers at this time with English language news.
- El Salvador. YSS-655 can be heard many evenings and after 1100 UTC s/on. Listen for "R. Nacional de El Salvador" IDs.

MODERATE DIFFICULTY - The following countries require a bit of patience and skill, plus a decent receiver/antenna system. However, they are regularly received by many DXers in this corner of the continent.

- Panamá. R. Libertad-840 is probably the easiest Panamanian. Onda Tropical-1200 may show up regularly in the future (try Monday mornings when WOAI is off). R. Macaracas-825 has been reported by many DXers battling Titania evenings, although I've never heard it.
- Haiti. 4VEC-1035 makes its best showing around 1100, although reception will be rougher with KTWO-1030 apparently now NSP. 4VUE-660 is also worth looking for.
- Venezuela. YVOZ-1200 shows up some Monday mornings with WOAI off. YVNA-660 is also a good bet around 1000 on weekday mornings. YVKS-750 hasn't been heard lately, but might occasionally top WSB/KFQD.
- Surinam. If you can get past the CKLG-730 sloop, SRS-725 is a good possibility in early evening or after about 0900 in the morning.
- Dominican Republic. HILR-860 was heard fairly often on Monday mornings before last summer's hurricanes, although it could still show up out here. HIJB-830 might also make it through the ether.
- Honduras. R. Honduras-880 was heard well last season just after KRVN signed off. R. Moderna-830, likewise, when WCCO wasn't too obnoxious.
- Guatemala. TGW-640 might make it through a nulled KFI. TGJ-880 sometimes can be heard with KRVN nulled or aurorally attenuated.
- Saint Kitts. Radio Paradise-1265 is best on Monday mornings with the 1270 crowd off the air.

DIFFICULT - It definitely takes experience, skill, a communications receiver, and a loop or Beverage to bag these countries. The experienced foreign DXer can expect to receive them once a year if he or she is lucky.

- Jamaica. JBC-700 and 750 sometimes override the eastern clears and/or other Latins on their channels.
- Ecuador. HCFA2-540 sometimes comes in during the wee early hours. HCEW2-995 is another good bet for this country. Try Monday mornings with KOMO off.
- Cayman Islands. While this country is "easy" in most parts of the U.S. it is very difficult to receive here. The best bet is the 1205 outlet which can be heard evenings when conditions are good. 1555 is hopeless during the evening and difficult at 1100 signon.
- Peru. R. Nacional-854 pierces the KTAC splash every once in a while. R. América-1010 is occasionally heard through the various QRMers on the channel. Onda Popular-1040 has been heard a couple times in Seattle. Try Sunday mornings with WHO off.

21. Antigua. Caribbean Radio Lighthouse makes an occasional showing through the 1160/1170 splash. ZDK-1100 might make it through some day with KFAQ off or looped.
22. Puerto Rico. WRSJ-1560 has been heard at signon, though not recently. WAPA-680 has been heard with KNBR off, which isn't too often.
23. Dominica. Another rarie. Try 595 some morning and hope for the best.
24. Montserrat. The 740 outlet was heard a few times at Monday morning signon before KCBS moved their SP to Sundays. The 885 kHz outlet might now be the best bet.
25. Argentina. Radio Del Plata-1030 poked through XEQR and Colombia about once a year, but with KTWO apparently now NSP that one morning a year will have to coincide with a KTWO silent period. Only other likely bet would be LRA-870 if WWL ever goes off.
26. Brazil. R. Globo was a good bet on 1180 but it's hopeless on 1220. Best bet for this country would be R. Tupi-1040, which can sometimes cut through KPOI and the Colombians on Sunday morning with WHO off. R. Record-1000 made it here once several years ago and might make it out this way again.
27. Saint Lucia. The outlet on 660 is worth a try some morning.
28. Chile. R. Diego Garcia-1180 was the best bet, but is reportedly now off the air. R. universidad Técnica-1210 was heard in California a couple seasons back. R. Portales-840 was heard in California on a Beverage a few seasons back. As another longshot, try for R. Cooperativa-760 if KPMB is ever off. WRTH lists their s/on as 1100 and the station was heard on the west coast during the 1960's.
29. British Virgin Islands. ZBVI-780 is a longshot. It was heard by many west coast DXers in the late 60's and early 70's. Nowadays, with KCRL off SM only, and WBBM NSP, the only hope is for them to sign on earlier than the listed 1500, or for KCRL to be off on the right weekday morning.
30. Bahamas. ZNS1-1540 can be heard if KZAM is off some Monday morning (very rare) and if KZLA and KXEL don't go NSP.
31. Paraguay. R. Caaguazú-645 is supposedly still on the air, but hasn't been heard in North America recently. It's worth checking for, though, if deep South American reception is promising.

THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE - The following countries have not been heard in western North America in recent years. Given the right conditions and/or a silent period from a certain NSP station, there's a slight chance they might make it in. Don't get your hopes too high for them.

32. Grenada. The 535 outlet is heard in the northeastern U.S. and has an open frequency. It could show up on the west coast some morning or evening if conditions are good to the Caribbean.
 33. Saint Vincent. This country's outlet on 705 also is heard on the east coast and has a clear frequency. Try for it Monday mornings with KIRO and KMPC off. Listed signon is 1030.
 34. Bolivia. The best bets I see are stations on 780 and 1530 which are heard in Scandinavia. Unfortunately, WRTH only lists low powered jobbies on these channels, so I'm not sure of slogan or location. At any rate, 780 would require a KCRL silent period (Sundays) and WBBM to be nulled or wiped out by aurora. Ditto 1530 with KFBK (Monday SP) and WCKY. Other possibilities: R. Illimani-1020 with KTNQ off or R. Mendez-680 with KNBR off. Don't hold your breath waiting for them though....
 35. US Virgin Islands. WWVI-1000 seems possible at 1000 Monday morning signon with KOMO off, but to the best of my knowledge it hasn't been heard out here.
 36. Guyana. GBS-760 might show up some day if KPMB is off or nulled, WJR is off, and HJAJ and KGU cooperate. Like I said, it might show up....
 37. Guadeloupe. All you need to do is wait for the right KFI silent period and cooperation from the Cuban. The 640 outlet has a listed schedule of 1030-0230. Don't get your hopes up for this one either, but it could show up out here some day.
 38. Barbados. CBC-900 needs a CJVI silent period as a minimum and I have no idea how many years it's been since that happened. Maybe some day, during the wee early morning hours....
 39. Trinidad. R. Trinidad-730 could show up during a CKLG silent period (and they actually happen sometimes). Even then, you'd still have XEX and the Colombian to contend with. R. Guardian-610 is a hopeless case. When KPRC goes off, there's still about a dozen domestics to contend with.
 40. Anguilla. Radio Anguilla-1505 has a clear frequency but only 500 watts of power. But it was heard years ago in Edmonton on a DX test. Maybe some day at 1030 signon it will miraculously appear.
- YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING - The following countries are close to hopeless at the moment, if not totally hopeless. Based on current station status in these countries and the current schedules of co-channel domestics, I see little hope in hearing any of them.
41. Uruguay. R. Carvé-850 was heard in California a few years ago but at the moment, reception here would require simultaneous silent periods from KTAC, KOA, and CKRD, which I can't see happening. SODRE-650 is supposedly planning a power increase to 100 kw which might change things a bit, but in the meantime, uh uh....
 42. French Guiana. The 1070 kHz outlet would require simultaneous KNX and CFAX silent periods to be even worth thinking about. KNX sometimes goes off. CFAX never does. Even if they were both off, there would probably be some other domestic or Latin station wiping out the channel.
 43. Bermuda. With two graveyarders and a 960 kHz station here, I can't imagine hearing them. As the absolute minimum, NSPers CFAC, KABL, and KAYK would have to be off, stations further east would probably also have to be off, and conditions would have to be really good. If KABL, KAYK, and CFAC went off and I heard Phoenix, I would be ecstatic. Hearing Bermuda as well would be more than I could handle....
 44. Martinique. This station was a rarity in the southeast U.S. before a recent hurricane damaged their transmitting system. Since it broadcasts on 1310, an NSP cluttered channel, it's chances of getting out this far are infinitesimally small.
 45. Turks and Caicos. This country's 1550 kHz outlet only has to fight through NSPers like KGAR, KRGO, KQWB, WOKJ, and I-don't-know-who-else to be heard here. The only chance I see of this one being heard out here is if the FCC decides that all radio stations go off the air between midnight and 5 am to conserve energy. If you believe that will ever happen then you probably also believe in the Easter Bunny.....
 46. Falkland Islands. The 536 kHz outlet is on the air mainly during daylight hours. Our only hope of hearing it is for a group of penguins to commandeer the station and run a late night DX test.

In comparing the preceding list with the one compiled by Connelly, Kazaross, and DeLorenzo, certain differences can be generalized. In the northeastern U.S., Caribbean stations are ranked much higher than they are out here. On the other hand, Central American countries do better on the west coast than on the east coast. Some countries, such as Colombia and Cuba, seem to fare equally well on either coast. Western and southern South American countries, while difficult to receive throughout North America, seem to be less difficult in the Northwest than in the Northeast.