

FLOODED VENEZUELAN TOWN VISITED BY FORMER RESIDENTS



Venezuelan Potosi was intentionally flooded in 1985 to make way for a massive hydroelectric dam. The El Nino combined with excessive drought has caused the small town to reappear on the surface as Venezuela faces an acute energy crisis.

In 1985, the then Venezuelan President, Carlos Andres Perez, circled above the Venezuelan town of Potosi and announced that the town need be deserted. Its location was ideal for building a massive hydroelectric dam and its 1,200 inhabitants were forced to leave everything behind and find a new life, a new home. **Now, 25 years later, dry weather conditions and the El Nino phenomenon have resulted in a significant drop of water levels and Potosi has resurfaced revealing a sad image.**

Water levels used to be measured by the 26 m high church tower, which is now completely dry, and many houses, the town square, and local cemetery are fully visible. The levels in the Uribante reservoir have dropped by 30 m (98 ft); another 3 m (10 ft) and the plant will no longer be able to produce electricity. **Several former residents have returned to visit what once used to be their home and recalled the painful memories of their forced leave.**

Recently, President Hugo Chavez reacted to the energy crisis and announced an electricity emergency in Venezuela. Hydropower generates some 68% of all electricity here and the drought has had a terrible impact this year. In a massive effort to save power, the government has decided to fine those who fail to cut back on their energy use and thus violate the country's newly launched energy saving campaign.

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