World Geography

This chapter requires a companion activity book in which students respond to questions on text content. A quiz follows every fifth lesson. Answers are found in the *Teacher's Resource Kit.*



Chapter 2

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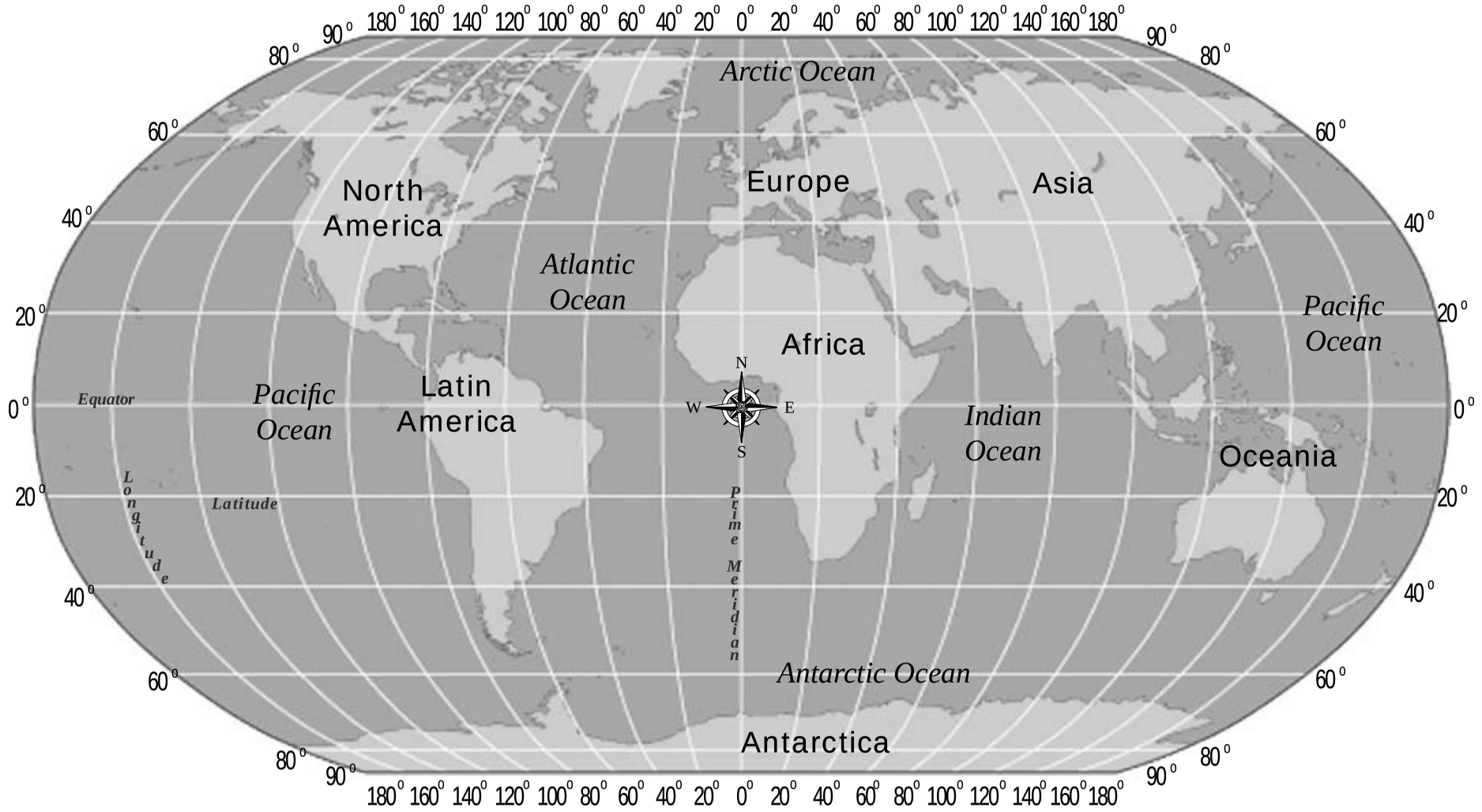


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MAP A

The World



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Largest Metropolitan Areas

Latin America



World Rank	Rank	Central City	Country	Population	Outlying Areas / Suburbs
7	1	São Paulo	Brazil	21,000,000	Guarulhos
17	2	Buenos Aires	Argentina	13,800,000	San Justo, La Plata
21	3	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	12,500,000	Nova Iguaçu, São Gonçalo
30	4	Lima	Peru	8,850,000	
32	5	Bogotá	Colombia	8,600,000	Usme
50	6	Santiago	Chile	5,950,000	El Monte, Pirque
51	7	Belo Horizonte	Brazil	5,850,000	Contagem, Santa Luzia
=65	8	Caracas	Venezuela	4,950,000	La Ciénega
82	9	Porte Alegre	Brazil	4,275,000	Alvorada
93	10	Brasília	Brazil	3,875,000	
94	11	Recife	Brazil	3,850,000	Olinda
=100	=12	Fortaleza	Brazil	3,650,000	Eusébio
=100	=12	Salvador	Brazil	3,650,000	Lauro de Freitas, Simões Filho
=104	14	Medellín	Colombia	3,550,000	Bello, Itagüí
=107	15	Curitiba	Brazil	3,475,000	São José dos Pinhais
138	16	Campinas	Brazil	2,900,000	
=149	17	Cali	Colombia	2,750,000	
151	18	Guatemala City	Guatemala	2,725,000	Mixco
=166	19	Guayaquil	Ecuador	2,475,000	
=179	20	Maracaibo	Venezuela	2,325,000	San Benito
=186	21	Belém	Brazil	2,250,000	Ananindeua, Marituba
=199	=22	Asunción	Paraguay	2,100,000	Mariano Roque Alonso, San Antonio
=199	=22	Goiânia	Brazil	2,100,000	Aparecida de Goiânia
=212	24	Valencia	Venezuela	1,970,000	Guacara
=237	25	Manaus	Brazil	1,850,000	

All information from http://www.citypopulation.de/world/agglomerations.html and accurate as of December 31, 2009.

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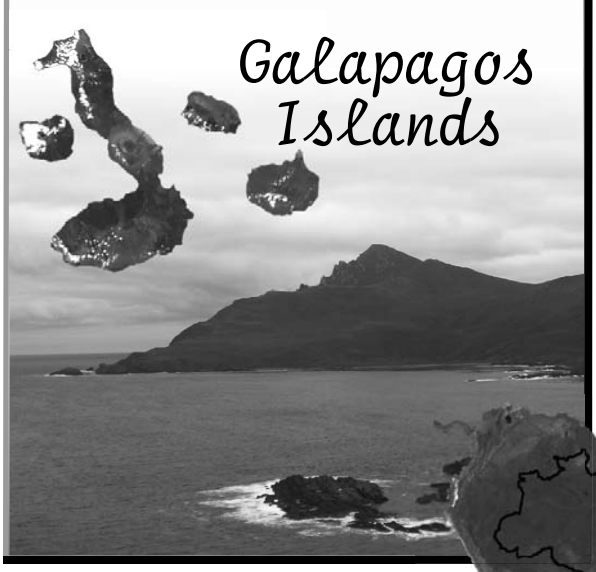
World Geography

Chapter 2

Lesson 1
Borders and Boundaries

Section 1
Lessons 1-5

Borders and Boundaries of Latin America



Geographers refer to Latin America as all the land of the Americas south and east of the United States. The designation includes all of Mexico, Central, and South America, as well as the Caribbean islands and some outlying South American territories. In both geographical and common usage, however, the term differs in its meaning. Many people referring to the region, particularly in North America, embrace this wider definition, lumping all countries in these regions under the Latin American name. Others, often those living in the region or geographers and linguistic scholars, mean only the nations in which Romance languages dominate, which were, historically, derived from Latin. This designation admittedly includes most countries below the U.S., but notably leaves out a few, such as Suriname, the territory of French Guiana in South America, and several Caribbean islands. Some narrow the definition even further, admitting only those countries that were once Spanish or Portuguese colonies. This definition excludes many other Caribbean nations, yet includes most of Central and South America.

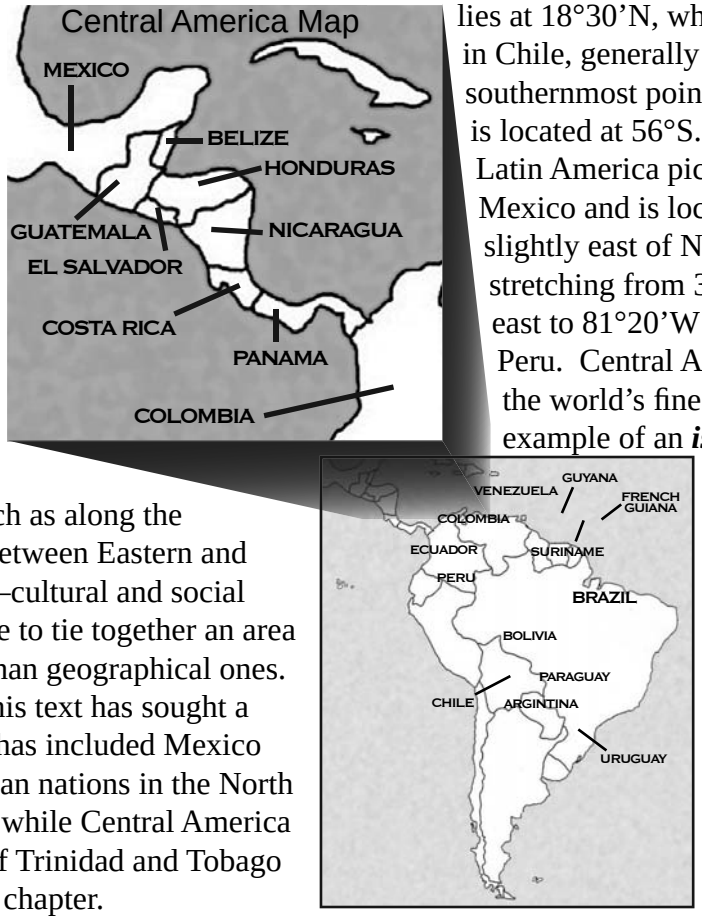
In any of these definitions, Latin America overlaps with the continent of North America in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Sea. Most geographers and sociologists consider all these lands part of North America, and limit the continent of South America to those countries below Panama. While this understanding provides for a uniform and recognizable basis for defining regions, the fact is that those countries south of the United States are

VOCABULARY

Isthmus: narrow strip of land with water on both sides connecting two larger landmasses
Cape: an area of land projecting into a body of water
Biodiversity: characterized by high numbers and variations of plant and animal life
Basin: natural depression

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bound together culturally, generally sharing the Spanish language (with a few exceptions) and either Spanish or Portuguese heritage. As is the case in some other areas of the world—such as along the fuzzy boundary between Eastern and Western Europe—cultural and social factors often serve to tie together an area far more tightly than geographical ones. For this reason, this text has sought a compromise and has included Mexico and most Caribbean nations in the North America chapter, while Central America and the country of Trinidad and Tobago are treated in this chapter.

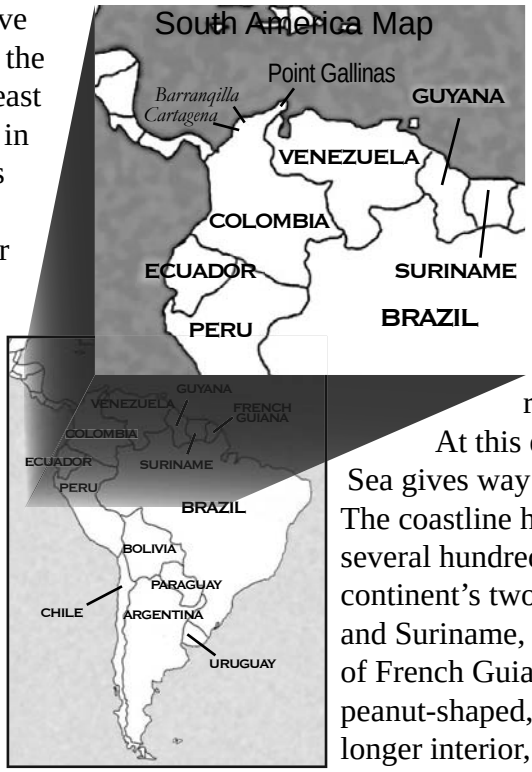


Latin America, as defined in this textbook, is spread primarily in the southern and western corners of the globe, covering nearly 13% of Earth's land area and just over 3% of its total surface. Its population hovers around 422 million, of which South America counts for 380 million, placing that continent and the region, if it is to be treated as a continent, at fifth-place in the world. Latin America, as it is traditionally defined, covers about 7.9 million square miles, putting it slightly behind North America; if Mexico and the Caribbean are given to North America, as this book has done, its total square mileage comes in closer to 7 million. Geographically, Latin America is spread across a wide range of latitudes. In the north, the border of Guatemala lies at 18°30'N, while Cape Horn in Chile, generally considered the southernmost point in the Americas, is located at 56°S. Longitudinally, Latin America picks up from Mexico and is located south and slightly east of North America, stretching from 34°48'W in the east to 81°20'W on the coast of Peru. Central America is perhaps the world's finest and largest example of an ***isthmus***, while off the coast of South America, archipelagos parallel shorelines.

Latin America has a total of twenty sovereign nations, twelve of which are in South America, seven of which are in Central America, and one which is a pair of islands off the South American coast. In the north, Guatemala and Belize border Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, the former in the west and the latter in the east. Guatemala is the most populous isthmus country, with over 14 million as of July 2009; Belize is its second smallest by area. Next to Guatemala, Honduras provides an eastern border, while tiny El Salvador wedges between them in the south. Farther south, Honduras shares its border solely with Nicaragua, the largest but fifth-most populous Central American country, whose east is largely divided from its west by large Lake Nicaragua. Continuing south into Costa Rica, the isthmus narrows to 75 miles across; further into Panama, its narrowest point is just 31 miles across. Panama halts

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the southeasterly coastline and actually resembles a snake, winding essentially east across the Panama Canal before meeting the South American country of Colombia. Of the seven countries, five have frontage on both the Caribbean Sea in the east and the Pacific Ocean in the west; Belize fronts only the Caribbean Sea, while El Salvador borders only the Pacific. Because it dramatically narrows the already narrow Central American region, Panama is often referred to as an isthmus of its own.



Across the South American border, the land's breadth expands colossally, as the coastline runs northeast and south from Panama. Colombia is the most northwestern country in South America and is twice as large as all of Central America, occupying 440,000 square miles. To the north, the coastline follows a somewhat irregular trajectory for about 500 miles, passing the cities of Cartagena and Barranquilla before hooking around Point Gallinas, the continent's northernmost location. The country of Venezuela borders the Gulf of Venezuela and the connected Lake Maracaibo. A few hundred miles east, its capital, Caracas, is located on the Caribbean coast, and the coastline continues for several hundred miles east to Guyana. Trinidad and Tobago, which covers about 2,000 square miles, lies seven miles off the eastern Venezuelan coast.

In Guyana, the coastline becomes less rugged and turns southeast. At this eastern point, the Caribbean Sea gives way to open Atlantic Ocean. The coastline heads mostly southeast for several hundred miles, passing by the continent's two smallest nations, Guyana and Suriname, and the French territory of French Guiana. Guyana is somewhat peanut-shaped, with a short coastline but a longer interior, while Suriname and French Guiana are slightly more symmetrical. The coastline turns more sharply south along the coast of Brazil. Brazil comprises nearly half of Latin America by area, and its population of 192 million constitutes half the people living in South America. Not far south, the Atlantic Ocean receives inflow from the massive Amazon River Basin, which actually includes numerous rivers and tributaries. Several large islands like Marajó sit at the river's mouth. The coastline resumes a somewhat jagged path past this point and turns east, passing São Luís. Several important cities lie on the far eastern coast, including Natal and Recife, and rounding Brazil's eastern ***cape*** the São Francisco River carves into the country. For more than 1,200 miles, the coastline travels increasingly southwest,

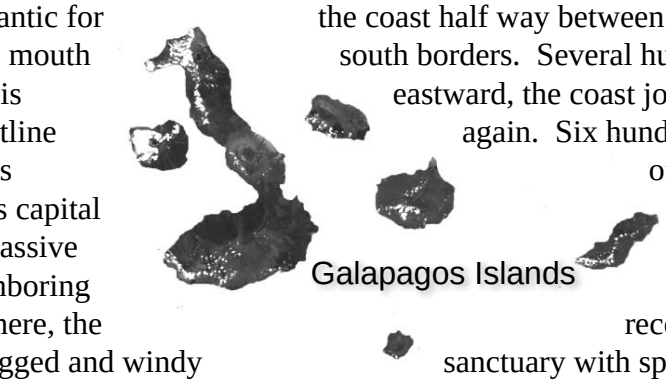


Point Gallinas

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past the historic city of Salvador. Brazil's two largest cities, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, are located just 100 miles apart on the country's southern coast. In the far south, the Lagoon of the Ducks is among the largest freshwater lagoons in the world.

Brazil's coastline is the 16th-longest in the world. It measures 4,654 miles, all of which are on the Atlantic Ocean. In the south, it gives way to Uruguay, which borders the South Atlantic for about 500 miles. The mouth of the Rio de la Plata is the most notable coastline feature here; its shores reaching to Uruguay's capital of Montevideo and massive Buenos Aires in neighboring Argentina. South of here, the coastline follows a rugged and windy path relatively south. Near Argentina's southern tip, Laguna del Carbón is a salt lake on the Atlantic coast and is the lowest point in both the Western and Southern Hemispheres at 340 feet below sea level. As the coast starts breaking up in the extreme south, the Strait of Magellan presents the first water route through the continent; 100 miles farther, Cape Horn is the continent's southernmost point. The British territory of the Falkland Islands lies several hundred miles east of Rio Gallegos, Argentina. The islands are claimed by Argentina despite their historic claim by Britain.


Galapagos Islands


Cape Horn

The coastline then pulls a hairpin turn and heads due north, with large and small islands fragmented off the Chilean mainland. The land in southern Chile is mountainous and sparsely inhabited, and hundreds of islands extend the coastal mileage well over the 2,580 miles geographers officially recognize. Past Puerto Monte, the islands suddenly cease, and the shore becomes smooth. It passes Concepción and eventually Antofagasta before nudging slightly west as Chile ends and Peru begins. Peru's coast extends for hundreds of miles. The capital, Lima, is on the coast half way between the north and south borders. Several hundred miles eastward, the coast joins Panama again. Six hundred miles west of Ecuador lie the Galapagos Islands, an internationally recognized wildlife sanctuary with species found nowhere else in the world. The islands are home to a small permanent population; over 97% are nationally protected by Ecuador, the islands' owner. Aside from their ***biodiversity***, the Galapagos are perhaps most famous for their connection with Charles Darwin, who formed his theory of evolution while studying wildlife on the islands in the 1830s.

Brazil constitutes the largest area in South America, covering the Amazon River Basin in the north and a broad highland south of the ***basin*** called the Mato Grosso Plateau. All of the countries in the north, from Ecuador to the French Guiana territory, border Brazil, as well as their own respective bodies of water. These are of varying sizes, ranging from Peru's 496,000 square miles to French Guiana's 35,000. Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, which are all situated on the continent's northwest, are

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the largest, while the northeastern countries tend to be smaller. However, Ecuador in the northwest is also small. The landlocked nation of Bolivia lies southeast of Peru and in the cleft of Brazil, while Paraguay is situated southeast of Bolivia and south of Brazil. Chile is entirely a border country, measuring an average of 100 miles across but stretching for 2,700 miles from north to south. Argentina is similarly narrow and long, but it is much wider than Chile, especially in the north where it is wedged between Chile and Uruguay.



Life Principle

Success is measured not so much by the position the one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.

- Booker T. Washington

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World Geography

Chapter 2



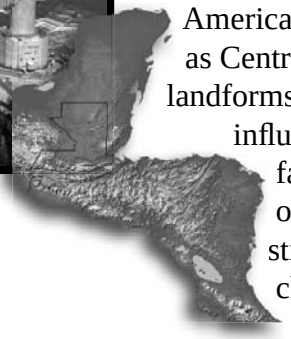
Lesson 2
Terrain



Section 1
Lessons 1-5



To map the terrain of Latin America is essentially to do so in two separate regions. Because Latin America, in this text, refers to both the isthmus of Central America and the continent of South America (with several additional island locations), an examination of the region's topography must almost necessarily deal with the two separately. Geographically, Central and South America are quite different. South America is nearly thirty-five times as large as Central America, encompasses terrain and landforms that are far more diverse, and is influenced by many more environmental factors, including climatic and marine ones. In spite of this, Central America still exhibits some topographical characteristics that South America lacks.



Despite their differences, Central and South America do share some common threads in regard to their terrain. Central America is much like a long island, or archipelago, in that it is essentially a mountain range rising out of the surrounding ocean. It is part of the American Cordillera, linking Mexico's series of Sierra Madre ranges with the peaks and ranges of the Andes Mountains in South America. Like South America, Central America displays a high level of biodiversity, enabled largely by the jungles scattered about it. And away from the highest mountain peaks, both Central and South America enjoy lush plains and fertile valleys, regions that large numbers of Latin Americans call home.

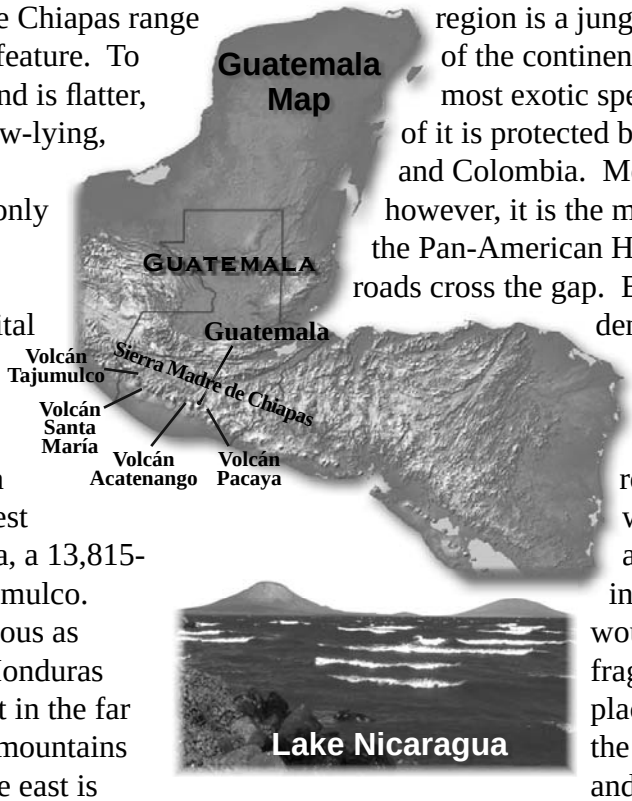
Central America picks up in Guatemala close to the end of Mexico's Sierra Madre del Sur Mountains. In south and southwest Guatemala, the terrain is rugged and hilly,

VOCABULARY

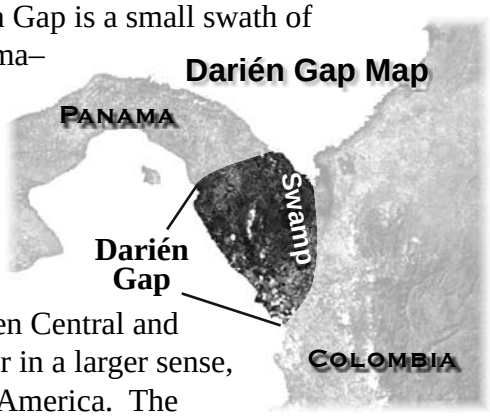
Ecosystem: community of plants, animals, microorganisms, and their environments, functioning together as a unit
Guerilla: pertaining to unconventional warfare using mobile tactics, such as ambushes and raids
Llano: in Latin America, extensive grassy and largely treeless plain
Anticyclone: system of winds spiraling out from a center of high air pressure

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with the Sierra Madre de Chiapas range the country's dominant feature. To the north and east the land is flatter, and Belize is actually low-lying, the highest point, called Doyle's Delight, rising only 3,805 feet. Many cities exist in these countries' lower areas, but the capital of Guatemala is built on the mountain spine, as are several other major cities. Guatemala actually boasts the highest point in Central America, a 13,815-foot volcano called Tajumulco. El Salvador is mountainous as well, and neighboring Honduras is extremely hilly except in the far east. In Nicaragua, the mountains taper off somewhat. The east is a fertile plain stretching to the Caribbean Sea, while in the southeast, Lake Nicaragua sits at 100 feet above sea level, the largest lake in Central America. In Costa Rica, the Cordillera Talamanca pushes the plains out to the coasts and nearly reaches the heights of Guatemala's summits. Western Panama is located in the middle of these mountains, but they level out to near sea level in the center, resuming only briefly before the Darién Gap.



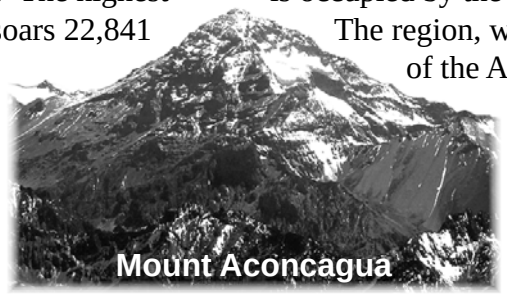
The Darién Gap is a small swath of land on the Panama–Colombia border, and it is significant for several reasons. First, the land marks the border between Central and South America, or in a larger sense, North and South America. The region is a jungle, hosting some of the continent's rarest and most exotic species, and much of it is protected by both Panama and Colombia. More intriguingly, however, it is the missing link on the Pan-American Highway, as no roads cross the gap. Because of the dense forest cover, and in some areas the marshy swampland, road construction would be costly, and studies have indicated a road would threaten the fragile ***ecosystems*** in place there. As such, the gap is dangerous and shrouded in mystery, as many would-be crossers have been kidnapped by native tribes or ***guerilla*** soldiers, or killed by animals. Several successful crossings have been made, but these are highly discouraged; for all practical purposes, plane or ferry crossings are the only means of travel between Panama and Colombia.



Despite South America's size, the terrain is misleadingly simple. There are three primary topographic regions on the continent: the Andes on the Pacific coast, a large lowland or basin dominated by the Amazon River, and a series of highlands to the southeast. Of these, the first two are far more typically associated with South America. The Andes are the continent's premier mountain chain, the most impressive in the Western Hemisphere, and the world's

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longest, carving down the coastline for 4,300 miles and spanning up to 430 miles in width. They are the highest range outside Asia and the highest in both the western and southern hemispheres: The highest peak, Mount Aconcagua, soars 22,841 feet above sea level. The Amazon River, the world's second longest and by far the largest, is an incredible feature, a wonder of nature that lies at the heart of a colossal ecosystem that is no less staggering.


Mount Aconcagua

Across the Colombian border from Panama, the mountains resume quickly. The Andes actually begin in Venezuela near Barquisimeto, and by the Colombian border they have climbed quite high. Colombia's capital of Bogotá is one of three Andean South American capitals, along with Quito, Ecuador and La Paz, Bolivia, and lies at nearly 8,700 feet in elevation. From their origin, the mountains generally take a southwesterly arc, gradually turning southwardly through Colombia and into Ecuador. They lie extremely close to the Pacific coast, in some places separated from the ocean by just 10 or 20 miles. In these northwestern countries, the Andes are actually comprised of several mountain ranges: the Cordillera Occidental and the Cordillera Oriental—and for a short spell in Colombia, the Cordillera Central. In a valley between two of these, Colombia's Magdalena River snakes up to the Caribbean coast, its mouth sprawling across a lowland. In Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela, are somewhat high, grassy plains called ***llanos*** east of the Andes, but in southeastern Venezuela the Guiana Highlands rise sharply. These dominate the southern areas of Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. On the coast, these countries have gradually tapering plains.

South of the Guiana Highlands and east of the Andes, much of South America is occupied by the Amazon River Basin. The region, which is mostly comprised of the Amazon Rainforest, is low-lying and stretches from central Peru and southwestern Colombia to eastern Brazil. It is a vast area, encompassing in excess of 2.7 million square miles, an area slightly smaller than Australia, and it accounts for more than half of Brazil's total area. This region is thinly populated, the largest settlement being Manaus; although modern engineers are capable of bridging the river itself, no bridges cross it at any point because so few people live there. At its huge mouth, the Brazilian coastline fractures, and numerous islands exist as river meets ocean. The largest of these is Marajó, a landmass comparable in size to Switzerland that is surrounded entirely by fresh water.

Southeast of the Amazon jungles, the Brazilian Highlands rise gently across Brazil to the eastern cape and the country's major metropolises in the southeast. The northwestern section of the highlands is the Mato Grosso Plateau, whose elevation is approximately 1,650 feet. Population is still thin in this area, but small cities exist, and the city of Cuiabá is a regional capital of sorts, located at the center of South America. About 500 miles due east, capital Brasília is located in the central section of the highlands, while Brazil's most populous cities lie on the coast in a spectacular area where low, sharp mountain peaks rise out of the ocean. Several major rivers run through this region, including the

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Tocantins and the São Francisco. In the south of Brazil, the highlands are not quite as rugged, and they give way to a plain past Porte Alegre. Uruguay and most of eastern Argentina lie in a region called the Pampas, a Native American word for "plain." Latin America's three largest metropolitan areas—São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro—lie on its southwestern coast.



In the far south of South America, the region called Patagonia is a transitional area between high Andean peaks in Chile and western Argentina and the Atlantic plains in the east. The area is not widely inhabited, and as the region is far from the Equator, glaciers are present along the coast, while mountain snowfall dares to inch far down the Andean slopes. Just a couple hundred miles from the Andes, salt lakes and natural depressions exist near the Atlantic. Laguna del Carbón is the lowest point in the Americas, while other locations like Valdes Peninsula are several hundred feet below sea level, as well. In the far south, the mountains give way to the sea.

Chile is overwhelmed by the Andes, which traverse its long sliver of coastline most of the way up, although its higher peaks are across the Argentine border. The capital of Santiago is located in the nation's central valley and is only 850 feet above sea level, but the mountain summits provide a dramatic backdrop not far off. In Chile's north lies the Atacama Desert. The desert, nestled between the Andes and the Chilean Coast Range on the Pacific, is about 600 miles long and is by all measures the driest place on Earth. A confluence of factors is responsible for this, the most significant of which is its location in the Andean rain shadow, but ocean currents and the Pacific ***anticyclone*** also prevent moisture from approaching the desert. The dryness of the region is indeed staggering: near Antofagasta, annual precipitation totals are around 0.04 inches per year, and some weather stations have never received rainfall.

Bolivia is mountainous in the west and flat in the east. Bolivia's capital La Paz is the highest national capital in the world at 11,940 feet, while in the north the country nearly touches the Amazon Rainforest.



In Peru, the Andes also overlook the country's west, and more dramatically its southwest, while the east and especially northeast are flat. Off the coast of Argentina, the Falkland Islands number 778 individual islands with highly irregular coastlines, complete with natural inlets and harbors.

Life Principle

The summit is just the halfway point. **- Ed Viesturs**

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World Geography



Lesson 3
Bodies of Water

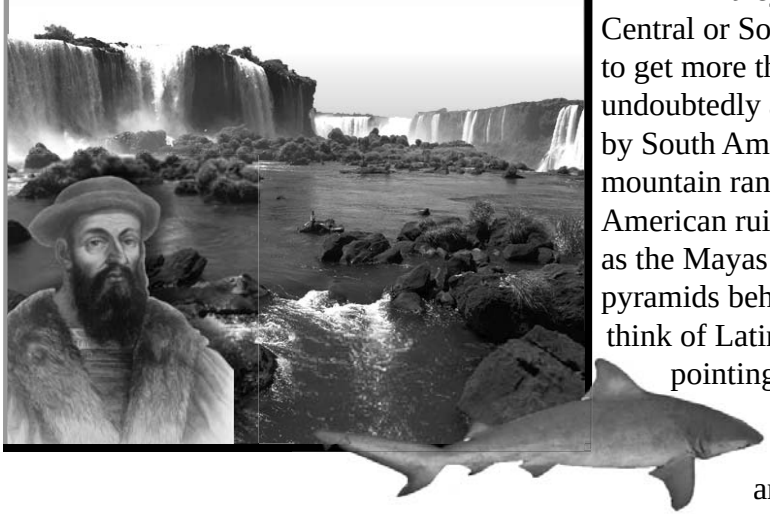
Chapter 2



Bodies of Water of Latin America

Section 1

Lessons 1-5



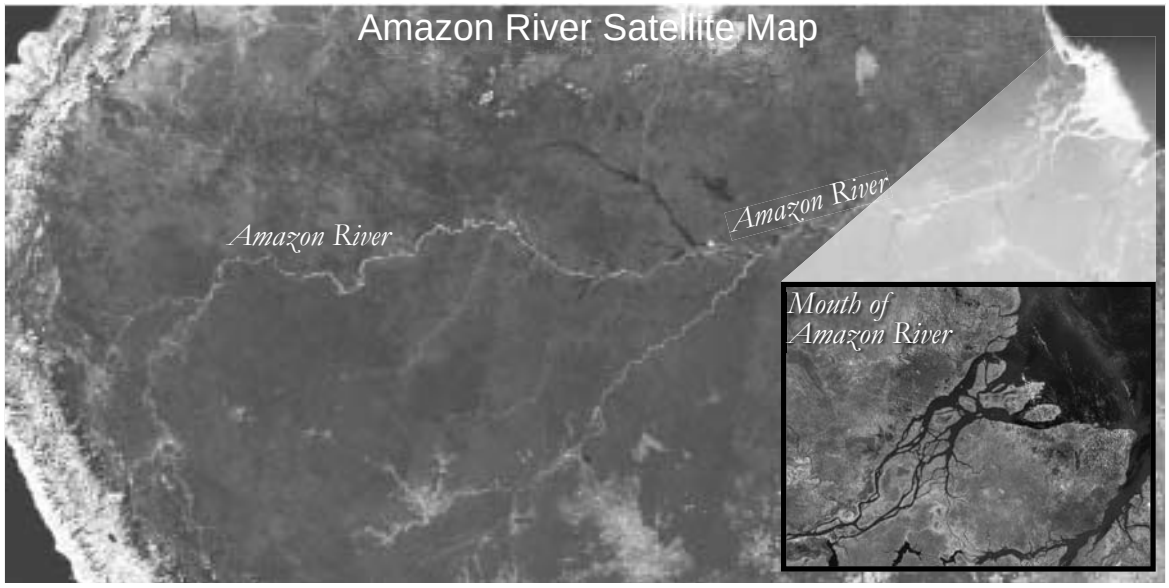
Ask the average group of people what they most naturally associate with Central or South America, and you're likely to get more than a few answers. Some will undoubtedly answer "the Andes," captivated by South America's colossal and spectacular mountain range. Some will mention Native American ruins, civilizations long extinct, such as the Mayas or Incas that left cities, temples, and pyramids behind. You'll likely get some who think of Latin America as a summer playground, pointing out tropical vacation destinations like Rio de Janeiro or Aruba, complete with sun-drenched beaches and liberal amounts of surfing and beach volleyball. A few more athletically inclined individuals may immediately think of Brazil's world-class soccer team, while those more politically bent might speak of corruption and drug problems that plague some countries. Perhaps none of these were your first answer—Latin America is a diverse and dynamic place on geographic, political, cultural, and historical levels.

Probably near the top of the list, however, would be the Amazon River. For those of you who know Amazon as only a website and not a geographical place, the river is among the most incredible features of nature. It is the second-longest river in the world, behind only the Nile, snaking for about 4,000 miles across the entire width of South America. (Some geographers dispute its second-place ranking, claiming it is actually longer than the Nile; the differences have to do with differing methods of measurement. As of 2009, however, consensus in the geographical community holds the Nile as the world's

VOCABULARY

Potable: suitable for drinking
Circumnavigate: to travel around
Crater lake: a lake or pond located in a volcanic crater
Silt: fine particles of earth that are deposited by water; somewhere between sand and clay in size

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longest, and the Amazon just behind it, although neither river has an agreed-upon figure for its length.) By every other definition, it is the world's largest river, accounting for about one-fifth of total world river flow. The river's elevation change is massive, as its source is located at 16,962 feet and its mouth is at sea level in the Atlantic Ocean. At some points near its mouth, the Amazon's width measures 120 miles including tributaries, and the primary river channel nears ten miles across. The Amazon pours 7.7 million cubic feet, or nearly 58 million gallons, of water every second into the Atlantic, a volume so great that the ocean is noticeably less saline 300 miles away from the coast. The mouth itself is so large it can be considered an estuary, with some islands surrounded entirely by fresh water, and water here, and even in nearby open ocean, is of ***potable*** quality. The Amazon's basin, which includes dozens of smaller rivers and tributaries, blankets 40% of the continent.



Nevado Mismi

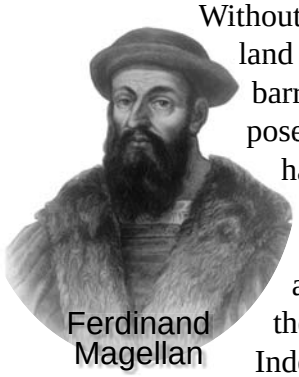
The Amazon is located about a third of the way down the South American continent, and tops Latin America's list of rivers as the most important and impressive one. It lies at the center of the vast Amazon Rainforest, which is home to one-third of the world's species and the most diverse ecological region on the planet. Its drainage basin is spread across six countries; 1,100 tributaries meet the river on its trek to the ocean, eleven of which exceed 1,000 miles long. Its origin is a mere trickle at the cliff called Nevado Mismi in western Peru.

The Amazon's girth and uniqueness elevate it to equal importance with the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, which bound the region in the east and west, respectively. They are the world's largest oceans, occupying 69 million and 41 million square miles, and for convenience they are typically divided into north and south sections at the Equator. In the west, the Pacific washes upon the Central American coast, follows the bulge of South America in its northwest, and then cuts in as the coast turns

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east. Along Central America, the body is generally considered the North Pacific, while in South America it gives way to the South Pacific. Across the continent, the Atlantic follows the same naming scheme, called the North Atlantic in the Central American latitudes and the South Atlantic in South America. In the region, however, and in tiny Trinidad and Tobago, the sea is not t Atlantic Ocean but the Caribbean Sea, and the northernmost Latin American country to border on the Atlantic Ocean proper is generally considered Guyana.

These two oceans have been of immeasurable importance to Latin America over the centuries. With the exception of North America, the region is far from any other continents—it is 2,000 miles from Africa, and more than 9,000 miles from Australia—and the vast Pacific and Atlantic form insulating barriers, protecting Latin America from foreign invasions. The Caribbean region and Central America are even farther removed from other major landmasses, and the sheer distance across either ocean has been a formidable hurdle for empires or would-be colonizers. On the flip side, since Europe began developing faster means of water travel in the 15th and 16th centuries, the open oceans have enabled travel to and from South America.


Ferdinand Magellan

Without the impasses that land mountain ranges or barren deserts would pose, South Americans have been able to conduct trade, commerce, travel, and exploration on the seas for centuries. Indeed, the Strait of Magellan, a narrow strip of water through Chile, not far from Cape Horn, was the best water route through the Americas since its discovery by Ferdinand Magellan in 1520. Europeans and Asians ***circumnavigating*** the globe used it heavily, in spite of its cold climate and glacial obstacles. When the Panama Canal was opened in 1914, it replaced the Strait as the passageway of choice, enabling vessels to cut thousands of miles off their voyages. To this day, ships coming to and from Latin America utilize both the Panama Canal and the Strait of Magellan thoroughly, the former much more so; this testifies to the oceans' importance to the region.


Panama Canal

Many of South America's longest and largest rivers drain into the Amazon. That said, some do not, and both those that are Amazon tributaries and those that are not have diverse characteristics. The second-longest river in Latin America is the Paraná, which runs through Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina for 1,600 miles before reaching the Rio de la Plata estuary. Not far from its mouth, the Paraná is joined by the Uruguay River, which is somewhat shorter at 900 miles. The Rio de la Plata is the widest river in the world, measuring thirty miles across at the confluence of the two rivers and 137 miles at its mouth at the Atlantic Ocean. The cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo are located on the river, which, near the ocean, is more an elongated bay or harbor than a river, though it retains the river designation.

Elsewhere, other rivers are

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important, though not as well known. The Purus River is the longest tributary of the Amazon, cutting through Peru and Brazil for 2,100 miles. The river is unique in that its drainage basin is extremely small for its size: only about 24,000 square miles of land drain into it, or about 12 square miles for every mile of its length. The São Francisco is the longest river completely inside Brazil, measuring 1,760 miles. Its origin is in the Brazilian highlands in the south, and it drains into the Atlantic Ocean on the country's northeast coast. On the Iguazu River, which straddles the border between Brazil and Argentina for part of its length, the Iguazu Falls are found. The waterfall has only a modest drop—270 feet—but has one of the highest discharges of water in the world, between 350,000 and 400,000 gallons a second. Some hundred miles north, the Iguazu Falls are dwarfed by Angel Falls in Venezuela. These are the world's highest falls, where water from a small stream spill 3,200 feet over the edge into the Kerep River.

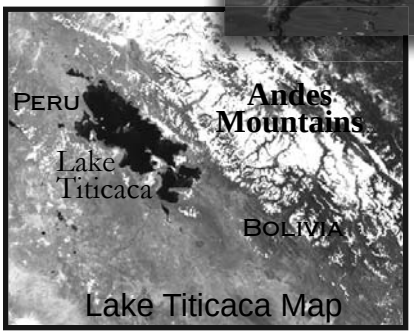


Iguazu Falls

Several major lakes exist in Latin America, as well. The best known of these is probably Lake Titicaca, located on the border between Peru and Bolivia. The lake is slightly smaller than Venezuela's Lake Maracaibo by surface area, but is larger by volume, making it the largest lake by volume in South America. Occupying 3,232 square miles, all of which are commercially navigable, Lake Titicaca sits at 12,500 feet above sea level in the Altiplano basin, making it one of the highest lakes in the world. Despite its height, Lake Titicaca is not the highest Latin American lake. That honor goes to the ***crater lake*** of Ojos del Salado, the highest volcano in the world. Located on the Argentina–Chile border, the small pool inside it is indeed the world's highest, as well, situated 20,960 feet above sea level. Many volcanoes in the highest Andean peaks have permanent pools in their craters, and some of these rival small ponds in the Himalayas for the right to be called among the highest in the world.

Just south of the Gulf of Venezuela, Lake Maracaibo is the largest lake in Latin America by surface area, occupying 5,100 square miles. The lake is actually connected by the Tablazo Strait to the Gulf of Venezuela, technically making it a bay. Some speculate that thousands of years ago, however, the lake was not connected to the gulf, and despite some calls in the geographic community for it to be stripped of the designation, Maracaibo is still largely considered a lake in Venezuela and around the world. Surrounding areas contain large reserves of oil, and because of its near-coastal location, the ***silt***-rich Maracaibo is a major commercial and shipping route. In Nicaragua, Lake Nicaragua is the 21st-largest lake in the world, covering 3,200 square miles. The body of water

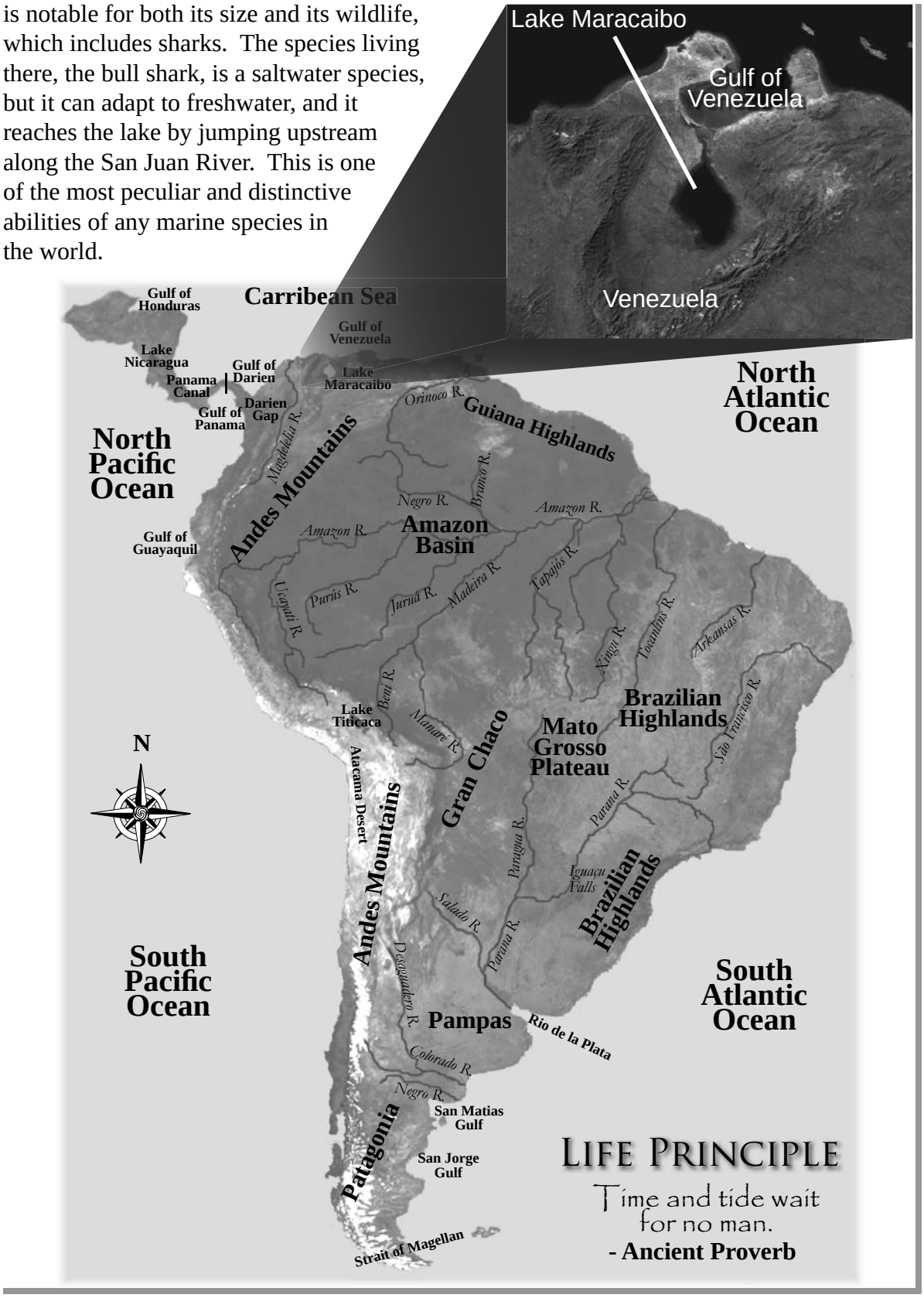




Lake Titicaca Map

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is notable for both its size and its wildlife, which includes sharks. The species living there, the bull shark, is a saltwater species, but it can adapt to freshwater, and it reaches the lake by jumping upstream along the San Juan River. This is one of the most peculiar and distinctive abilities of any marine species in the world.



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World Geography

Chapter 2



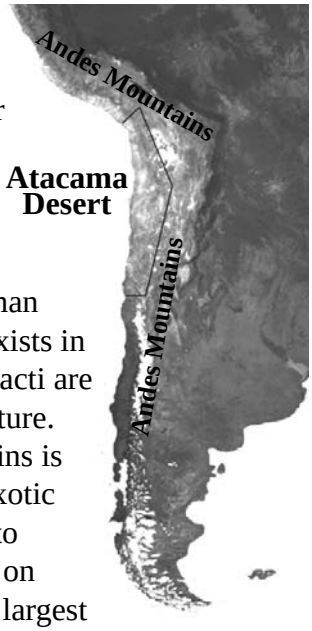
Lesson 4
Climate and Precipitation

Section 1
Lessons 1-5

Climate and Precipitation Latin America



As mentioned earlier, the Atacama Desert is the driest place in the world. It is located in southern Peru and Chile, and on average it receives about 0.04 inches of rain per year. Some weather stations in the desert have never recorded rain, while some scientists believe that from the 16th to the 20th century, the desert may not have seen any measurable precipitation—a period of 400 years without rain. The desert has been inhabited by people for hundreds of years, although extremely sparsely because of the intemperate climate. Nomadic South American tribes wandered the desert before the Incas took over during the 13th and 14th centuries. After Spain conquered and colonized South America, new European residents established mining operations in the desert, which is rich in nitrate that is used for fertilizers and food preservatives. Today, the town of San Pedro de Atacama lies in an oasis in the desert, where about 5,000 people live. Aside from these few brave human souls, however, extremely little life exists in the desert, as even small shrubs and cacti are stunted in growth by the lack of moisture.



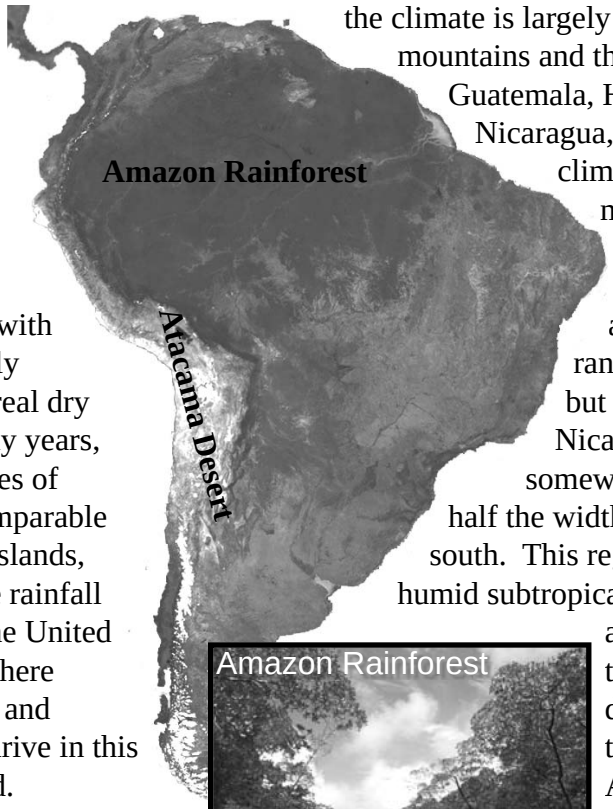
Just across the Andes Mountains is a lush, fertile rainforest that houses exotic and unheard-of species, and is home to more wildlife than any other location on Earth. The Amazon Rainforest is the largest

VOCABULARY

Deforestation: the clearing or removal of plant life from forested areas
Isothermal: constant or unchanging in temperature
Trade winds: prevailing pattern of easterly surface winds found in the tropics near Earth's Equator
El Niño: invasion of warm water into the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Ecuador every several years, causing climate change

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rainforest—indeed it represents more than half the Earth's remaining rainforest, much of which is threatened by ***deforestation***. The climate here is decidedly tropical, with warm weather nearly year-round and no real dry season, and, in many years, more than 100 inches of rain fall, a level comparable to some Hawaiian islands, which receive more rainfall than anywhere in the United States. The atmosphere is sticky and moist, and countless species thrive in this tropical wonderland.



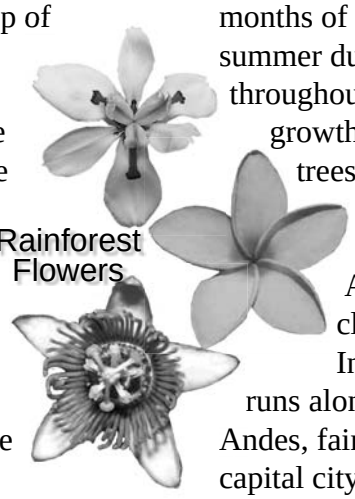
The contrast is extremely fascinating, especially when viewed side-by-side on a map. Although the Andes are a wide mountain range, continents typically have far greater distances between wet and dry areas, but the Atacama Desert and the Amazon Rainforest are less than 100 miles apart in some spots. The two regions are actually a microcosm of Latin America as a whole, which has some of the most diverse climates anywhere in the world. From Central America to the southern tip of Chile, the region enjoys areas with plentiful rainfall—wet tropical playgrounds for all sorts of plant and animal species—to others that are barren wastelands, with little human or other inhabitation.

Latin America actually has eight distinct climate zones, ranging from arid and semi-arid regions to two separate tropical zones. In Central America, the climate is largely determined by the mountains and their location. Through Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, a strip of highland climate runs down the middle of each country. The strip is somewhat narrow in Guatemala, as the mountain range is more slender, but near the Honduras–Nicaragua border it thickens somewhat, spreading across half the width of Honduras in the south. This region is flanked by a humid subtropical zone in the west and a tropical zone in the east. These two designations reflect two things. First, Central America is not far from the Equator—Managua, Nicaragua's capital, is less than 1,000 miles—so temperatures are warm, which is a characteristic of both these zones. Second, precipitation comes primarily from the east via the Gulf of Mexico rather than the Pacific Ocean in the west, so the high mountains block much precipitation from the western edges of the countries. Hurricanes are common in the Gulf, and while Central America often does not receive the brunt of their fury, occasionally hurricanes have hit it hard. Hurricane Stan, which ravaged Mexico to El Salvador in 2005, and 1998's Hurricane Mitch, which killed 11,000 in three countries and brought widespread flooding to Guatemala and Honduras, have been among the most deadly in recent years. In Costa Rica and Panama, the mountain range tapers off, and most of these countries are

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covered by a tropical zone, except in the far west where they are still humid subtropical. Several hundred miles east, Trinidad and Tobago has a tropical climate, similar to all other Caribbean islands.

Entering South America, the tropical zone continues into Colombia and Ecuador. The climate zone actually spreads all the way to the Amazon, which covers much of northern South America, including Brazil, but in the continent's northwest it is interrupted by the thin strip of Andes Mountains. Ecuador is entirely tropical wet, except for a tropical dry section in the southwest and the Andes in the center, which have a highland climate. Colombia is similar, except the drier tropics are in the north, bordering Venezuela, and the entire south is tropical except for the Andes. These regions lie at the Equator, which runs through Ecuador, Colombia, and the Amazon Rainforest, and are largely ***isothermal***. Because the climate zones are so drastically different, however, actual conditions can vary widely. Leticia, Colombia, for instance, situated in the Amazon Basin, receives around 80 inches of rain in an average year. Barranquilla, in contrast, located on the Caribbean Sea, receives less than a quarter of that total, or about 18 inches per year. Temperatures are warm and remain mostly unchanged all year, with the exception of the Andes, where winters can be quite cold, and precipitation is irregular.


Rainforest Flowers

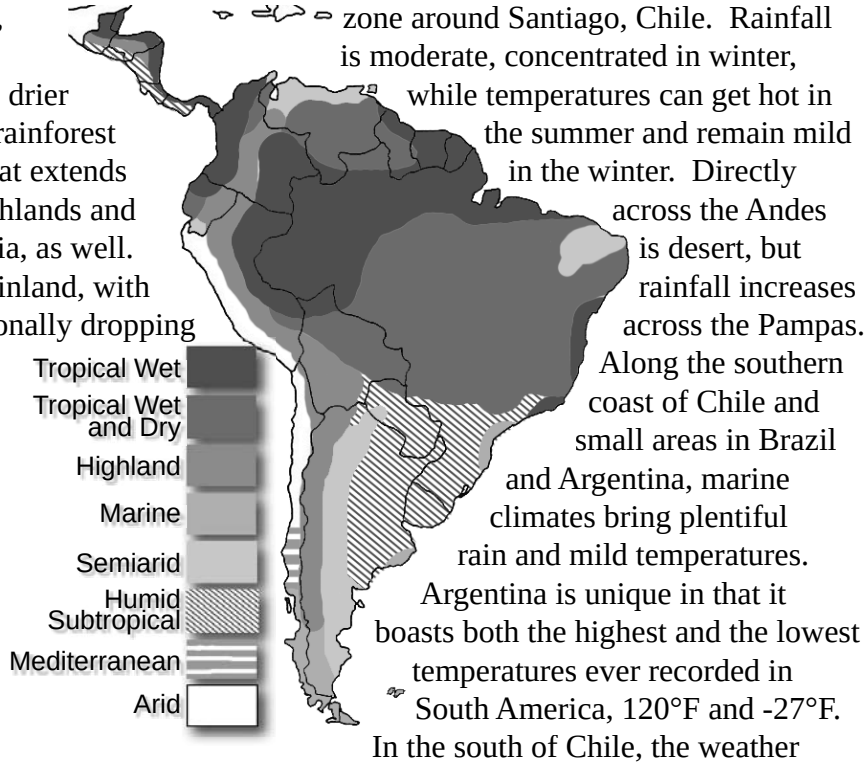
The Andes begin in Venezuela, and east of them the climate is mostly warm, humid, and muggy. Venezuela is mostly tropical dry—the Caribbean Sea keeps the land moist, but not quite as wet—although a tropical wet zone extends into the south. Interestingly, Venezuela's northern coast, a section that includes Caracas, is semi-arid due to ***trade winds*** that dry the region. The tropical dry zone runs through Guyana and extreme western Suriname, but these countries are mostly tropical wet. Northern Brazil is entirely tropical wet, dominated by the Amazon Basin. Although the rainy season in the Amazon is essentially year-round, more rain falls during the winter months of May through October than in the summer during January. Wet conditions throughout the Amazon allow for the rapid growth of flowers, ferns, and other trees, which do not have to compete for the plentiful moisture.

Further south on South America's Pacific coast, the climate grows a bit more varied. In Peru, a strip of arid conditions runs along the Pacific coast parallel to the Andes, fairly narrowly in most places. The capital city, Lima, is in this zone, and while temperatures are warm year-round due to the influence of the Equator, rainfall totals generally average less than 5 inches a year. The desert grows drier as one travels farther south, as the Peruvian desert borders the even drier Atacama. In the north, the desert is called the Sechura, and it is very dry, as well, although less so than areas farther south. Despite the dryness, the weather here is dictated by ***El Niño***, and even in arid areas some flooding occurs during El Niño seasons. Thunderstorms are also common here because of the Intertropical Convergence Zone. This band, which circles Earth near the Equator, is the area at which southern and northern hemispheric air masses collide, and short but intense storms form as a result.

In an approximate arc running from

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Cuzco, Peru to Manaus, Brazil, the Amazon Rainforest gives way to drier conditions. Below the rainforest is a tropical dry zone that extends across the Brazilian highlands and blankets much of Bolivia, as well. Temperatures fluctuate inland, with wintertime lows occasionally dropping close to freezing, although, typically, frost does not form. Much of the cooler climate here owes to the elevation rather than latitude, as cities like Brasília and Belo Horizonte are more than 3,000 feet high. In the Andes to the west, temperatures are consistently cooler, although their proximity to the Equator makes them warmer than other mountains of the same height. La Paz, Bolivia gets its wet season from December through March and temperatures that do not often dip below freezing, despite the high altitude. In northern Chile, the Atacama Desert, with its scorched and dehydrated climate, contrasts with the surrounding area.



Across lower South America, the Pampas lie in a humid subtropical region. The region blankets Paraguay and all of Uruguay, with a small section of the former located in a semi-arid strip that runs from there nearly to Cape Horn. Southwestern South America is actually a zone of rapid climate change. The Andes' highland climate dominates Chile and Argentina, growing increasingly cold toward the south. South of the Atacama Desert, the land grows slightly wetter, slowly transitioning into Latin America's lone Mediterranean zone around Santiago, Chile. Rainfall is moderate, concentrated in winter, while temperatures can get hot in the summer and remain mild in the winter. Directly across the Andes is desert, but rainfall increases across the Pampas. Along the southern coast of Chile and small areas in Brazil and Argentina, marine climates bring plentiful rain and mild temperatures. Argentina is unique in that it boasts both the highest and the lowest temperatures ever recorded in South America, 120°F and -27°F. In the south of Chile, the weather can get quite cold through June and July, a reality most people do not associate with South America. Cape Horn is a mere 500 miles from Antarctica; and not far from the coast, glaciers can form in the ocean. The Falkland Islands, located not far away, have a cool marine climate.

Life Principle

Be still, sad heart, and cease repining. Behind the clouds is the sun still shining.

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(1807-1882), 19th century U.S. poet

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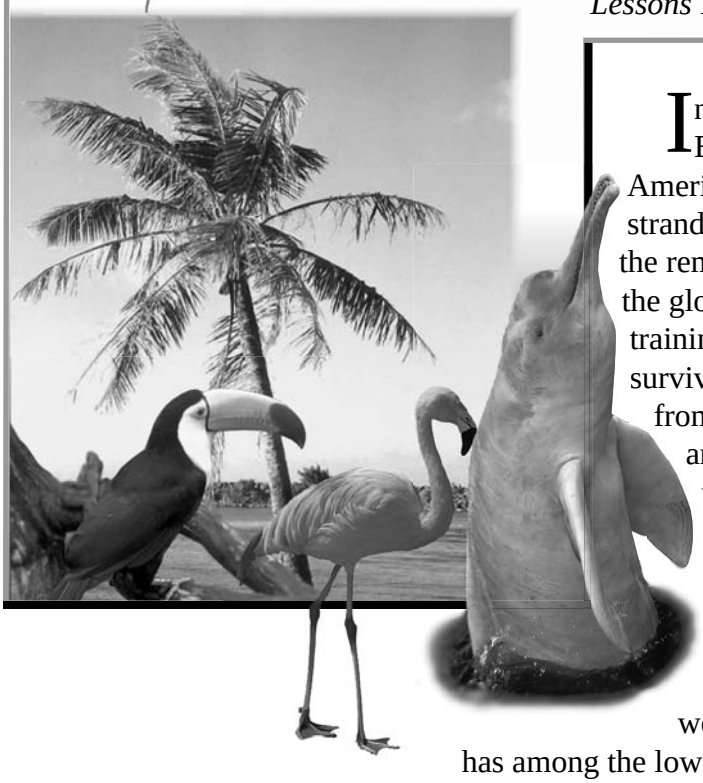
World Geography

Chapter 2

Lesson 5
Vegetation and Wildlife

Section 1
Lessons 1-5

Vegetation and Wildlife of Latin America



In 2009, Bear Grylls made a visit to Belize. Grylls, the star of the popular American television series *Man vs. Wild*, strands himself on a weekly basis in some of the remotest and most dangerous corners of the globe, relying on his British Special Forces training and knowledge of the environment to survive. In this particular episode, Grylls drops from a helicopter into the Belizean jungles and traverses them while descending waterfalls, crossing raging rivers, and walking for much of the time on rocks as slippery as sheets of ice. Along the way, he encounters rare and dangerous Belizean wildlife, killing and eating a boa constrictor and eating tree bark that works as a painkiller. The reason Belize has among the lowest population densities in the world, he tells us, is that the jungle is so inhospitable—wildlife is everywhere, and the dense tree cover grows at an astonishing rate.

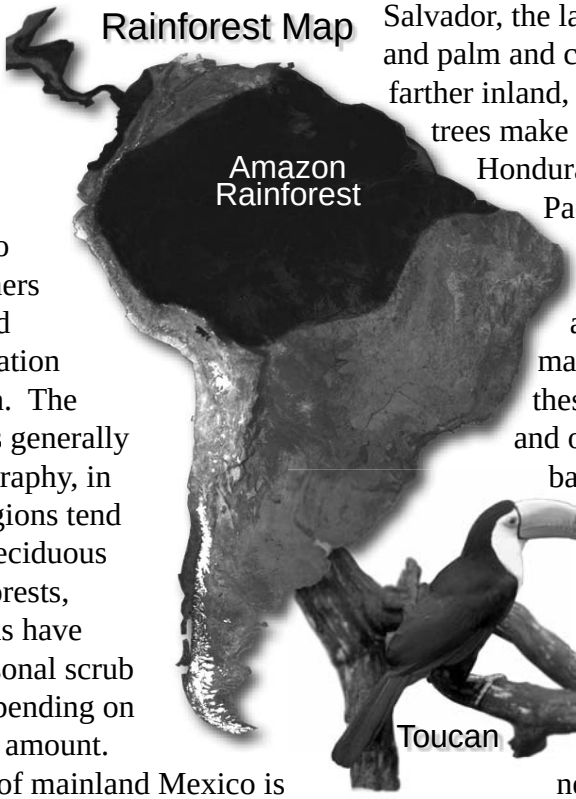
The episode is an instructive lesson on many Central American countries, which are covered by dense jungles and have some of the most fascinating wildlife on the planet. Belize is not the only country with a diverse array of wildlife and vegetation—the Amazon Rainforest is easily the most diverse region in the world, and places like the Darién Gap, and even the Andes, have many different examples of wildlife and plants. Even lakes within Latin America are home to interesting creatures—particularly Lake Nicaragua, which has animal populations found nowhere else on the planet. Although Central America is among the smaller regions of the world, it may have the most species diversity

VOCABULARY

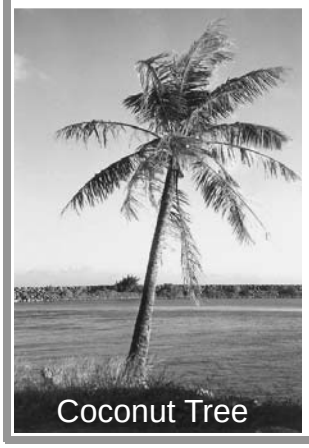
Biodiversity hotspot: geographic region with a significant variety of plant and animal species
Carrion: dead animal carcasses
Gaucho: cowboy on the South American Pampas
Grassland: land where grass or grasslike vegetation grows and is the dominant form of plant life

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of any single region, and it certainly has the most for its size.



In Central America, the two biggest determiners of vegetation and wildlife are elevation and precipitation. The vegetation zones generally follow the topography, in that highland regions tend to have mixed deciduous and evergreen forests, while lower areas have tropical and seasonal scrub or rainforest, depending on the precipitation amount. Although much of mainland Mexico is dry and scrubby, the Yucatán Peninsula is lush and fertile, and this continues into Central America in the north. The Belizean jungles are among the densest in the Americas, and near the coast they give way to swamps and wet lowlands, with small lakes and lagoons distributed throughout the region. In Guatemala, the Caribbean coast is swampy and scrubby, as well, but in higher elevations to the west the vegetation becomes more developed.


Coconut Tree

Deciduous forests prevail throughout the central mountain range, with some coniferous trees on the highest peaks. In western Guatemala and El Salvador, the land is tropical rainforest, and palm and coconut trees thrive, while farther inland, cedar, mahogany, and laurel trees make up large majorities. In Honduras and Nicaragua, both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts are tropically forested, with ferns and palms scattered among lagoons and salt marshes. Throughout many of these countries, important fruits and other agricultural items, like bananas and sugar cane, are grown, and the rubber plant is also harvested in places. Through Costa Rica and Panama, tropical rainforest dominates, with some swampy, marshy areas lying near the coasts. Coffee is an important agricultural product here and in neighboring Colombia; unique and exclusive species abound. Panama's Darién Gap, alone, is home to wildlife species that are limited in their ranges, such as tree frogs, sloths, anteaters, spider monkeys, toucans, parrots, and crocodiles.

Toucan

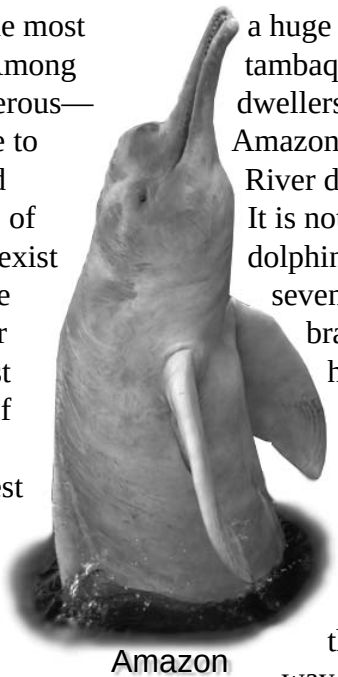

Brazilian Wandering Spider

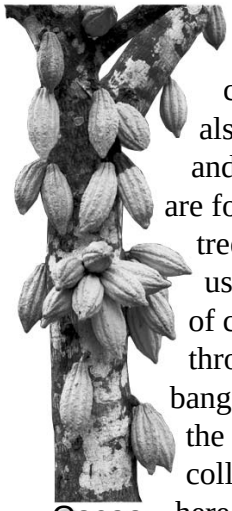
Animal species flourish throughout Central America, as well, which is considered part of the Mesoamerican ***biodiversity hotspot***. Vipers and coral snakes (the latter which are present throughout North America, as well) are among the venomous species here, as is the Pacific sea snake. Tarantulas are common in drier areas, and the Brazilian wandering spider has wandered as far north as Costa Rica.

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This arachnid can be up to five inches long, and is widely considered the most venomous spider in the world. Among less venomous—if not less dangerous—animals, Lake Nicaragua is home to freshwater species of sawfish and sharks, which jump up the rapids of the San Juan River. Tilapia also exist here, though not natively. Off the Belizean coast, the Belize Barrier Reef is the world's second-largest barrier reef, home to thousands of species of plants and fish.

In South America, the biggest single depository of vegetation and wildlife is in the Amazon Rainforest. Orchids and water lilies thrive in the wet climate here, and alstroemeria flower and poisonous curare plant are found throughout. Cacao trees, which produce pods used in the production of chocolate, are scattered throughout, and harvesters bang the tree trunks to shake the pods loose so they can be collected. Annatto trees exist here, which are often used to make lipstick. Mango and banana trees are also common. Pineapples and a wide variety of spices, from cinnamon to nutmeg to ginger, are native to the Amazon, as is the bamboo plant. The list of animals found in the Amazon is, perhaps, equally impressive. Brightly colored macaws, noisy birds related to parrots, can be found perched on tree limbs here, as can giant-billed toucans and true parrots. The piranha, a carnivorous fish that has a reputation for being a savage killer, is native to the Amazon River, alongside a huge variety of catfish, dogfish, tambaqui, bocachico, and other river dwellers. One of the most fascinating Amazonian animals is the Amazon River dolphin, also known as the *boto*. It is not found in salt water like most dolphins. The animal is typically seven or eight feet long and has a brain 40% larger than the average human. Poison dart frogs live here, as well, as do larger animals like jaguars, howler monkeys, and the capybara—which, at four feet long, is the world's largest rodent.


Amazon River Dolphin (Boto)


Cacao Tree

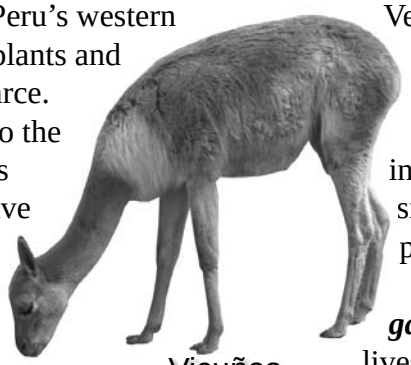
North of the Amazon, the rainforest gradually gives way to savannas and scrubland, especially near the Caribbean coast. Much of the wildlife remains the same: jaguars hunt smaller mammals here, and monkeys, foxes, ocelots, and capybaras live throughout the mountains and woods. The notorious white-tailed deer, which is found all over North America, is here. Anteaters and porcupines are native to Venezuela. Plant life in the Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana is largely tropical and dense, but towards the foothills of the Andes, more woodsy and mountain species begin to spring up. In central Venezuela and Colombia, mixed forests dominate the land, with coniferous trees mixing with deciduous trees at higher elevations. Tapirs, an endangered animal species found only in Latin America and Southeast Asia, live in Brazil and near


Capybara

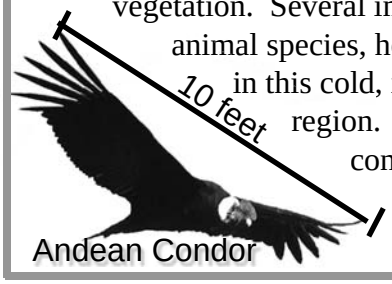
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the Andes Mountains, where they are the largest mammal on the continent. Some species of birds, such as pygmy swifts and spinetails, make their first appearance on the llanos northwest of the Amazon. Although most people do not associate South America with bears, the spectacled bear lives throughout Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru in the mountains.

In the desert, along Peru's western coast, and in Chile, both plants and animals are extremely scarce. Few species are adapted to the unnaturally dry conditions here, and those that are, live mostly in small pockets where more moisture collects—although "more" is relative, as the entire Atacama Desert is intensely dry. A few hardy species of cacti live here, as do small plants like the buckwheat bush and salt bush. Mesquite trees can be found in some places, typically supported by their deep roots that access water trapped far beneath the surface. A handful of animals, such as foxes and rabbits, wander the sandy surface. Llamas and some South American relatives of the llama, such as vicuñas and guanacos, live here, able to travel days without food or water. In many places, however, fungi and even bacteria are absent.


Vicuñas

The highest Andean mountain peaks are largely covered by snow and ice. Evergreen trees comprise most of the vegetation. Several important animal species, however, live in this cold, inhospitable region. The Andean condor is the largest flying bird in the world, with a wingspan of up to ten feet, and it soars majestically through the mountains, eating mostly ***carrion***. The bird, which can live for 50 years, roosts at elevations up to 18,000 feet and is of great importance to local ecosystems. Cougars and pumas, among the largest members of the cat family, live in slightly lower elevations, preying on llamas and vicuñas.



Andean Condor

Vegetation in the Andes is largely determined by the side of the mountains—the east side of the slopes is covered by dense jungle in many places, while the dry west side is scattered with birch and pine trees, but quite thinly.

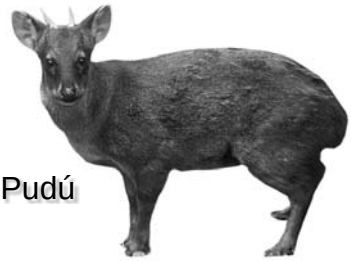
Across the Pampas, Argentine ***gauchos*** raise cattle and other livestock much as North American ranchers do. The area is predominantly ***grassland*** and scrubland; grass is the main plant. Actually, Pampas grass is a unique grass species that can grow up to ten feet high, so in many areas the plains resemble a prairie. Gnarly trees like cedars survive in some places, more so in the east where precipitation is higher. Deer are one of the most important animals here. Foxes and small rodents can be found throughout the Pampas. In the adjacent Chaco in Bolivia, animals such as tree frogs and armadillos have adapted to the semiarid and savanna climates.

Other vegetation and wildlife exists in the Brazilian highlands and southern South America. The anaconda is the largest snake in the world and lives throughout the Amazon and much of Brazil. Although it is shorter than the reticulated python, which lives in Asia,


Flamingo

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the anaconda is far larger, and feasts on capybaras and other medium-sized mammals near rivers and swamps. Flamingos, which get their pink color from the large quantities of shrimp they eat, enjoy wet coastal areas. Other venomous snakes include rattlesnakes and crossed pit vipers. The pudú, the world's smallest deer, is typically about a foot tall at the shoulder, and lives throughout Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia.

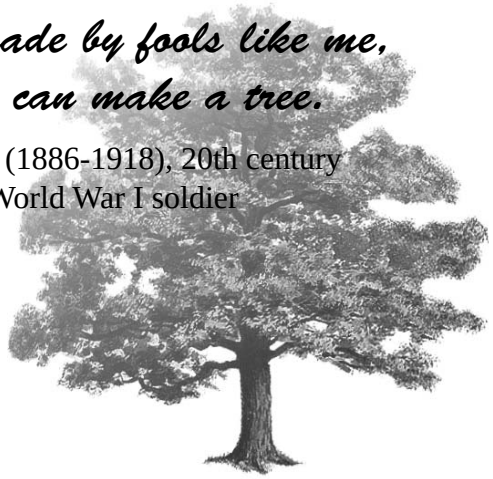


Pudú

Life Principle

Poems are made by fools like me,
but only God can make a tree.

-**Joyce Kilmer** (1886-1918), 20th century U.S. poet and World War I soldier



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World Geography

Chapter 2



Lesson 6
Famous Events and Sites

Section 2
Lessons 6-10

Famous Events and Sites of Latin America



Christ the Redeemer

On a mountain overlooking Rio de Janeiro, is a statue of Christ.

The bare facts of the monument are misleading. The mountain is Corcodavo, rising 2,329 feet above the sprawling metropolis of 13 million. The statue is 133 feet tall and depicts a standing Christ looking down upon the city, arms wide open in invitation. Made of concrete and soapstone, it is nearly as wide as it is tall, 112 feet from fingertip to fingertip, and it is the second-largest statue in the Southern Hemisphere. It is an icon of Rio de Janeiro, of Brazil, and, indeed, of all of South America, proclaiming the region's Christian heritage to the world in grand fashion. The statue's message and beauty have resonated all over the world—in 2007, it was voted one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in a contest held by a Swiss travel corporation.

The statue, which is called "Christ the Redeemer," is the best known site in Latin America and, perhaps, the entire Southern Hemisphere. The ***art deco*** statue dates to 1931, when it was opened after a nine-year and $250,000 construction process. The idea for a Christian statue atop Corcodavo originally came in the 1850s, when a Catholic priest asked the Brazilian princess for funding, but the princess refused and the idea stalled. Seventy years later, a Brazilian Catholic organization began soliciting donations to explore again the idea for a statue. Enough money was donated, mostly by private individuals, and a French architect was commissioned to build the statue. In 1987, Bolivia began constructing a replica of Christ the Redeemer,

VOCABULARY

Art deco: style of architecture and design popular in the 1920s and 1930s, marked by geometric forms and bold colors
Cataract: waterfall, typically a large one
Plunge: uninterrupted drop in a waterfall
Glacier: large mass of ice that forms from the compaction of layers of snow

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which opened in 1994 and is slightly larger than the original. Today, Christ the Redeemer is an enormous tourist attraction, silently guarding the city below, and inviting the world to accept His gift of redemption.



The massive concrete Christ is one of the most significant sites in Latin America, but it is certainly not the only one. South America is home to a moderately rich cultural diversity, one that has spawned dozens of significant sites, cities, natural wonders, and attractions. From beautiful natural features and formations to ancient Native American cities, from urban buildings tied tightly to their cities' local heritage to awe-inspiring monuments memorializing lost cultures or historic events, Latin America is full of important sites, each with its own unique history. These places are not just confined to South America—Central America has its fair share, as do outlying places like Trinidad and Tobago and the Falkland Islands. A tour of the locations necessarily brings one in contact with the people and cultures that birthed them, and with the remarkable geography along the way.


Iguazu Falls

Latin America's most visited tourist attraction, however, is not Christ the Redeemer. The most visited tourist attraction is Iguazu Falls, a massive ***cataract*** straddling the Brazil–Argentina border about halfway down the continent. The waterfall lies on the Iguazu River and cascades over a 270-foot drop to the bottom, a height similar to the United States' Niagara Falls. The Iguazu Falls, however, are far larger than Niagara Falls, measuring more than 1.5 miles in width and dumping over twice as much water. Most of the 275 individual falls lie on the Argentina side of the border, and they have the highest flow rate of any waterfall in the world. A system of walkways and low bridges extends over the river bottom and allows visitors to view the feature from several different locations, while a trail at the edge of the tallest drop allows for bird's eye views of the land beneath. The sheer scope and grandeur of the waterfall is so impressive that U.S. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt is said to have exclaimed "Poor Niagara!" upon seeing Iguazu for the first time. Outdoor enthusiasts, such as rock climbers, enjoy challenging the Iguazu area cliffs.

South America is actually home to two famous waterfalls. Iguazu is the destination of choice in the southern part of the continent, but in the north, Angel Falls is, in some respects, more impressive. Though this Venezuelan cataract has but a single narrow drop, it dwarfs the Iguazu Falls in height: it is 3,212 feet high, with an uninterrupted ***plunge*** of 2,648 feet.

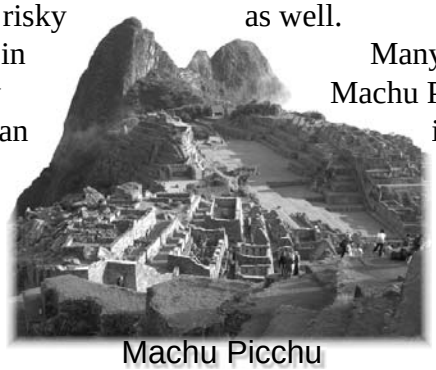
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The drop is sixteen times as high as Niagara Falls and the highest anywhere in the world. Angel Falls is located in a remote jungle in the nation's southeast and is effectively inaccessible on land, as no roads run near it. Tourists do frequent the falls, but the only two practical ways to see it are by boating up the river or flying over it, both of which are popular options. River trips are more common during the Venezuelan winter and spring, which are the seasons during which more rain falls. Aerial tours of the region provide for some spectacular views, but on cloudy or hazy days the falls are often obscured, making this a risky option. Angel Falls is so remote, in fact, that it was not discovered by modern settlers until 1933, when an American pilot initially flew over the falls and documented them four years later.

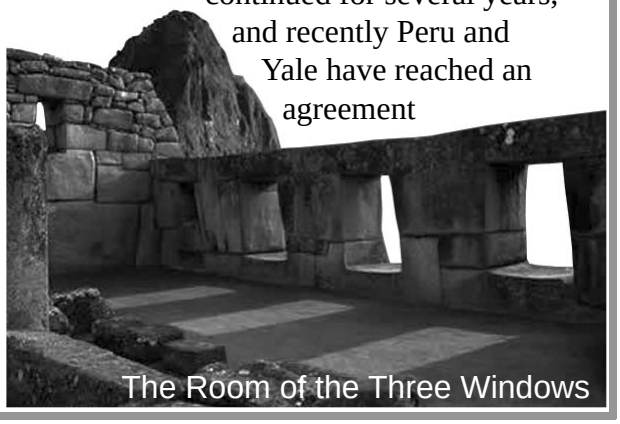


Angel Falls

Some of Latin America's famous sites have ties to local and continental history, as well. Machu Picchu is an ancient Inca civilization located in the Peruvian Andes, more than 8,000 feet above sea level. The city is perched on a mountain above the Urubamba Valley and is also known as the "Lost City of the Incas." Construction on the city was begun in the early 1400s, when the Incas dominated the Andes and Pacific coast from present-day Ecuador to southern Chile. The city was inhabited and thrived until the mid-1500s, when European conquerors established their own government over the region and Machu Picchu was largely abandoned. Until around 1911, the site was not widely known outside of Peru, but an American researcher and historian publicized it internationally. The remains of the buildings in Machu Picchu are made of polished dry-stone, mostly without mortar, which requires a technique in which the Incas were experts. The city is divided into sections by function, so residential zones and commercial zones are somewhat set apart. Among the more important buildings are the Temple of the Sun, the Room of Three Windows, and the Intihuatana, all of which were dedicated to the Incan sun god. A road built by the Incas that traversed the empire from Ecuador to Argentina services the city, and it is a popular tourist attraction, as well.


Machu Picchu

Many of the artifacts from Machu Picchu were excavated in the early 20th century and brought to Yale University in the United States, where they were enshrined in a museum. They remained there for decades, but in recent years Peru has demanded they be returned. The debate continued for several years, and recently Peru and Yale have reached an agreement


The Room of the Three Windows

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Cuzco, Peru

to return the majority of the artifacts, where both the Peruvian government and the university will administer a museum and research center dedicated to the site.

Fifty miles from Machu Picchu, Cuzco, Peru was the historic capital of the Inca Empire and still retains much of the culture's history. Now a modern and moderately-sized city, Cuzco has entire districts that still feature Inca homes, temples, and public areas. It is considered the cultural capital of Peru and among the most important cultural centers in Latin America. Many locations in the city are marked historically and retain Inca heritage, making it one of the most fascinating locations in Latin America. The city was featured in the 2000 animated film *The Emperor's New Groove*.

Farther south, Patagonia is among the most beautiful regions in all of Latin America. It is located at the southern tip of South America and encompasses the southernmost peaks of the Andes, along with plateaus and plains nearby. The region is the least populated in South America, with averages around one person per square mile. Depressions, basins, and lakes dot the area amidst mountains and volcanoes, and some of the continent's lowest elevations can be found in the Patagonian east. In the mountains, the elevation and far southern latitudes combine to cap peaks with snow year-round, and ***glaciers*** can be found in the hills and near the coast. Patagonia borders the Pampas of Argentina, which are a wide-open prairie where ranching and farming take place. Although the region is sparsely populated, tourism is a big draw here, and hundreds of thousands flock to see the region's natural, untamed beauty every year.

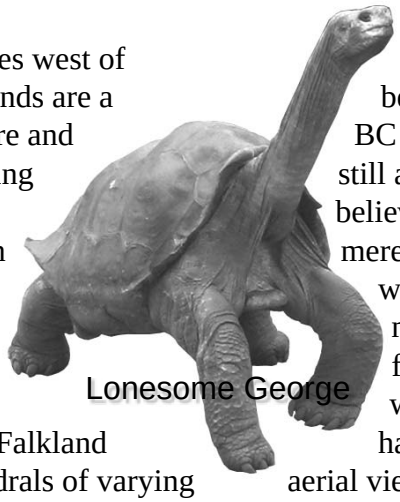

Patagonia

In Central America and elsewhere in Latin America, other important sites exist. Maya ruins are located throughout Central America, the region the Mayan people dominated from the 3rd through 10th centuries. The empire was concentrated in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula and northern Central America, including Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. The Maya are famous for their elaborate and technologically advanced buildings for their day. In Cartagena, Colombia, one of the oldest settlement records in South America

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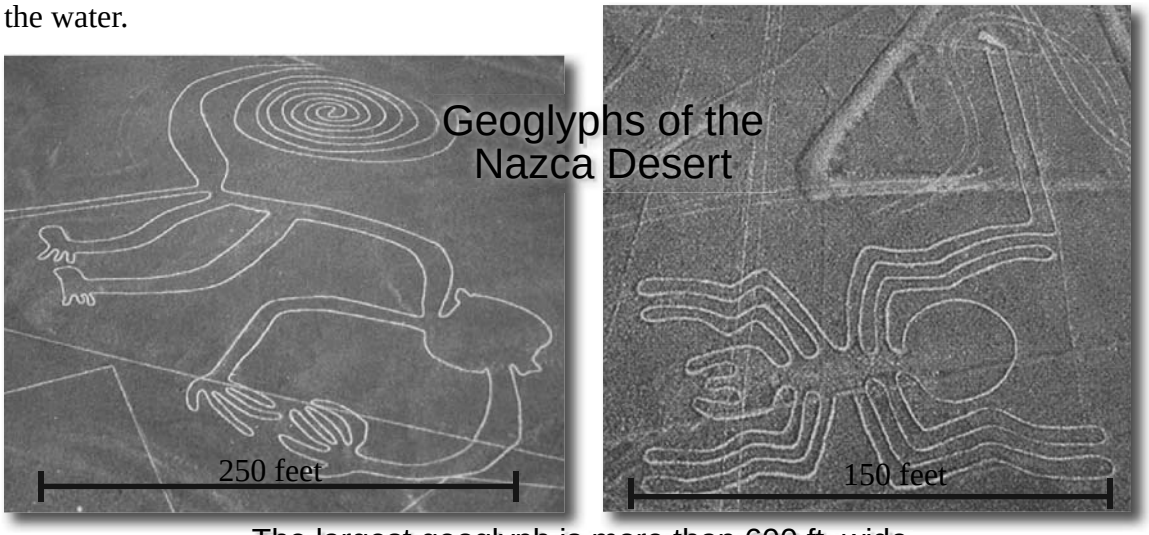
provides intriguing history lessons to modern Colombians. The city is known to have been settled thousands of years before Christ, and is one of the oldest cities in the Western Hemisphere.

Several hundred miles west of Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands are a sanctuary for all kinds of rare and endangered wildlife, including the giant Galapagos Island tortoise. The species, which was once prevalent on the island, has been reduced to one living animal, a 90-year-old tortoise named Lonesome George. On the Falkland Islands, churches and cathedrals of varying architectural styles are interesting tourist attractions, as well as penguins that live near the water.



Lonesome George

One of the more puzzling attractions in South America is the Nazca lines, a group of geoglyphs in Peru's Nazca Desert. The large shapes and drawings, which are formed of shallow lines on the desert floor, are thought to have been completed between 200 BC and 700 AD. Their purpose is still a mystery to scientists. Some believe the lines may have been merely artistic irrigation devices, while others postulate they were messages to gods or aliens from outer space. The dry and windless climate of the desert has kept the designs clear, and aerial views provide a fascinating perspective of the area.



Geoglyphs of the Nazca Desert

The largest geoglyph is more than 600 ft. wide

Life Principle

Those who run with purpose
reach the goal first.

- J. Campbell

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World Geography

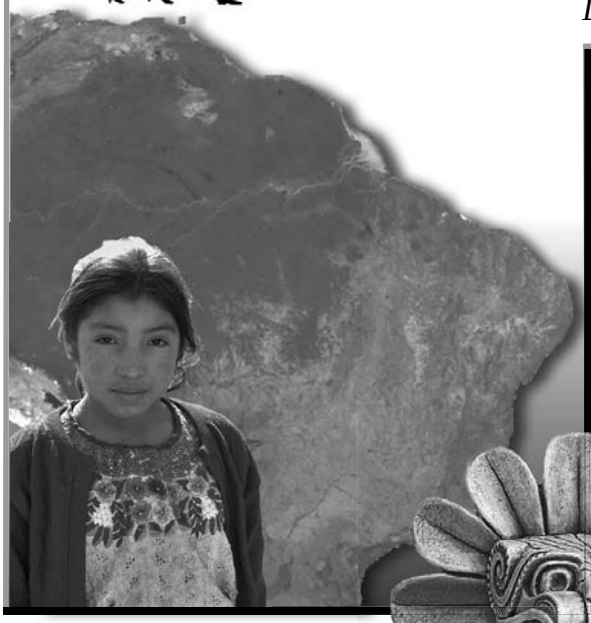
Chapter 2

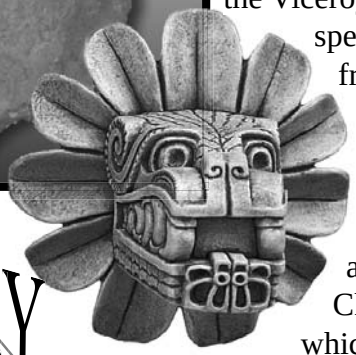


Lesson 7
Races and Ethnicities

Section 2
Lessons 6-10







His name was Bernardo O'Higgins, and he was among the most important and respected patriots in Chile during the Chilean War for Independence. He was born in Chile to an Irish father and a Chilean mother, and he was educated in his home country. As an adolescent, he was sent to Lima, Peru, and began a stellar young career in politics, eventually serving as the Viceroy of Peru. He traveled to Europe, spending time in London and in Spain, from which he watched the young United States of America assert itself following its war for independence. After he returned to Chile, O'Higgins reentered the political realm, serving as a representative and pushing for greater Chilean control over its own government, which was subservient to Spain. When the Chilean Revolution broke out in 1810, O'Higgins led some of its military efforts, serving heroically and successfully. Several years later, Chile won the war, and O'Higgins became the nation's second supreme dictator. Today, he is remembered both for his contribution to Chilean history and independence and for his unusual name and background.

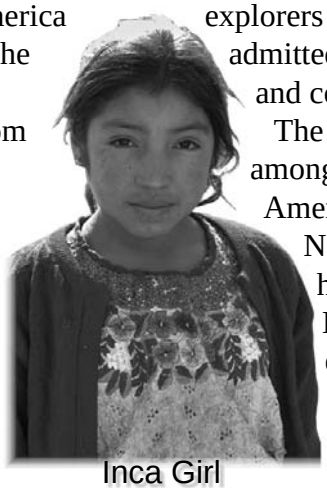
Although most Latin Americans with such odd heritages do not attain the level of fame and importance that O'Higgins did, the region is full of lesser known, more ordinary individuals with atypical mixtures of ethnicity. Latin America certainly does not boast the level of diversity that Asia and Africa do, perhaps, because of its size and relatively similar histories across the countries that comprise it. Indeed, the region was probably settled by

VOCABULARY

Migration: the movement of persons from one country or locale to another
Mulatto: in Latin America, a person of mixed white and black descent
Zambo: in Spanish-speaking countries, a person of mixed black and Native American descent
Creole: a person of European descent born in the Caribbean or Latin America

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nomadic peoples who came over from Asia thousands of years ago. In the 16th century Europeans came and mixed with them, and today these Mestizos comprise large majorities in many countries. Nevertheless, it is more diverse than North America or even Oceania. Furthermore, the ethnic makeup in Latin America often does not flow smoothly from one area to the next, changing gradually and logically. Instead, neighboring countries can have vastly different racial compositions. One prime example of this is in the case of Argentina and Paraguay. The two South American countries are adjacent, sharing nearly a 1,200-mile border. In Argentina, however, 85% of the population is white, with only 11% Mestizo; while in Paraguay, Mestizos comprise 75% and whites only around 20%. While an exhaustive exploration of all Latin America's ethnic groups would be extremely arduous, several main groups are prevalent throughout, and they are worth a closer look.


Inca Girl


Mayan Art

Among the predominant ethnic groups in Latin America are indigenous people groups. As in North America, Latin America was likely first populated by Asians who crossed from northern Russia into modern-day Alaska and gradually descended to South America. This mass ***migration*** occurred several thousand years before Christ. Because they came from the north, Central America was likely inhabited before South America. Many anthropologists believe the crossings came in waves, and there is little evidence to suggest otherwise. When these primitive wanderers first arrived, they were organized into tribes with varying social structures, means of survival, forms of governance, and other characteristics. This organizational structure prevailed until the time European explorers arrived, although societies had admittedly grown far more developed and complex by then.

The Mayas and the Incas were among the most important Native American cultures in Latin America. Now a topic in nearly every history classroom in the Western Hemisphere, the two societies existed at different times and in different places, but were among the original shapers of culture in the Americas. The Mayas were the earlier of the two, having been established as early as 2000 BC and thriving between approximately 250 and 900 AD. The civilization, which was remarkably long-lived, flourished in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula and throughout present-day Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Mayas were an astonishingly developed people: their art, economy, architecture, and language were far beyond any other Western civilization at the time, and they developed the only full written language in the Americas before Columbus. The Incas lived much later, from about 1200 to 1530, originating in present-day Peru and eventually conquering lands from western Colombia to southern Chile. Incas ran a federal government with provinces that reported to the emperor, who was believed to be divine. They united much of Pacific South America at the time with road-building and the spread of their

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culture, and are known for the picturesque cities that still stand today, including Machu Picchu. Descendants from both these cultures continue to reside throughout the areas their ancestors once ruled.

Today, Europeans comprise large numbers, including several majorities, throughout Central and South America. The specific lineages of these people trace back to European colonization in the 16th through 18th centuries, when Western Europe began settling the region. Most Europeans in Latin America are of Spanish descent, as Spain aggressively took an interest in the region during this era. This is the dominant European people group throughout almost all of Latin America; Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Brazil in South America and Belize in Central America are exceptions to this dominance of Spanish lineage. Other European countries are represented in several places. Although most of Belize's European population is Spanish, English is the official language, and some English people live there. The Guianas—the countries of Guyana and Suriname and the territory of French Guiana—are unique in being an enclave of non-Spanish influence on the continent. Respectively, they were settled primarily by English, Dutch, and French people, although the current ethnic makeup reflects this only marginally. Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in Latin America, and the majority of its European residents trace back to Portugal. In Costa Rica, Argentina, and Uruguay, unmixed white Europeans constitute overwhelming majorities.



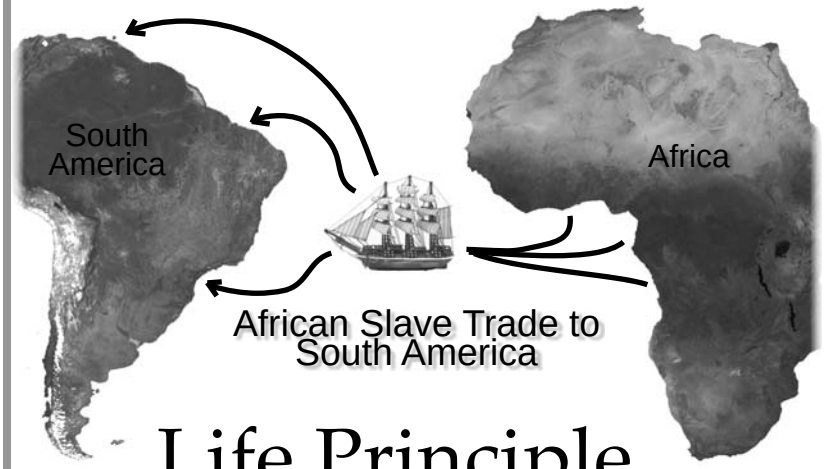
These two groups—indigenous peoples and Europeans—exist in large numbers in Latin America, and unmixed (or mostly unmixed) whites are the largest ethnic group across the board. In reality, however, many Latin Americans are Mestizo, and even many who identify as white have mixed blood somewhere along their family tree. Mestizos represent majorities in five countries—El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Paraguay—and are the largest single ethnic group without constituting a majority in three others. In total, around 30% of Latin America's population—126 million people—identify as Mestizo. The actual number, however, is likely far higher, because many Mestizos with only a small percentage of mixed ancestry simply identify with the group to which they are closest, either white or Native American. Logically, the prevalence of Mestizos is highest in places where Europeans were able to settle the most easily, which is why Central America has higher rates than some South American countries. Conversely, some of the countries with the most unmixed Native Americans, such as Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, are on the Pacific coast or deep interior of South America. Coming across the Atlantic, Europeans colonizing the region would have taken far longer to reach these areas.

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Mulattos comprise about 20% of Latin America's population, and unmixed blacks about another 3%. In the United States, textbooks, politicians, and pop culture condemn the slavery that existed there as a dark blot on the nation's history—and they do so rightly. The reality is, however, that slavery was not a U.S. invention, but actually existed throughout the world at the time, including Latin America. Millions of slaves were imported from Africa to Latin America during the 18th and 19th centuries, mostly to the Caribbean and Brazil. The largest mulatto population in Latin America exists in Brazil, comprising nearly 40% of the population—74 million people. In Venezuela, mulattos tie Mestizos for the largest ethnic group, while in Panama, Colombia, and Peru they are large minorities, as well. Some countries beyond the Atlantic coast of South America did not see much importation of Africans and, therefore, have extremely small populations. In El Salvador, Argentina, and Chile, black or mulatto populations are negligible.

Other ethnic groups exist in pockets throughout Latin America, some of which are actually quite large. Although Argentina and Uruguay are largely of Spanish European descent, Italians and Germans constitute an influential minority—some researchers even suggest that up to 60% of Argentina has some Italian background. Asians are not generally a significant minority in Latin America, but in Panama and Argentina they compose 4% and 3% of the population, respectively. ***Zambos*** (or Garinagus, or Cafusos) represent 14% of Panama and small percentages in several other nations. ***Creole*** is technically not an ethnic group but rather a designation of birth. However, in many places Latin Americans use the term to refer to descendants of French people in the Americas.

In Belize, much of the business community is comprised of Asian and Middle Eastern groups. Honduran culture is influenced by Arabic heritage, while El Salvador has a moderate Jewish influence. In the early 20th century, around the same time the United States received a large influx of European immigrants, Argentina became a hotspot for German and Italian immigration. These new European imports were decidedly different in appearance, particularly the Germans: blonde, tall, and blue-eyed.



African Slave Trade to South America

Life Principle

You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all the time.

- Abraham Lincoln

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World Geography

Chapter 2



Lesson 8
Languages

Section 2
Lessons 6-10





While most indigenous languages in the Americas are dissolving, Quechua is healthier than ever.

Quechua is an indigenous language group in the Andes Mountain region of South America, a collection of similar tongues that date back as far as 2,500 years. Its origins are mysterious: while it is most widely associated with the Incas, who used it in the 13th to 16th centuries, it was already well established when the Inca civilization rose to power. Similarly, its source was probably not in Cuzco, which spawned the Incan empire, but likely was in central Peru. Unlike the overwhelming majority of native tongues, Quechua did not suffer after Europeans arrived in South America, but was adopted by many colonists. The Roman Catholic Church even utilized the language in its missionary efforts in the New World, which further contributed to its spread. Five hundred years later, Quechua is spoken by between 6 and 10 million people in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina, an astounding number relative to other native tongues. It is the largest indigenous language family in the Western Hemisphere.

Quechua is not a single language but a language family, so designated because it actually includes multiple tongues whose speakers cannot necessarily understand each other. ***Anthropologists*** believe Quechua was probably birthed in Bolivia and Peru. Here, it is actually an official language, a remarkable fact in an area so thoroughly dominated by Spanish. Quechua is among a shrinking group of native tongues that exist in Latin America, a group that

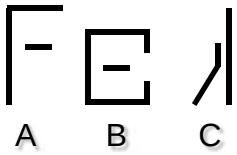
VOCABULARY

Anthropologist: person who studies the origin, development, races, customs, and beliefs of humankind
Anglophone: English-speaking, usually natively
Bilingual: able to speak two languages

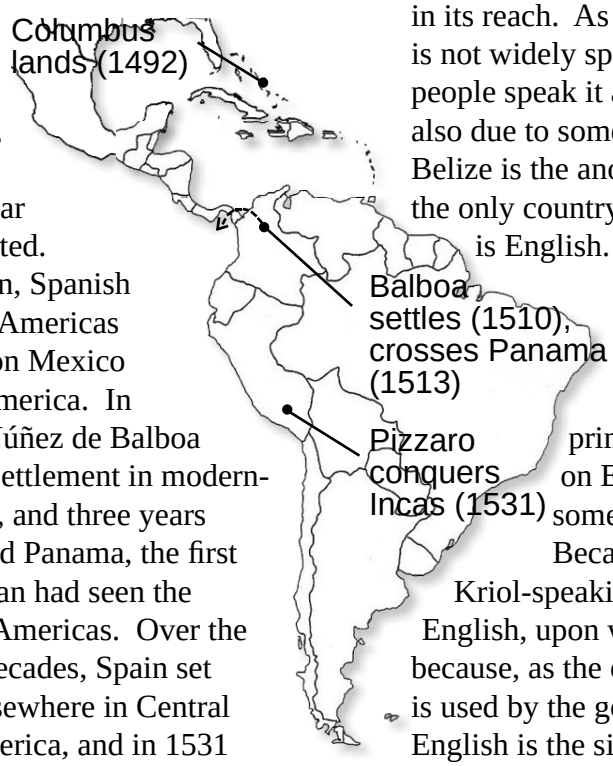
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also includes the widely dispersed languages of Guarani and Maipurean. Although many European settlers adopted Quechua and used it among natives, the discovery of America essentially brought down the curtain on many native tongues, and today European languages rule in Central and South America. Spanish is easily the most dominant, though several others are spoken, as well. Except for Dutch, all the major languages spoken are part of the Indo-European language group, which counts about 3 billion speakers and is the world's largest language family.

A Quechuan Alphabet



In all but six countries in Latin America, Spanish is the dominant language. The extent of the language dates back to the era of Spanish imperialism, when Christopher Columbus first landed in the New World and claimed it for Spain. Columbus landed in the Bahamas in the Caribbean, although on which particular island is disputed. After his return, Spanish interest in the Americas concentrated on Mexico and Central America. In 1510, Vasco Núñez de Balboa established a settlement in modern-day Colombia, and three years later he crossed Panama, the first time a European had seen the Pacific in the Americas. Over the next several decades, Spain set roots down elsewhere in Central and South America, and in 1531 Francisco Pizzaro conquered the Inca Empire, eventually founding the city of Lima, Peru and laying the foundation for exploration west of the Andes. Unlike North America, when Spain had to compete with English and French explorers and settlers, Latin America was largely Spain's for the taking. The Spanish language's spread over the region owes to the same history as does the prevalence of ethnically Spanish Europeans, or Mestizos of Spanish descent.



In Central America, Spanish's hold is strong, as every nation but Belize is predominantly Spanish-speaking. In Guatemala, 93% of the population speaks Spanish; in Nicaragua, 90%; and in Costa Rica, 97%. Other Central American nations have similarly high prevalences of the language. In the north—above Costa Rica—the *voseo* form of Spanish is more frequently used, a form slightly more formal and poetic than common everyday Spanish, but limited in its reach. As a second language, Spanish is not widely spoken, partially because most people speak it as a primary language, but also due to some groups' refusal to learn it. Belize is the anomaly in Central America, the only country whose official language is English. Spanish is the language most used in the home in Belize, used by about 46% of the populace; 37% of the country speaks Kriol, primarily, a language based on English, but incorporating some African words and phrases. Because the large numbers of Kriol-speaking people can understand English, upon which it is based, and because, as the official language, English is used by the government and in schools, English is the single most widely spoken language in Belize.

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In South America, Spanish dominates every South American country or territory except Guyana, Suriname, Brazil, and French Guiana. The language is spread out rather unevenly, however, as it is common in some areas and considerably less common in neighboring ones. Colombia and Venezuela have high percentages of native Spanish-speaking people, while Ecuador and Peru's numbers are high, as well. Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile are all predominantly Spanish, with varying degrees of influence from other languages. In Bolivia, Spanish has more speakers than any other single language, but comprises about one-third of the country's population. Quechua is nearly as widespread here as Spanish, and other indigenous tongues flourish throughout.

Brazilians speak Portuguese, and the country's massive population actually holds more speakers of Portuguese than the rest of the continent holds speakers of Spanish. This curious reality means that Portuguese is actually the most prevalent tongue in South America, despite that it is widely spoken in only one country. Nearly 100% of the country speaks the language, and the holdouts are not Spanish speakers, but, rather, isolated Native American pockets that are largely self-sufficient. Brazilian Portuguese is similar, but not identical, to European Portuguese, and interestingly, dialects largely do not exist, only mild regional variants in vocabulary and pronunciation. Portuguese and Spanish are similar languages, so some Brazilians can speak and understand Spanish, although many do not. On the fringes of the country, near the borders, some numbers of people speak Spanish as a second language, but extremely few do inside the country.

In the Guianas, neither Spanish nor Portuguese reign. Guyana is ***Anglophone***, having been settled by England and still retaining a large number of ethnic English. Suriname speaks Dutch, and French Guiana speaks French, though some of the residents in these nations understand Spanish and other European tongues, as well. In Trinidad and Tobago, English is the official and most widespread language, although, as in the Guianas, many people are ***bilingual*** or more. Some countries have significant minority language pockets in certain areas. São Paulo's Liberdade district has the largest Japanese population outside Japan. French and German linguistic minorities exist throughout Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. In Argentina and Venezuela, high Italian immigration in the 19th and 20th

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centuries added hundreds of new words and expressions to the Spanish dictionaries there, and the Spanish spoken is a unique blend of both languages' influences. Hebrew and Yiddish are also found throughout Latin America, especially in El Salvador.



Life Principle

Birds are entangled by their feet and men by their tongues.

- Thomas Fuller

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World Geography

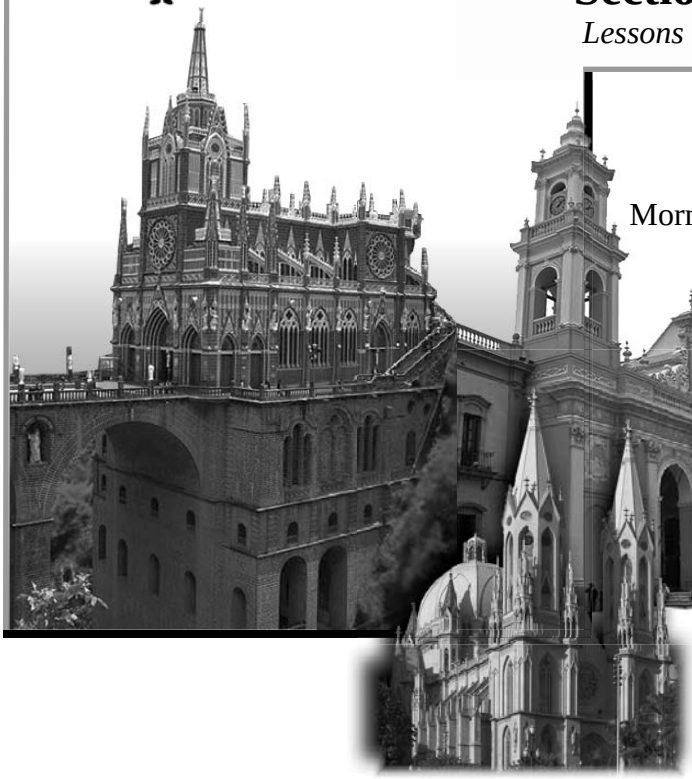
Chapter 2



Lesson 9
Religions

Section 2
Lessons 6-10





Despite the growth of Protestant evangelicalism and offshoots like Mormonism, Catholicism dominates religion in Latin America. If any single region of the world is inextricably entangled with one religion, it is Latin America and Roman Catholicism. Catholicism's dominance in Latin America is rivaled only by perhaps Islam's hold on the Middle East—and perhaps not even there, as Latin America's population is higher. A glance at the map of Religion in Latin America (pg. 39) confirms the fact. With the exception of the Guianas, which feature an eclectic mix of Protestantism and several Eastern religions, and some sparsely inhabited sections of Brazil in which isolated tribes practice local faiths, Catholicism rules from Mexico to Cape Horn.

Nevertheless, some other faiths like Mormonism and Protestant evangelicalism have made inroads into the continent, and certain countries and regions have religious trends that are painting the religious landscape in Latin America. During the 1990s, evangelist Luis Palau held city-wide crusades in Colombia, Brazil, and other predominantly Catholic countries, drawing thousands of people who embraced Protestant evangelicalism.

Across Latin America, Catholics comprise the majority of the population. As of 2000, South America was 87% Catholic and Central America was 85%. More recent estimates indicate figures have not changed significantly.

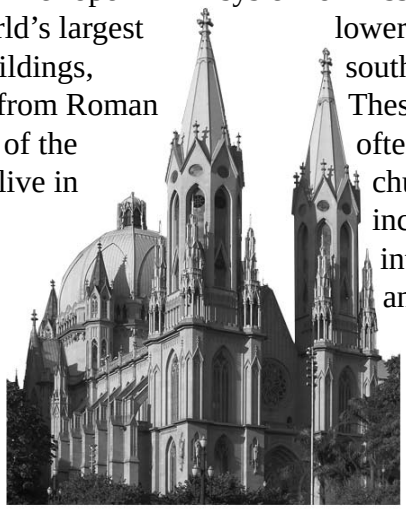
VOCABULARY

Cathedral: large or important church in Roman Catholicism
Mission: church or parish established in the Americas during the Spanish colonial era to convert indigenous people
Syncretism: attempted fusion of disparate or contradictory systems of thought or belief
Medium: intermediary between the living and the dead

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Roman Catholicism constitutes majorities in all but three countries, and in two of those it is, nonetheless, the leading faith. Among predominantly Catholic countries, Ecuador has the highest prevalence of Catholicism at around 95%, while barely 50% of Belize identifies as Catholic. Generally, however, percentages hover between 70 and 90. Catholics make up approximately 71% of Chile and 74% of Brazil; on the high end, rates in Peru and Venezuela are 89% and 92%, respectively. ***Cathedrals***, from rustic rural churches to colossal urban complexes, are mainstays throughout both Central and South America. Some of these, like São Paulo's See Metropolitan Cathedral, are among the world's largest and most beautiful church buildings, featuring ornate architecture from Roman and Gothic styles. One-third of the world's 1.1 billion Catholics live in Latin America.

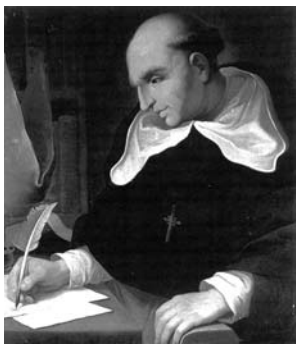


Metropolitan Cathedral, Brazil

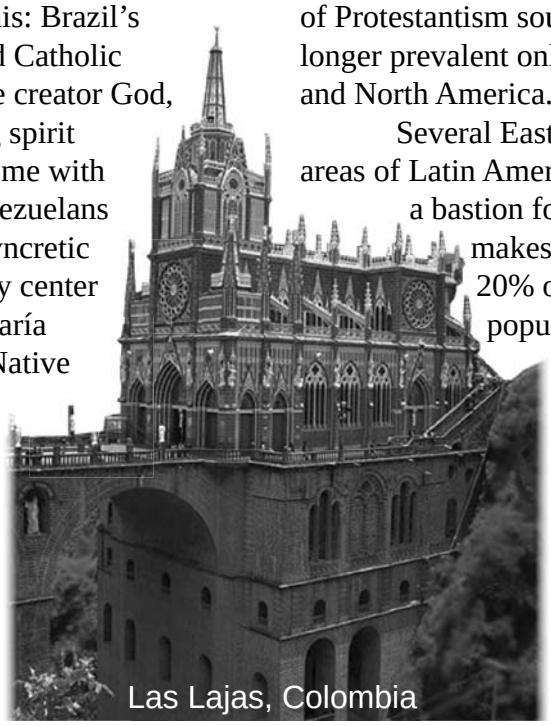
As is true of many aspects of Latin American culture, the importance of Roman Catholicism owes to European colonization, beginning in the 16th century. At the time of Europe's discovery of and exploration in the Americas in the early 1500s, Catholicism was not just the dominant faith in Western Europe—it was virtually the only one. The Protestant Reformation that shook the Church to its core did not begin until 1517, so early explorers brought their Catholic heritage to the Western Hemisphere. When the Reformation was sparked, many places in Europe witnessed the breakaway Protestant growth, but Spain's position on the Atlantic coast reduced influence by reformers. Because Spain and neighboring Portugal were the primary colonizers of Latin America, Catholicism was already well-rooted in the New World before Protestantism took hold in Europe. One of the first goals of the Spanish and Portuguese governments in the Americas was to convert the indigenous Native American tribes. To do this, they established a system of ***missions***, which spread from lower South America to the southwestern United States. These establishments, which often served as a combination church, grocery, and sometimes included a military outpost, introduced European culture and, specifically, Catholicism to natives. Priests and monks, such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, ran the missions and met with varying degrees of success. Some Native Americans were hospitable to the foreigners and eventually adopted the Catholic faith, especially when mission workers were more fluent in the native language. In other cases, natives outwardly professed Catholicism but still

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retained their own belief systems, or blended Catholicism with more primitive animistic practices. Often, poor treatment, and even enslavement, by Europeans prevented any real conversions from taking place. As Europeans became more established in the region, however, Catholicism emerged as the dominant faith.


Bartolomé de las Casas

Yet, in spite of the relative uniformity of Catholicism in Latin America, local flavors of the religion can be quite distinct. In Brazil, Catholicism has fallen victim to ***syncretism*** in places. As indigenous people did during the colonization era, many Brazilians intermingle the Catholic faith with native traditions, or with African religions imported during the era of slavery. The religion of Umbanda is a prime example of this: Brazil's 400,000 adherents blend Catholic ideas, such as a supreme creator God, with practices involving spirit guides and ***mediums***, some with occultic overtones. Venezuelans are similarly prone to syncretic traditions, but here many center on historical figures. María Lionza, for instance, a Native American woman in Venezuela in the 16th century, is at the center of one such faith, and her reverence for, and worship of, nature is among her religion's central tenets.


Las Lajas, Colombia

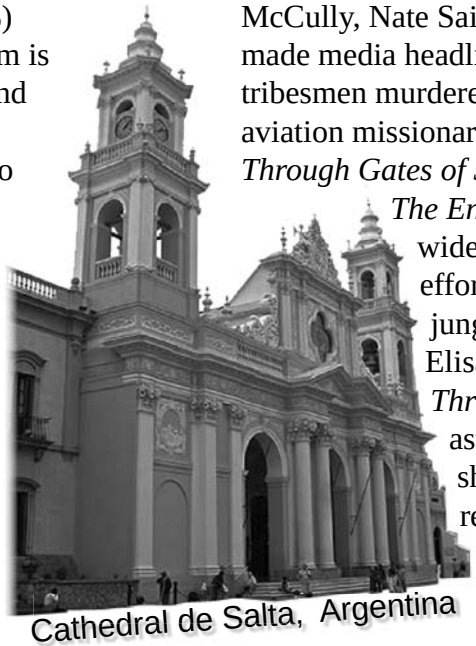
In Guyana and Suriname, Protestants outnumber Catholics. Guyana is a former British territory and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, while Suriname was owned by the Dutch, which helps explain why Catholicism is not dominant. Both of these nations include various Christian denominations. Suriname has higher concentrations of Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, and Moravians, while in Guyana, Anglicans and Seventh-day Adventists are significant. Pentecostal Protestants, known for their expressive worship and holiness doctrines, are a growing group in these nations, comprising 17% of Guyana's population. Outside these countries, Protestantism is growing rapidly in the historically Catholic nations. A 2007 survey revealed that 36% of Honduras is evangelical Protestant, and numbers are rising in Guatemala, Brazil, and Chile, as well as several other countries. The trend, which is at least partly due to intensive missionary activity in the region, has effectively begun to shift the global center of Protestantism south, so that it is no longer prevalent only in Western Europe and North America.

Several Eastern faiths exist in areas of Latin America. The Guianas are a bastion for Hinduism, which makes up 28% of Guyana and 20% of Suriname. The Hindu populations here represent Hinduism's largest numbers outside India, which exist due to a large wave of Indian immigration in the early 1900s. Islam is present in the Guianas, as well, especially in Suriname, where it comprises 14% of

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the population. Other countries, such as Guyana, French Guiana, and Panama, also have small (under 10%) Muslim populations. Taoism is significant in the Guianas and in urban districts with large Chinese populations. In São Paolo's Liberdade district, the Japanese religion, Shinto, is popular. In some countries, growing contingents are nonreligious, either agnostic or atheistic.

Primitive tribal religions in the interior jungles of Ecuador, Colombia, and Uruguay are based historically in superstitious rituals that include decapitation of enemies. The skulls are shrunk and displayed on weapons, hats, and posts. During the 1950s, North American evangelical missionaries Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Nate Saint, and Roger Youderian made media headlines when Ecuadorian tribesmen murdered the group of young aviation missionaries. The popular book, *Through Gates of Splendor* and the film *The End of the Spear* brought wide attention to evangelical efforts to convert the primitive jungle tribes to Christianity. Elisabeth Elliot (author of *Through Gates of Splendor*) astonished the world when she and Rachel Saint returned to live with the tribe who murdered Nate Saint and John Elliot. They spent five years building great friendships with the tribe, leading them to Christianity, before returning to their home in the United States.



Cathedral de Salta, Argentina

Life Principle

Man thinks,
God directs.

- **Alcuin** (735-804), 8th century A.D.
British Celtic theologian

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World Geography

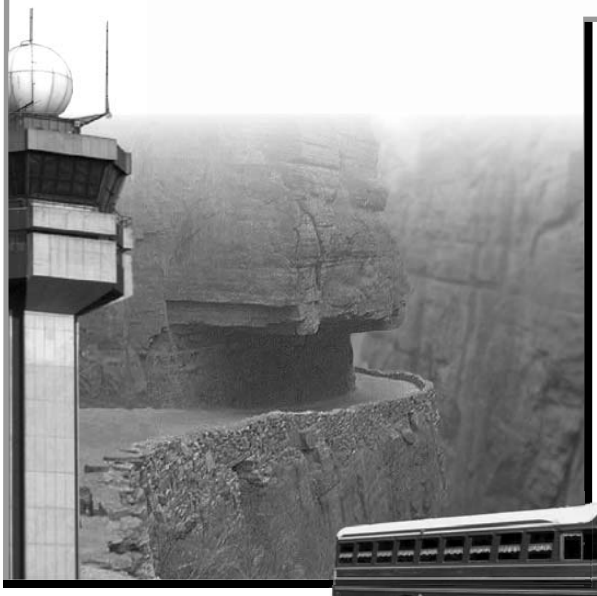
Chapter 2



Lesson 10
Transportation

Section 2
Lessons 6-10

Transportation of Latin America



It was once said in Europe that "all roads lead to Rome." The phrase, which has since entered the world's linguistic vault and taken on a larger meaning, reflected the centrality of the Roman capital and the incredible extent of its road system. In the Roman Empire, the city of Rome served as the empire's transportation hub, with roads emanating in all directions from it to the realm's outlying areas. In Latin America—and throughout the world—there is no similar city, no capital that is quite so integral to its kingdom's transportation network. But two of the region's most important pre-Colombian civilizations, the Mayas and the Incas, constructed vast and high-quality road systems, spanning thousands of miles throughout Central and South America. The Mayas, located in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula and northern Central America, were perhaps the less advanced of the two, as their system was not as far-flung as the Incas'. Yet Maya roads were structurally sound for their day, and offered conveniences, such as public restrooms at regular intervals; some roads were even monitored by a system of couriers responsible for the roads' upkeep and security. A thousand years later, the Incas built a remarkable road system along South America's Pacific coast, stretching from northern Ecuador to present-day Santiago, Chile. The road network, along with sites like



VOCABULARY

Vista: view, typically of nature
HOV lane: high-occupancy vehicle lane; roadway traffic lane reserved for vehicles with more than one occupant
Chicken bus: brightly decorated bus in Guatemala and Honduras used for mass transit
Rail gauge: distance between two parallel rails that make up a railway line, often varying among countries

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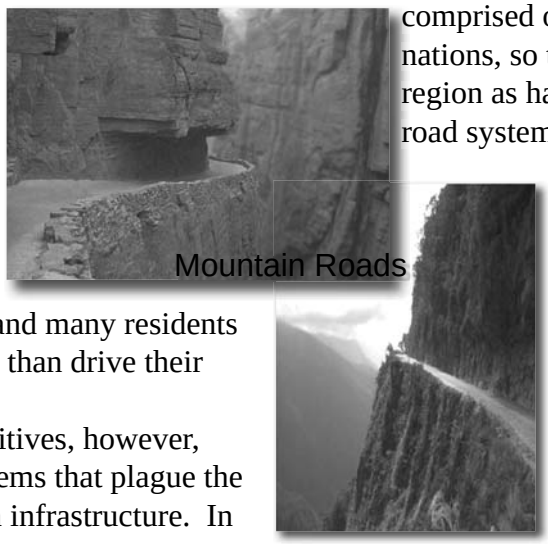
Machu Picchu, ranks among the Incas' most notable accomplishments. It was based largely on two north–south highways, with an intricate web of east–west roads linking them. In both places, many of these roads survived their empires' decline, and modern highways exist along some of the same routes these early roads carved.


Inca Road

As impressive as Latin America's oldest road networks were, modern routes are very different from the stone and gravel thoroughfares Native Americans once traveled. The current transportation system, which includes elements from primitive dirt roads to state-of-the-art international airports, is as diverse and multifaceted in some places as more developed regions, such as North America and Europe. Particularly in some larger cities—such as Bogotá, São Paulo, Lima—high-capacity highways carry millions of people across far distances, linking up seamlessly with rail and water transit for rapid travel. Central and South America differ from North America, especially the United States, in that transportation is not necessarily ruled by the personal automobile. Mass transit options are well-developed and heavily utilized. In Peru and Bolivia, buses travel modern streets in large cities, and many residents opt to use buses rather than drive their own vehicles.

All of these positives, however, are tempered by problems that plague the region's transportation infrastructure. In South America, the continent's size and population patterns have proven difficult for efficient movement of people and goods, as most country's denser populations are located on the coasts. Landforms and natural features have also been a hurdle for developers. The Andes Mountain region is home to a considerable portion of South America's population, but the mountainous and irregular terrain has made road building difficult. The Amazon Basin covers a huge swath of land through which thoroughfares could connect eastern areas with western, but it is environmentally protected and off-limits to construction, and few people live in the area. A lack of funding for road construction and mass transit systems also hampers many countries' efforts to improve conditions. While issues surrounding size and settlement patterns are not as significant in Central America, funding remains a major issue there, as well.

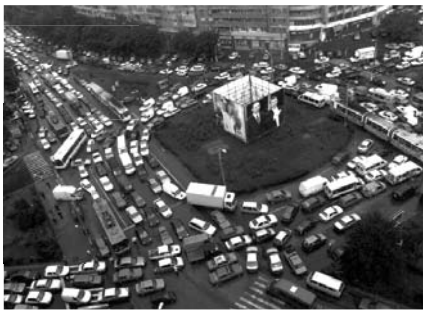
Highway and road systems are the most basic building block of most transportation systems, and Latin America is no exception. Latin America is actually comprised of twenty individual nations, so to conceive of the region as having one single, unified road system would be inaccurate. Countries maintain their own road systems, meaning that extent and conditions vary from country to country. Generally, however, highways are drivable in cities and along busy routes among cities, as governments direct


Mountain Roads

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adequate funding toward these areas. In rural areas, conditions are less assured. Many roads are gravel or dirt, and upkeep is sporadic in many places. Bolivia is notorious for unpaved roads: of the nation's 38,800 miles of roads, only 2,300 are paved, including just 17 miles of expressways. In the Andes Mountains, paved roads are similarly sparse. Cities in many Andean nations exist at unusually high elevations—La Paz, Bolivia, for instance, sits at nearly 12,000 feet above sea level, requiring expensive and laborious engineering. ***Vistas*** from mountain roads here, however, are among the most spectacular in the world. The world's highest segment of paved road is Ticlio Pass in the central Andes in Peru, 15,807 feet above the nearby Pacific Ocean. A razor-thin stretch of highway on a Bolivian mountainside has been dubbed the world's most dangerous road. Truckers frequent the stretch, which has, essentially, only one lane and lacks guardrails, so passing is a perilous task.

In April 2008, *Time* magazine ran a story entitled "The World's Worst Traffic Jams." The story, which spotlighted Brazil's São Paulo as the worst traffic city in the world, brought to light the mind-boggling amounts of time São Paulo residents spend in gridlock each year. The growing wealth of the city's residents, the article revealed, was behind the trend, as was the greater availability of credit for potential car buyers and the metropolis's rapid growth. São Paulo has recently gone to extraordinary lengths to assuage congestion: ***HOV lanes*** (also known as carpool lanes) now exist along many major thoroughfares, and city ordinances prohibit each car from being driven during rush hour one day a week. São Paulo's woes are perhaps the worst in Latin America, but other major urban areas suffer, as well. Rio de Janeiro's problems stem from narrow highway lanes and high car ownership, as well as the sheer number of people in the area (12.5 million). Buenos Aires, Lima, Caracas, Bogotá, Santiago—indeed, all of Latin America's largest metropolitan areas—are marred by traffic problems. Interestingly, Central America has largely been spared from major road tie-ups so far, because the largest Central America cities are small compared to South Americas. (Guatemala City, the largest urban area in Central America, encompasses about 2.7 million people. No other Central American metropolis tops 2 million.)


São Paulo Traffic

For international travel to and from Latin America, flying is often a traveler's best option. The region's busiest airports are in South America—this is a function of the greater populations than in Central America—and while none rank among the world's busiest, some still see heavy traffic. São Paulo, the Western Hemisphere's third-largest metropolitan area (behind Mexico City and New York City), is one of only a few major cities worldwide with two similarly busy airports. Guarulhos International Airport, the busiest in Latin America, handled 20 million passengers in 2008, while Congonhas was not far behind with 13 million. El Dorado International in Bogotá saw 13 million people that year, and the major airports in Rio de Janeiro and the capital, Brasilia, rounded out Brazil's list. Lima's

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Jorge Chávez International, Buenos Aires's Ministro Pistarini International, and Santiago's Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International are also busy. As air travel becomes more affordable for Latin Americans, many national airlines are growing.


Gaurulhos Airport Tower

On land, Latin America offers a wide range of mass transit options, although their availability is patchy. Many mass transit forms, like taxis and buses, utilize roads both within and outside of cities. Just as in North America, taxis are easy to find in most larger cities. Some inner-city residents forgo vehicle ownership entirely, relying on taxis and other forms of transportation exclusively. Buenos Aires's *colectivos* are one of the best examples of public transportation in South America, referring to any mass transit vehicle, but especially buses. The ***chicken bus*** system in Guatemala and Honduras is the same type of system, using old, flamboyantly decorated American school buses. Many companies offer a long-distance system using well-equipped and comfortable charter buses. These are an affordable alternative to flying where highways exist; probably the best Latin American system exists in Argentina.


Chicken Bus

Rail transportation plays a big role throughout Latin America for passenger transit, and an even larger one for cargo transit. Most countries throughout Latin America have more developed rail systems than the U.S. or Canada, thus large quantities of people and goods are moved by rail. For international travel, variations in ***rail gauge*** often pose problems, in some cases prohibiting rail transportation between countries altogether. Typically, neighboring countries have tried to resolve the problem of rail gauge breaks to allow for international rail traffic, but sometimes the process is costly. Belize, Guatemala, and Nicaragua are unique in that they have no rail transportation, either for passengers or for cargo, of any kind, a result of low usage and ridership in recent years. In South America, however, rail usage remains high.

Other forms of transportation flourish throughout the continent. Recreationally, lakes and coastal areas offer ferry rides and scenic trips, often taken by tourists. In the dense jungles of the Amazon, the Amazon River itself is navigable for more than 2,000 miles. Many of the river's tributaries are also large and afford river transportation, but these are used primarily by the isolated tribes and residents of the few small cities there. For some time, Brazil has proposed completing the Trans-Amazonian Highway, which would connect the Amazon Basin with lower Brazil, along with Ecuador and Peru. Construction was begun in 1972, and nearly 3,300 miles of roadway were built. Costs mounted quickly in the inhospitable Amazon jungles, and the impact on the environment caused widespread concern, as the highway cut into the fragile Amazonian habitat. Eventually, Brazil abandoned the project, as many other nations disapproved of any further work being done.

Life Principle

Good company in a journey makes the way to seem shorter.

-Izaak Walton

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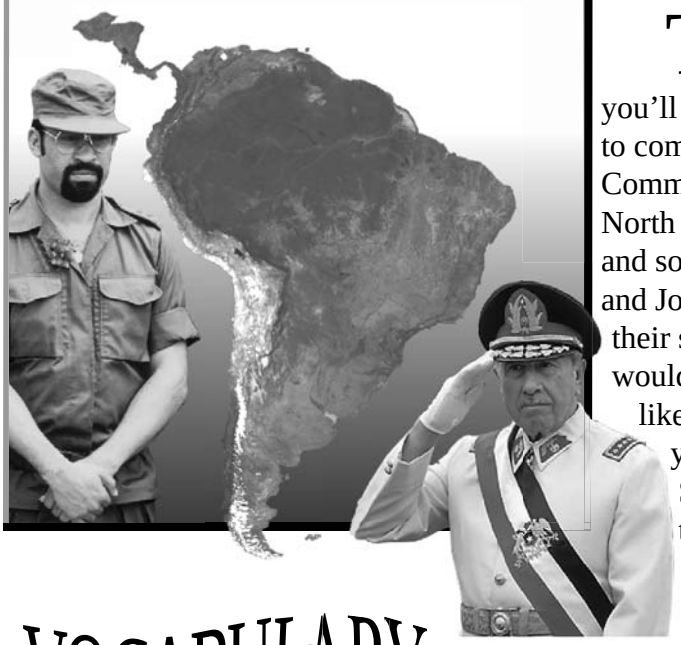
World Geography

Chapter 2

Lesson 11
Forms of Government

Section 3
Lessons 11-15

Forms of Government of Latin America



Turn on the evening news or pick up a news magazine, and before long you'll be bombarded with enough information to compile a list of the world's worst countries. Communist nations and Islamic theocracies like North Korea and Iran would be perennial entries, and so would the Middle Eastern nations of Syria and Jordan for the daily violence that ravages their streets. Many central African nations would undoubtedly qualify—destitute nations like Swaziland, where the life expectancy is 39 years. And certainly war-torn and genocidal Sudan would be near the top—the dictator there, Omar al-Bashir, has presided over the death of 200,000 citizens since 2003.

Most of these nations, which have earned their place in history because they are poverty-stricken or terrifyingly unstable, are far from the United States and, indeed, the Western Hemisphere. But one country that often keeps under the radar in this discussion is actually as close as Latin America. Colombia is, admittedly, not as dangerous as Afghanistan, not as poor as Somalia, and not as unstable as Gaza and the West Bank. In fact, democracy has reigned uninterrupted in Colombia for decades, and peaceful ***transfers of power*** are the norm in South America's gateway nation. But on a concrete level, the country is plagued by drug problems far worse than anything in Mexico. Drug cartels own the streets, shipping huge quantities of heroin and cocaine abroad—some estimates suggest that Colombia produces 80% of the cocaine used in the U.S. Guerilla groups roam countrysides, terrorizing innocent civilians and attacking infrastructure. Many of these groups, including the large

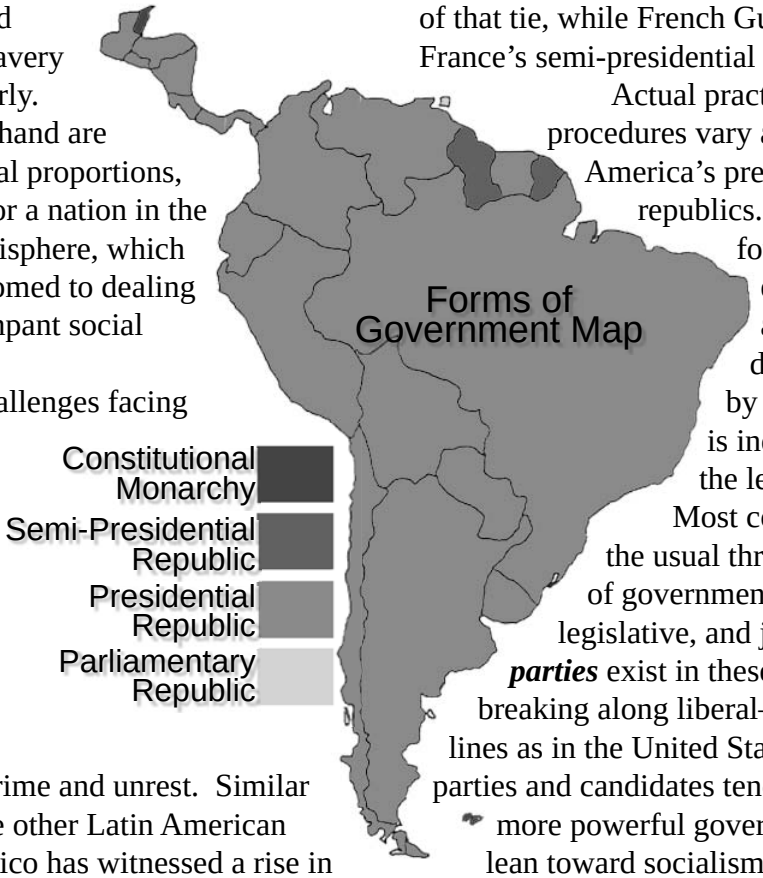
VOCABULARY

Transfer of power: the passing of political rule from one administration to another
Political party: an organization that seeks to attain political power in a country, usually united by a particular ideology
Coup d'état: sudden, unconstitutional deposition of a government
Internment camp: concentration camp; area where political prisoners are relocated

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Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, earn tremendous profits from cocaine distribution and they bomb bridges, power plants, and oil pipelines as political statements aimed at the government. In some places, women and children are kidnapped and forced into slavery almost regularly. The issues at hand are of monumental proportions, particularly for a nation in the Western Hemisphere, which is less accustomed to dealing with such rampant social tumult.

The challenges facing Colombia do not reflect a flaw in its governmental system, but merely the government's inability to suppress widespread crime and unrest. Similar problems face other Latin American nations. Mexico has witnessed a rise in drug production and importation across its northern border recently. Socialist forces in Panama and Venezuela have disrupted democracy. Yet despite the challenges, most of Latin America employs common and familiar forms of government. Of the twenty nations represented in the region, seventeen have presidential republics, making it by far the dominant system in the Americas. One nation, Guyana, has a semi-presidential republic, similar to that in France or Russia. Belize utilizes a constitutional monarchy, while Trinidad and Tobago has a parliamentary republic.



These latter three forms are indicative of Latin America's former ownership by Europe, as all three still identify with Europe. The Falkland Islands, which are administered by the United Kingdom, employ a constitutional monarchy by virtue of that tie, while French Guiana takes on France's semi-presidential republic.

Actual practices and procedures vary among Latin America's presidential republics. At the foundational level, each country has a representative democracy, led by a president who is independent of the legislative body. Most countries have the usual three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial. ***Political parties*** exist in these countries, often breaking along liberal–conservative lines as in the United States. Liberal parties and candidates tend to favor larger, more powerful governments and often lean toward socialism; conservative parties prefer small government and free enterprise economics. Like most presidential republics do, Latin American nations usually name their legislature a "Congress" or "Assembly." The legislatures in seven countries—Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay—are bicameral, while in the rest they are unicameral. Judicial branches in most countries are arranged into hierarchies, usually headed by a Supreme Court. The internal divisions of most nations are called provinces, and usually they share power with the national government through

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a federal system. States differ as to the balance of power between national and provincial governments, however. In Costa Rica, the federal government is very strong, but in several others it is rather weak.


Augusto Pinochet

Many Latin American countries have only recently begun to stabilize following a series of ***coups d'état*** in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these were violent and some were long-lived. In Chile, for instance, Army Chief of Staff Augusto Pinochet recruited various governmental agencies in 1973 to help him overthrow the existing socialist government, and, after seizing power, he ruled as dictator until 1990. Pinochet's administration was controversial because he stifled free speech and political opposition as he came down heavy-handed on communist revolutions. A 1993 report asserted that 3,200 people were killed for opposing Pinochet, while a more recent report suggested that 30,000 were tortured and 80,000 placed in ***internment camps***. Pinochet allegedly amassed a considerable fortune through illegal business dealings and tax issues. His tenure was the most turbulent within the past several decades.


Désí Bouterse

In Argentina, Jorge Videla served as president from 1976 to 1981, committing various crimes while in office. Many Argentines were tortured or killed under Videla, especially political opponents and critics. Videla made widespread use of concentration camps where law enforcement officers would bring his enemies, but some of his larger accomplishments were almost shocking: during his five-year term, he managed to ban labor unions and eradicate the judicial system entirely. Today, the period is known as the Dirty War.

In Suriname, Désí Bouterse came to power in 1980 and influenced politics for a decade, ruling as president briefly. His name has been connected with cocaine dealing and is most famous for his role in the December Murders, in which several political critics were killed, sparking an international outcry. All told, the vast majority of Latin American countries have been run by military dictatorships at some point in the 20th century.

Currently, Venezuela is run by President Hugo Chavez, a Marxist who has political ties to communist Cuba, China, North Korea, and Iran. Chavez has built up an army of tanks and missiles obtained from his Asian alliances. His rhetoric against the U.S. has caused concern over future political, economic, and religious freedom inVenezuela and the surrounding region.

Guyana has a semi-presidential republic in which three branches of government operate independently. The country has both a prime minister and a president. The president holds more of a ceremonial role, serving as formal head of state, while the prime minister is responsible for actual running of the government. French Guiana is also a semi-presidential republic, but it is not a sovereign nation, instead being administered by France. A general council and a regional council run affairs in the territory and report to France, representing its interests. Belize is part of the Commonwealth of Nations, ruled by Queen Elizabeth II. The nation has

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a prime minister, who officially serves at the monarch's pleasure. Trinidad and Tobago utilizes a parliamentary republic system, ruled by a president. The country's political structure is largely based on the United Kingdom's system.



Life Principle

Though the people support the government, the government should not support the people.

- **Grover Cleveland,** 22nd and 24th U.S. President

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World Geography

Chapter 2



Lesson 12
Diplomatic Relations

Section 3
Lessons 11-15

Diplomatic Relations of Latin America



August 2009 was an unusually exciting month for diplomatic relations in Latin America. Even in a region where governments are not always the most stable, and where relations between countries can be more fickle than those in the Middle East, this month was particularly busy. Here's a brief rundown of events.

In June, left-leaning Honduran President Jose Manuel Zelaya was overthrown in a military coup sparked by allegations that he was a communist and wanted to tamper with Honduras's ***constitution***. Zelaya was promptly ***exiled*** from the country, and congressional leader Robert Micheletti stepped in as interim president. The ouster was overwhelmingly condemned by the international community, who claimed that Honduras should deal with its problems in a legal, constitutional manner, not through a military overthrow. Over the next several months, tensions mounted between Honduras and its Latin American allies, and, finally, in August, Argentina asked its Honduran ***ambassador*** to leave because he did not oppose Micheletti's rule. Several days later on August 18, Honduras formally cut ties with Argentina, ordering its ambassadors to depart within three days and channeling any communication through Israel. In an unrelated incident one week later, controversial Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez indicated his country would sever connections with neighboring Colombia, which had accepted a U.S. military presence on its military bases to help stem the onslaught of drug distribution and guerilla warfare. Venezuela, once among both South America's and the United States' closest

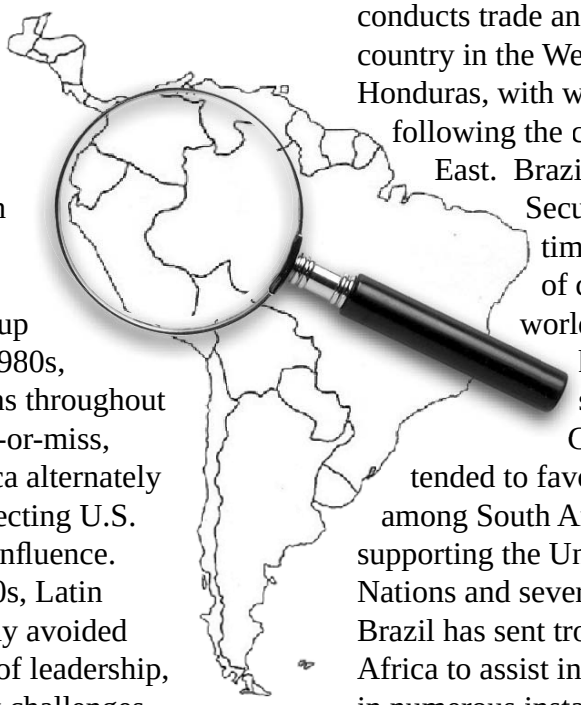
VOCABULARY

Constitution: document containing the foundational and supreme law of a country
Exiled: expelled from a country
Ambassador: highest-ranking representative from one country to another

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partners, has become increasingly critical of U.S. policies in Latin America since Chavez took office, and has implemented socialistic programs that have elicited strong disapproval and isolation within the international community.

The flurry of activity brought to the surface some of the issues simmering in Latin America. Indeed, in the 20th century, few regions have been under the international microscope like Central and South America. Through a series of coups that began in the 1930s, but picked up in the 1970s and 1980s, diplomatic relations throughout the world were hit-or-miss, with South America alternately embracing and rejecting U.S. and other foreign influence. Since the late 1980s, Latin America has mostly avoided violent upheavals of leadership, but since then new challenges have faced the region. Some nations are among the world's more stable diplomatically—Brazil, Costa Rica—where trade and talks have continued warmly for years. Others, however, are still influenced by Soviet-era communism that collapsed during the Cold War and is still embodied in Cuban and Venezuelan politics. Furthermore, even though new constitutions in some countries have done well since their adoptions over the past three decades, these young governments are very much susceptible to internal strife and external pressure from aggressive neighbors.

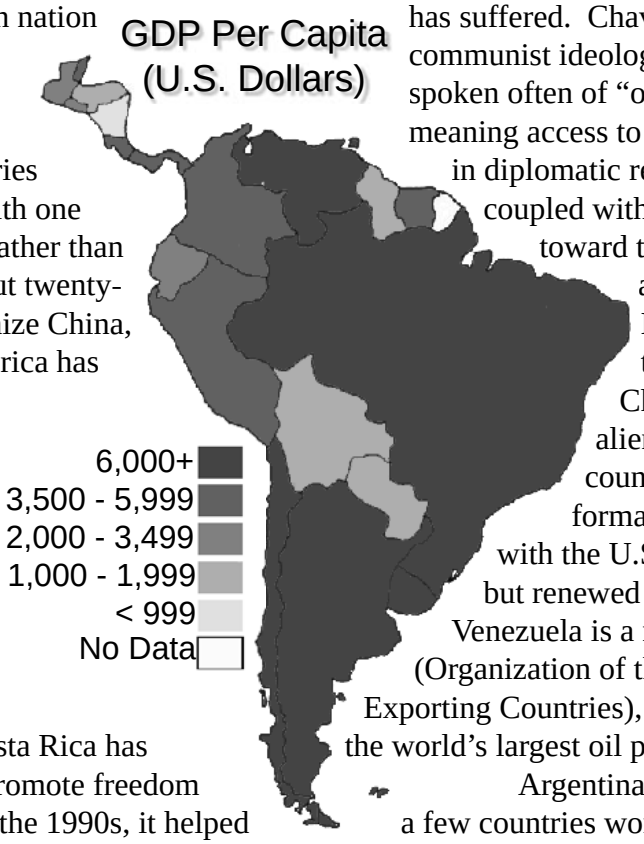


The problems represented in Honduras and Venezuela are not typical in all countries. Some nations have quite warm diplomatic relationships around the world. Brazil's government has been stable for quite some time, and as the largest and most populous country in Latin America, it has shaped foreign relations and economic trends in the West for decades. The nation conducts trade and diplomacy with every country in the Western Hemisphere (except Honduras, with which it suspended relations following the coup) and many in the East. Brazil has served on the U.N. Security Council multiple times (a sort of elite group of countries that supervises world affairs in the U.N.) and has sought a permanent seat for several years. Continentally, Brazil has tended to favor stronger relationships among South American countries, supporting the Union of South American Nations and several other organizations. Brazil has sent troops to the Middle East and Africa to assist in peacekeeping missions in numerous instances, but lately it has abstained from military offensives, including the international coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The nation's official stance favors multilateralism, but Brazil's relationships with more conservative countries like the U.S. and the U.K. have not suffered.

In Central America, perhaps no country holds more sway over international affairs than Costa Rica. The small nation, about four-fifths the size of West Virginia, enjoys clout and significance that far outstrips its size. Costa Rica has held conservative policies for quite some time—it did not conduct trade with Cuba until very recently, and it counts the United States

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as its principal economic partner. In the China–Taiwan dilemma, Costa Rica is the only Central American nation that joins the global community. Because Taiwan is claimed by China, most countries conduct diplomacy with one country or the other, rather than both. Currently, all but twenty-three countries recognize China, although Central America has notably bucked this trend and recognized Taiwan. Costa Rica was among them until 2007, when it officially changed its support from Taiwan to China. Both locally and intercontinentally, Costa Rica has worked tirelessly to promote freedom and human rights. In the 1990s, it helped facilitate the first democratic elections in El Salvador following the civil war there, whereas, on a larger scale, it served on the U.N. Security Council and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.



Venezuela is currently among the less admirable diplomacy stories. The nation plays a major role, both within South America and overseas, for many reasons, a fact that has made recent events more troubling. It is near the top of South America in many counts: it is the fourth largest by area and population, and its GDP is the third highest, a reality attributable to its vast reserves of oil. Historically, Venezuela has pursued socialistic policies, yet maintained cordial relations around the world. However, since Chavez's election in 1998, diplomacy has suffered. Chavez embraced communist ideology and has spoken often of "oil diplomacy," meaning access to Venezuela's oil in diplomatic relations. Often coupled with hostile rhetoric toward the United States and Western Europe, this thinking within the Chavez regime has alienated many foreign countries. Venezuela formally halted relations with the U.S. in 2008, but renewed them in 2009. Venezuela is a member of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), an association of the world's largest oil producers.



Cristina Fernández de Kirchner

Argentina is one of only a few countries worldwide with a female head of government, a list that includes neighboring Chile. President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, whose husband served as president prior to her election, is listed on Forbes's "The World's 100 Most Powerful Women" list, and guides Argentina's foreign policy. As the second largest nation in Latin America, Argentina holds substantial influence over the region. Current relations are good throughout Latin America and the world. Like Brazil, Argentina has supported projects seeking to unify South America, including its status as a charter member of Mercosur, a trade pact that has expanded to nine countries. The nation is one of Latin America's most stable and

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has partnered with Brazil and the United States to counter a myriad of social ills on the continent: drug and human trafficking, guerilla wars, political instability, and others. Argentina participated in the Gulf War in the early 1990s and strengthened ties with the U.S. in doing so. Historically, its 3,300-mile border with Chile has been a source of contention, as the two have had territorial disputes in Patagonia. Argentina has several other territorial claims for which it has fought, largely off its coastline in potentially oil-rich Atlantic waters. Recently, however, relations with Chile have been repaired somewhat, and Kirchner is seeking to broaden Argentina's global influence while battling economic problems at home.

While other nations throughout Latin America are of considerable importance diplomatically, these are some of the most significant. Peru, Colombia, Panama, and Guatemala are all important players on the world stage, while other countries are important regionally and locally. Belize is interesting in that it has roots in England and very limited diplomatic connections, except the United States, which accounts for a huge percentage of trade and investments. Guatemala has claimed various portions of Belize since before World War II but lacks support with which to pursue ownership. Peru has had more free elections recently after receiving heavy criticism for flawed elections in 2000, opening up relations within the Americas. It supports the Free Trade Area of the Americas, which is essentially an expansion of NAFTA to Central and South America as well, although many Latin American nations oppose it. Bolivia, the poorest country in South America, has decent relations with every country except Chile. In the Falkland Islands and French Guiana, the governments conduct foreign relations through their parent countries, England and France respectively.

Life Principle

Two persons will not be friends long if they cannot forgive each other's little failings.

-Jean de la Bruyere

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World Geography

Chapter 2



Lesson 13
Economic Systems

Section 3
Lessons 11-15





By 2050, Brazil could be the world's third-largest economy.

So said investment firm Goldman Sachs in 2007 in its global economic forecast for the next forty years. It is a serious promotion for the Latin American power, which today ranks tenth in the world. Goldman Sachs's selection of the top five nations raised quite a few eyebrows, not for putting China first—which many economists believe is all but guaranteed—but for elevating India, Brazil, and Mexico above traditionally dominant economies, such as Japan and those in Europe. But the report concretized one thing that many experts have been whispering about for years: the world's economic landscape is changing.



And whether or not Brazil will end up among the key players in a few decades, it is poised to become a major player on the economic stage. In 2009, Brazil earned the designation of "newly industrialized country," a term economists and sociologists give to countries displaying marked economic growth, democratic and capitalistic commitment, and an increasingly industrialized workforce. All of these are hallmarks of ***developed countries***, a group into which Brazil is quickly making headway. Brazil has been a contender for entry into the G8 in recent years (an association of the world's eight richest countries, which, in September 2009, was effectively replaced by the G-20, of which Brazil is a member). It has served extensively as an invitee on the U.N. Security Council, which participates in international discussions on world economic issues.

The emergence of Brazil as a global economic

VOCABULARY

Developed country: informal classification for countries usually characterized by a high level of economic development, a high standard of living, a post-agricultural economy, and open market tendencies
Capital: revenue available for use in the production of goods and services

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powerhouse is counterintuitive, given the nation's relatively repressed freedom rankings. In indices of economic freedom, Brazil ranks around 100th in the world, which is quite a poor rating. According to one source, Brazil falls behind communistic China on the list, while other sources put it behind some of the poorest African nations, which are hardly known for their free and unfettered marketplaces. Taxes are high in many instances as the government seeks to pay for its educational system and subsidize important industries like farming and energy. Brazil also has large amounts of foreign debt, but has effectively reduced dependency on imported oil. These acts consume large amounts of ***capital***. Among the few bright spots in Brazil's economy is its utilization of free trade pacts with countries in the Western Hemisphere.



Throughout Latin America, economies vary on numerous levels. Economic freedom, tax rates, nationalization vs. privatization, government oversight of various industries—all of these differ throughout the region, resulting in very different realities among countries. Few regional economic trends exist compared with Europe, where countries tend to display predictable economic growth. Overall, both Central and South America score low to average in economic freedom, with some countries—notably Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru—scoring higher, and others, like Guyana and Venezuela, embracing socialism. Many of the problems Latin America faces are common among countries, such as high unemployment and high taxes. All these are characteristics of ***developing countries***, a category into which every Latin American nation falls.

Central America, as a whole, is a collection of average economies. In the north, Belize has Latin America's second-smallest economy (to Guyana), but with a population of just 300,000, its finances are relatively healthy. It employs a mixed economy, though it tends toward capitalism more than socialism, relying on tourism to its Belize Barrier Reef and Native American ruins. Banking and investment firms are open to foreigners, which has attracted moderate investment over the past twenty years. Guatemala has the largest economy in Central America, fueled partly by its strong banking sector. El Salvador has privatized its banking industry and many others, including essential infrastructure like utilities and communications.



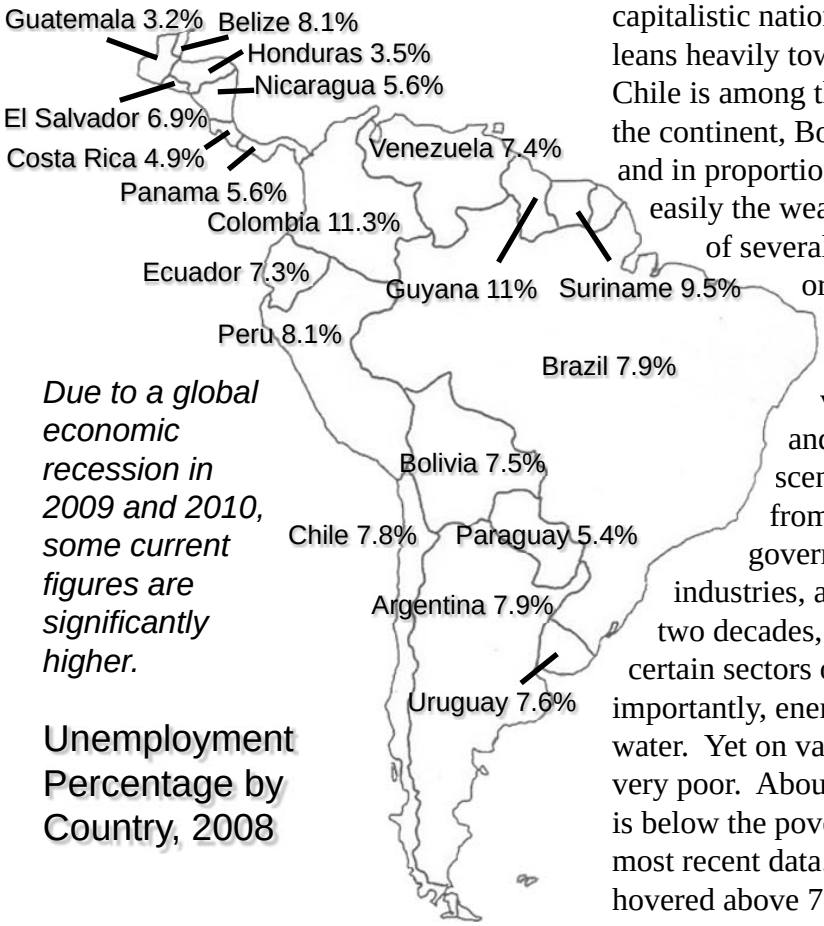
These changes have transformed it into a solidly capitalistic nation. Its use of the U.S. dollar as currency has held both pros and cons: it has generally stabilized currency and limited inflation in a region prone to inflation, but the dollar's woes in recent years have hurt El Salvador, as well. In Honduras, the 1990s were a frightening period of high inflation, but it promises to stabilize since pro-communist

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President Manuel Zelaya was removed from office in 2009. Nicaragua continues to flirt with socialism, but has taken steps toward free market policies. Though its foreign debt has dropped dramatically, many Nicaraguans are underemployed, a trend that the global recession has intensified. Costa Rica has embodied, largely, capitalistic principles for decades, while Panama has sought to initiate them. Nearly 100 years after its opening, Panama still benefits robustly from revenue generated from the Panama Canal.

Chile is the most capitalistic nation in Latin America. It actually outperforms most European countries, with a strong emphasis on foreign trade and generally healthy economic sectors. Since the coups of the 1970s and 1980s, many Chilean industries, such as banking and agriculture, have been returned to private hands. The government retains a limited role in the economy, addressing issues such as inflation, which it regulates through its national bank. Although inflation levels in Chile are higher than in North America, they have been moderate recently, an impressive feat for a Latin American country. In the banking industry, Chile has encouraged investment by providing open, free access to Chilean banks for foreigners and guaranteeing profits, which regularly materialize for investors. Like Mexico in North America, Chile has relied on its numerous free trade agreements, providing access to valuable markets overseas.

On the other end of the spectrum lies Bolivia. Whereas Chile is the most capitalistic nation in Latin America, Bolivia leans heavily toward socialism. Whereas Chile is among the healthier economies on the continent, Bolivia's is among the worst, and in proportion to the country's size, it is easily the weakest. Bolivia is a member of several transnational economic organizations, including Mercosur and the Andean Group, but the country's vigorous mining industry and its spectacular mountain scenery have not lifted it from economic hardship. The government still controls various industries, although, over the last two decades, it has begun to privatize certain sectors of the economy, most importantly, energy and some utilities, like water. Yet on various fronts, Bolivia is still very poor. About 70% of the population is below the poverty line according to the most recent data. Unemployment has hovered above 7% for several years, which



Due to a global economic recession in 2009 and 2010, some current figures are significantly higher.

Unemployment Percentage by Country, 2008

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is due, in part, to the global recession but also reflects inherent problems at home. To alleviate some of the nation's rife poverty, the government has pursued a series of socialistic measures designed to assist the poorest Bolivians. The consequence, however, is higher taxation, which does not help Bolivia's efforts to become more capitalistic.

Paraguay has a relatively small, but stabilizing, economy. Like most Latin American nations, it is pursuing steps to liberalize production, business law, trade, and other economic factors. This has come largely through its banking industry, which has rebounded considerably following a crisis in the mid-1990s. Inflation has dropped as of late, although some financial experts expect it to inch back up over the next few years. Ironically, Paraguay tolerates and encourages a robust black market industry involving European products. Uruguay, which has a mostly free economy, has utilized its energy industry to win free trade agreements around the world. Other Latin American nations face varying challenges on the economic front as they attempt to mix capitalism and socialism. Some nations could be termed ***welfare states***, particularly the least free nations. Guyana is unusually repressed, with countless government policies regulating even minute aspects of private business. In Venezuela, this is far more pronounced—next to Venezuela, Guyana looks free and unchecked. According to the 2009 Index of Economic Freedom, Venezuela has the sixth-least free economy in the world, only slightly ahead of Cuba and authoritarian Burma.


Santiago Financial District

VOCABULARY

Developing country: informal classification for countries usually characterized by a lower level of economic development, a low to moderate standard of living, an agricultural economy, and closed market tendencies

Welfare state: nation in which the government undertakes large-scale action to redistribute wealth, goods, and benefits

LIFE PRINCIPLE

All we have of freedom,
All we use or know,
This our fathers bought for us,
Long and long ago.

-Rudyard Kipling

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World Geography

Chapter 2



Lesson 14
Natural Resources

Section 3
Lessons 11-15

Natural Resources of Latin America



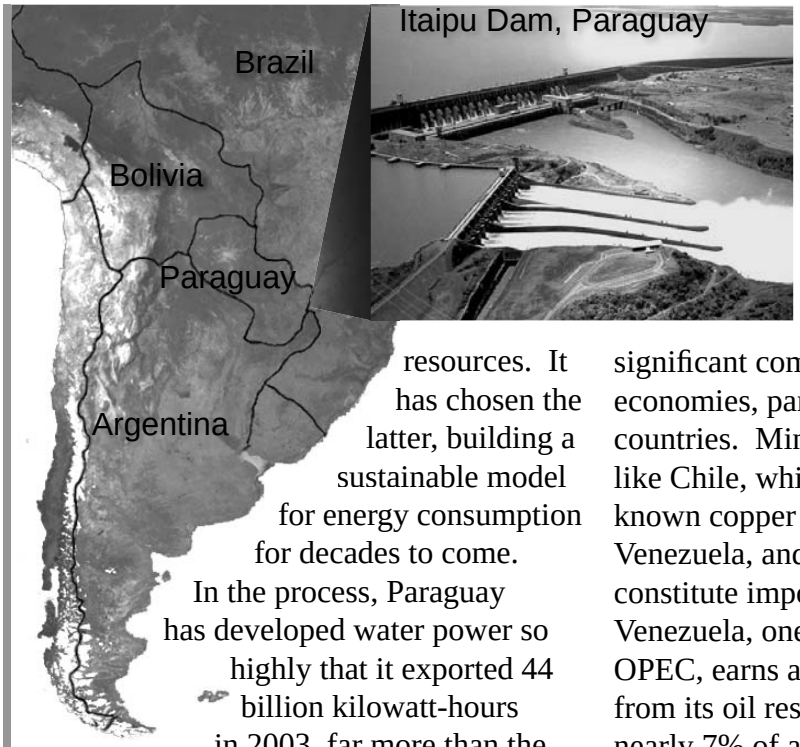
Imagine a girl named Anna who lived in a place that generates all of its electricity through renewable means. When Anna was young, her country set its mind on using only clean, sustainable energy sources and succeeded in doing so. Not only that, Anna's homeland produced fifteen times as much energy as it needed—that renewable energy gave her family and friends fifteen times as much power as they actually used to fuel vehicles, heat and cool homes, manufacture goods, raise and harvest crops, and run industry. The results were phenomenal. They sparked a transformation not seen since America's Industrial Revolution, when millions left their farms to work in factories in the city. Gas companies in Anna's country had to adapt, or go bankrupt. Energy prices were suddenly more likely to drop than to spike, as gasoline prices around the world have done lately. Anna could fill her fuel tank with ***biofuels***, turn on light switches drawing electricity from solar panels, and heat her bath water using gas generated from ***geothermal power***. In addition, Anna's nation wiped out its immense national debt in no time, and taxes dropped as it exported its newfound energy surpluses around the world.

Anna's country is Paraguay. For the past ten years, Paraguay has produced 99.9% of its energy needs with hydroelectric power. In a country with no oil reserves, no nuclear power plants, no geothermal development, and few alternative energy sources, Paraguay can either import costly power from its neighbors or utilize its vast water

VOCABULARY

Biofuel: fuel derived from renewable biological materials or organic matter
Geothermal power: generation of energy by the extraction of heat in the Earth
Tantalum: hard, gray metallic element
Ecology: the environment as it relates to living organisms

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Itaipu Dam, Paraguay

resources. It has chosen the latter, building a sustainable model for energy consumption for decades to come. In the process, Paraguay has developed water power so highly that it exported 44 billion kilowatt-hours in 2003, far more than the 3.5 billion it used at home. Since then, its energy production capacity has more or less remained on par with consumption, emerging as one of the biggest boons to the Paraguayan economy.

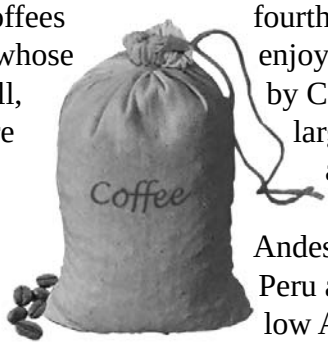
The hydroelectric reserves are one of Paraguay's most important natural resources. Paraguay is not alone in the region in utilizing hydroelectricity. Nearby Uruguay uses hydroelectric power to produce 95% of its energy needs; Argentina is not near this level, but hydroelectricity supplies nearly a third of its power. Components of Paraguay's hydroelectric system are quite impressive by any standard. The nation's star power plant, Itaipu Dam, is nearly five miles long and is the second-largest generating facility of any kind in the world. Altogether, Itaipu and its counterparts save Paraguay half a million barrels of oil per day, a feat it is able to accomplish by virtue of the Paraná River, which, at 2,484 miles, in length, is the main part of the world's fourteenth longest river system.

Latin America is brimming with natural resources, ones that historically have been important and still contribute to its economic well-being. Agricultural resources are significant components of many nations' economies, particularly in less-developed countries. Minerals are abundant in nations like Chile, which has 38% of the world's known copper resources, and in Colombia, Venezuela, and many others where minerals constitute important facets of the economy. Venezuela, one of the founding members of OPEC, earns a huge percentage of funding from its oil reserves, which account for nearly 7% of all the oil in the world. To reduce dependency on oil, whose prices are hardly stable, many nations, like Paraguay, have begun to invest in renewable sources of energy. It is one of the region's glaring examples of how a nation with a wealth of natural resources is fraught with economic problems founded in socialism.

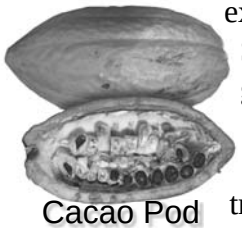
When many people think of Latin America's natural resources, its agricultural products are the first that come to mind. This conception is not without foundation: traditional, staple crops exist throughout many places in Latin America, while the region's tropical climate has made it a premiere producer of non-staple foods. In Central America, corn, squash, and grains flourish throughout the isthmus, being used to feed the populations and sometimes sold as exports. Yet, many more localized crops are higher-profile. From Guatemala down through the southern Andes, coffee is a huge agricultural item and one of Latin America's top exports. Some of the world's

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most flavorful and exotic coffees come from Latin America, whose warm climate, ample rainfall, and often high elevations are perfectly suited to produce it. Some coffee producers believe that the higher the elevation, the better quality the coffee. For this reason, Colombia is one of Latin America's best-known coffee growers, utilizing the mountainous terrain of its Andean slopes to cultivate the crop. Peru and Argentina count coffee as an important resource, as well. Brazil, like Colombia, has become synonymous with good coffee, producing fully one-third of the world's supply.



Other tropical crops flourish in the temperate climates here. Bananas, the fourth largest fruit crop in the world, enjoy the warm, wet climate afforded by Costa Rica, Brazil, and Ecuador, the largest producers in the region. Brazil accounts for nearly 10% of the world's banana production, but the Andes region countries of Ecuador and Peru also cultivate bananas widely. In the low Andean foothills of Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia, and in the Amazon Basin, cacao trees grow. Pods from these trees, whose beans are the principal ingredient in the production of chocolate, are a major export item for the countries. Most exports are sent to the United States, where confectionery giants, Hershey's and Nestlé use chocolate in candy. Intriguingly—and tragically—one of the most important crops in Colombia is the coca plant. The thin, unassuming plant contains the cocaine compound, which is the primary element in production of illegal drugs. Grown throughout the Andean region, the plant prefers elevations of several thousand feet and is in high demand by Colombia's ruthless drug trafficking industry.


Cacao Pod



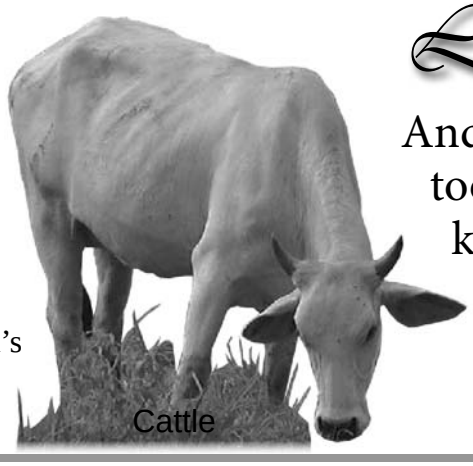
Other crops, including tobacco, sugarcane, and, to a lesser extent, corn, thrive throughout South America. Latin America also has a healthy and productive mining sector. Central America has small stores of silver and copper, and a few other minerals are extracted for commercial use. Most of Latin America's mineral resources are found in South America. The Andean region is particularly endowed in this area. Peru has large stores of gold, silver,

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copper, and tin, which it uses in jewelry manufacturing, electrical conduit, and construction applications. Cash-strapped Bolivia also has a large supply of tin. Chile, which is relatively low on other metals, has the largest single store of copper in the world, found in the deserts and low Andean foothills to the east. In Brazil, one-fifth of the world's tin resources are an important economic contributor, as are the lesser quantities of metals like aluminum, nickel, and hafnium. In addition, half of the world's ***tantalum*** is located in Brazil. This rare, lustrous metal is used primarily in electronic items, such as telephones, computers, and cameras. Brazil also has deposits of diamonds, which are used mainly in industrial products.

Other natural resources exist throughout Latin America, as well. In Guatemala, cattle ranching is a primary economic activity. Cattle and other livestock are in fact increasingly prevalent throughout Central America and northern South America, where they are raised largely for beef. Many privately owned farms and ranches flourish in the region, but corporations have entered the field, running vast livestock operations and selling their profitable products worldwide. Although Central America is not known for its oil production, several refineries exist throughout, utilizing the region's small reserves for power. Venezuela is the oil capital of South America, an activity that dominates both its economic and political discourse. Argentina has harnessed the immense wind potential in Patagonia, to apply turbines to generate power. In forested areas, timber is an important natural resource. Brazilian timber products are in high demand worldwide, but harvesting has increasingly cut into the Amazon Rainforest, resulting in large-scale deforestation and concerns over the local ***ecology***.


Lumberjack


Cattle

Life Principle

And Nature, the old nurse, took the child upon her knee, saying: "Here is a story-book thy Father has written for thee."

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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World Geography

Chapter 2



Lesson 15
Imports, Exports, and Major Industries

Section 3
Lessons 11-15

Imports, Exports, and Major Industries of Latin America



About sixty miles off the coast of Belize, in the middle of an atoll called Lighthouse Reef, lies a sinkhole called the Great Blue Hole. About 1,000 feet wide, the hole is essentially an underwater cave that plunges dramatically from the surrounding ocean, measuring 410 feet in depth. It is a deep blue in color, and when viewed from the air it is a stunning sight, as the shallow waters around it are a luminescent palette of light blues and greens, decorated by the coral teeming throughout the atoll. The site is among Belize's top attractions for scuba divers and other seafaring adventurers, who often dedicate an entire day to frolicking in the sinkhole's depths. Made popular by famed French explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, the location also draws simply curious tourists and recreational pilots, who frequent the near-coastal skies for the striking views it affords.

The Great Blue Hole represents one of the most important economic activities in Belize, and much of Central America: tourism. Warm weather and abundant sunshine are not the only draws in the tropical playground of Central America. Services related to sites like the sinkhole, and the surrounding Belize Barrier Reef, rake in massive profits annually, most of them from the United States. In Costa Rica, dense jungles and unusual species make ***ecotourism*** one of the biggest economic activities each year, attracting millions of environmentally conscious visitors. On the historical and cultural side, Maya ruins in Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras fascinate travelers from around the world. Perhaps the most famous

VOCABULARY

Ecotourism: branch of tourism defined by its focus on the natural environment and commitment to its protection
Economic diversification: state of having many sources of income or economic products
Industrialization: the extensive development of industry as a key component of an economy
Outsource: to transfer a production task or element out of the country

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Maya Ruins

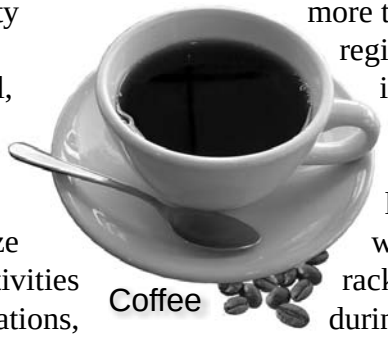


Tourist Beach

of these sites are the Maya pyramids, which served functions from places of worship to burial grounds, and date back thousands of years. Some large cities, such as Panama City and San Salvador, are thoroughly modern and draw tourists to their theatre offerings and unique local cuisines.

In a region where economies often struggle and substantial portions of the populace live below the poverty line, tourist receipts are of critical importance. Tourism actually headlines the list of major industries and exports in Latin America, a list that belies the region's poverty problems. Latin America's natural resources—agricultural, geological, and environmental—have actually equipped it with lofty potential for development and prosperity. Aside from industries that capitalize on the region's resources, other activities like manufacturing, telecommunications, and services have cropped up, affording Central and South America one of the most potentially diverse economic realms in the world. Between the promise and the practice, however—between the region's sheer capability and what it actually produces—lies a wide gulf. Many South American countries have failed to capitalize on their natural resource stores, while others have, historically, been oppressed by harsh governments and restrictive economic laws. In some nations, socialistic tendencies have placed control in the hands of government, whose track record on running economies is abysmal. Happily, a few nations have managed to grow their economies in recent years, and they will likely serve as models of development throughout Latin America.

One of the instantly identifying trademarks of a developing country is the centrality of agriculture to the national economy. Throughout Latin America, this is true in about half of the countries. Central and Latin America are blessed with fertile soils, plentiful sunshine, and, in many places, sufficient rainfall, which form a powerful combination for farms and agriculture. Coffee, grown at higher elevations from Belize to southern Argentina, is associated with Latin America more than perhaps any other region—and its importance in national economies does not disappoint. Colombia, the third largest producer in the world, was expected to rack up 1.3 billion pounds during the 2009-10 growing season. Directly south, Brazil's totals dwarf Colombia's: in 2007, Brazil grew nearly 5 billion pounds of the crop, easily the largest amount in the world. Guatemala, Peru, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela are all among the world's top twenty



Coffee

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coffee-producing nations. Bananas, the most extensive fruit crop in the world, are important throughout the region. Ecuador is the world's largest exporter of the fruit and Brazil is the second largest producer; every Central American country counts bananas as among its most important crops, most of which are exported to the U.S. and Europe. Other tropical and warm-weather crops, such as sugarcane and cotton, are important economic activities throughout Latin America. Guyana counts, roughly, half of its economy from the production of sugarcane.

Where agricultural endeavors are less widespread, or where economies have progressed beyond farming, economies based on minerals or mining are prevalent. Capitalistic Chile has watched its economy experience growth rates between five and seven percent per year recently—an extremely high figure—on the back of its copper production. In 2007, copper comprised 22% of Chile's GDP. That number dropped to 16% just a year later, but the metal will continue to dominate with the nationalized copper producer and private copper firms exploring sources nationwide. In Bolivia, tin and silver are important. One of the many weaknesses of Bolivia's economy is its lack of ***economic diversification***, as the country has, historically, derived large chunks of its income from one source. For some time, Bolivia was among the world leaders in tin production, which is used in building construction, roofing, plumbing fixtures, and the electroplating of an array of metal objects. Tin prices fell in the 1980s and 1990s and Bolivia began exploring silver,


Business Jet

Yanacocha Gold Mine



and gold, among other resources. Chile produces large amounts of silver, while Peru is the world leader. Peru, which has the fastest-growing economy in Latin America, also boasts the world's most profitable gold mine in Yanacocha. Aluminum, bauxite, zinc, antimony, and other mineable resources also fuel local economies.

Although lower-scale activities such as these are behind many economies, some Latin American nations do show signs of increasing ***industrialization***. Brazil is the most notable nation in this mix, with nearly 30% of its GDP coming from industry. In large metropolitan areas, factories produce passenger cars and aircraft. Aircraft maker Embraer, an internationally respected business jet manufacturer, is headquartered in São Paulo. Energy is a big component as well. Brazil has an incredibly diverse and sustainable energy model, with over 80% of its electricity coming from hydroelectric sources such as Itaipu Dam, which it shares with neighboring Paraguay. The remaining portion comes from wind sources and nuclear energy, and oil also plays a small role. Petrobras, the national energy corporation, is one of the largest companies in the world, as is the mining company, Vale. In Argentina, vehicle production couples with construction equipment and machinery to make up the nation's

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large industrial sector. Manufacturing is important in both Brazil and Argentina, and elsewhere. Argentina is a leading producer of textiles and glass; Brazil's large quantities of rubber plants make the nation a leading exporter of tires and textiles, in which rubber is used as elastic. Uruguay's economy is highly dependent on textiles. Uruguay is poor, and textiles provide jobs and income for Uruguayans. Many textile workers in Uruguay, and throughout Latin America, work for American companies that ***outsource*** production to these countries. Jobs are created and quickly filled by people anxious to earn wages, even though they fall below hourly salaries of workers in the U.S. Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay are also known for their leather and furs, as many cattle ranchers and other livestock raisers live throughout the area. The South American *gaucho* is highly respected for his horsemanship while herding cattle on large ranches.


Cell Phone

In metropolitan areas, service jobs like retail, restaurants, and specialty stores are becoming increasingly common. In the wake of the technological revolution, telecommunications is a budding new field that Brazil and Argentina have taken seriously. Internet access, cell phone usage, and computer ownership are at surprisingly high levels in places like Buenos Aires, Panama City, and Guatemala City. Many Latin American nations have large telecommunications corporations that provide service throughout the country and even the region. In many countries, banking constitutes an ever-growing segment of the economy, spurred by reduced inflation, more stable economies, and foreign investment. Venezuela's oil production dominates that country's export economy.

Life Principle

Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship.

-Benjamin Franklin

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