

Country and Map: South America

Geography: South of North America. Made up of 12 countries. Mostly in Southern Hemisphere, equator runs through Ecuador, Columbia and Brazil. Brazil takes up half of the continent of S. America. The Amazon River flows through Brazil. The Atacama Desert runs along the western coast of the continent all along Chile. The Andes Mtns., the longest mountain chain in the world. runs down Chile. To the west is the Pacific Ocean and to the east is the Atlantic. The Caribbean Sea is to the north. The southern tip is only 600 miles from Antarctica.

Climate/weather: Warm tropical climate near the equator but cooler in the mountains. There have been earthquakes but no tornadoes or hurricanes.

Land Types: The Amazon rainforest is in Brazil and south of the rainforest is the Pampas grasslands where you can see thousands of cattle grazing. There are wetlands in the center of the continent. The western coast is desert and mountainous.

Animals: The monarch butterfly and many hummingbirds migrate and winter in South American. There are more types of animals in the rainforest than any other place in the world. Half of the world's plant and animal species can be found in the Amazon Rainforest. Toucans, macaw, jaguar, monkeys, leaf eating ants, three toed sloth and many others inhabit the forest floor, understory, canopy and emergent.

Government: Today democracies are taking hold but it wasn't so long ago that dictators ruled South American countries. Dictatorships are when one person makes all the decisions for the country, unlike the US where we elect representatives to create our laws. Dictators often have the military back up their decisions.

Economics: There are many natural resources in South America. Oil is found in Venezuela and South America is also famous for its emeralds. Fish are caught in the waters surrounding the continent. Coffee is sold worldwide. Bananas are sold from Equador. South America is also known for its beef cattle. Loggers also cut down trees to sell rare woods for making furniture and other products.

Symbols:

Culture: People of Brazil celebrate Carnival. They dress up in colorful costumes and parade through the streets similar to Mardi Gras or Chinese New Year. People in Brazil speak Portuguese but most of the countries speak Spanish.

History: In the 1500's, Spanish conquistadors (explorers) visited S. America looking for gold. They almost wiped out the local civilization with the diseases they brought from Europe.

Architecture:

Extra: Environmentalists from around the world are involved in conservation efforts to save the rainforest. Due to loggers and ranchers clearing large sections of the rainforest, this valuable resource is being depleted. Doctors feel that the rainforest may hold hope for new medicines in the fight against cancer and other illnesses. If we destroy the rainforest the animals that only live in that habitat will be gone forever. Do you remember the story of the Great Kapok Tree?