



Landforms and Resources

A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE Simón Bolívar was a general who led the South American wars of independence against Spain. In August 1819, Bolívar led approximately 2,500 soldiers on a daring march from Venezuela over the mountains into present-day Colombia. Coming from this direction, over the massive barrier of the Andes Mountains, Bolívar and his troops were able to advance unseen. Bolívar's soldiers surprised the Spanish army and won a great victory. Military leaders such as Bolívar were able to use the geography of the region to help the South American republics win their independence from Spain.

Mountains and Highlands

Latin America has an enormous span from north to south, as you can see from the map on page 191. It reaches from the border between the United States and Mexico down to Tierra del Fuego at the southernmost tip of South America, a distance of about 7,000 miles. It covers part of North America, all of Central and South America, and the Caribbean Islands. Its highlands, lowlands, rain forests, and plains are bounded by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea. The mountains of Latin America form one of the great ranges of the world.

THE ANDES MOUNTAINS The **Andes Mountains** of the South American continent are part of a chain of mountain ranges that run through the western portion of North, Central, and South America. This range is called the Rockies in the United States, the Sierra Madre in Mexico, and the Andes in South America. There are many active volcanoes throughout the region.

All along the west and south coasts of South America, the Andes Mountains are a barrier to movement into the interior. As a result, more settlement in South America has occurred along the eastern and northern coasts.

Even so, the mountain ranges of Latin America were the home of some of the most important civilizations in the hemisphere, including the Inca in Peru.

Main Ideas

- Latin America's landforms include highlands, lowlands, mountains, and plains.
- The Andes Mountains and the Amazon River are the region's most remarkable physical features.

Places & Terms

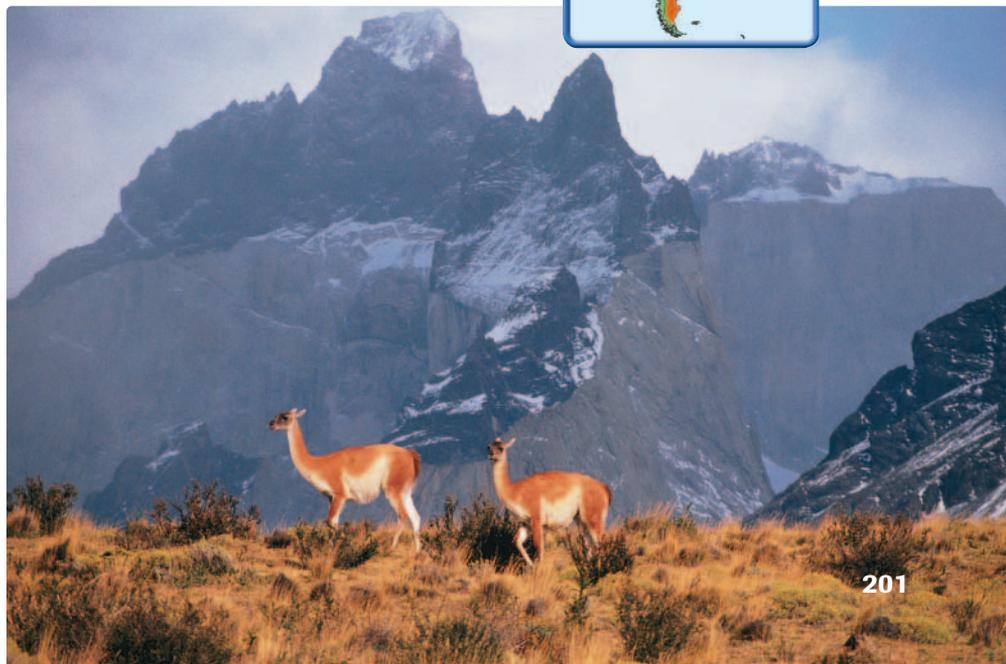
Andes Mountains

llanos	Orinoco River
cerrado	Amazon River
pampas	Paraná River

CONNECT TO THE ISSUES

RESOURCES People in Latin America have often struggled over the best way to develop and use natural resources.

MOVEMENT Two sure-footed guanacos climb the foothills of the Andes in Patagonia, a region that includes parts of Argentina and Chile.



HIGHLANDS Other ranges in Latin America include the Guiana Highlands in the northeast section of South America. Highlands are made up of the mountainous or hilly sections of a country. The highlands of Latin America include parts of Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Brazil. The Brazilian Highlands (see the map on page 203) are located along the east coast of Brazil.

Plains for Grain and Livestock

South America has wide plains that offer rich soil for growing crops and grasses for grazing livestock.

LLANOS OF COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA Colombia and Venezuela contain vast plains called **llanos** (LAH•nohs), which are grassy, treeless areas used for livestock grazing and farming. They are similar to the Great Plains in the United States and the pampas of Argentina.

PLAINS OF AMAZON RIVER BASIN Brazil also contains expansive plains in the interior of the country. These are the **cerrado** (seh•RAH•doh), savannas with flat terrain and moderate rainfall that make them suitable for farming. Much of this land is undeveloped.

However, the government of Brazil is encouraging settlers to move into the interior and develop the land.

PAMPAS OF ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY In parts of South America, the plains are known as **pampas** (PAHM•puhs), areas of grasslands and rich soil. Pampas are found in northern Argentina and Uruguay. The main products of the pampas are cattle and wheat grain. A culture of the gaucho has grown up in the region, centered on the horsemen of the pampas. 

The Amazon and Other Rivers

The countries of Central America and the Caribbean do not have the extensive river systems that are found in South America. In North America, the Rio Grande, which forms part of the border between the United States and Mexico, is longer than any other river in Mexico, Central America, or the Caribbean. However, these areas are all bordered by water. As a result, they are less dependent on river systems for transportation than is South America.

South America has three major river systems. The Orinoco is the northernmost river system, with the Amazon also in the north, and the Paraná in the south of the continent.

ORINOCO RIVER The **Orinoco River** winds through the northern part of the continent, mainly in Venezuela. It flows more than 1,500 miles, partly along the Colombia-Venezuela border, to the Atlantic. The Orinoco River basin drains the interior lands of both Venezuela and Colombia. Some of the areas drained by the Orinoco are home to the few remaining Native American peoples, such as the Yanomamo.



Seeing Patterns

 How are the llanos, cerrado, and pampas of South America similar to the Great Plains of the United States?

5 THEMES

HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

The Gaucho

Gauchos, the cowboys of Argentina and Uruguay, wear ponchos to help protect them from bad weather. They tuck the tops of their baggy trousers into riding boots. Like American cowboys and the *vaqueros* of Mexico, they wear hats with wide brims to help protect them from sun and rain on the pampas.

Their tools include the knife and the bola, a special kind of sling. It is made of stones fastened to the ends of cowhide thongs. The thrower hurls the bola at the legs of an animal, tripping it and throwing it to the ground.



BACKGROUND

The Amazon is the second longest river in the world after the Nile.

AMAZON RIVER Farther south, the **Amazon River** flows about 4,000 miles from west to east, emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. Its branches start in the Andes Mountains of South America, close to the Pacific. Yet it flows eastward across the central lowlands toward the Atlantic. The Amazon River is fed by over 1,000 tributaries, some of which are large rivers in themselves. The Amazon carries more water to the ocean than any other river in the world. In fact, it carries more water to the ocean than the next seven largest rivers of the world combined.

PARANÁ RIVER The **Paraná River** has its origins in the highlands of southern Brazil. It travels about 3,000 miles south and west through Paraguay and Argentina, where it is fed by several rivers, and then turns eastward. The last stretch of the river, where it turns into an estuary of the Paraná and Uruguay rivers between Argentina and Uruguay, is called the Río de la Plata. An estuary is the wide lower course of a river where its current is met by the tides.



LATIN AMERICA

Major Islands of the Caribbean

The Caribbean Islands consist of three major groups: the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles, and the Lesser Antilles. (See the map on page 191.) These islands together are sometimes called the West Indies and were the first land encountered by Christopher Columbus when he sailed to the Western Hemisphere in 1492. They served as a base of operations for the later conquest of the mainland by the Spanish.

The Bahamas are made up of hundreds of islands off the southern tip of Florida and north of Cuba. They extend southeast into the Atlantic Ocean. Nassau is the capital and largest city in the Bahamas.

THE GREATER ANTILLES The Greater Antilles are made up of the larger islands in the Caribbean. These include Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico. The island of Hispaniola is divided between the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

THE LESSER ANTILLES The Lesser Antilles are the smaller islands in the region southeast of Puerto Rico. The Lesser Antilles are divided into the Windward Islands and Leeward Islands. The Windward Islands face winds that blow across them. The Leeward Islands enjoy a more sheltered position from the prevailing northeasterly winds. **B**



Using the Atlas

B Use the map on page 191. Which of the Antilles are closer to the coast of South America?

Resources of Latin America

Latin America is a treasure house of natural resources. These include mineral resources, such as gold and silver, as well as energy resources, such as oil and natural gas. In addition, the region is rich in agricultural and forest resources, such as timber. These resources have drawn people to the region for centuries.

MINERAL RESOURCES Gold, silver, iron, copper, bauxite (aluminum ore), tin, lead, and nickel—all these minerals are abundant in Latin America. In addition, mines throughout the region produce precious gems, titanium, and tungsten. In fact, South America is among the world's leaders in the mining of raw materials.



SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION** Is most of the petroleum in South America produced in the east or west?
- REGION** Which country in the region outside of South America is rich in petroleum?

Many of these minerals are mined and then exported to other parts of the world, where they are made into valuable goods. For example, Jamaica was originally a plantation economy that depended on the sale of bananas and sugar for its livelihood. Then it turned to the mining and processing of bauxite (aluminum ore) in an attempt to make the country less dependent on agriculture and tourism. Today, this resource is mainly an export that is shipped elsewhere for industrial use.

ENERGY RESOURCES Oil, coal, natural gas, uranium, and hydroelectric power are all plentiful in Latin America. Venezuela and Mexico have major oil reserves. Brazil is rich in hydroelectric power because of its many rivers (including the mighty Amazon) and waterfalls. It is also rich in oil and gas.

Trinidad has discovered vast reserves of natural gas. New factories have turned Trinidad into a major exporter of methanol and ammonia. Natural gas has also attracted developers to the island.

In Mexico and Venezuela, oil has been a very important resource. Venezuela sits on top of major oil deposits. This resource was developed into a significant oil industry. Mexico has huge oilfields centered along the Gulf coast. Because of its reserves, Mexico is able to export oil to other countries. However, changes in the global price of oil have had a great impact on the economies of these countries.

Latin America has great variety in its climate and vegetation. You will read about each in the next section.

Connect TO THE Issues

RESOURCES

Rain Forest Medicines

Vegetation in the rain forests has yielded many products used to make modern drugs and medicines. These include quinine, which is used to treat malaria, and curare, which is used to relax muscles.

Scientists believe that many of the potential medicines and drugs of the rain forest remain undiscovered. Destroying the rain forests damages the habitats of plants or animals that might even provide a cure for cancer. In the picture below, a man is using a plant to soothe an earache.



LATIN AMERICA

CONNECT TO THE ISSUES
RESOURCES
How do the countries of the region make use of their natural resources?

SECTION 1 Assessment

1 Places & Terms

Identify and explain where in the region these would be found.

- Andes Mountains
- llanos
- cerrado
- pampas
- Orinoco River
- Amazon River
- Paraná River

2 Taking Notes

PLACE Review the notes you took for this section.

<i>Landforms</i>	
<i>Resources</i>	

- What types of landforms are found in Latin America?
- What is their relative location?

3 Main Ideas

- a. How did the Andes Mountains affect settlement along the western coast of South America?
- b. How are the landforms of the region both an advantage and disadvantage?
- c. What effect did natural resources have on the development of the region?

4 Geographic Thinking

Drawing Conclusions How might the Amazon River have affected movement into the interior of South America?

Think about:

- the network of travel offered by a river system

S See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R5.

GeoActivities

SEEING PATTERNS Pair with a partner and draw a **sketch map** of Latin America's rivers and mountains. Use arrows to indicate the directions the rivers flow. Why does the Amazon flow all the way east across the continent even though its headwaters begin in the Andes Mountains along the west coast?