SOUTH AMERICA KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Map and Overview

-South America is the fourth-largest continent in the world. It covers about 17.8 million km². It lies completely in the western hemisphere.

-South America is the fifth-most populous continent in the world – it has a population of around 420 million people (although over half of these people live in Brazil).

-The Equator cuts through the continent. Most of South America is in the southern hemisphere.

-Most of the people live on the east and west coasts; the southern coast and centre of the continent are sparsely populated.

Countries of South America

Largest S. American countries

1. Brazil– 8.5 million km²
2. Argentina – 2.8 million km²
3. Peru – 1.3 million km²
4. Colombia – 1.15 million km²
5. Bolivia – 1.1 million km²

There are 12 countries in South America, and a further 4 states that are listed as dependencies of other nations.

Most populous S. American countries

1. Brazil – 210 million people
2. Colombia – 49 million people
3. Argentina – 44 million people
4. Peru – 32 million people
5. Venezuela – 32 million people

Brazil

Brazil is by far the largest and most populous country in South America. It is also the 5th largest country in the world, by both area and population. The official language is Portuguese, and the most populous city is Sao Paulo. Rio de Janeiro harbour is its most famous landmark. Brazilians are known for samba dancing and a love of football.

Argentina

Argentina is a country located in the southern half of South America. Argentina is the 8th largest country in the world by area, and the largest Spanish-speaking country. Argentina endured a long fight for independence with Spanish invaders in the 19th Century, followed by a painful civil war. The climate in Argentina varies hugely from north to south.

Colombia

Colombia is a country in the north-west of South America. Colombia has been inhabited by indigenous peoples since at least 12,000 BCE. However, the Spanish arrived in 1499 and conquered much of the region. As a result, the national language is Spanish. Much of the population live in the highlands.

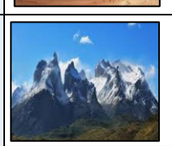
Peru

Peru is a country on the western side of South America. It has a diverse landscape, ranging from arid plains to the Andes mountains. Peru is known for being the centre of the Inca Empire – the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu remain a major tourist attraction today. The national language in Peru is Spanish.

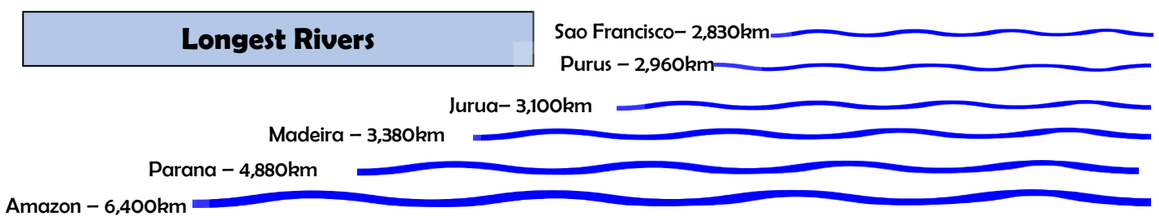
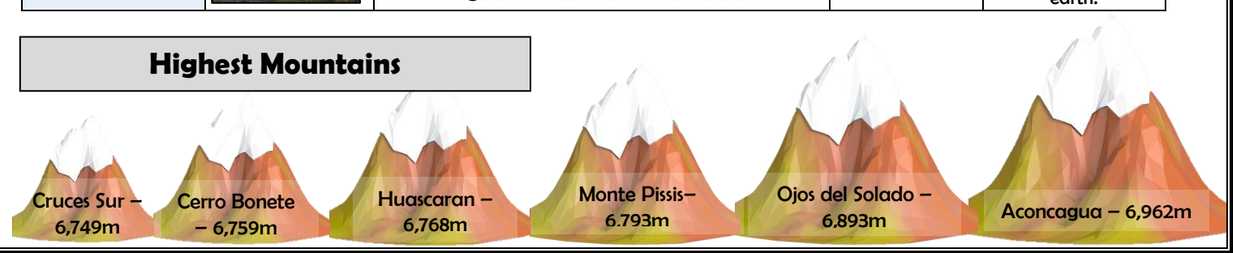
Human Geography Features

Deforestation		The Amazon Rainforest has been rapidly destroyed over the past 50 years – since 1970, nearly 800.000 km² of rainforest has been lost. The main causes are agriculture, illegal logging, and human encroachment into the forest.	**What?** About 20% of the total rainforest has now been cleared.	**Key Fact:** 150 acres of rainforest are destroyed every minute of the day.
Machu Picchu		The Inca Empire was the largest empire in pre-colonial South America. Machu Picchu was a large Incan citadel (fortified central area of town). Incans abandoned it after the Spanish invaded. It remained unknown until 1911.	**Where?** On a 2,430 metre mountain ridge in southern Peru.	**Key Fact:** It was built in 1450 in classic Inca style with dry stone walls
Colonisation/ Languages		Throughout the 16th-17th centuries, European settlers (mainly from Portugal and Spain, but also the French, Dutch and British) invaded and colonised South America. South Americans still speak European languages today.	**When?** Most countries gained independence in the 19thC.	**Key Fact:** Portuguese and Spanish are the main languages on the continent.
The Rio Carnival		The Rio Carnival is a festival held every year before Lent. It is considered the largest carnival in the world, with over 2 million people attending daily. It is filled with parades of revelers, dancers, floats and displays.	**When?** Friday before Ash Wednesday to Ash Wednesday.	**Key Fact:** The Rio Carnival has taken place since 1723.
Coffee Trade		The coffee plant is grown in abundance in South America, and many countries from the continent are the biggest producers of coffee in the world. Coffee is a huge regional export.	**Where?** Mainly Brazil, Colombia and Peru.	**Key Fact:** Brazil produces 2.5 million tonnes per year.

Physical Geography Features

The Amazon River		The Amazon River is the longest river in South America, and by some definitions, the world. It has a huge volume, discharging 20% of all river discharge into the ocean in the world!	**Where?** Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela	**Key Fact:** The Amazon is fed by hundreds of tributaries.
The Amazon Rainforest		The Amazon Rainforest is the largest rainforest in the world. The rainforest is about 5.5 million km² across nine different nations.	**What?** There are 16,000 tree species.	**Key Fact:** The Amazon contains around 390 billion trees!
Animals		The Amazon rainforest is so bio-diverse that it houses 1 in every 10 known species of animals. There are around 2.5 million insect species, 2,000 birds & mammals, 428 amphibians, and 378 reptile species One in 5 of all fish species live in the Amazon River and its tributaries. Animals include the jaguar, caiman, and anaconda.	**What?** Many creatures are dangerous to humans, e.g. snakes, piranha fish, poison dart frogs and electric eels.	**Key Fact:** An unknown amount of Amazon animals have become extinct since the 1970s, because of deforestation.
The Atacama Desert		The Atacama Desert is one of the driest places in the world. There are some places where there has been no recorded rainfall!	**Where?** The Atacama Desert is in Chile.	**Key Fact:** The desert is so dry due to its position in a 'two-way' rain shadow.
The Andes		The Andes are the tallest mountains in South America (and in the world after the mountain ranges in Asia). The range is about 7,000km long, extending north to south. The world's highest volcanos are in the Andes.	**Where?** Through 7 different South American countries.	**Key Fact:** The peak of Mount Chimborazo is the furthest point from the centre of the earth.

Longest Rivers



Highest Mountains