

# **South America : Location, Area, Political & Physical Features**

## **POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- The Isthmus of Panama joins South America to North America. South America is triangular in shape and a greater part of it lies south of the equator.
- South America can be divided into four physical divisions—the West Coastal Plains, the Andes Mountains, the Central Plains and the Eastern Highlands.
- The West Coastal Plains are narrow plains lying between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains, in the western part of the continent. The Atacama Desert is located here.
- The Andes are a long stretch of high, young fold mountains that run parallel to the Pacific Coast in the western part of the continent. Mt Aconcagua, the highest peak in South America, and Lake Titicaca, the second highest freshwater lake in the world, are located here. There are also several active dormant volcanoes located here such as Mt Chimborazo and Mt Cotopaxi.
- The Central Plains are lowlands that lie between the Andes in the west and the Eastern Highlands in the east. The flat plains are formed by the rivers Amazon, Orinoco, Parana, Paraguay and Uruguay.
- The Guiana Highlands and the Brazilian Highlands form the Eastern Highlands. The two highlands are separated by the river Amazon. These highlands extend in the eastern part of the continent along the Atlantic coast.
- The Orinoco River, the Magdalena River and the Amazon River are some of the important rivers of South America. Rivers Paraguay, Parana and Uruguay form the La Plata river system. Lake Titicaca, Lake Poopo and Lake Maracaibo are the important lakes of the continent.

## **IMPORTANT TERMS**

**Llanos** : The grasslands of the Orinoco Basin.

**Selvas** : The dense equatorial forest of the Amazon Basin.

**Pampas** : The extensive temperate grasslands of Argentina.

## VALUES AND LIFE SKILLS

We must learn not to exploit natural resources and to instead, take care of our environment and the natural resources we have, like the indigenous people in the Amazon Basin

What are the ways in which you can encourage a sustainable lifestyle ?

**Answer:**

**We can encourage a sustainable lifestyle by following ways :**

1. Become a member of a community garden.
2. Change the lights in your house (from light bulbs to CFL).
3. Become more efficient with your errands.
4. Start using Natural cleaners.
5. Walk, bike or car pool to work.

## EXERCISES

### A. Identify who I am

1. I am a narrow neck of land that joins South America to North America and separates the Atlantic Ocean from the Pacific Ocean : **Isthmus of Panama.**
2. I am a hot desert that lies in the western coastal region of South America and stretches across the Tropic of Capricorn : **Atacama desert.**
3. I am one of the few gaps in the Andean Mountain chain : **Uspallata Pass.**
4. I am the highest peak of the second highest young fold mountain chain of the world, with a height of 6,960 metres above sea level : **Mt. Aconcagua.**
5. I am the second highest freshwater lake in the world : **Lake Titicaca.**

### B. Write true or false.

1. The 60° W longitude passes almost through the middle of South America.

**Answer.** True.

2. The Orinoco Plains are called the llanos.

**Answer.** True.

3. The selvas are another name for the grasslands of Argentina.

**Answer.** False.

**Correct—** The pampas are another name for the grasslands of Argentina.

4. The La Plata river system drains southwards into the Atlantic Ocean.

**Answer.** True.

5. Lake Titicaca and Lake Poopo are saltwater lakes.

**Answer.** False.

**Correct —** Lake Titicaca and Lake Poopo are freshwater lakes.

### C. Match the columns

A	B
1. Argentina	(a) Bogota
2. Peru	(b) Montevideo
3. Uruguay	(c) Buenos Aires
4. Venezuela	(d) Lima
5. Colombia	(e) Caracas

**Answer:**

A	B
1. Argentina	(c) Buenos Aires
2. Peru	(d) Lima
3. Uruguay	(b) Montevideo
4. Venezuela	(e) Caracas
5. Colombia	(a) Bogota

### D. Answer the following questions in brief

#### Question 1.

What is the latitudinal extent of South America ? In which hemisphere does the major part of it lie ?

**Answer:**

South America extends from 12°N to 55°S and from 35°W and 81°W. Major part of this continent lies in Southern hemisphere though some parts lie north of the equator.

#### Question 2.

Name the water bodies that lie to the east and the west of this continent.

**Answer:**

The continent is bounded by Pacific ocean in West, Atlantic Ocean in East. The Caribbean sea lies north of this continent and it stretches as far South as the Southern Ocean.

**Question 3.**

Identify the major physical divisions of South America.

**Answer:**

**The major physical divisions of South America are:**

- The West Coastal Plains.
- The Andes Mountains.
- The Central Plains.
- The Eastern Highlands.

**Question 4.**

In what respect is the Atacama Desert different from the Patagonian Desert ?

**Answer:**

Atacama desert is a hot desert which lies in the Western Coastal Region across the Tropic of Capricorn in North Chile whereas Patagonian desert is a cold desert which lies between 40°S and 50°S in Argentina in eastern highlands.

**Question 5.**

Name three Andean towns that are also capital cities in South America.

**Answer:**

Bogota, the capital of Colombia; Quito, the capital of Ecuador, and La Paz, the capital city of Bolivia, are important towns. Cuzco, the old Inca capital, Oroya in Peru, and Potosi in Bolivia are also important cities.

**E. Answer the following questions in one or two paragraphs****Question 1.**

**Describe the Andes under the headings :**

- **Extent**
- **Position**
- **Features**
- **Significance**

**Answer:**

- **Extent** — Long stretch of young fold mountains that run parallel to Pacific coast in Western part of South America.
- **Position** — They are not one mountain range but several parallel ranges with basins and plateaux between them lying in the West Coastal region of South America.
- **Features** — Despite being near the equator, the highest peak, Mt. Aconcagua, remains snow covered. The Uspallata Pass is one of few gaps in the lofty mountain range. Lake Titicaca is the highest freshwater lake found

in Andes. There are many active volcanic mountains present in Andes as they form a part of Pacific Ring of fire.

- **Significance** — Andes are storehouse of mineral wealth like copper, gold, silver, tin, lead and platinum. Many short, swift rivers flowing down the Andes supply hydroelectricity.

### **Question 2.**

Explain the following : llanos, selvas, pampas and the Gran Chaco.

#### **Answer:**

1. **Llanos** — The Orinoco Plains are called llanos which means plains in Spanish.
2. **Selvas** — The Amazon Lowlands are called selvas.
3. **Pampas** — The temperate grassy plains of Argentina are called pampas.
4. **Gran Chaco** — The vast alluvial region which is not drained well and become marshy during rainy season in Parana- Paraguay lowlands are called Gran Chaco.

### **Question 3.**

How are the Eastern Highlands different from the Andes Mountains ?

#### **Answer:**

The Eastern highlands are much lower in height than the Andes. The Andes are young fold mountains having active volcanic eruptions whereas the Eastern highlands are composed of old hard rocks and have Patagonian Desert which is a cold desert.

### **Question 4.**

Describe the Amazon, the largest river of South America.

#### **Answer:**

The Amazon River rises in the Andes Mountains and flow Westward across the widest part of the continent. This is the largest river in the world. The equator passes near the mouth of this river. It divides the Guiana Highlands and the Brazilian highlands.

### **Question 5.**

Describe the La Plata river system.

#### **Answer:**

The flat plains that are formed by the Parana, Paraguay and Uruguay rivers collectively is called La Plata river system. These rivers flow southwards and drain into the South Atlantic Ocean in a wide estuary in Argentina, which provides on excellent harbour.

**F. On a blank outline map of South America mark and name the following :**

1. Isthmus of Panama and Cape Horn
2. Rivers Amazon, Paraguay, Uruguay and Orinoco
3. Selvas, pampas, Guiana Highlands and Brazilian Highlands
4. Mountain peaks — Aconcagua, Cotopaxi and Chimborazo
5. Lake Titicaca and Lake Poopo

**Answer:**



### **G. Picture study**

**The picture here shows the world's highest waterfall, which is in South America.**



#### **Question 1.**

Identify the waterfall.

#### **Answer:**

Angel Falls.

#### **Question 2.**

Which river forms this waterfall ?

#### **Answer:**

The world's highest waterfall 'Angel Falls' are formed by tributary of the river Orinoco.