

# Chapter 37

## Geography of Spanish America



### COUNTRIES AND THEIR CAPITALS

#### 1. In North America

Mexico (capital: Federal District of Mexico) is directly south of the United States of America, bordering the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California; our nearest Spanish-American neighbor. Land of the Aztecs and the Mayas, two of the most advanced Native-American civilizations.

#### 2. In Central America

a. Costa Rica (capital: San José) is one of the most progressive countries in Central America. It has good environmental laws and no army.

b. El Salvador (capital: San Salvador) is the smallest country in Central America.

c. Guatemala (capital: Guatemala City) is the main producer of *chicle*, used in the manufacture of chewing gum. Guatemala was the center of the old Mayan empire.

d. Honduras (capital: Tegucigalpa) has important mineral and timber resources. Exports mainly bananas and coffee.

e. Nicaragua (capital: Managua) is the largest country in Central America. Exports cotton and textiles, coffee and sugarcane.

f. Panama (capital: Panama City) is an isthmus joining Central and South America. The Panama Canal is located there.

#### 3. In the Caribbean (Antilles)

a. Cuba (capital: Havana) is the largest island of the Caribbean.

b. Dominican Republic (capital: Santo Domingo), together with French-speaking Haiti, forms the island of Hispaniola.

c. Puerto Rico (capital: San Juan) is a commonwealth of the United States. The smallest of the Greater Antilles, it's also called Borinquen, its native name.

#### 4. In South America

a. Argentina (capital: Buenos Aires) is the largest Spanish-speaking country in South America.

b. Bolivia (two capitals: La Paz and Sucre) is the only country in South America without an outlet to the sea. Although Sucre is the official capital, La Paz is the actual seat of government.

c. Colombia (capital: Bogotá) is the only South American country with seacoasts on

both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

d. Chile (capital: Santiago) is the longest and narrowest country in South America.

e. Ecuador (capital: Quito) is crossed north to south by two parallel ranges of very high volcanic peaks, part of the Andes Mountains. The Galápagos Islands belong to Ecuador.

f. Paraguay (capital: Asunción) has a large Native-American population. Paraguay produces soybeans and packed meats; also produces yerba mate, a popular tea used widely in Argentina.

g. Peru (capital: Lima) The land of the Incas, a Native-American civilization that flourished centuries before the arrival of Europeans in America.

h. Uruguay (capital: Montevideo) is the smallest Spanish-speaking country in South America.

i. Venezuela (capital: Caracas) is the richest oil-producing country in South America; is also the birthplace of Simón Bolívar, "The Liberator."

NOTE: Some countries are not mentioned here because their cultural heritage is not Spanish but French (Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana); English (Belize, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana), Portuguese (Brazil); or Dutch (Surinam).

### GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES

#### 1. Mountain Ranges

a. The Andes extend the entire length of South America along the west coast. There are many high peaks; the highest, Aconcagua, has an altitude of nearly 23,000 feet (more than four miles), and it is the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere. There are many other peaks nearly as high.

b. The Sierra Madre (Mexico) consists of two parallel mountain chains, the Sierra Madre Oriental (Eastern) and the Sierra Madre Occidental (Western), with a great plateau between them.

#### 2. Principal Rivers

a. The Orinoco (Venezuela) is the longest single river in Spanish America. (The



- Amazon River, which is more than twice as long, is in Brazil.)
- b. The Río de la Plata (between Uruguay and Argentina) has the capitals of both countries, Argentina and Uruguay, on its banks.
  - c. The Paraná-Paraguay System is formed by the Paraná and Paraguay Rivers. It connects with the Río de la Plata, to form the chief water outlet from the interior regions to the sea.
  - d. The Magdalena (Colombia) crosses the whole country from south to north; it is an important means of transportation.
3. Climate
- a. Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile are in the South Temperate Zone. Northern Mexico is in the North Temperate Zone. Southern Mexico and the rest of Spanish America lie in the tropics (Torrid Zone).
  - b. Most cities located in the tropics, except the ones at high altitudes, are very warm.

### ANIMAL LIFE

1. Birds
  - a. The condor is a carrion-eating bird from the Andes; probably the largest among flying birds.
  - b. The quetzal is a brilliantly colored bird of Central America. It is the national emblem of Guatemala, and gives name to its monetary unit.
2. Wool-Bearing Animals
  - a. Alpaca, guanaco, llama, vicuña (in the Andes).
  - b. Sheep (mainly in Argentina and Uruguay).

3. Beasts of Burden
  - a. The burro is the most common beast of burden in Spanish America.
  - b. The llama is the main beast of burden of the Andean countries (Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia).

### IMPORTANT PRODUCTS

1. Some of the products that Spanish America gives to the world are potatoes, corn, tomatoes, chocolate, vanilla, pineapples, peanuts, pecans, and cashew nuts.
2. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS
 

apples and peaches bananas  beef cacao bean (used in manufacturing chocolate)  coffee sugar  corozo nuts (used in manufacturing buttons)  tobacco wheat	MAIN PRODUCERS Chile most Central-American countries Argentina, Uruguay Ecuador, Venezuela Colombia, Venezuela Cuba, Dominican Republic Ecuador Cuba Argentina, Uruguay
---	--
3. MINING AND CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES
 

copper emeralds nitrates (used for fertilizer)  petroleum platinum silver tin	MAIN PRODUCERS Chile, Peru Colombia Chile Venezuela, Mexico Colombia Mexico, Peru Bolivia
--	--

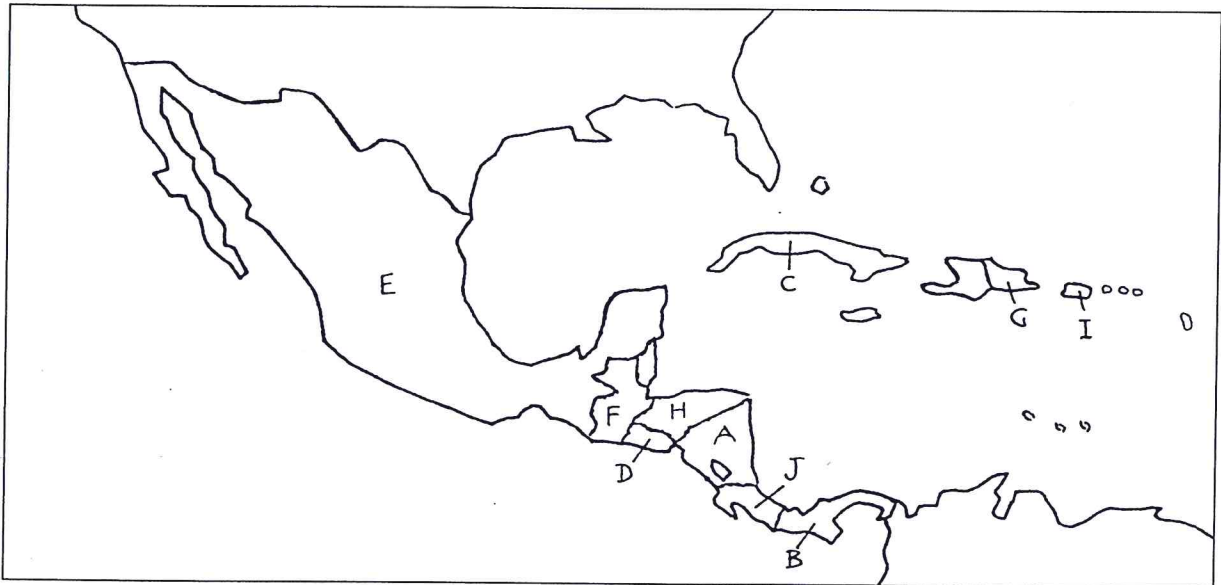
### EXERCISE A

If the statement is true, write *Sí*; if it's false, correct it by replacing the word(s) in boldface. Write the correct word(s) in the space provided.

1. Two important products of Venezuela are **petroleum** and **coffee**. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Lima is the capital of **Argentina**. \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Santiago** is the capital of Colombia. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Costa Rica and Honduras produce many **bananas**. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The Parana River flows into the **Pacific Ocean**. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Spanish is the language of **six** countries in South America. \_\_\_\_\_
7. **Montevideo** is the capital of Venezuela. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The condor lives in the **Andes**. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Mexico and Peru produce **emeralds**. \_\_\_\_\_
10. There are **six** countries in Central America. \_\_\_\_\_

**EXERCISE B**



In the map above, identify each of the following countries by writing its corresponding letter in the space provided.

- |                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Panama      | _____ 6. Guatemala           |
| _____ 2. Puerto Rico | _____ 7. Mexico              |
| _____ 3. Costa Rica  | _____ 8. Cuba                |
| _____ 4. Honduras    | _____ 9. Nicaragua           |
| _____ 5. El Salvador | _____ 10. Dominican Republic |

**EXERCISE C**



In the map above, identify each of the following countries by writing its corresponding letter in the space provided.

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| _____ 1. Bolivia   | _____ 6. Colombia  |
| _____ 2. Argentina | _____ 7. Peru      |
| _____ 3. Chile     | _____ 8. Paraguay  |
| _____ 4. Ecuador   | _____ 9. Venezuela |
| _____ 5. Uruguay   |                    |

**EXERCISE D**

Match the words in column A with their corresponding definitions in column B. Write the letter for the definition in the space provided.

A	B
_____ 1. Sierra Madre	a. river in Colombia
_____ 2. corozo nuts	b. capital of Nicaragua
_____ 3. yerba mate	c. used to manufacture chocolate
_____ 4. Aconcagua	d. fabric borne by the alpaca
_____ 5. tin	e. mountains in Mexico
_____ 6. Magdalena	f. highest peak in the Western Hemisphere
_____ 7. Managua	g. used to manufacture buttons
_____ 8. cacao	h. bird of the Andes
_____ 9. wool	i. element found in Bolivia
_____ 10. condor	j. popular tea from Paraguay

**EXERCISE E**

Write the word that is needed to complete each statement.

1. The longest river in Venezuela is the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Andes are situated in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The quetzal is found mainly in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The main beast of burden in the Andes is the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay it is cold in the months of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The capital of Costa Rica is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The only country in South America without an outlet to the ocean is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The country crossed north to south by two parallel ranges of peaks is \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The richest oil-producing country of South America is \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The ingredient used to manufacture chocolate is \_\_\_\_\_.

