



# Physiography of latin america

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# INTRODUCTION

LATIN AMERICA is consist of South America, Central America, Mexico and the West Indies (the Caribbean region) . The Countries show "Latin imprint on their culture, way of life, religion, languages etc. Official language in latin america is Spanish and chief language spoken by the people from Mexico and Cuba in the north to Chile and Argentina in the south. Portuguese is the chief language spoken in Brazil. These two languages are derived from Latin Hence, the name Latin America.

## **Location, Situation and Size:**

- Latin America extends over two continents-southern parts of North America and the whole of South America Latin America extends across the Equator both in northern and Southern hemispheres.

- In the north in Mexico it extends from 33 North latitude to Tierra del fuego (Cape Horn) with 56'S latitude in the south.
- In east-west direction Latin America extends from about 35 W longitude to 117 W longitude. However, S. America extends between 35 to 82 W longitude and from 11'30N to 56'S latitude.
- The region is broadly TRAIINGULAR in shape and it tapers from north to south. The continent of S. America covers area of 17,798,500 square km.
- The region has Pacific Ocean on its west. The Atlantic Ocean and the waters of Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico wash its coast on the east. To the north lies the country of U.S.A. (Anglo America). Beyond Cape of Horn in the south the Pacific Ocean and Atlantic Ocean mingle together.





**Elevation Profile**





# Physical features

## Relief :

Latin America is divided into four main relief divisions each stretching from north to south.

- I. The Cordilleras of the Andes.
- II. The Central Lowlands.
- III. The Eastern Highlands.
- IV. The Central American Mountains and Plateaus.

## THE ANDES:

- It is the longest mountain system of the world extending for about 7250 km from Panama to Strait of Magallen in the south. Their average height is 4000 m above sea level. Many peaks rise above 6000 metres.
- The Andes form an unbroken stretch of high mountain country which flanks the Pacific coast from Caribbean sea to Cape Horn.



- In comparatively recent times, Tertiary Period, the Andes were folded into a complex system of ranges and intermontane plateaus and basins.
- Two Ranges. In general the Andes consist of TWO MAIN RANGES which form the Western and Eastern sides (Cordilleras) of the mountain system.
- To the east of this coastal tract the main Western Range rises abruptly to great heights. The Eastern Andes are equally high but they are less forbidding than the Western Andes because they are cut by many river gorges and their eastern slopes are broken by fertile Valleys.
- The Western slopes of the Andes give rise to only short streams but numerous large rivers drain the eastern slopes, many flowing into the Amazon. The Pacific side of the Andes is unstable and subject to earthquakes.
- The eastern and western Andes merge into one range which becomes lower and less of a barrier towards the south where the land has undergone submergence.

# The Central Lowlands

The central lowlands occupy about one-half of S. America. They consist of **THREE main areas The Llanos of the Orinoco Basin, the Amazon Basin, and the Paraguay or Plate River Basin.** Although highlands partially surround these lowlands. The uniform level of the lowlands is partly due to the fact that they are composed of undisturbed marine sediments of recent geological age, capped by alluvial deposits brought down by numerous rivers or in the drier areas of the Pampas.

- 1. The Llanos of the Orinoco Basin:** consists of a large, almost featureless plain which lies between the north-western highlands and the Guinea Highlands . Large part is covered with grass and patch of scrub bush.



1. **The Amazon Basin:** is very large and covers an area as large as U.S.A. east of the Rockies. It is drained by a system of rivers spectacular in size with some 20800 km of navigable waterways. The Amazon Basin is shaped like an oval and are almost surrounded by high land. The Guiana Highlands separate the Amazon Basin from the Orinoco Basin.

2. **The Paraguay or Plate River Basin:** A low water-shed divides the rivers which flow to the Amazon from the head waters of the river Paraguay . The Paraguay is joined by the Parana which rises in the Brazilian Plateau. Much of the area on both sides of the river Paraguay is so low and flat that it is full of swamps and marshes The Pampas are covered with fine grained stoneless deposits similar to loess .For long ages winds have carried dust from the dry west and deposited it in the Pampas until it has hurried deeply the original landscape.



# The Eastern highlands

- These are much lower than andes..
- They form TWO highly dissected hilly areas-**The Guiana Highlands, to the north of the Amazon and Brazilian Highlands to the south.**
- They are considerably older than the Andes and are formed of ancient igneous rocks, sandstones and more recent lava flows.
- The surface is broken up into flat plateaus and rounded hills with occasional extinct volcanic cones.

- **The Brazilian Highland** is very extensive and runs close and parallel to the eastern coast of Brazil. Most rivers flow inland to the Parana. The Brazilian Highlands to the West and North West of Parana is called Plateau of Motto Grasso and further northward as Coatingas. The Brazilian Highlands are of similar geological age to the African plateau and also resemble it in being rich in minerals.



- **The Guiana Highlands** lie to the south-east of Orinoco river valley. The western part is more extensive and high. Various north and south flowing rivers have dissected it much. The highlands are composed partly of crystalline rocks which form hilly upland areas and partly of massive sandstone which lie in horizontal beds and form high plateaus from which rivers tumble in majestic waterfalls

# The Central American Mountains and plateaus

- Central America consists essentially of an upraised intermontane plateau, broadening.
- It is crossed by a rather tangled skin of east-west ranges, many of which are surrounded by lofty, snow-capped volcanoes. Many of these spectacular cones are of recent origin.



- Beyond Mexico each central American country has a share of the 1600 km long highland backbone of the region and also a strip of the Pacific or Caribbean coast or both.
- The highlands consist of folded, faulted and dissected ranges. Close to the Pacific coast is a chain of high volcanic cones many of which are still active.
- The region has also been experiencing earthquake activity. Structurally, most of the West Indian Islands are distinguished by their mountain backbone, often volcanic.



Thank You