

# Physical Features



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Read the following paragraph and label the **boldfaced** features on the map. You may consult an atlas or additional references.

There are many notable features in Mexico and Central America. The **Caribbean Sea** lies just to the north of Venezuela and Colombia. The Peninsula on the west side of Mexico is called **Baja California**. The mountain ranges in Mexico are collectively called the **Sierra Madre**. Just east of Mexico is the **Gulf of Mexico**. It is separated from the Caribbean by the **Yucatán Peninsula**. The **Yucatán Channel** connects these two bodies of water. Most of the islands in the Caribbean, collectively known as the West Indies, are known by their country names; however, the island of **Hispaniola** is shared by the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The largest islands in the West Indies are known as the **Greater Antilles**; the smaller ones on the eastern side are called the **Lesser Antilles**. North and South America are connected by a narrow piece of land called the **Isthmus of Panama**.

South America is known for its rugged terrain. The southernmost point of land in the continent of South America is known as **Cape Horn**. The **Strait of Magellan** bypasses the dangerous waters around the cape. The strait also separates the continental mainland from the large island known as **Tierra del Fuego** (Land of Fire). To the east of this area are the **Falkland Islands**, which are British territory also claimed by Argentina. The **Andes Mountains**, extending the length of the continent, is the longest chain of mountains in the world. Located mostly in Venezuela, Guyana, and Suriname are the **Guiana Highlands**. In eastern Brazil, near the capital, is a wide range of uplands called the **Brazilian Highlands**. The western section of those highlands is known as the **Plateau of Mato Grosso**. An elevated area known as **Patagonia**, is located in southern Argentina and is an area where many sheep are raised.

There are many important bodies of water in Latin America. The **Rio Grande** forms part of the Mexico–United States border. The **Orinoco River** flows from Venezuela into the Atlantic

Ocean. The **Magdalena River** flows north through Colombia into the Caribbean Sea. The world's mightiest river, the **Amazon**, flows east from the Andes through Brazil to the Atlantic Ocean. It has many large tributaries including the **Rio Negro** which flows from the north at about 3°S and 60°W. In eastern Brazil, the **São Francisco River** runs north and east to the Atlantic Ocean. Between Uruguay and Argentina, at the mouth of the **Uruguay River**, is an estuary known as the **Rio de la Plata**; it has several major tributaries including the **Paraná River**, which starts in Brazil and flows southwest along one part of the Paraguay and Argentina border. Another tributary, the **Paraguay River**, also starts in Brazil and then flows through Paraguay to Argentina. There are few large lakes in South America; two of importance are **Lake Maracaibo** in Venezuela, the center of much oil production, and **Lake Titicaca** on the border of Peru and Bolivia.

Diverse climates have resulted in varied vegetative regions in South America. In northern Chile, west of the Andes, is one of the driest deserts on earth, the **Atacama**. East of the Andes, in Brazil, is the rain forest along the Amazon River called the **Selvas**. In eastern Colombia and western Venezuela, between the Andes and the Guiana Highlands, is a grassy, rolling plains region called the **Llanos**. Much of northern Argentina is a forest and scrubland called the **Gran Chaco**. Farther south, in central and eastern Argentina, is the fertile, grassy plain region known as the **Pampas**, where many foodstuffs and cattle are raised.

