

# Latin America's Physical Geography



EQ: What are characteristics of Latin America's physical features?

# Latin America is divided into 3 Regions:

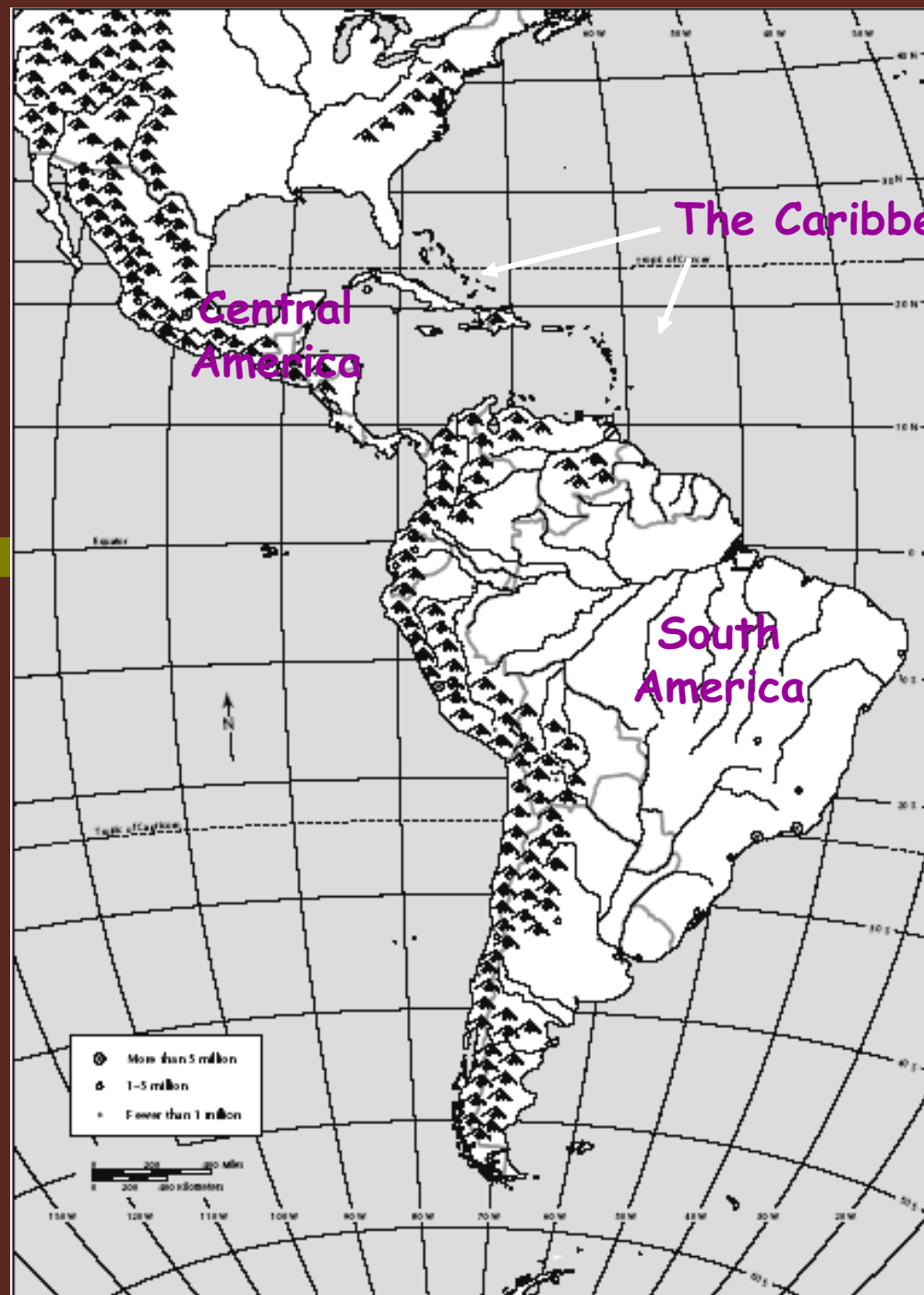
- ❑ Mexico and Central America
- ❑ The Caribbean
- ❑ South America



# Where did the name come from?

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Latin America is called "Latin America" because the countries that comprise Latin America speak Spanish and Portuguese, which are descended from Latin.



# I. Mexico and Central America

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- ❑ 2,500 miles (about as wide as the US)
- ❑ Mountains dominate the region
  - Part of a huge system that extends from Canada, through the US, and all the way to the tip of South America
- ❑ Central plateau in Mexico
  - Lies between Sierra Madre mountains and makes up more than half the country's area
- ❑ Central America is an Isthmus
  - Isthmus = a narrow strip of land that has water on both sides and joins 2 larger bodies of water
  - Many volcanoes in Central America, as a result, their soil is arable (fertile) and many people farm lands

# Mexico and Central America



# Gulf of Mexico

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- ❑ Body of water
- ❑ Bordered by the US to the north, 5 Mexican states to the south, and Cuba to the east



# Sierra Madre Mountains

- Mountain system in **Mexico**
- Three major chains: the Sierra Madre Occidental in the west, the Sierra Madre Oriental in the east, and the Sierra Madre del Sur, which extends along the southern coast
- The Sierra Madre range contains some of the **highest mountains and volcanoes** in Mexico.

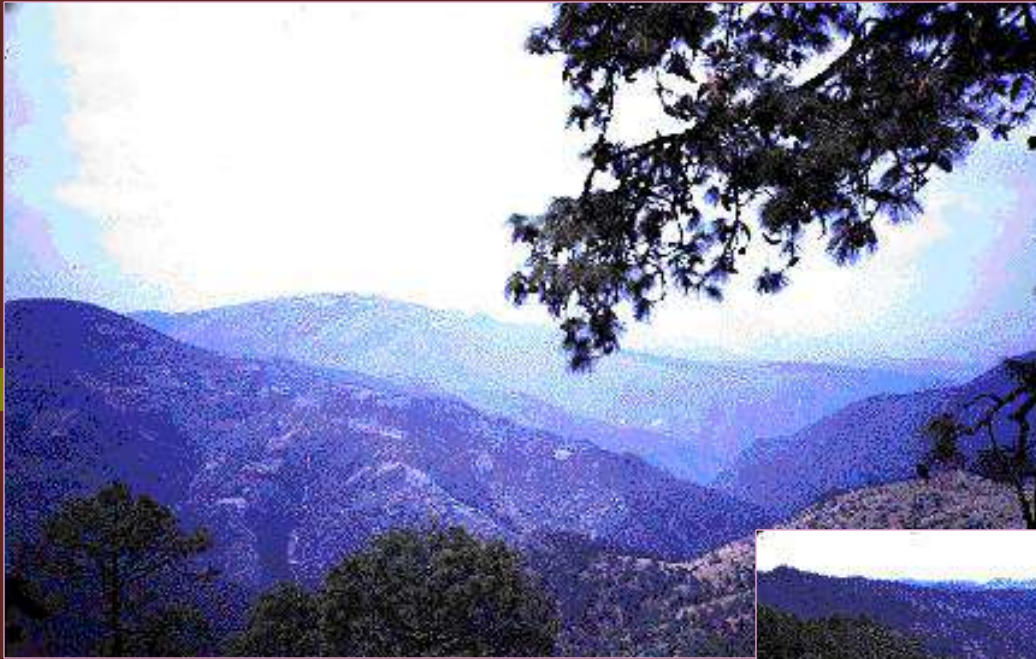


# Sierra Madre Mountains

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# The Sierra Madres



# Panama Canal

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- ❑ canal across the isthmus of Panama in Central America
  - Major “shortcut” that allows ships to travel between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans
- ❑ handles a large volume of world shipping and enables vessels to avoid traveling around South America, reducing their voyages by thousands of miles and many days.
  - Consists of artificially created lakes, channels, and a series of locks, or water-filled chambers, that raise and lower ships through the mountainous terrain of central Panama

# Panama Canal

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# The Panama Canal



# The Caribbean Islands

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- ❑ Small islands are made of coral
  - Skeletons of tiny sea animals, rock-like substance
- ❑ Larger islands are tops of underwater mountains
  - Examples: Cuba, Jamaica



# Caribbean Sea

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- ❑ Surrounds the islands of the West Indies
- ❑ East of Central America
- ❑ A major trade route for Latin American countries
- ❑ A popular tourist area—  
noted for its mild tropical  
climate and beautiful waters



# Caribbean Sea

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# South America

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- ❑ Andes Mountains—4,500 miles along west coast of South America
  - They rise at some points to 20,000 feet—same height as twenty 100 story buildings stacked on top of each other
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> largest mountains; Himalayas are the 1st
- ❑ Amazon River Basin—contains the largest tropical rain forest (Amazon Rain Forest) in the world; covers 1/3 of the continent



# Andes

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# Andes Mountains (Peru)



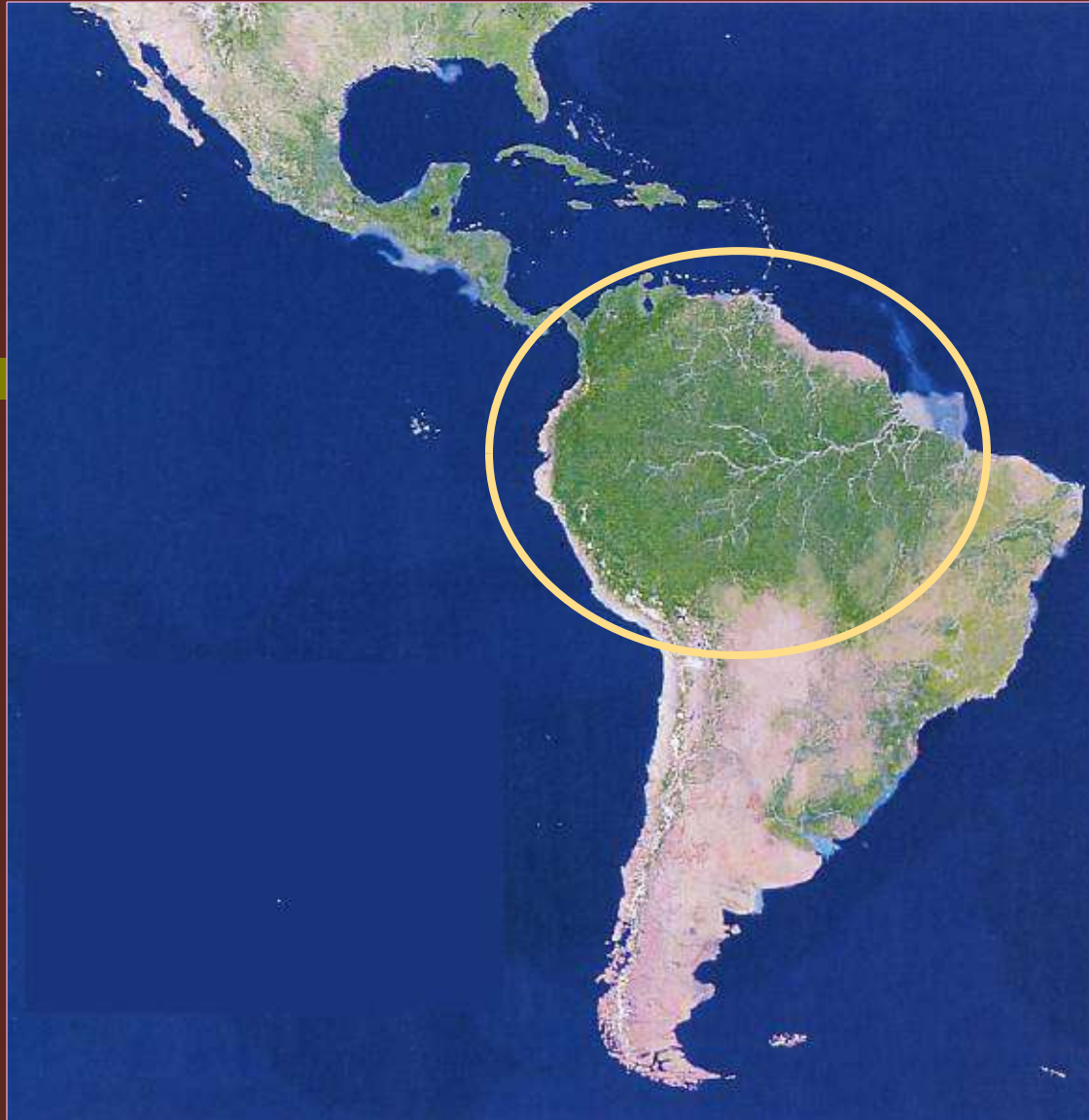
# Llamas in the Andes



# Amazon Rain Forest



# Amazon Rain Forest



# Deforestation in the Amazon



# South America

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- ❑ Atacama Desert (Chile)—one of the driest places on earth; very little rainfall
  - Between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains

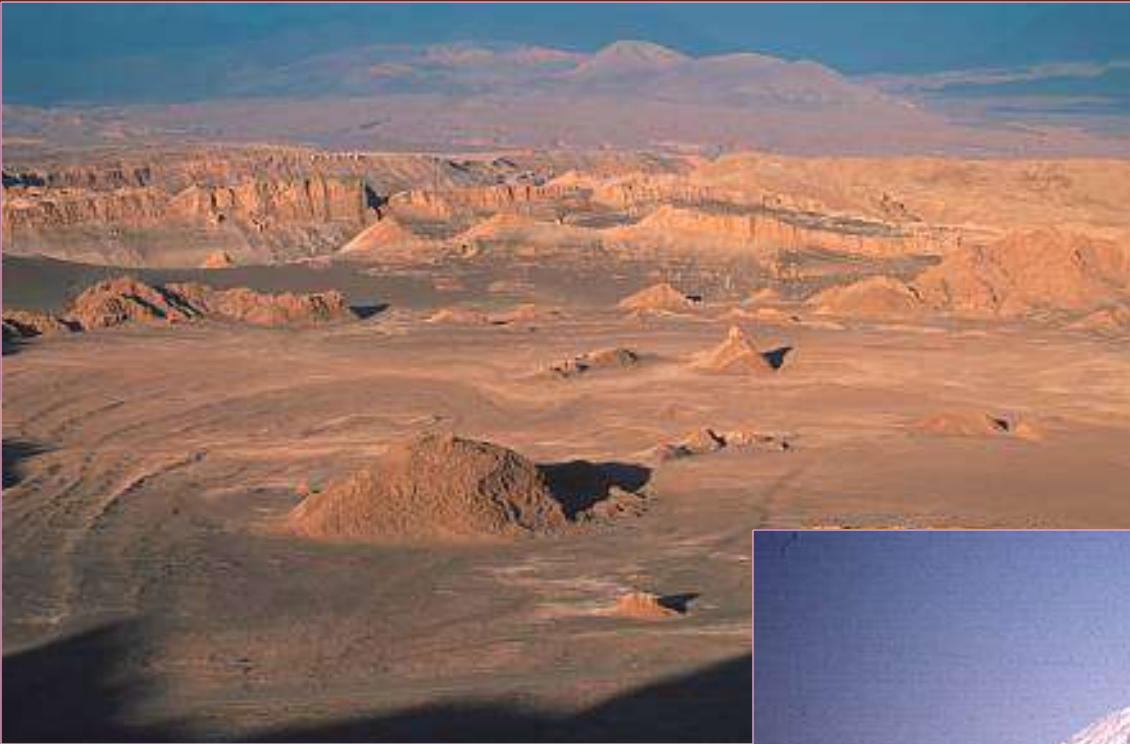


# Atacama Desert

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# Atacama Desert



# South America—Water

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- Rivers serve as natural highways where it's hard to build roads
  - provide food and hydroelectric power
  
- Amazon River—2<sup>nd</sup> largest river in the world (1<sup>st</sup>—Nile River)
  - 4,000 miles from Peru across to Atlantic Ocean
  - Contains 20% of all fresh water in the world!

# Amazon River—view from space





# Pacific Ocean

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- ❑ World's largest ocean
- ❑ Covers the western coast of South America



# Your Task

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- ❑ We are going to create a class “quilt” of Latin America’s physical features!
  
- ❑ On your sheet of construction paper, please include the following:
  - 1. Name of feature
  - 2. What it is
  - 3. Where it’s located
  - 4. COLORFUL illustration