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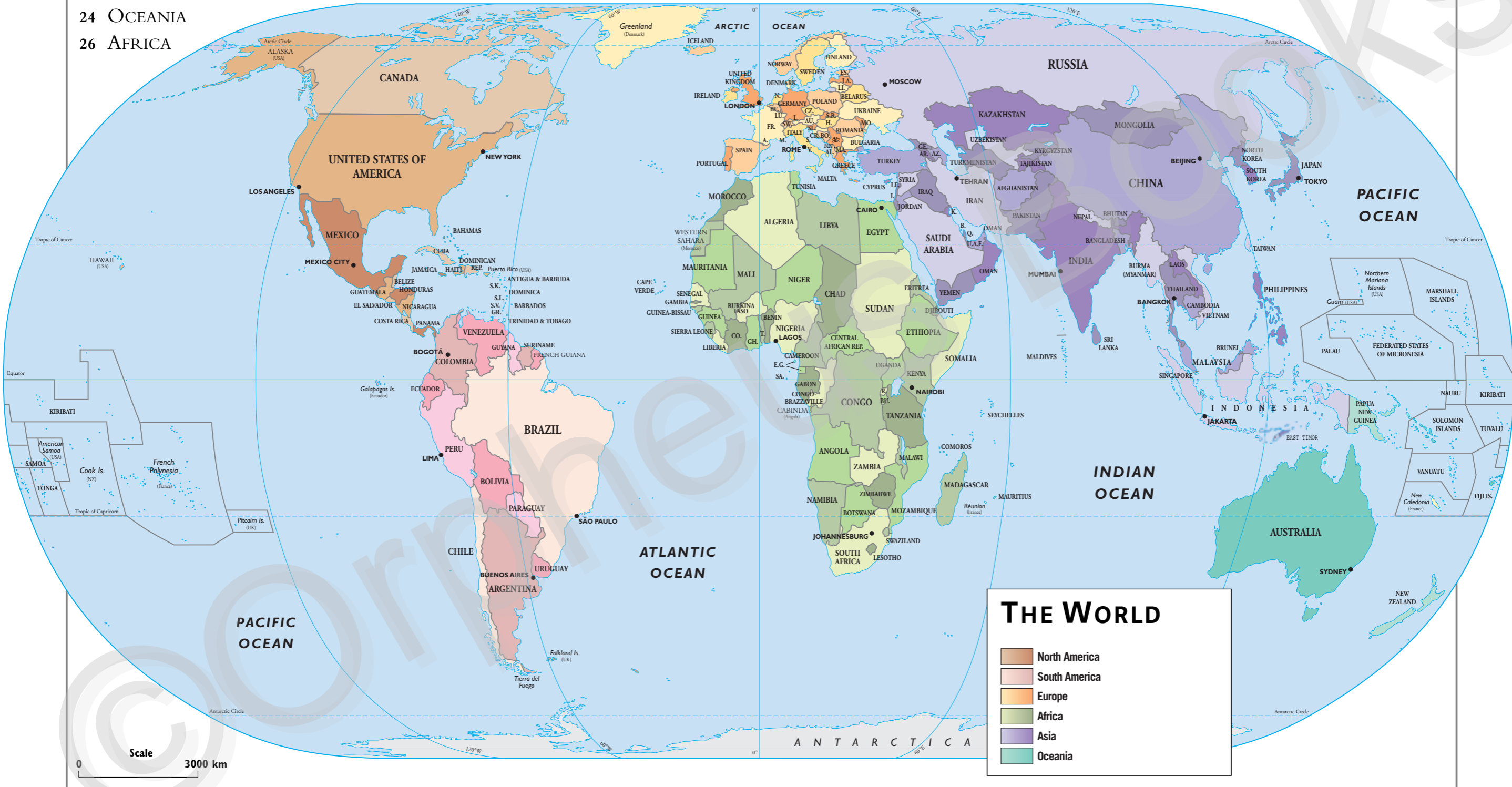
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| <b>BU.</b> Burundi            | <b>GR.</b> Grenada            | <b>MA.</b> Macedonia    | <b>SE.</b> Serbia              | <b>V.</b> Vatican City                     |



**THE WORLD**

- North America
- South America
- Europe
- Africa
- Asia
- Oceania

Scale 0 3000 km

# SOUTH AMERICA

**S**OUTH AMERICA is a continent of extremes. The world's longest mountain range, the Andes, stretches along the west coast. Between the snow-capped mountains lies a high, cold and windswept plain called the altiplano. Between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean coast is the Atacama Desert, the driest place on earth. Rain may not fall here for hundreds of years at a time.

In the north, most people live near the Caribbean coast or in the mountains. Further inland, the vast rainforests of the Amazon basin dominate. The Amazon River originates in the Andes, and winds its way eastwards through Peru and Brazil before reaching the Atlantic Ocean.

To the east of the Amazon rainforest lie the Brazilian Highlands. Further south are wide areas of fertile grasslands, known as pampas, which cover parts of Argentina and Uruguay. In the extreme south of

A Chilean boy. Many people living in South America today are of mixed European and native Indian descent. They are known as mestizos.



Argentina, grasslands give way to the dry, bleak scrublands of Patagonia. The southern Andes is an region of glaciers and volcanoes, breaking up into bleak, rocky islands at its tip.

Many people in South America are descended from Europeans, especially the Spanish and Portuguese, who began to arrive during the 15th century. Most South American people today still speak these languages. Others are descendents of African slaves brought over by the Europeans. The numbers of native peoples of South America fell dramatically after the arrival of the Europeans, but some still live in the mountains and the rainforest, keeping their own languages and traditions.



This scarlet macaw is one of the many birds of the rainforest.



The destruction of the rainforests does not only mean a loss of habitat for plants and animals. The bare landscape that is left also leads to soil erosion, while some scientists think that the loss of so many trees may affect the world's climate.



# AMAZON RAINFOREST

The Amazon basin is the largest area of rainforest in the world. Many kinds of plants and animals live there, and new species are constantly being discovered. The mighty Amazon River and its tributaries flow through the forest, providing a vital

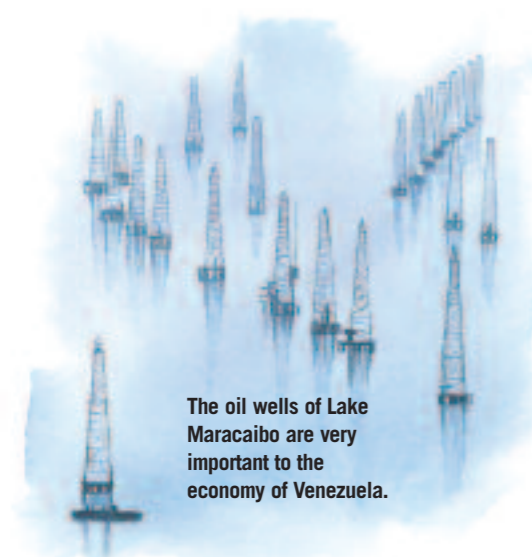
transport route and source of food for the native peoples who live in forest villages. A few of these peoples still follow a traditional way of life, hunting, fishing and growing crops. Many also take advantage of modern technology, such as engines for their boats.

Today, the rainforest is disappearing at an alarming rate, because of logging for the timber industry, roadbuilding, and clearing space for cattle farming or crop planting. The poor-quality rainforest soil means that it cannot support grazing or crops for long before the farmers must move on to new areas. So even more of the forest is lost.

Some rainforest peoples live in one part of the forest for a while, where they hunt and grow basic crops, and then move on to another site to give the soil a chance to recover. As more and more of the forest is cut down, their homelands are depleted. They have also suffered from persecution and illness as outsiders have moved into the forest.



# FACTFILE



The oil wells of Lake Maracaibo are very important to the economy of Venezuela.

**NORTHERN**

 Colombia	 Venezuela	 Guyana	 Surinam
 Ecuador	 Peru	 Bolivia	

**BOLIVIA**  
**Area** 1,098,581 sq km **Population** 9,247,816 **Capitals** La Paz, Sucre  
**Languages** Spanish, Quechua, Aymara

**COLOMBIA**  
**Area** 1,141,748 sq km **Pop.** 45,013,674  
**Capital** Bogotá **Language** Spanish  
**Religions** Roman Catholic 95%, other 5%

**ECUADOR**  
**Area** 272,045 sq km **Population** 13,927,650 **Capital** Quito **Languages** Spanish, Quechua

**FRENCH GUIANA**  
**Area** 91,000 sq km **Pop.** 209,000 **Capital** Cayenne **Languages** French, Creole

**GUYANA**  
**Area** 214,969 sq km **Population** 770,794  
**Capital** Georgetown **Languages** English, Hindi, Urdu

**PERU**  
**Area** 1,285,216 sq km **Population** 29,180,899 **Capital** Lima **Languages** Spanish, Quechua, Aymara **Religions** Roman Catholic 89%, other 11%

**SURINAM**  
**Area** 163,265 sq km **Population** 475,996  
**Capital** Paramaribo **Languages** Dutch, Hindi, Javanese

**VENEZUELA**  
**Area** 912,050 sq km **Population** 26,414,815 **Capital** Caracas **Language** Spanish **Religions** Roman Catholic 96%, other 4%

**BRAZIL**  
**Area** 8,511,996 sq km **Population** 191,908,598 **Capital** Brasília **Language** Portuguese **Religions** Roman Catholic 90%, other 10% **Currency** Real  
**Highest point** Pico da Neblina 3014 m  
**Main industries** Cars, aircraft, machinery, textiles, clothing, chemicals, steel



Rio de Janeiro, or "January River" (below), lies on the coast of Brazil. It was named after the month in which Portuguese explorer Goncalo Coelho sailed into its bay in 1503. A great city has since grown up beneath the famous Sugar Loaf mountain. In the 19th century, Rio de Janeiro was an important port trading gold and diamonds mined in the interior of the country. Today, poverty-stricken shantytowns cluster on the outskirts, crowded with people desperate for work.

A native American woman steers a boat on the highest navigable lake in the world, Lake Titicaca (right), which stretches between Peru and Bolivia. The boat is made from tough, tightly bundled reeds. People also live on floating island villages in the lake, made from thickly-piled reeds. When the reeds at the bottom rot away, more layers are piled up on top.



**SOUTHERN**

 Chile	 Paraguay	 Uruguay	 Argentina
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**ARGENTINA**  
**Area** 2,766,889 sq km **Population** 40,677,348 **Capital** Buenos Aires  
**Language** Spanish **Religions** Roman Catholic 90%, Protestant 2%, other 8%  
**Currency** Argentine peso

**CHILE**  
**Area** 756,626 sq km **Population** 16,454,143 **Capital** Santiago **Language** Spanish **Religions** Roman Catholic 89%, Protestant 11%

**PARAGUAY**  
**Area** 406,752 sq km **Population** 6,831,306 **Capital** Asunción **Languages** Spanish, Guaraní **Religions** Roman Catholic 90%, Protestant 10%

**URUGUAY**  
**Area** 176,215 sq km **Pop.** 3,477,778  
**Capital** Montevideo **Language** Spanish **Religions** Roman Catholic 66%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 2%, other 30%