

Geography of South America

Number of Countries - 12, 2 dependent territories

This continent occupies the entire southern part of the supercontinent of the Americas, that's why is called South America. It is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean from the west, by the Atlantic Ocean from the east and north, by the Caribbean Sea from the northwest and connected with North America in the northeast part. An overland border between two continents stretches along the Panama-Colombian state boundary.

In total, there are 12 independent countries and 3 dependent territories in South America. The largest country by area and the most populated is Brazil, it occupies about 50% of the total mainland area, and more than 52% of the population live on its territory.

South America

The continent is made up of 12 sovereign countries: Colombia, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and Ecuador.

Dependent Territories

The territories are French Guiana (France), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and the Falkland Islands (UK).

Area - 6.8 million square miles

Largest by area

1. Brazil, 2. Argentina, 3. Peru, 4. Colombia, 5. Bolivia, 6. Venezuela

Smallest by area

1. Suriname, 2. Uruguay, 3. Guyana, 4. Ecuador, 5. Paraguay, 6. Chile

Population

The current population of South America is 427,830,855 as of Wednesday, September 4, 2019, based on the latest United Nations estimates.

South America's population is equivalent to 5.54% of the total world population.

The population density in South America is 24 per Km² (63 people per mi²).

85.3 % of the population is urban (364,414,366 people in 2019).

The median age in South America is 30.5 years.

Largest by population

1. Brazil, 2. Colombia, 3. Argentina, 4. Peru, 5. Venezuela, 6. Chile

Smallest by population

1. Suriname, 2. Guyana, 3. Uruguay, 4. Paraguay, 5. Bolivia, 6. Ecuador

Major Cities

1. Sao Paulo, Brazil - 12 million, 2. Lima, Peru - 8.9 million, 3. Bogota, Colombia - 7.8 million, 4. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - 6.5 million, 5. Santiago, Chile - 5.5 million

Major bodies of Water

Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea

Major River

The Amazon River

The 4,345 mile long Amazon River was considered to be the 2nd longest river in the world until recently, when some Peruvian and Brazilian studies confirmed that it is longer than the Nile. The most distant source of the Amazon is the Mantaro River in Peru. The Amazon has an average discharge of 209 million liters per second. The river's discharge represents about 20% of the world flow into the ocean. The Amazon River passes through multiple countries including Venezuela, Guyana, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Brazil.

Parana-Rio de la Plata

Situated in the southern central part of the continent, the Parana River runs through Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil for approximately 3,030 miles. The 3,030 mile long river is the 2nd longest river in South America, and it merges with the Rio-de-la-Plata (which is made up of the Uruguay and Paraguay rivers) before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. It flows through Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia and Argentina. Rio-de-la-Plata is part of the Uruguay-Argentina border and the host of these nations' significant ports.

Tocantins-Araguaia

This 2,270 mile river is composed of two Brazilian rivers which are considered to be the tributaries of the Amazon (which is not the case). The Tocantins drains into the Atlantic alongside the Amazon. The 3rd largest river in South America flows through numerous Brazilian states including Para, Maranhao, Goias, and Tocantins.

Madeira-Mamore-Grande-Caine-Rocha

The Mamore is a large river in Brazil and Bolivia which merges with Beni to create the Madeira. The Madeira, which is approximately 2,020 miles long, is the most significant Amazon tributary which accounts for over 15% of the Amazon water. The Rio Grande joins the Mamore through Ichillo River, one of its branches.

Madeira-Mamore-Grande-Caine-Rocha merges to form a 2,100 mile river which is the 4th longest in South America. The Madeira-Mamore-Grande-Caine-Rocha flows through Peru, Bolivia and Brazil.

Purus River

The fifth longest river in South America is the Purus River. The Purus River is an Amazon River tributary with a drainage basin which is about 24,389 square miles. The 1,995 mile long river originates in Peru and helps define the Brazil-Peru boundary in Acre state before running along the border of the Santa Rosa-do-Purus national forest.

Sao Francisco

The Sao Francisco River is a 1,811 mile Brazilian river that is the 6th longest river in South America. Prior to colonization, the river was known as "Opava".

Major Mountain Ranges

Andes - Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile

Sierra Nevada de Santa - Colombia

Cordillera Occidental - Bolivia, Chile

Cordillera Oriental - Bolivia, Chile

Cordillera Huayhuash - Peru

Notable Mountains

Aconcagua, Argentina - 22,841 ft. Tallest in the Americas

Ojos del Salado, Chile/Argentina - 22,615 ft.

Monte Pissis, Argentina - 22,287 ft.

Huascaran, Peru - 22,205 ft.

Chimborazo, Ecuador - 20,564 ft. summit is farthest from the center of the earth

Major Islands

Falkland Islands, Easter Island, Galapagos Islands

Desert Regions

La Guajira Desert, Monte Desert, Sechura Desert, Atacama Desert, Patagonian Desert