

Physical Features Information Sheet

The Sierra Madre Occidental is a mountain range in western Mexico and the extreme southwest of the United States from southeast Arizona where it joins with the **Sierra Madre Oriental** of central Mexico. Sierra Madre means "Mother Range". The mountains are home to several indigenous nations speaking Uto-Aztecan languages, including the Tarahumara in the central portion of the range, and the Huichol in the southern part of the range.

The Mexican Central Plateau, which averages 1,100 metres in elevation, lies between the Sierra Madre Oriental and the Sierra Madre Occidental further west. The central plateau is considered to be the heartland of Mexico since it is the largest region, has the best farmland, and is home to most of Mexico's cities and people.

The Yucatán Peninsula, in Southeastern Mexico, separates the Caribbean Sea from the Gulf of Mexico. It is located directly within the hurricane belt. The Yucatán Peninsula comprises a significant proportion of the ancient Maya Lowlands. There are many Maya archaeological sites throughout the peninsula; some of the better-known are Chichen Itza, Tulum and Uxmal. Indigenous Maya and Mestizos of partial Maya descent still make up a sizable portion of the region's population, and Mayan languages are still widely spoken there.

Lake Nicaragua (Spanish: Lago de Nicaragua, is a vast freshwater lake in Nicaragua of tectonic origin. With an area of 3,191 sq mi, it is the largest lake in Central America, the 21st largest lake in the world (by area) and only slightly smaller than Lake Titicaca. The lake has a history of Caribbean pirates who assaulted nearby Granada on three occasions.

The Andes Mountains are located in South America, running north to south along the western coast of the continent. The Andes Mountains are the longest and one of the highest mountain ranges in the world.

The Pampas of South America are a grassland biome. They are flat, fertile plains that covers an area of 300,000 sq. miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the Andes Mountains. It is found primarily in Argentina and extends into Uruguay. The word Pampas comes from the Guaraní Indian word for "level plain". The Argentinean Pampas are the home of the 'Gaucho', the original South American cowboy.

Patagonia is a geographic region containing the southernmost portion of South America. Located in Argentina and Chile, it comprises the Andes mountains to the west and south, and plateaus and low plains to the east.

The name Patagonia comes from the word patagón used by Magellan to describe the native people who his expedition thought to be giants. It is now believed the Patagons were actually Tehuelches with an average height of 5'11" compared to the 5'1" average for Spaniards of the time.

The Mato Grosso Plateau is a plateau in central Brazil occupying most of the state of Mato Grosso. It contains mostly savannah and woodland. In the south it gives way to floodplains called the Pantanal.

The Atacama desert is the driest desert on Earth and is found along the coast of Chile, South America - right next to the Pacific Ocean - the biggest body of water in the world. Much of the desert extends up into the Andes Mountains and is very high in elevation. Unlike more familiar deserts, like the Sahara desert in Africa and the Mojave in California, the Atacama is actually a pretty cold place, with average daily temperatures ranging between 0°C and 25°C. The annual rainfall (or lack of it) defines a desert, but that doesn't mean that it never rains in Atacama.


The Amazon is the greatest river in the world by so many measures; the volume of water it carries to the sea (approximately 20% of all the freshwater discharge into the oceans), the area of land that drains into it, and its length and width. It is one of the longest rivers in the world and, depending upon who you talk to, is anywhere between 6,259km/3,903mi and 6,712km/4,195mi long. For the last century the length of the Amazon and the Nile Rivers have been in a tight battle for title of world's longest river. The exact length of the two rivers varies over time and reputable sources disagree as to their actual length. The Nile River in Africa is reported to be anywhere from at 5,499km/3,437mi to 6,690km/4,180mi long. But there is no question as to which of the two great rivers carries the greater volume of water - the Amazon River.

Located between Bolivia and Peru, **Lake Titicaca** is one of the most fascinating lakes in the world. It is situated at a very high altitude, at over 3800 meters above sea level. Lake Titicaca is a sacred place for the Inca civilization, as the Incan mythology says that the first Inca king, Manco Capac, was born here. According to the Incan mythology, this is the place where the world was created from, when the god Viracocha came out of the lake and created the sun, the stars and the first people.

The equator is an imaginary line on the Earth's surface approximately equidistant from the North Pole and South Pole that divides the Earth into a Northern Hemisphere and a Southern Hemisphere.

Name: _____

Physical Map of Latin America Checklist and Instructions

1. Read ALL directions before you start your map.
2. Write your name in pencil in the BOTTOM RIGHT corner of the map.
3. Title the map "PHYSICAL MAP OF LATIN AMERICA"
4. Draw and label a COMPASS ROSE on your map.
5. Write in all CAPITALS letters, NEAT and as LEGIBLE as can be. ☺
6. If you draw a line from the physical feature to its name, USE A RULER for ALL LINES.
7. When you label mountain ranges, mark them with the  symbol the entire length of the mountain range.
8. Color according to elevation
9. Use the maps on pages A22 and A24 in your textbook to label the features.
10. Most importantly, USE THE CHECKLIST below to ensure accuracy.

Checklist

Central America

- ___ Sierra Madre Oriental (be sure to draw in the mountain range)
- ___ Sierra Madre Occidental (be sure to draw in the mountain range)
- ___ Central Plateau (use page 155 in the textbook to locate this feature)
- ___ Yucatan Peninsula
- ___ Lake Nicaragua (draw in the lake and color it blue)

South America

- ___ Andes Mountains (be sure to draw in the mountain range)
- ___ Pampas
- ___ Patagonia
- ___ Mato Grosso Plateau
- ___ Atacama Desert
- ___ Amazon River (draw in the Amazon and go over the sharpie with blue colored pencil)
- ___ Lake Titicaca (draw in the lake and color it blue)
- ___ Label the Equator with dashes across the map like this - - - - -

DO YOU HAVE EVERYTHING??

IS IT YOUR MAP AS NEAT AS POSSIBLE?

ARE YOU SURE???