

LATIN AMERICA**Climate and Vegetation**

In this section, you will learn how climate and vegetation affect life in Latin America.

All questions require at least **THREE** sentences on own paper.

PLACES & TERMS

rain forest dense forests, made up of different species of trees, that grow in areas of high rainfall

A Varied Climate and Vegetation

The climate of Latin America ranges from the hot and *humid* to the dry and desert-like. Rain forest, desert, and savanna are all found in the region.

The vegetation is varied. It includes rain forests, grasslands, and desert *scrub*. It ranges from the thick trees of the rain forests to the mosses of the tundra.

This variety of climate and vegetation is due to several factors. First, Latin America spans a great distance on either side of the equator. Second, there are massive mountains in the region. This creates big changes in altitude. Third, ocean currents affect the climate. The currents of the Atlantic are warm, and the currents of the Pacific are cold.

1. What three factors are responsible for the varied climate and vegetation of this region?

Answer in at least **THREE SENTENCES** on own paper.

Tropical Climate Zones

The tropical climate zones of the region produce both rain forests and grasslands.

Rain forests are dense forests made up of different species of trees. Rain forests form an ecosystem in the region. An ecosystem is a community of plants and animals living in balance. Rain forests are found in the tropical wet climate zones. The climate in these areas is hot and rainy year round.

Rain forests are abundant in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. The largest rain forest is the Amazon rain forest. It covers more than two million square miles of South America. Much of this rain forest is located in Brazil.

Rain forests contain many *exotic* plants and animals. Scientists have counted more than 2,500 varieties of trees in the Amazon rain forest. One of these trees is the Brazil nut tree, which grows 150 feet high. Living in these rain forests are anacondas, which are among the largest snakes in the world. There are also jaguars, the great cats of Latin

America. In the water are piranhas, sharp-toothed, meat-eating fish.

Tropical wet and dry climate zones are found mainly in South America. Savannas are grasslands dotted with trees. They are common in tropical and subtropical regions. Savannas are found in Brazil, Colombia, and Argentina.

2. Where are rain forests abundant?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

Dry Climate Zones

Dry climate zones are found in Mexico and in some countries in South America. Neither Central America nor the Caribbean has dry climate zones.

A semiarid climate is dry, with some rain. Vast grass-covered plains are often found in semiarid climate zones. Desert *shrubs* may also grow in semiarid regions. Such regions are found in Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina.

Parts of northern Mexico are classified as desert. So is much of the coast of Peru. The Atacama Desert is in northern Chile. Argentina's southern zone, Patagonia, contains a desert.

3. What vegetation grows in the semiarid regions?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

Mid-Latitude Climate Zones

Latin America's mid-latitude, moderate climate zones are located south of the equator.

Humid subtropical areas have rainy winters and hot, humid summers. Parts of Paraguay, Uruguay, southern Brazil, and northern Argentina are located in humid, subtropical climates. The vegetation is varied.

Part of Chile along the west coast has a Mediterranean climate. There are hot, dry summers and cool, moist winters. The climate is similar to that of California. The vegetation in this climate is mainly chaparral (drought-resistant trees and shrubs).

A marine west coast climate runs along the coast of southwestern South America. This climate is similar to that of Oregon or Washington. It has cool, rainy winters and mild, rainy summers. Parts of southern Chile and Argentina have this climate. Forests are the typical vegetation.

Highland climate zones vary depending on the altitude. They can be moderate to cold. Highland climates are also influenced by sunlight, the wind, and the landscape. Highland climates are found in the mountains of Mexico and South America.

4. What factors can affect highland climates?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.