

Brazil

Brazil is the largest country in South America. It is slightly smaller in land-size than the U.S. Its population of 190 million lives mostly in big eastern cities. The largest cities are São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The capital is Brasília and the official language is Portuguese. The currency is the real.

Brazil's topography includes the densely forested Amazon Basin in the north, the Brazilian Highlands in the south, and the Chaco in the west. The Amazon Basin includes the world's largest river and the world's largest tropical rain forest. The Amazon River drains more water than any other river in the world and is second in length to the Nile in Egypt. The Brazilian Highlands in the south and east are made up of eroded plateaus, irregular mountains, and river valleys. These highlands separate Brazil's inland regions from a narrow coastal plain. Much of Brazil is covered by a savanna, or tropical grassland. The famous Iguazu Falls are located on the border between Argentina and Brazil and fall about 260 feet.

Early inhabitants of Brazil were Native Indians. Most were members of the Tupi-Guaraní cultures and lived along the Atlantic coast. Disease reduced the Native Indian population in the 1560s and they left few artifacts so little is known about them. The Portuguese arrived in 1500 and settled permanently by 1532. The Portuguese established trading posts and produced and exported hard wood known by its Latin name, *brasile*. The area was soon known for its brazilwood and the Portuguese called their colony Brazil. Between 1538 and 1888, almost five million African slaves were brought to Brazil. Slavery was abolished in 1888. Brazil gained its independence from Portugal in 1822.

Brazil's economy has historically been tied to the world's demand for sugarcane, rubber and coffee. The discovery of gold and diamonds brought a gold rush around 1700. Today, Brazil has one of the world's fastest growing major economies. It is the world's leading producer and exporter of coffee. Bananas, soybeans, cacao, tobacco, maize, sugarcane, and oranges are also important crops. Brazil is one of the largest steel-producing countries in the world, and it is Latin America's largest exporter of lumber. Mining production is led by iron ore and aluminum ore.

Soccer is the national pastime and the most popular sport in Brazil. FIFA ranks the Brazilian National Team as one of the best in the world. Brazil will host the World Cup in 2014, as well as the Summer Olympics in 2016.



1. Brazil is the largest country in South America. Shade Brazil on the map to the left.
2. The United States has a population of 311 million. What is the population of Brazil? Which country has the larger population? By how much?
3. Brazil's major cities include:
 - São Paulo, 11 million
 - Rio de Janeiro, 6 million
 - Brasília, 2.5 millionFind out the metropolitan population of your city. How does it compare with these cities?
4. What language do Brazilians speak?
5. Name the ocean that borders Brazil and label it on the map to the left.
6. Name the major topographical region found in northern Brazil.
7. Name the famous waterfall that is located in southwestern Brazil.
8. What year did the Portuguese first arrive in Brazil?
9. Brazil has one of the world's fastest growing economies and its automobile industry is one of the largest in the world. Explain which Brazilian resources might be used for automobile manufacturing.
10. What major sporting event will Brazil host in 2014?