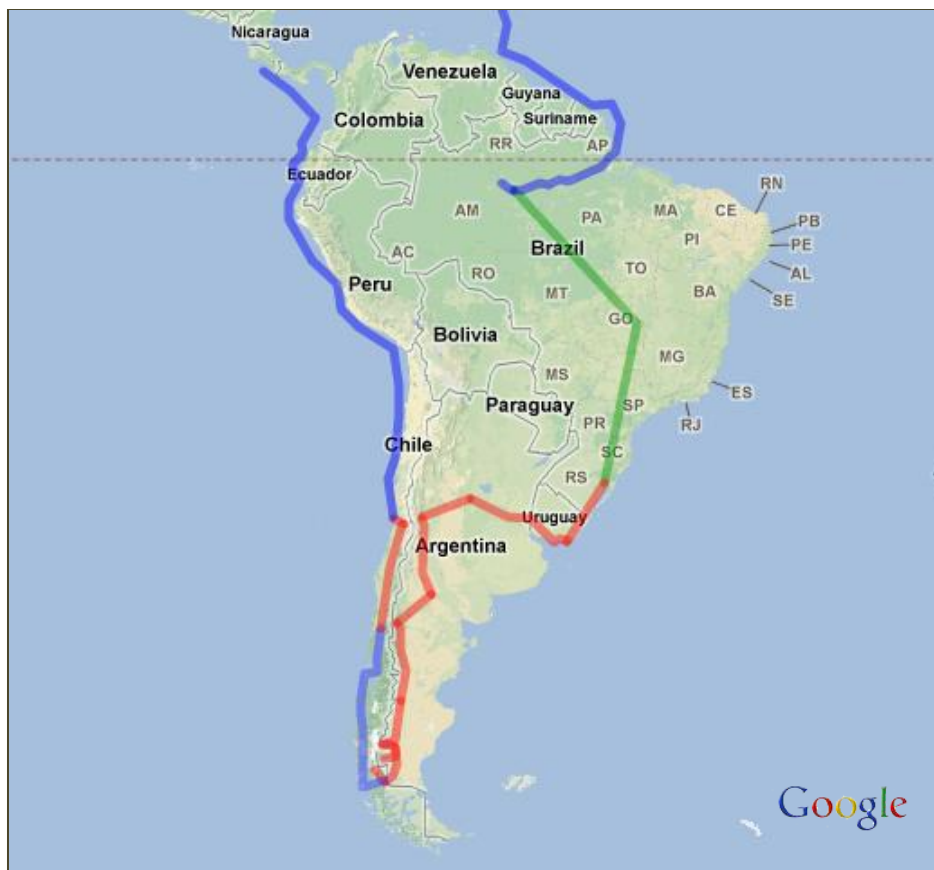




Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



South America – An Overview

- Darren and Sandy plan to spend about ten weeks in South America. Above is a map of the South America and our route. See page 4 for our plans.
- To some, South America is considered a subcontinent of the Americas (vs. a separate continent).
- The equator, which is the imaginary line that separates the world into Northern and Southern Hemispheres, runs horizontally through South America. (See the dotted line on the map above.)
- We have traveled approximately 57,636 miles (92,794 kilometers) from our starting point in California.

People and Culture

- South America consists of 12 countries and has an estimated population of 385 million. Brazil has the largest population with 192 million people (50% of the total for the continent). Suriname has the smallest population with just 475,000 people.
- The economies of South America rely heavily on the exporting of goods and natural resources. Tourism is becoming a significant source of income for many South American countries. Brazil is the seventh largest economy in the world and the largest in South America, followed by Chile and Argentina.
- Spanish is the official language of most countries in South America. Portuguese is the official language of Brazil. Dutch is the official language of Suriname while English is the official language of Guyana.
- Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion in South America, comprising over 80% of the population in most countries. In lowland South America, as well as in the Andes, animism and shamanism exist.
- The Nasca Lines are mysterious etchings carved into the Peruvian desert by the native Nascan people. They are so vast that they are best seen from air.



Machu Picchu is nestled in Peru's Andes above the Urubamba valley (sources: about-peru-history.com, personal library)

Colonial South America

The first explorers that reached South America were the Spanish and the Portuguese. In the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, these two kingdoms divided South America more or less down the middle with Spain claiming the Pacific side and Portugal, the Atlantic. England and France attempted to plant colonies in the 16th century, but these attempts failed.

source: Wikipedia.org



Listen and watch the competition at the "Festival y Mundial de Tango 2009 - Buenos Aires" (3:03)

Atacama – the driest desert?

According to the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and other organizations, the Atacama in Chile is the driest desert in the world with no rain in the mid-desert region since recordkeeping began. However, others point to the McMurdo Dry Valleys in Antarctica where it is reported that no precipitation has fallen for at least two million years.

sources:

Wikipedia.org,
Softpedia.com,
Answers.com



Cotopaxi, part of the Andes Mountains, and located 17 miles (28 kilometers) south of Quito, Ecuador (source: personal library)



Iguazu Falls (source: personal library)

Nature and Environment

- South America is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean and the north and east by the Atlantic Ocean.
- At 4,200 miles (6,800 kilometers), the Amazon River is the second longest river in the world and by far the largest by water flow.
- One in ten known species in the world lives in the Amazon Rainforest. This constitutes the largest collection of living plants and animal species in the world. Some of the Amazon Rainforest has been deforested because of a growing interest in hardwood products, as well as farming and ranching. However, deforestation has declined significantly in the Brazilian Amazon since 2004.
- The Andes is the world's longest continental mountain range and extends from north to south through seven South American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. This range is about 4,300 miles (7,000 kilometers) long and has an average height of 13,000 feet (4,000 meters).
- Thirty-one rivers meet at high speed at the borders Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil to form over 200 separate waterfalls at Iguazu Falls.

Our Plans

- While in South America, we plan to visit French Guiana, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Ecuador. We plan to trek in three of these countries, including the Amazon rainforest (Brazil) and Patagonia (Argentina and Chile).
- Once we have completed our time on land, we will leave the continent by ship from Santiago, Chile, and cruise along the Pacific coast, visiting countries in Central and North America.
- What would you like to know about South America? Send us your questions and we will try to include them!

More Information

- <http://www.funtrivia.com/en/Geography/South-America-99.html>
- http://www.go2peru.com/nazca_lines.htm
- <http://news.softpedia.com/news/The-Driest-Place-on-Earth-Atacama-Desert-55456.shtml>
- <http://www.bootsnall.com/articles/11-04/the-incredible-national-parks-of-south-america.html>

Regions and Territories

The following regions and territories are part of the South American continent but are not countries:

French Guiana (overseas region of France), the **Falkland Islands** (self-governing overseas territory of UK) and **South Georgia** and the **South Sandwich islands** (both an overseas territory of the UK and an overseas territory of the European Union).

source: Wikipedia.org

Our Partners



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