

# **Location, Climate, and Natural Resources of Brazil and Cuba**

## **Location of Brazil**

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America in both population and land area. Brazil is located on the eastern side of South America along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Brazil shares a border with nearly every other country in South America. The Amazon River and other large rivers stretch across most of Brazil.

Brazil's location on the Atlantic Ocean and its closeness to the Panama Canal greatly influence its trade with other countries. Brazil's exports can be shipped through any of the seven major seaports on the coast. Cars and other transportation equipment are traded to other countries. Exports also include iron ore and shoes. The United States is Brazil's most important trading partner. China, Argentina, Germany, and the Netherlands also buy goods from Brazil.

Tourism is a growing industry in Brazil. The Amazon rain forest draws many visitors. Its animals, plants, and other natural wonders cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Brazil's sandy beaches and warm climate are another attraction. Cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have attractions and festivals that bring visitors from around the world.

## **Climate of Brazil**

The country's location on the equator gives it the climate needed to support one of the world's largest regions of tropical rain forest. The climate is mostly hot and tropical. In the south, further from the equator, the climate is temperate (mild).

Most Brazilians live along the eastern, coastal areas of their country. Good roads do not extend into the vast Amazon rain forest region of the interior of the country. As a result, 80 percent of the people live within 200 miles of the ocean. Brazil's cities are clustered in this area too. About 30 percent of the people work in health care, education, or government jobs. Another 30 percent work in businesses such as transportation, communication, and trade. Nearly 12 percent of the workers find jobs in manufacturing. Because these jobs tend to be found in urban areas, nearly 85 percent of Brazilians live in urban environments.

## **Natural Resources of Brazil**

Only 7 percent of the land in Brazil is arable, but Brazil makes the most of this resource. Twenty percent of the workers in Brazil are farmers. They produce one-third of the world's coffee, and they lead the world in the production of oranges, papayas, and sugar cane. Soybeans and soybean products are important products for trade with other countries. Only the United States exports more farm products than Brazil.

## **Location of Cuba**

Cuba is an island nation 90 miles south of the state of Florida. It is bounded by the Gulf of Mexico on the northwest, the Atlantic Ocean on the northeast, and the Caribbean Sea to the south. The island is a little more than 700 miles long, and it ranges from 135 miles at its widest point to only 20 miles at the narrowest point. Cuba is the largest island in the West Indies.

Most Cubans (76 percent) live in urban areas. Twenty percent of them live in the capital and largest city, Havana. Many workers in the urban areas have jobs in manufacturing. A large number have jobs in service professions such as education, health care, government, and tourism. Cuba's location on ocean trading routes has been an important influence on its history and current economy.

## **Climate of Cuba**

Cuba's climate is tropical but moderated by trade-winds. There is a rainy season from May to October, and there is a dry season from November to April. The tropical climate means that Cuba is warm to hot all year long. Winds help move the air and provide relief from the heat.

Cuba's location and climate also make it a target for hurricanes. The warm tropical waters provide energy for the storms, which begin on the coast of Africa. As the storms move west, they often move across islands in the Caribbean, including Cuba. Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30.

## **Natural Resources of Cuba**

Twenty-eight percent of Cuba's land is arable. Cuba makes good use of this land by growing not only crops for its own people but also crops to sell to other countries. For centuries, sugar cane plantations have been a major source of income for Cuba. This is true today, with sugar being the most important export of the country. Coffee, fish, fruits, and tobacco products are traded to other countries as well. Cuba is known for its cigars. This tobacco product is highly prized by many people and provides a good income to the country. Cuba's location on the ocean gives it easy access to rich fishing waters. Fishing provides food for Cubans, and it gives the country another product to export.

One of the fastest-growing industries is tourism. Cuba has a beautiful, natural landscape and wonderful beaches. Tourists from Canada, Europe, and Latin America bring money to the island and provide jobs for the people. Hotels are being built or renovated to attract even more tourists.

Cuba is a communist country. That means the government owns or controls most farms and businesses. The communist government of the Soviet Union helped to support Cuba for many years. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Cuba faced difficult times. Cuba's trade with other countries does not bring in enough money to meet the needs of its people. Today, Venezuela sells oil to Cuba at a reduced price, but Cuba cannot sell enough goods to buy everything its people need,

In order to save energy, the government sometimes orders businesses and factories to close. The government also orders blackouts, or times when all electricity to a region is cut off.

## **Directions:**

1. Create a Double Bubble Thinking Map to compare Brazil and Cuba using details from the reading to complete your thinking map on your own paper.
2. Create a frame to your thinking map answering the questions, "So What" What is this thinking map about? "So why" Why is it important to study location, climate, and natural resources of countries?