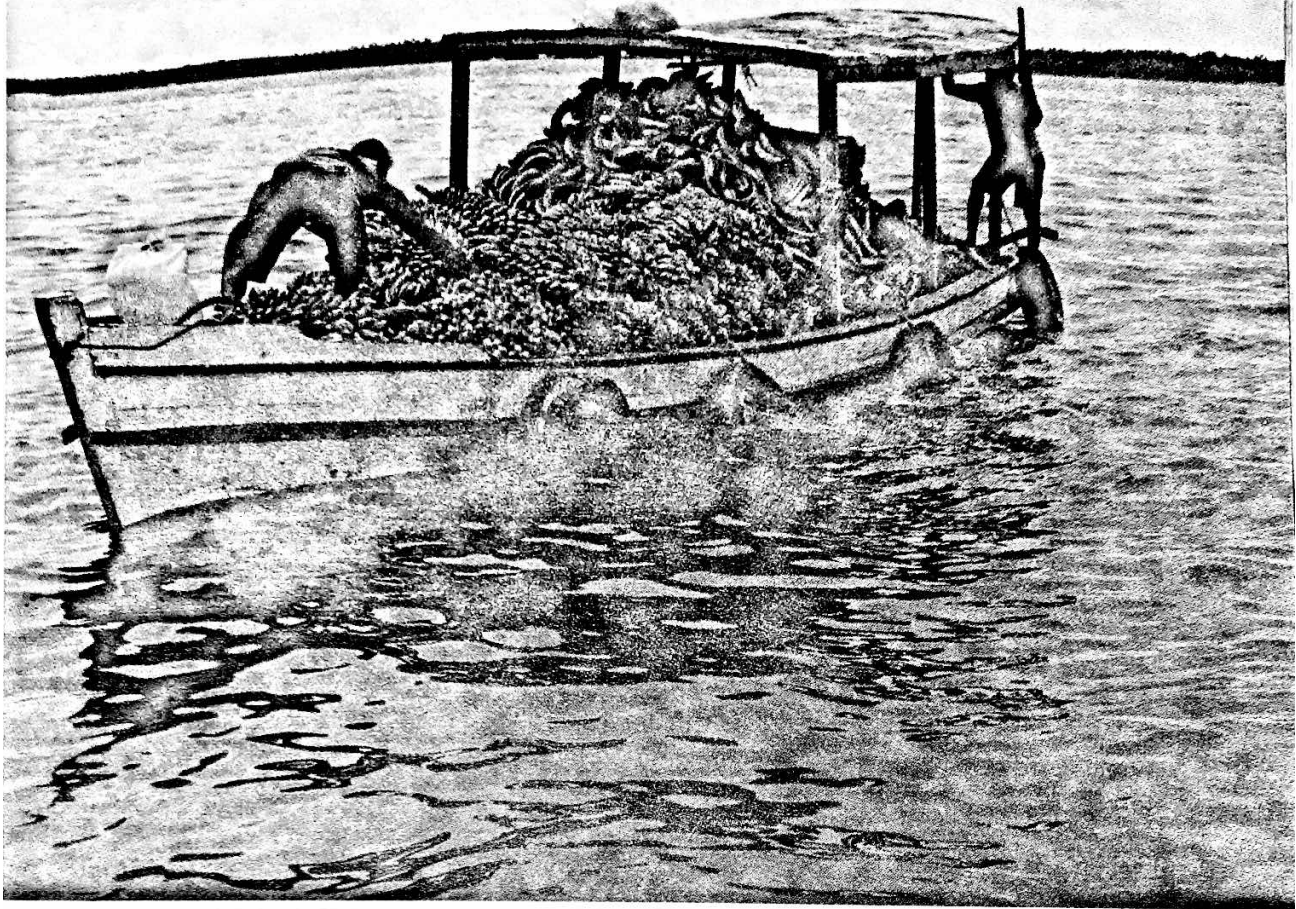


**Bananas being moved on a boat in  
the Amazon River** (Guentermanaus/Shutterstock)



## CHAPTER TWELVE

# SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS

Time to get back to continents. Across the isthmus of Panama is South America.

There are 12 countries in South America. The largest is Brazil, followed by Argentina.

Remember how we said that part of the U.S. used to be colonies of a European country called England? Most of South America used to be colonies of Spain and Portugal, which are also in Europe. Because of that, the two most common languages in South America are Spanish and Portugese.

## The Amazon and the Andes

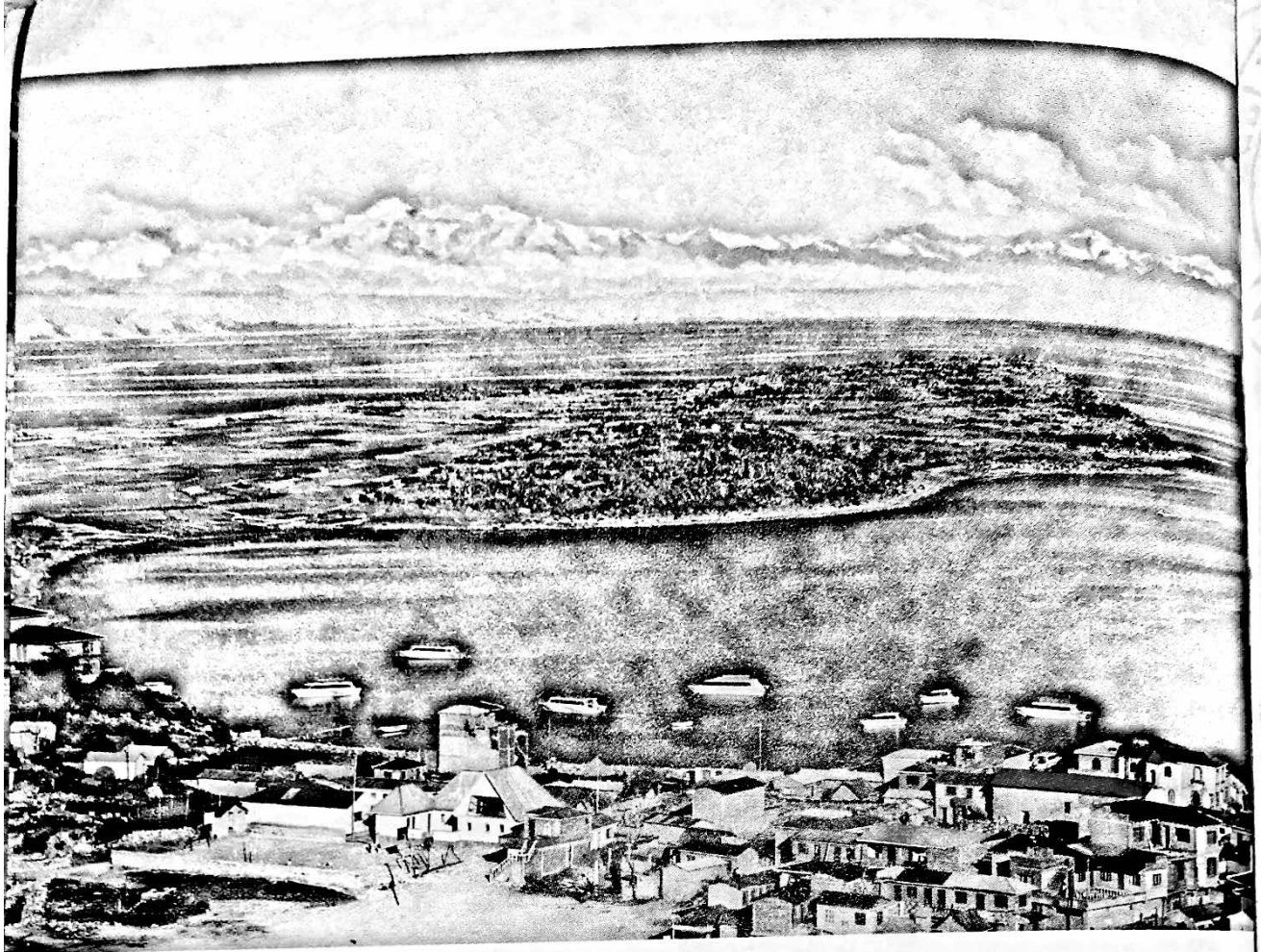
The two best-known features of South America are the Amazon River and the Andes Mountains.

The Amazon is the largest river in the world (in terms of how much water flows through it). It flows for nearly 4,000 miles, from northern Peru to the coast of Brazil. For much of its length, the Amazon River is surrounded by tropical **rainforest**, which contains some of earth's most crowded plant and animal life.

This rainforest is important to the health of our planet. One-fifth of the oxygen on earth is produced by the Amazon rainforest. A large part of the air that humans need to breathe is oxygen!

The Amazon rainforest is a beautiful place, but can be dangerous for humans. People who live there have to look out for animals such as jaguars and cougars on land and flesh-eating piranha fish in the water!





**Lake Titicaca, with the Andes Mountains in the background** (Rafal Cichawa/Shutterstock)

Then there are the scorpions and spiders. The Amazon rainforest is home to the Goliath Birdeating Tarantula spider.

People who prefer high mountains to tropical rainforest visit the Andes Mountains. This mountain range runs from the northern part of South America to its southern tip. It is the longest mountain range in the world—4,500 miles from one end to the other!

Near the Andes Mountains, on the border between Peru and Bolivia, is Lake Titicaca. Lake Titicaca is more than 12,500 feet above sea level, making it one of the highest lakes in the world. 🌟

**TRUE OR  
FALSE?**

The Goliath Birdeater Spider eats birds.  
(Answer on page 96)

# QUESTIONS

1) Why is the Amazon rainforest important to our planet? \_\_\_\_\_

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2) What are some of the dangers in the Amazon rainforest?

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