

# **The Northern Tropics**

# The Guianas

- Countries
  - Guyana, Suriname, French Guyana
- Culture reflects colonial history
  - Official Languages
    - Guyana – English
    - Suriname – Dutch
    - French Guyana - French
  - Religions
    - Suriname and Guyana – Muslim and Hindu



# The Guianas contd.

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- Effects of Migration
  - Africans were brought to area as slaves
  - Asians migrated to area after slavery ended
  - Suriname has a large mulatto population
- Economic Activities
  - Fishing is important
  - Farmers grow sugar cane and rice
  - Bauxite is abundant here



# Venezuela

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- Population is 24 million
- Average per capita GNP is \$780 – South America's poorest country
- Life Expectancy is 73 years
- Official Language is Spanish and most residents are Catholic
- The Andean Highlands
  - Area of plateaus and hills near the Andes
  - Capital of Caracas located here
  - Most of the population live in rachitos or small shacks – similar to fevelas



# Venezuela Contd.

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- Waterfalls and Grasslands
  - Tropical rainforests are found on the border with Brazil
  - World's largest waterfall (Angel Falls) located here
  - Llanos is a savannah region that receives rain only half the year making agriculture difficult
- Elevation and Climate
  - Elevation effects the vegetation of the region
  - Coffee is grown in the tierra templada region where the climate is mild



# Venezuela contd.

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- An Oil-Rich Region
  - Venezuela is a major producer of oil
  - Oil deposits are found in four areas
    - Eastern Llanos
    - The lowlands near Lake Maracaibo
    - The Orinoco River Delta
    - Offshore

# Colombia

- Named after Christopher Columbus
- Physical Characteristics
  - Has three regions
    - Lowlands, mountains, llanos
  - 75% of the population live in the plateau between the mountains
  - Bogotá is located here
- A Single Crop
  - Coffee is the only cash-crop grown in Colombia
  - Campesinos (tenant farmers) can barely keep their families fed
  - If coffee prices drop, the country could be in trouble



# Colombia contd.

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- The Drug Trade
  - Marijuana and Cocaine has become a major product of Colombia
  - Small groups of people or families control most of the trade leading to violence
  - US and Colombian governments have tried to stop this problem
- Cooperation and Conflict
  - Colombia has seen many civil wars since gaining independence from Spain in the 1820s
  - 200,000 people were killed in a civil war in the 1950s
  - Conflict still continues today

# **Brazil's Quest for Economic Growth**

# Economic Challenges

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- Most of Brazil's poor live in favelas
- Small number of wealthy own plantations
- Rural workers have to find jobs on plantations or become subsistence farmers
- The government promised land redistribution that never happened
- People living in the sertao face high poverty because of the weak soil





# Government Policies

- Brazilian government has tried to boost the growth of industry and encourage development of interior
- Economic Activities
  - Government built first steel mill and oil refinery in the 1940s
  - It also built hydroelectric plants along the rivers
  - A bank was established to loan money to new business owners
  - Brazil's economy moved from agriculture to industry during the 1950s because of auto, chemical, and steel industries



Itaipú Dam, Paraguay/Brazil. The world's largest hydroelectric facility.  
Credit: Itaipu Binacional

# Government Policies contd.

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- Patterns of Settlement
  - Brasilia was created to encourage people to move from Rio and Sao Paulo
  - Government built thousands of roads with Brasilia at the center
  - The government gave away plots of land in the north to encourage settlement
  - 1 million people migrated to the Amazon between 1970 and 1985



Broella



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# Economic Growth

- Industry makes up 1/3 of Brazil's GNP
- Gasohol (mix of gasoline and alcohol) helped country respond to high gas prices in the 1970s
- Ethanol is now made from sugar cane
- 1/3 of the workforce is in mining, manufacturing, and construction
- Service industries are also being developed
- These moves have created an educated workforce and growing middle-class

# Environmental Challenges

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- Economic development has led to more poverty because people can't find jobs
- Government has tried to create low cost housing to help
- Challenges and opportunities
  - Farming in the Amazon is difficult
    - Thick vegetation that was cut down led to soil washing away
    - Soil is not very fertile
    - Settlers must clear more land after a growing season

# Environmental Challenges contd.

- New Efforts
  - Deforestation is becoming a very serious problem
  - Brazil's military patrols the rain forest to cut down on illegal forestry
  - Taxes encourage people to maintain forest areas
  - Ecotourism allows people to vacation without affecting the ecosystem

