Colombia 2 Essay, Research Paper

Colombia

The distinguishing topographical feature of Colombia is the Andes mountain chain. The Andes are situated in the central and western parts of the country and extend north south across almost the entire length of Colombia. The western two-fifths of the country lies in the highlands of the Andes. The ranges of the Andes are separated by deep depressions. Almost all of Colombia s population lives in the narrow valleys and basins nestled among the mountains. East of the Andes, three-fifths of the country consists of portions of the llanos, or grasslands, and selva, or rain forest. The llanos lie on the plain that drains northeast into the Orinoco River, and the selva drains southeast into the Amazon River basin. Along the shore of the Caribbean Sea is a strip of lowland.

Climate:

The low regions along the coast and the deep Pat a and Magdalena river valleys are torrid, with average annual temperatures of 24. to 27. C From about 500 to 2,300 m the climate is subtropical, and from about 2,300 to 3,000 m it is temperate. Above about 3,000 m the cold-climate zone, where temperatures range from -18. to 13. C. The average January and July temperatures in Bogot are the same: 14. C. The averages for the same months in Barranquilla are 27. C (80. F) and 28. C (82. F).

Throughout the year, three-month periods of rain and dry weather alternate. Along the Pacific coast precipitation is heavy. At Bogot the annual rainfall averages about 1,060 mm and in Barranquilla it averages about 800 mm. Dry weather prevails on the slopes of the Cordillera Oriental.

Animals:

Among the wildlife is the larger South American mammals, such as jaguars, pumas, tapirs, peccaries, anteaters, sloth s, armadillos, and several species of monkey and red deer. Alligators, once numerous along the principal rivers, have been intensively hunted and are becoming scarce. Many varieties of snakes inhabit the tropical regions. Bird life includes condors, vultures, toucans, parrots, cockatoos, cranes, storks, and hummingbirds.

Population:

The racial makeup of the Colombian population is diverse. About 58 percent of the people are mestizo about 20 percent are of unmixed European ancestry, and about 14 percent are mulatto the remaining 8 percent are blacks, Native Americans, and people of mixed race.

Culture:

Colombia has a rich tradition of folk music and dance, most of which reveals African or Native American influences. The bambuco is the national dance. In the area around Popay n, a city in southwestern Colombia along the Cauca River, a type of music called the murga is played by groups of wandering street musicians using stringed instruments. The word chirim a refers both to a kind of flute and to musical groups that use this instrument to perform pieces with a strong Native American influence. Colombia has a National Symphony Orchestra and a National Conservatory in Bogot .

Agriculture:

Coffee is Colombia s principal crop. Although Colombia is second only to Brazil in the annual volume of coffee produced and is the world s leading producer of mild coffee, the crop was bypassed by petroleum in the mid-1990s as the country s largest source of foreign income. In the mid-1970s coffee accounted for 80 percent of Colombia s export earnings.

Currency:

The basic unit of currency is the Colombian peso (1,141 pesos equal U.S.$1; 1997 average).