

# Countries Around the World™

## Venezuela

### Program Summary

Meet 9-year-old Victoria. She and her family live near Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. Join Victoria and her Aunt Maria at a plantation in the Barlovento region as they dance to the beat of *tambores*, traditional Venezuelan drums. Then, they harvest cacao beans and process them to make one of the world's most popular confections — chocolate! After a trip to the beach for some shoreline net-fishing, Victoria and Maria head back to Caracas. Once there, Victoria and Maria introduce aspects of Venezuela's history and religious traditions when they cross Bolívar Plaza and enter a Catholic cathedral. Afterwards, Victoria meets up with her brother Rojelio, and together, they observe wildlife that represent the varied topography of Venezuela during a visit to the zoo. Experience how Venezuela's climate is conducive to growing produce when Victoria and Maria browse among natural, plant-based medicines and shop for and sample exotic fruits at the market in the village of El Hatillo. Finally, Victoria and Maria ride a cable car up Mount Ávila before embarking on a trek through the mountains to the rustic village of Galipán.

### Country Information

- **location:** northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean; bordered by Brazil, Columbia and Guyana
- **capital:** Caracas
- **official language:** Spanish
- **type of government:** federal republic
- **total area:** approximately 912,050 sq km
- **climate:** tropical, hot and humid; more moderate in highlands
- **terrain:** Andes Mountains and Maracaibo Lowlands in the Northwest; central plains (*llanos*); Guiana Highlands in the Southeast
- **natural resources:** includes petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, bauxite, other minerals, hydropower and diamonds
- **industries:** includes petroleum, construction materials, food processing, textiles, iron ore mining, steel, aluminum and motor vehicle assembly
- **agricultural products:** includes corn, sorghum, sugarcane, rice, bananas, vegetables, coffee, beef, pork, milk, eggs and fish

### Vocabulary

**tambores** — Spanish for “drums.”

**Creole** — Referring to a person born in the West Indies or Spanish America of European, usually Spanish, ancestry. Also refers to the culture and language dialects associated with Creole people.

**cacao** — A native tree found in Mexico and South America. Its seeds are the main ingredient in chocolate.

**ferment** — To undergo fermentation, a process in which sugar is transformed into carbon dioxide and alcohol.

**turpial** — Also “troupial.” A tropical bird similar to the oriole. The turpial is Venezuela's national bird.

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**Simón Bolívar** — The South American patriot, known as “the Liberator,” who led a Latin American revolt against Spanish rule in 1819.

**macaw** — A long-tailed, brilliantly colored parrot of Central and South America.

**tapir** — A mammal found in South America that has a heavy body, short legs and a long, fleshy, flexible upper lip.

**calabash** — A type of gourd.

**guava** — A round, pear-shaped fruit with reddish, edible flesh.

**annona** — A tree native to the tropical regions in Central and South America that has edible fruit.

### Pre-viewing Discussion

- Lead a discussion about diversity. How does a society benefit by having a diverse population? How can diversity lead to a better understanding of other peoples? What would the world be like if everyone was the same? Can diversity help you learn something about yourself? Why or why not? How is learning about another country and culture related to diversity?
- Discuss what makes places different from each other. Begin by having students brainstorm a list of things that they think make places unique. Follow up with questions, such as: How is climate a factor in defining an area? How are land formations or bodies of water factors? Are people a part of making a place unique? How? How would you characterize the place where you live? What makes it unique? As they prepare to watch the program, ask students to predict how Venezuela is different from their communities. After the program, follow-up by asking students to compare their predictions about Venezuela with what was shown. What are some of the things that were different? Was there anything that was similar to where you live?
- Distribute outline maps of South America to the class. Have students find and label Venezuela and its capital in addition to the other countries in South America and their capitals. Questions to ask include: Where is Venezuela located on the South American continent? Which countries border Venezuela? Where is Venezuela in relation to the equator? How does Venezuela compare to other South American countries in terms of size?

### Follow-up Activities

- Cacao seeds are used to make one of the most popular confections in the world — chocolate! Students will have fun discovering the wonderful world of chocolate by visiting [www.fieldmuseum.org/Chocolate/about.html](http://www.fieldmuseum.org/Chocolate/about.html). Working in small groups, have students select topics and create pages for inclusion in a class book about chocolate. The book can include sections on the history of chocolate, how it is grown and produced, time lines tracing chocolate's evolution and maps showing where chocolate originated, in addition to other topics. As an extension, students can seek out different types of chocolates from around the world and bring them to class to have a tasting.
- Simón Bolívar is considered a hero in South America for bringing independence to the Central and South American countries of Bolivia, Panama, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. In fact, Bolívar is known as “The Liberator” throughout South America. Lead a discussion about heroic people by asking questions, such as: Whom do you consider to be a hero? Why? In the United States, who are the people we consider to be liberators or national heroes? What have these people done to be considered heroic? How are these people still part of our culture today? Can fictional characters also be “true” heroes? Why or why not? Encourage each student to draw a picture of a person whom he or she considers to be a hero and write a brief biography of that person.

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- Students can learn basic Spanish words and phrases by visiting [www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/talk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/talk/). Drawing from the sections that deal with shopping and traveling, have students write and perform skits using these phrases as if they were traveling in Venezuela. After each performance, students can translate their skits into English. Invite fluent Spanish-speaking students to act as classroom leaders by helping with pronunciations and different ways of saying things.
- Using information from the program and other sources, have students participate in a trivia game based on Venezuela. Encourage students to write their own questions for use in the game. The questions can take many forms — maps, pictures and illustrations, even questions in Spanish!
- *Tambores*, or drums, are an essential ingredient in South American music. Using various materials, like coffee cans and pieces of leather, invite students to build their own *tambores*! Then, listen to sample rhythms of Latin and South American music by visiting [www.worldmusic.net/listen/mp3.html](http://www.worldmusic.net/listen/mp3.html) and scrolling down to the section titled “Latin American and Caribbean” for clips of music from places like Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and others. Students can play along with the songs on their drums. After their “jam session,” discuss the different types of music by asking questions like: What was similar about the music? What was different? Which songs did you like the best?
- Use clay, salt dough or another medium to create a raised relief map of Venezuela. Advise students to sketch the country on a sturdy piece of cardboard first. When molding the clay, be sure to clearly depict the different landforms and bodies of water of Venezuela, like the Amazon Rainforest, the Andes Mountains and the Oronoco River. When the model dries, use paint or other craft materials to provide a greater level of detail for the map. Mark and label the major cities in addition to the different topographic regions.
- Students can design and illustrate stamps for Venezuela. The stamps might feature a landmark, physical feature, person or symbol for which Venezuela is known, like the turpial — the national bird. Students can present the stamps to the class, explaining why they chose the images they did.
- Venezuela is one of the world’s leading oil producers, but how does it compare to other oil-rich nations? Students can find the most recent facts about the top five oil-producing nations and create graphic organizers comparing their production with Venezuela’s in terms of millions of barrels per day. For information about oil, visit [www.eia.doe.gov/international/](http://www.eia.doe.gov/international/). Then, have students pick another aspect of oil, like oil exports or consumption, and create companion charts comparing Venezuela to other nations.

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- With different regions, like tropical rainforests, mountain ranges and arid plains, Venezuela is teeming with a vast array of plants and animals. Students can choose a type of plant or animal found in Venezuela and create a fact poster about it. Instruct students to include a picture or illustration and a map showing where the plant or animal is found. Students can present their posters to the class.

### Suggested Internet Resources

- [www.embavenez-us.org/index.php?pagina=kids.venezuela/intro.htm&titulo=Venezuela%20for%20Kids](http://www.embavenez-us.org/index.php?pagina=kids.venezuela/intro.htm&titulo=Venezuela%20for%20Kids)  
This children’s site, hosted by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Washington, D.C., presents information on Venezuela’s geography, history, politics, culture and economy.
- [www.geographia.com/venezuela/index.htm](http://www.geographia.com/venezuela/index.htm)  
Learn more about Venezuela’s history, culture, geography and cuisine at this site presented by Geographia.
- [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)  
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Venezuela and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the “World Factbook” link.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Baguley, Kitt and Jane Kohen Winter. *Venezuela*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2002.
- Gibson, Karen. *Venezuela: A Question and Answer Book*. Capstone Press, Mankato, MN; 2007.
- Horenstein, Henry. *Baseball in the Barrios*. Harcourt Trade Publishers, San Diego, CA; 1997.
- Morganelli, Adrianna. *Biography of Chocolate*. Crabtree Publishing, New York, NY; 2006.
- Willis, Terri. *Venezuela*. Children’s Press, Danbury, CT; 2003.

Teacher’s Guide written by Brian Wales, Curriculum Specialist, Schlessinger Media

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