



Year 5 Geography Knowledge Organiser: Central America



Subject Specific Skills

- use maps, atlases, globes and digital/computer mapping to locate countries and describe features studied
- describe and understand key aspects of:
physical geography, including: climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts, rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes, and the water cycle
- Locate the world's countries, focus on North & Central America
- Identify the position and significance of lines of longitude & latitude

Prior Learning

- Children will have used maps, atlases and globes to locate different places in the world.
- Children should be able to describe some of the key aspects of physical geography including rivers, mountains, volcanoes.

Key Information

Central America has an area of 524,000 square kilometres (202,000 sq mi). It is almost 0.1% of the Earth's total surface. In 2009, the population was estimated at 41,739,000. It has a density of 77 people per square kilometre or 206 people per square mile. Central America consists of seven countries. These are Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. While Nicaragua is the largest country in area of Central America, Guatemala has the largest population by country in Central America, with more than 14 million people and they also have the most populated city in Central America, being Guatemala City. Most of Central America rests on the Caribbean Plate.

Six of the seven countries have Spanish as their official language, with Belize being the non-Spanish speaking country, as their official language is English, although there are now at least 195,597 (62.8%) of people in Belize who speak Spanish.

Some people also speak indigenous or creole languages like the Maya languages.

Climate Zones: Central America has an overall humid, tropical climate with distinct dry and rainy seasons throughout the region. However, the weather can vary from country to country, and some countries have multiple climate zones. Typically, in mountainous areas, temperatures dip lower than those in areas with lower elevation, but usually no colder than around 10 degrees Celsius. And temperatures in the hottest areas of the region typically top out just below 32 degrees Celsius. The exception to this overview is Guatemala, which can see temperatures range from freezing to the 38 degrees Celsius, depending on where you are and when you are visiting.

Key physical features : Central America has many mountain ranges; the longest are the Sierra Madre de Chiapas, the Cordillera Isabelia and the Cordillera de Talamanca. Most of the population of Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala live in valleys, between mountains. Valleys are also suitable for the production of coffee, beans and other crops.

Key human features: Tikal Ruins (northern Guatemala), Catedral Metropolitana (Mexico City, Mexico), Basílica de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles (Costa Rica), Joya de Cerén (El Salvador), Santiago of Managua Cathedral (Nicaragua).

Most populated countries: Mexico – 128,932,753 people, Guatemala - 17,915,568, Honduras - 9,904,607, Nicaragua - 6,624,554, El Salvador - 6,486,205, Costa Rica - 5,094,118, Panama - 4,314,767, Belize - 397,628

Key Vocabulary

Equator: An imaginary line around the middle of the Earth at an equal distance from the North Pole and the South Pole

Human feature: A man-made feature of a place

Physical feature: A natural feature of a place

Climate: The usual weather conditions of a place

Coast: Where the land meets the sea

Capital city: City where the government of a country is based

Lake: A large area of fresh water surrounded by land

Mountain range: A group of connected mountains

Rainforest: A forest that receives a large amount of rain all year round

Desert: An area that receives very little rain

Northern hemisphere : The half of the Earth that is north of the Equator

Southern hemisphere: The half of the Earth that is south of the Equator

Environmental region: Areas of land with similar environments / physical features

Land-use: The way that land is used eg: farming

Natural resources: Natural materials that can be used or sold by people eg: oil, wood, minerals

Population : The people that live in a place

Tropical: Hot and humid

Fertile: Land that is good for growing plants

Key Individual:



Hernán Cortés

