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Manaus

*Amazon River*

Belém

Recife

Salvador

**Brazil**

★ Brasília

Belo Horizonte

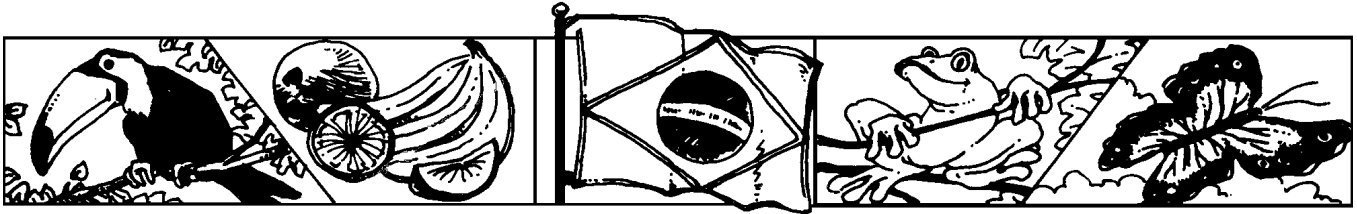
Rio de Janeiro

São Paulo

*Pacific Ocean*

*Atlantic Ocean*

Pôrto Alegre



# Brazil

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world in area and the sixth largest in population. It is a country with a diverse geography and a rich mix of people of many ethnic origins, including Indians, Europeans, Africans, and Asians. This mixed heritage has produced a culture unlike any other nation on earth. All Brazilians, regardless of racial or economic background, share the belief that they are a single people with a common history and with common goals and ideas. Each group has contributed to the language, politics, economics, arts, music, and religion that make up the proud Brazilian cultural heritage.

Brazil as a country and as a culture is very different from our own. Sharing aspects of Brazil's culture with children will enable them to better understand their own culture and to appreciate the differences between people that make our lives more stimulating.

**Area**—3,286,487 square miles (8,512,000 square kilometers)

**Population**—The population of Brazil is approximately 147,000,000. Brazil is a nation of young people with more than half the population under 25 years of age.

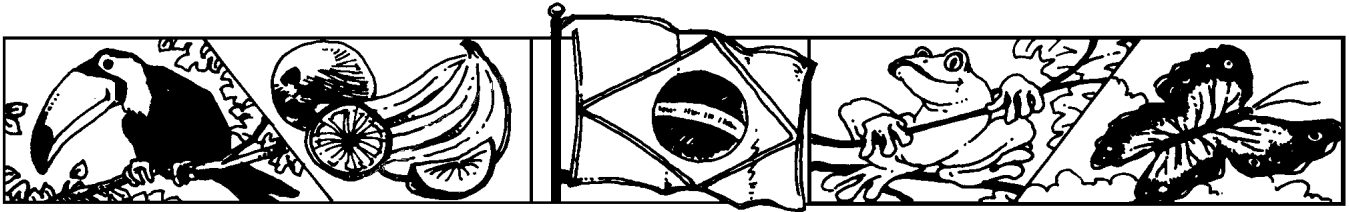
**Government**—The Federal Republic of Brazil has a representative form of government with 22 states, 4 territories, and a Federal District.

**Religion**—Roman Catholic culture is deeply rooted in Brazil, but it co-exists with other forms of religion, including Protestant revivalist churches and Afro-Brazilian religions and cults. One such cult is the Candomblé, which has borrowed heavily from Indian beliefs deeply rooted in mysticism and the worship of the forces of nature. Religious tolerance is greater in Brazil than, perhaps, any other Latin American country.

**Race**—In addition to the Indians who were native to Brazil and the Portuguese who colonized the country, Brazil is also comprised of Africans who were brought to the country as slaves, as well as Italians, Germans, Spanish, and Japanese who came over in later migrations. Brazil is a fusion of these many races and cultures.

**Language**—Brazil is the only Latin American country in which Portuguese is the official language. Brazilian Portuguese has been greatly influenced by the African and Indian cultures in the country.

**Major Cities**—Most Brazilians live in cities along the Atlantic coast. The largest cities are São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, but nine other cities have populations of one million or more. Brasília, the modern capital city of Brazil and the result of large-scale city planning, is located in the country's sparsely populated interior.



# History

In the 16th century colonial period, Spain and Portugal had conflicting claims on territory throughout the world. This disagreement was resolved by drawing an imaginary north-south line that gave all lands west of the line to Spain and all lands east of the line to Portugal. According to this agreement, the territory of what is now Brazil belonged to Portugal.

On April 22, 1500, Pedro Álvares Cabral reached the Brazilian coast. More Portuguese expeditions followed. Unlike the Spanish colonial empire in South America which became eighteen separate nation-states, Portuguese America remained intact as one nation, Brazil.

Brazilwood, one of the early exports from this territory, was used to make a red dye in the European textile industry. From this wood came the name of the country—Brazil.

## Native Peoples

It is estimated that before the arrival of the Portuguese, about two million Indians lived in what is now Brazil. Hundreds of small tribes were scattered throughout the territory. Today there are less than 200,000 Indians living mostly in the jungles of the Brazilian interior. They have lost much of their earlier culture and identity.

The Tupi was one of the first tribes encountered by the Portuguese colonists. They lived along the coast and became best known to the Europeans. Tupi names for the animals of Brazil and for many rivers, mountains, and town sites were adopted by the Europeans and are still in use today.

Early Portuguese settlers tried to enslave the Tupi and other Indian tribes for work in the sugar fields. Many of the Indians died as a result of cruel conditions on the plantations. Others died of European diseases against which they had no immunity, and still others were hunted to extinction.

