

# Latin American Geography Project

**Learning Competencies:** Locate and identify key places in the physical, human, and built environments of Latin America. Define the limits of the region by identifying an analytical focus for a tour of specific geographic locations. Create an in-depth, digital tour of the sites you've identified using Google Earth Tour Builder. Rather than give you a static map worksheet or map quiz, to help us better explore the geography of Latin America you will create your own tour of the region using Google Earth Tour Builder.

We chose that particular tool because it is intuitive and relatively easy to use, and it gives us the power to create detailed, annotated digital maps. With Tour Builder you will do much more than mark off a few places on a map. You will also add images of the places in your tour, articles or other online sources that provide more information about each place, and you will explain why you chose them/think that they are important to the geography of Latin America in terms of their historical, political, cultural, social, economic, etc., significance. We will work on this assignment in stages over the entire semester, and the final version will serve as the final project for the class.

To get started, go to Google Earth Tour Builder. If you don't already have a Google Account, you'll need to create one in order to save your work. Then, follow the steps to create a new tour. The assignment will be completed in three stages:

- Initial tour, due TBD
- Peer review, due TBD
- Final tour, due TBD

**Initial Tour:** In this step, you'll decide which places you would like to include in your tour. If you're not quite sure, review the maps included in the last couple pages of these instructions, think about the places we study in class, and brainstorm with your instructor or your classmates to make your decisions.

As a minimum, you **must include a total of 15 locations in your tour**. Roughly half should be physical sites (rivers, mountains, lakes, etc.), and the other half should be political/human sites (cities, towns, skyscrapers, etc.). 15 is an odd number; it's okay if you include, for example, 9 physical sites and 6 political ones as long as the balance is \*roughly\* half and half. If you would like to include more than 15 sites, please do so. For the Initial Tour (first step in the assignment), you only need to create a Google Earth Tour, choose your locations, and place them on your tour. You don't need to fill in the information for each site at this point--that will come next.

**Peer Review:** By the due date for this part of the assignment, you will need to have completed the entries for 7-8 of your 15 tour sites and provided a review of the other tours for the classmates in your group. A completed entry must include the following:

- a paragraph describing the site in terms of either its historical, cultural, political, geographical, or economic, etc., significance. For example, Sao Paulo, Brazil could be evaluated in any of these categories--you might discuss the city's historical or economic significance. In particular, be sure to explain why the site is significant to Latin America's geography. When creating the site link, add an image that illustrates the site. It can be a photo or image, painting, map, etc., that you found online. Be as creative as you can with this assignment and be sure to write each of your entries in your own words. If you copy work or collaborate, please cite to the original source.

**Final Tour:** By the due date for this last stage of the assignment, you need to complete all 15 of your entries, review and revise your work based on the feedback you received from your peers and from the educator, and write a short paper which evaluates what you learned in the process of creating your tour. Specifically, your post should address the following:

- What were your general impressions of the project in terms of expectations and use of Google Earth Tour Builder?
- How working on the tour helped you to better understand Latin America as a region. In what ways has your tour helped you articulate a clear definition Latin America?
- What specific insights you gained about particular places through your work on the tour. Did you notice any particular sub-regions within Latin America? What distinguishes them from the larger area that we call Latin America?
- What geographic or cultural questions or issues would you still like to explore in more detail?
- In sum, what are the most important things you'll take away from this project and from the class as a whole?

Include a link to your Google Earth Tour in your blog post, and post a link to your blog post in the Google Drive to submit your work.

**Philosophy:**

We purposely did not provide you with a list of sites to identify in your tour for a couple of reasons. First, any list of “key sites across Latin America” would be subjective and would reflect someone else’s preferences. Rather than make you identify the things we find interesting, find your own path through the region. Second, by locating your own key sites, you will need to think about what makes a place important and explain that significance to the rest of us in specific terms. In other words, your tour will be a subjective list of important sites in the region so you will need to make a case for why each of your sites constitutes a significant place. The concepts of “space” and “place” are central to the study of geography; you will consider what those mean in the context of Latin America.

Having said all of this, I understand that some of us may have very little prior knowledge of the region from which to decide which places to choose. If you need help, see your instructor to identify resources which will help you to identify places you might want to include in your tour.