

1.2 Life at Different Elevations

TECHTREK

myNGconnect.com For online maps and photos of different altitude zones



Main Idea Elevation and climate affect where people live and how they use the land.

The people of South America must **adapt**, or modify, their economic activities to fit the different elevations and climates of the region. Life can vary greatly from one part of South America to another.

Elevation and Climate

People, animals, and plants adapt to a range of climates across the continent. More people live in the mild climates of the plains and grasslands than live in the extreme climates of high mountains and tropical rain forests. The low-elevation plains, such as the Llanos, the Pampas, and the Coastal Plain, are moderate, both in temperature and rainfall.

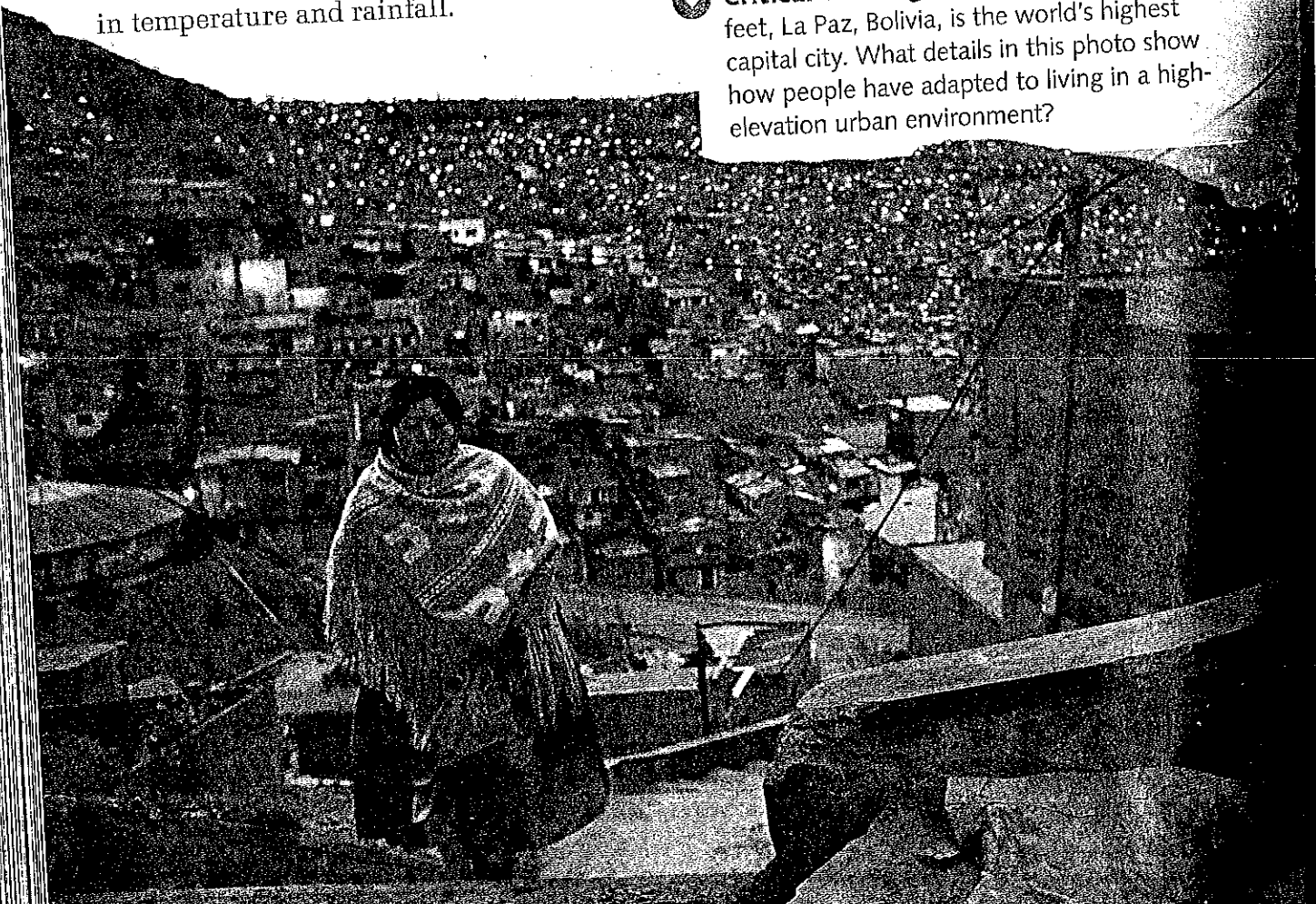
SOUTH AMERICAN ALTITUDE ZONES

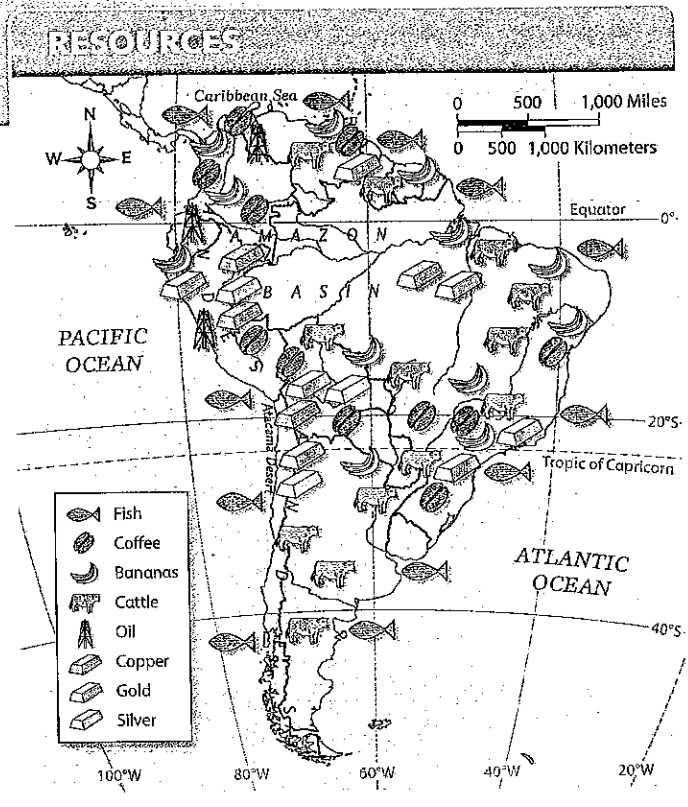
Altitude Zone	Climate	Elevation Range	Crops
Tierra Caliente	hot; adequate to extreme rainfall	0 to 2,500 feet	bananas, peppers, sugarcane, cacao
Tierra Templada	warm; adequate rainfall	2,500 to 6,000 feet	corn, beans, wheat, coffee, vegetables
Tierra Fría	cool; some rainfall	6,000 to 12,000 feet	wheat, barley, potatoes
Tierra Helada	cold; little rainfall	12,000 to 15,000 feet	no substantial crops

Source: H.J. deBlij, *The World Today: Concepts and Regions in Geography*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.



Critical Viewing At an elevation of 11,800 feet, La Paz, Bolivia, is the world's highest capital city. What details in this photo show how people have adapted to living in a high-elevation urban environment?





They are located in the *tierra templada* (tee EHR ah tem PLAH dah) elevation zone. The cool, dry elevations of the Andes are called *tierra fría* (FREE ah), or cold land.

Further up in the Andes, a very high and cold elevation range is called *tierra helada* (he LAH dah), or frozen land. At the other extreme, the hot and humid Amazon River Basin is *tierra caliente* (kay YEN tay), or hot land.

On the plains, higher rainfall provides opportunities for ranching and profitable, large-scale farming. Crops produced at these lower elevations in the region include tropical fruits, sugarcane, coffee, corn, wheat, and soybeans.

Before You Move On

Make Inferences Why do people settle in areas with moderate climates and low elevations?

Using the Land

Elevation and climate determine how people use the land. Rain is scarce at high elevations in the mountains and highlands of the continent. Some farmers in the Andes herd animals and grow only enough food for their families. This is called **subsistence farming**. However, others have become part of the global economy, selling wool to European and other manufacturers.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT

DATA LAB

- 1. Interpret Charts** According to the chart, in what altitude zone do potatoes grow? Which altitude zone experiences the most rainfall?
- 2. Draw Conclusions** Based on the chart, why do no substantial crops grow in the *tierra helada* zone?
- 3. Human-Environment Interaction** According to the population density map, where do most people in South America live? Use the resources map to help you explain why those areas have the most population.