

Knowledge box 2

Geography Plus: Amazon Adventures 1

These knowledge boxes provide background information for teachers to help develop knowledge for teaching **Amazon Adventures**.

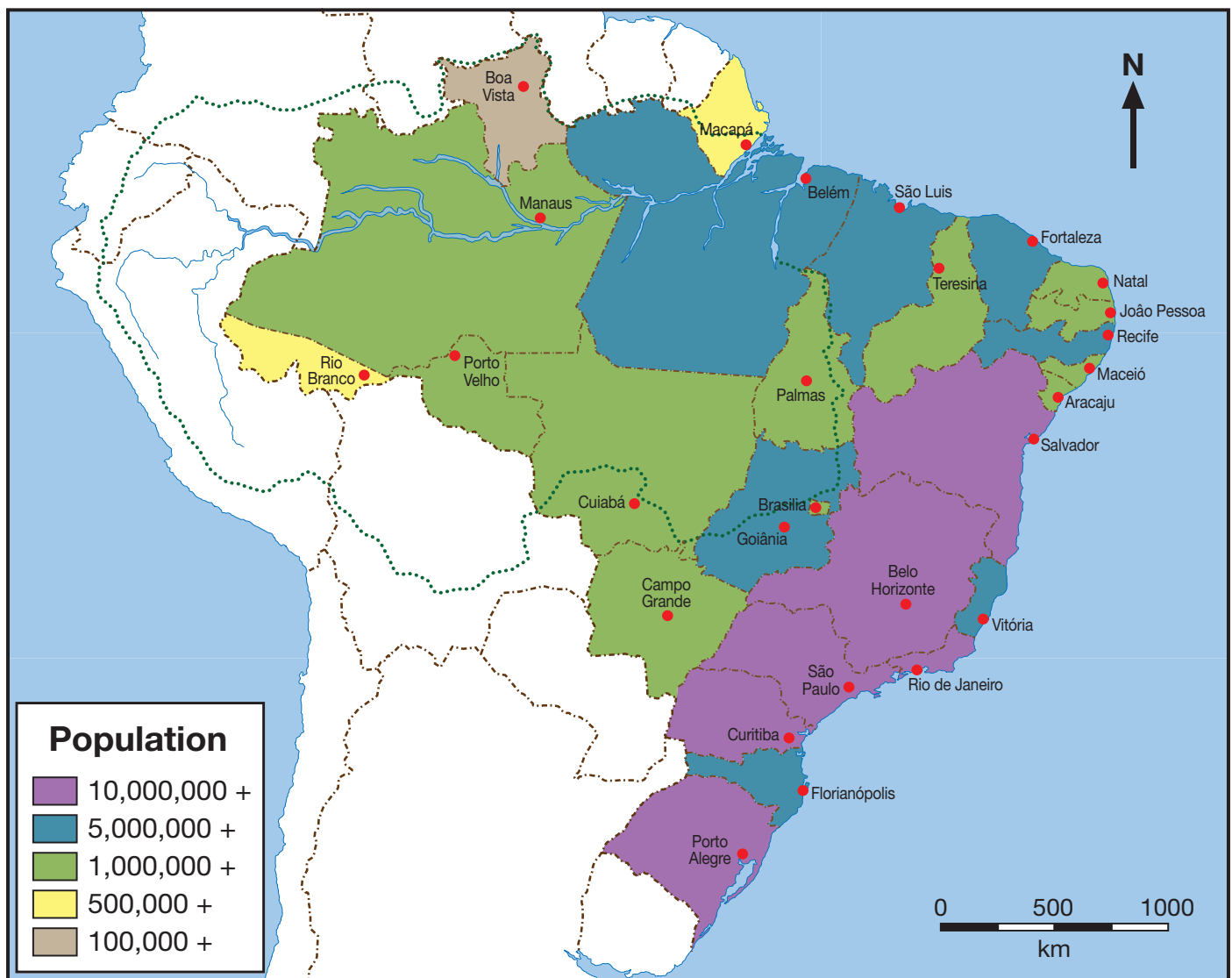


The people of Brazil

Brazil has the fifth highest population in the world, after China, India, the USA and Indonesia. According to the World Bank, in 2014 the population reached 202 million. Some 80% of Brazilians live in towns and cities, and people continue to migrate from rural to urban areas. São Paulo has a population of 20 million, and Rio de Janeiro 12 million. The greatest population density occurs in the south and east (see map). The people of Brazil are descended from migrants from many parts of the world.

The earliest inhabitants

Indigenous peoples like the Xingu and Yanomami are descendants of early humans who came to South America from Asia. After crossing the Bering Straits into northwest America they moved gradually south and east. In parts of western Brazil there are still uncontacted descendants of these migrants living like Stone Age communities. The total number of pure indigenous people in Brazil now is tiny; one estimate is about 900,000, or 0.0045% of the total.



Distribution of Brazil's population.

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European migrants

The next migrants were European, mainly Portuguese, settlers. Portuguese explorers first settled in Brazil in 1500.

African slaves

Between the 1600s and 1888, when slavery was finally abolished in Brazil, something like 10,000,000 Africans were taken from their homeland and forced to work as slaves in Brazil, often in coffee plantations.

Modern migrants

There are some 25 million Brazilians of Italian descent, and 10 million of Arab descent – the largest Arab population outside the Middle East. The 1.75 million Brazilians of Japanese descent form the largest Japanese population outside Japan. There are also sizeable minorities of Brazilians of German, Spanish and Polish extraction. These groups are known as 'Italian Brazilians', 'Arab Brazilians', etc.

Answers to Activity Sheet 4

- 1 False: Brazil is the largest country in South America.
- 2 True: the Equator does pass through Brazil.
- 3 True: the river Amazon does flow into the Atlantic Ocean.
- 4 False: Brasilia is the capital of Brazil.
- 5 True: Around 40% of Brazil nuts come from Brazil.
- 6 False: very few animals can break into a Brazil nut seed pod without tools. The agouti is one: their strong, sharp incisors can gnaw a hole in the pod to get at the nuts. There have also been reports of capuchin monkeys breaking open the pods by using a stone as an anvil.
- 7 True: some of the rainforest is being cleared for subsistence farming, and more significantly for soybean production.
- 8 False: of Brazil's ten largest cities, seven – São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Fortaleza, Curitiba, Recife and Porto Alegre – are on or near the coast.
- 9 False: Buenos Aires is the capital of Argentina.
- 10 True: The climate ranges from Tropical in the north to Temperate further south in Brazil.
- 11 False: the population of Brazil is over 2,000,000.
- 12 True: the average rainfall in the rainforest is around 2000mm a year.
- 13 False: the official language of Brazil is Portuguese.
- 14 True: One Brazilian *real* is worth about 25p; there are approximately four Brazilian *reals* to the pound.
- 15 False: the Amazon flows from west to east; although some geologists have calculated that millions of years ago it flowed in the opposite direction!
- 16 False: Brazil has borders with 10 countries: Argentina (1224km); Bolivia (3400km); Colombia (1643km); French Guiana (673km); Guyana (1119km); Paraguay (1290km); Peru (1560km); Surinam (597km); Uruguay (985km); and Venezuela (2200km).
- 17 True: It was renamed after the wood of the brazilwood tree, which was one of the country's earliest exports.
- 18 True: over 4000km of the river Amazon flows inside Brazil.
- 19 True: the state of São Paulo has the highest concentration of people with Japanese origins in Brazil.
- 20 True: 84% of the population of Brazil live in urban areas.