

## My First Library of Knowledge

# Our World



 Orpheus

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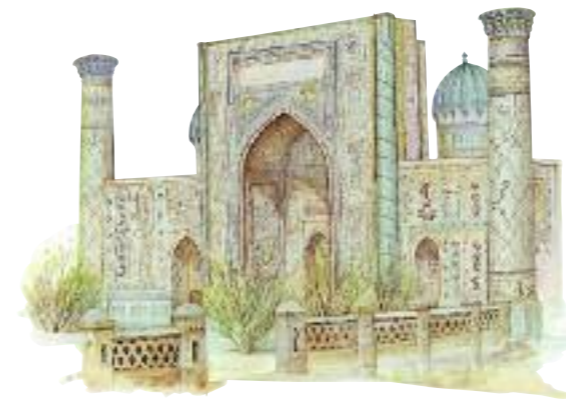
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# INTRODUCTION

**T**HE WORLD is home to many different peoples. From the native Indians of the Amazon rainforest to Japanese businessmen commuting by train, people make a living in a great variety of ways. Take a journey across the world, meet the inhabitants of every continent and find out more about the lands they live in.

# THE WORLD

**T**HERE ARE more than six billion people in the world. Yet most of our planet is completely uninhabited. More than 70 per cent of its surface is covered by ocean waters. Large parts of the land are taken up by desert, ice, mountains or thick forest. Most people live in the fertile lowlands in temperate regions: those parts of the world where the climate is neither too cold nor too hot.

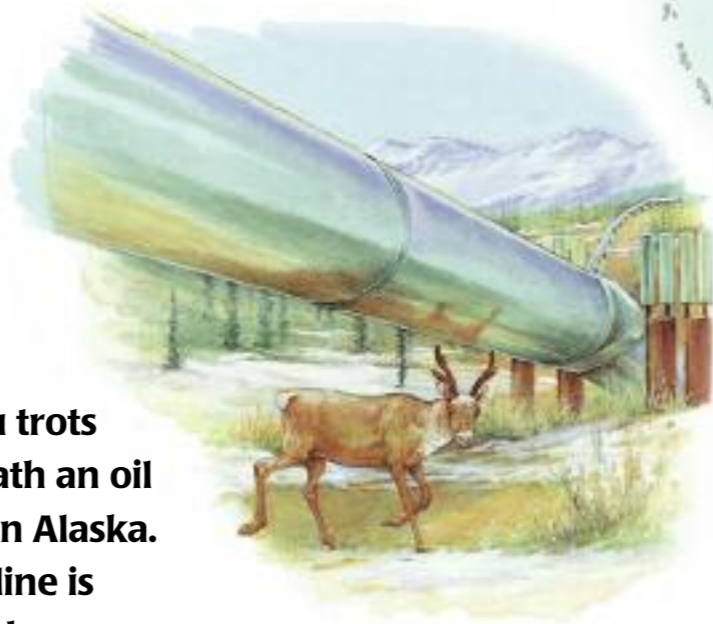


## WORLD FACTS

- Total land area: 148,328,100 sq km
- Population: 6,500,000,000
- Highest point: Mt Everest (8863 m)
- Greatest depth: Marianas Trench (10,924 m)
- Lowest point: Dead Sea (395 m below sea level)
- Longest river: Nile (6670 km)
- Largest lake: Caspian Sea (371,000 sq km)
- Largest ocean: Pacific (165,384,000 sq km)
- Largest continent: Asia (44,000,000 sq km)

# NORTH AMERICA

**T**HE CONTINENT of North America includes Canada, the United States of America, Mexico and the countries of Central America. The land stretches from Alaska's frozen wastes in the north to Panama's hot, tropical rainforests in the south.



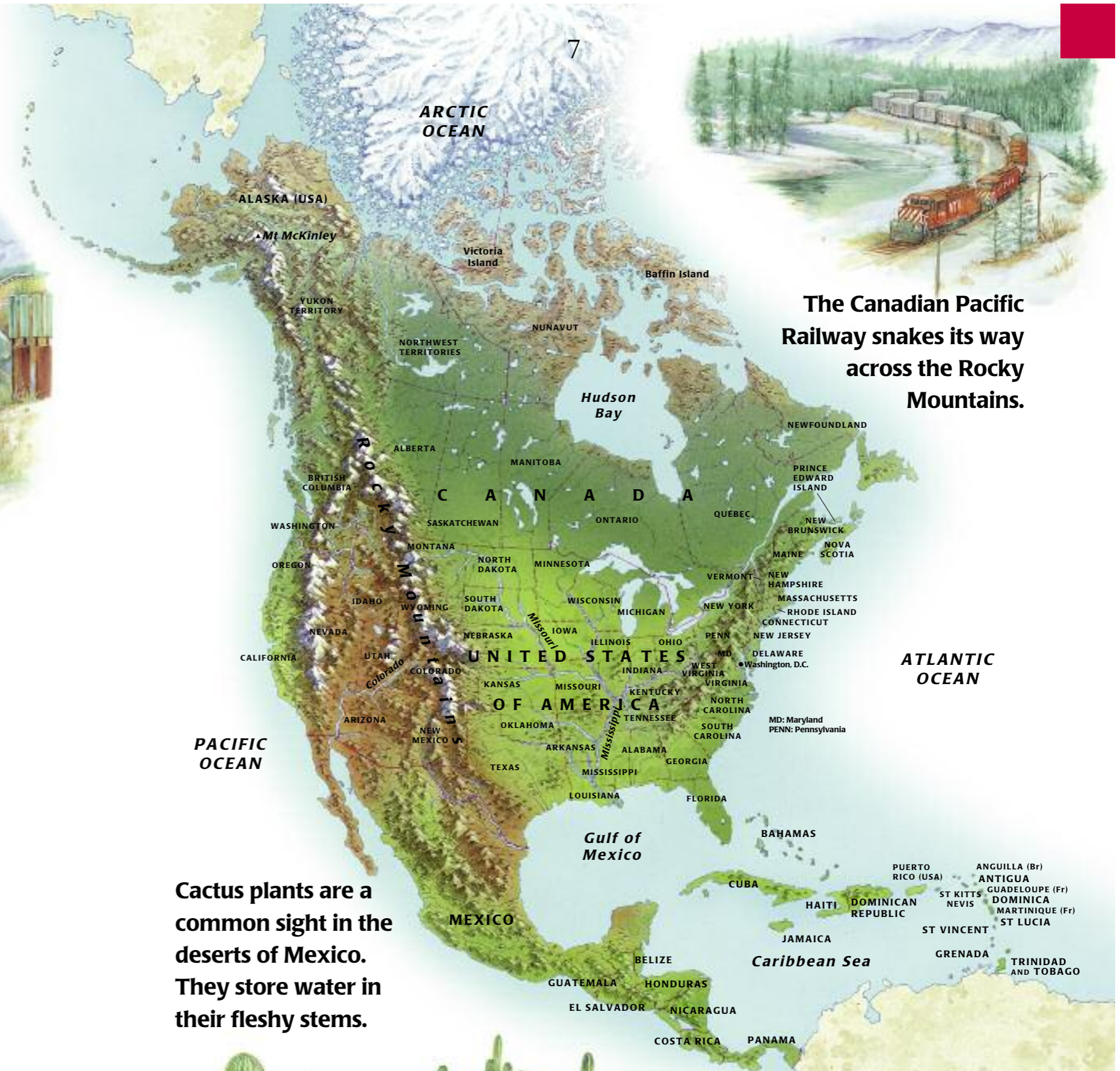
**A caribou trots underneath an oil pipeline in Alaska. The pipeline is 1300 km long.**



**The Panama Canal was opened in 1914. This 80-km waterway links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It took ten years to complete, and more than 20,000 people died helping to build it.**

## THE EVERGLADES

The Everglades in Florida, USA, is a swampy wilderness. The area lies close to a number of large cities. Much of the Everglades is now protected because of the unique wildlife that lives there, including wading birds, crocodiles, alligators and the rare Florida panther.



**The Canadian Pacific Railway snakes its way across the Rocky Mountains.**

**Cactus plants are a common sight in the deserts of Mexico. They store water in their fleshy stems.**



**Area: 24,250,000 sq km  
Population: 510,000,000  
Highest point: Mt McKinley (6194 m)  
Longest river: Mississippi-Missouri (5790 km)**

# LIVING IN NORTH AMERICA

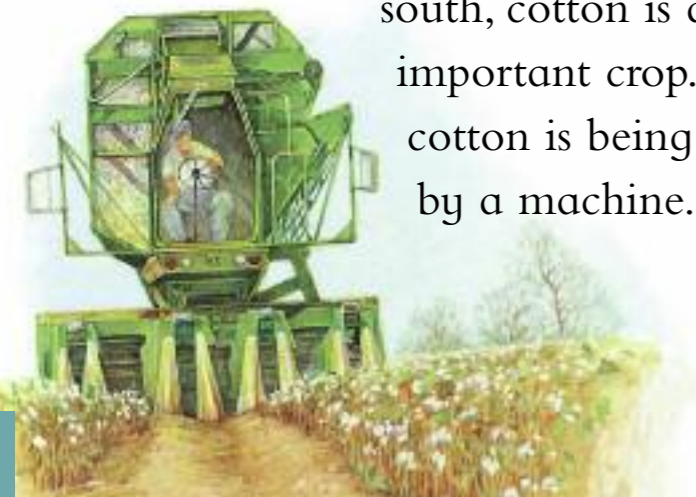
**P**EOPLE first arrived in North America between 15,000 and 30,000 years ago. They crossed from Asia. The Native Americans were joined by immigrants from Europe, Africa and Asia in the last 500 years.



A US baseball player

## FERTILE LAND

Large areas of the USA and Canada are covered by farmland. Wheat and maize are grown on the Great Plains. In the south, cotton is an important crop. Here cotton is being harvested by a machine.



Traditionally, the Inuit of Alaska, Greenland and northern Canada are fishermen and hunters of seals and whales.

Modern America: the Space Needle in Seattle is 184 m high.



# LIVING CRAFTS

Weaving is an ancient craft in Mexico and Guatemala dating back hundreds of years. The woman here is using a backstrap loom. One end is fastened to straps around her waist, and the other to a roof-support. This helps her to keep the weaving stretched tight. She is wearing a colourful *huipil*, a traditional handwoven top.

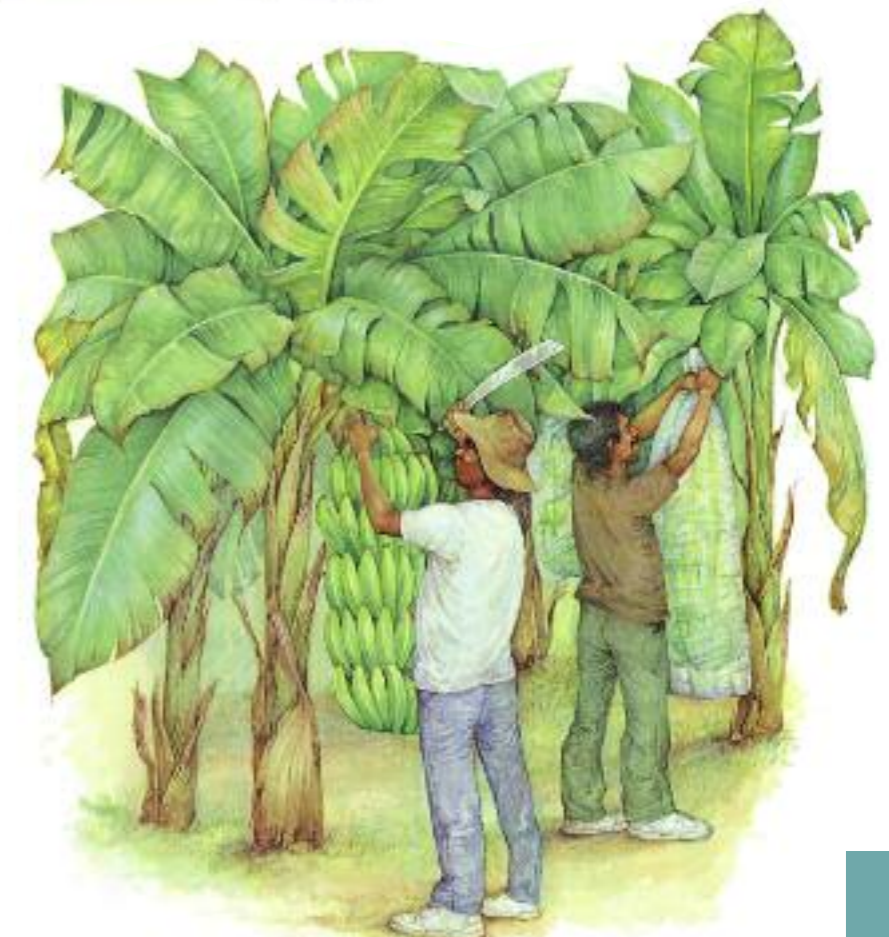


Music is part of life in the Caribbean. These Trinidad musicians play steel drums made out of old oil cans. Caribbean people originally came from Africa as slaves to work on sugar and banana plantations.



## BANANA GROWING

Bananas are an important crop in Central America and the Caribbean. Banana plants were first brought to the Americas from Asia by Spanish settlers 500 years ago. Here farmers cover the growing bananas with bags to protect them from insect pests.



# SOUTH AMERICA

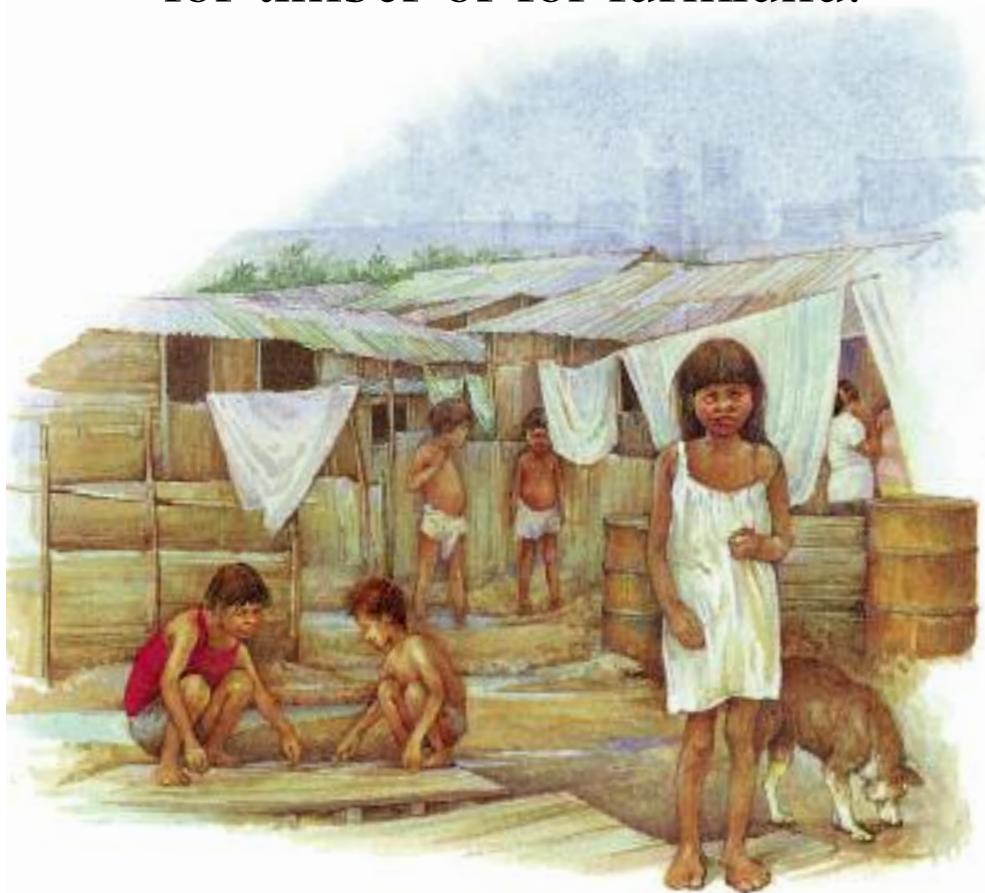
**S**OUTH AMERICA is linked to North America by a thin strip of land. It stretches south from the warm Caribbean Sea to within just 500 kilometres of Antarctica. Much of the northern part of the continent is covered by the Amazon Rainforest. Vast areas of trees are being cut down for timber or for farmland.



**The condor's wings measure 3 m across. It soars over the Andes Mountains searching for carrion, dead animals.**

## SHANTYTOWNS

Many people in South America have moved to the cities looking for work. For many of them, it is hard to find somewhere to live. Instead, they build their own houses out of pieces of wood and metal. Vast shantytowns made up of these shabby houses have grown up on the edges of some cities.



**An Indian woman from Peru wears her native costume.**



## RIVER AMAZON

The Amazon river rises in the Andes. It flows through a vast rainforest to the Atlantic Ocean. This great river carries one fifth of all the world's fresh water.

**Area: 17,663,000 sq km**  
**Population: 365,000,000**  
**Highest point: Aconcagua (6960 m)**  
**Longest river: Amazon (6451 km)**



**Colourful street parades are all part of the Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday") carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.**

# EUROPE

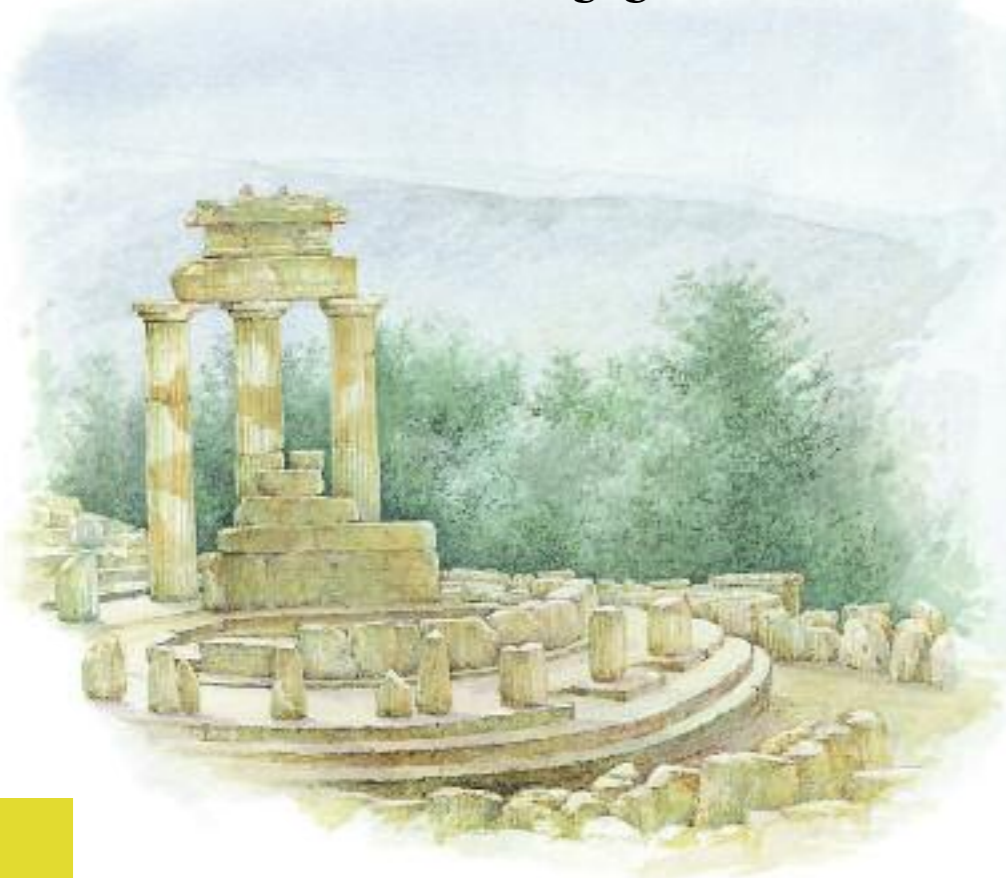
EUROPE stretches from Iceland and Lapland in the north to the warm lands of Italy and Greece on the Mediterranean Sea in the south. The Ural Mountains mark its border with Asia in the east. Europe's landscape is very varied—from craggy mountains and rolling fields to dense forests, smoking volcanoes and icy glaciers.



**Along the coast of Norway, there are many steep-sided sea inlets. These are called fjords. They were carved out by glaciers in the Ice Age thousands of years ago.**

## ANCIENT GREECE

In 500 BC Greece was home to a great civilization. Many of its buildings remain as ruins today. This (left) is the temple of Apollo at Delphi. People came here to talk to the Oracle—a priestess who could foretell the future.



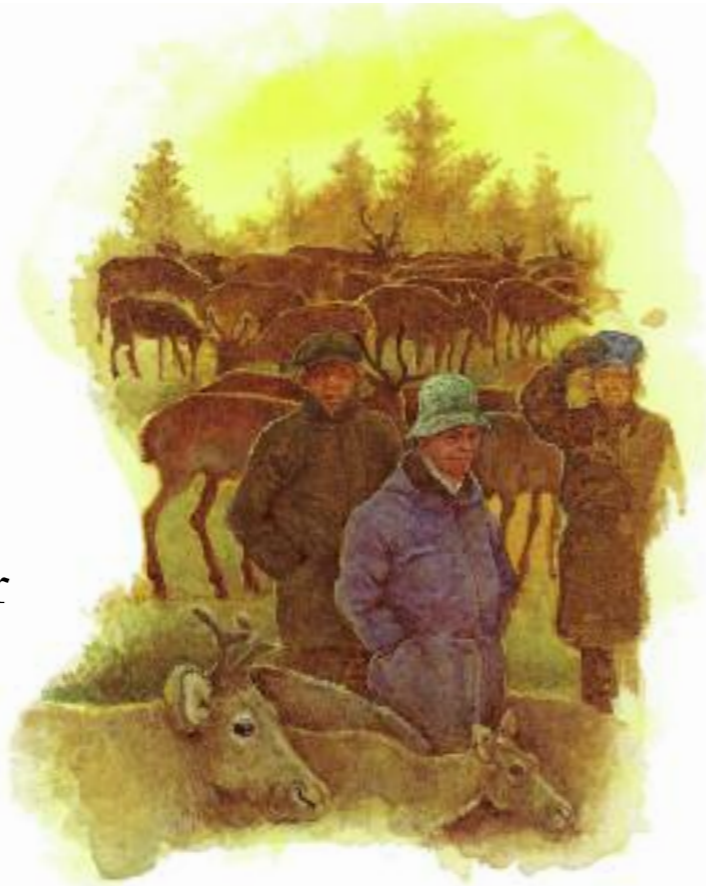
**Area: 9,700,000 sq km**  
**Population: 805,000,000**  
**Highest point: Mt Elbrus (5664 m)**  
**Longest river: Volga (3668 km)**



**The Rhine is one of Germany's main rivers. Large boats carry heavy cargo up and down it to and from sea ports.**

## LIVING IN NORTHERN EUROPE

**T**HE ATLANTIC Ocean brings mild, wet weather to many of the countries of northern Europe. The lowlands are a patchwork of cropfields and pasture, while the uplands are covered by forests or moors. Northern Europe has many industrial cities.



**The Saami people of Lapland in northern Scandinavia were herders of reindeer. A very few still follow this traditional lifestyle today.**

### CITY OF CANALS

Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, was the world's richest city 400 years ago. It made much of its fortune buying and selling tulip bulbs. A city of fine old buildings, it stands on a network of canals crossed by many bridges.

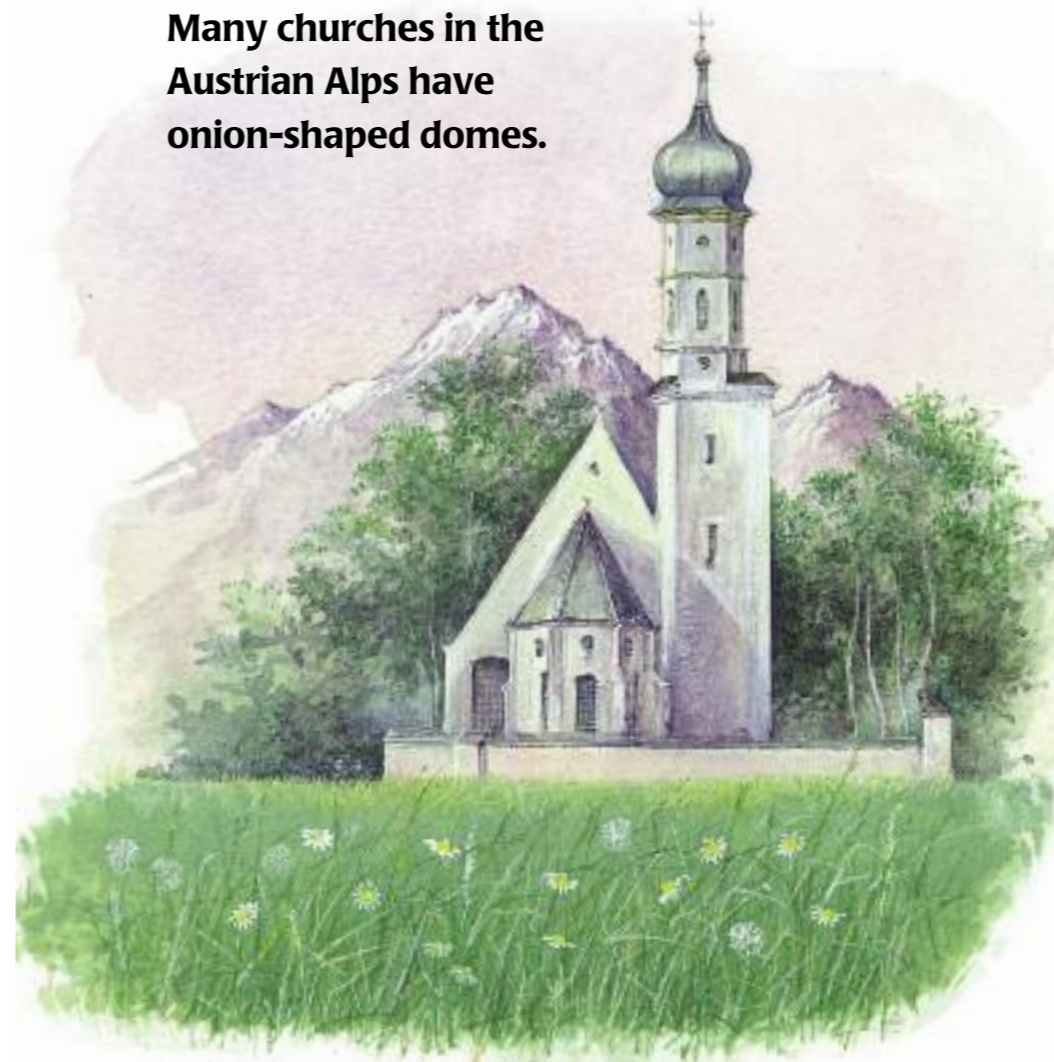


## STONEHENGE

No one is quite sure what Stonehenge in Britain was built for. It may have been a centre for worship, or a place to observe the stars. It was built around 4500 years ago. The huge stones were brought from 300 km away.



**Many churches in the Austrian Alps have onion-shaped domes.**



## CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPE

Northern Europe is a mainly Christian region, with some countries mostly Protestant and others mostly Catholic. In many towns and villages across Europe, the church tower is usually the tallest and one of the oldest buildings. Christianity was brought to northern Europe between the 6th and 9th centuries.



## LIVING IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

**T**HE COUNTRIES that border the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea in southern Europe enjoy a warm climate. Tourist resorts line the coasts, while inland there are olive groves, orchards and vineyards.



### LEANING TOWER

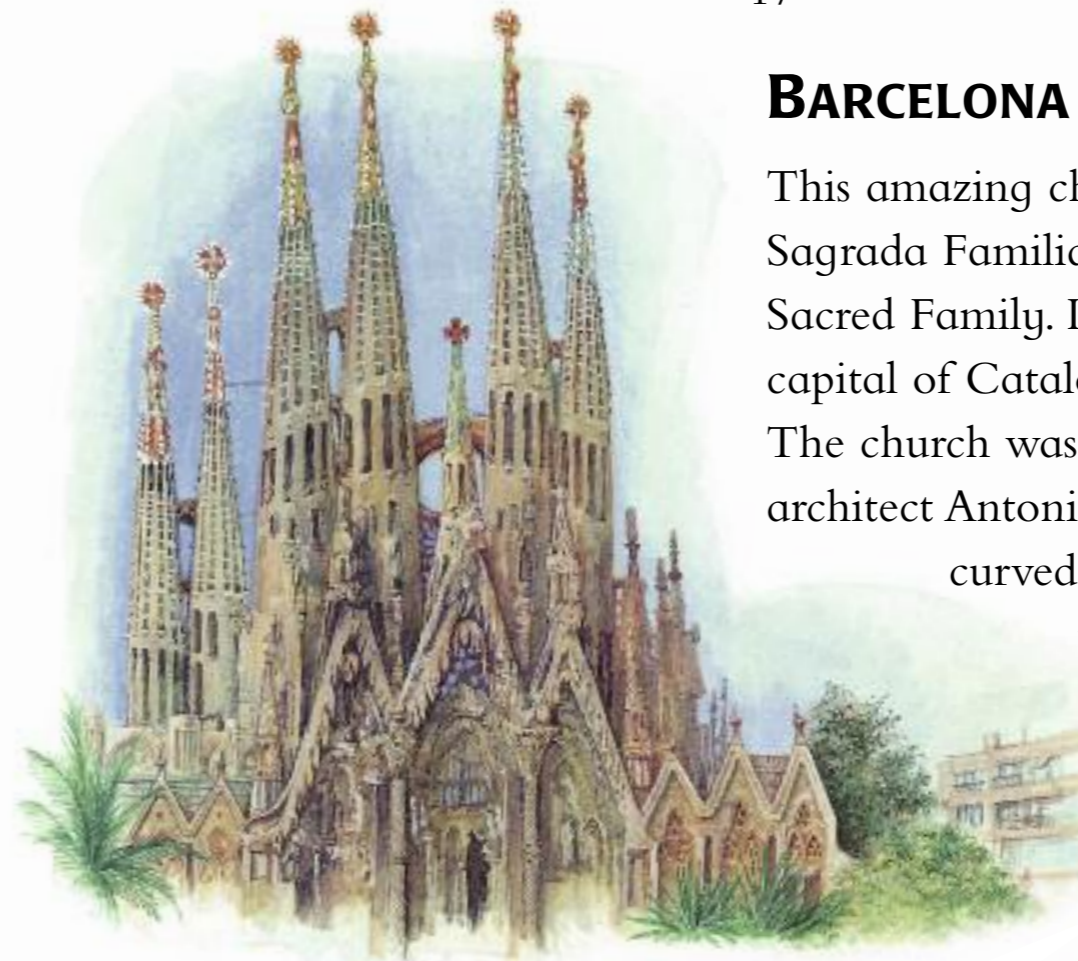
The beautiful bell tower in Pisa, northern Italy, leans at a precarious angle. It started to lean when it was being built 800 years ago because the ground underneath is so soft. Modern concrete foundations are designed to support the Leaning Tower for many years to come.



**In Portugal the bark of the evergreen oak is used for wine bottle corks. Workers remove the spongy bark which is then steamed and pressed to make cork.**

## BARCELONA

This amazing church is called La Sagrada Familia, the church of the Sacred Family. It is in Barcelona, capital of Catalonia, a region of Spain. The church was designed by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudi. The spindly, curved towers take its height to 115 m. It is still unfinished, more than 100 years after it was begun.



## THE BALKANS

The people of southeastern Europe, a region known as the Balkans, have a great variety of languages and religions. This Muslim girl (*right*) from Bosnia and Herzegovina wears a traditional headscarf.



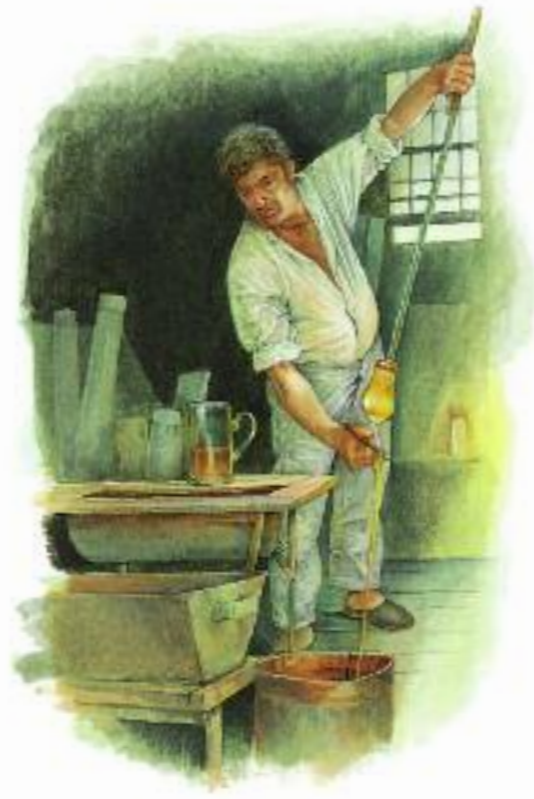
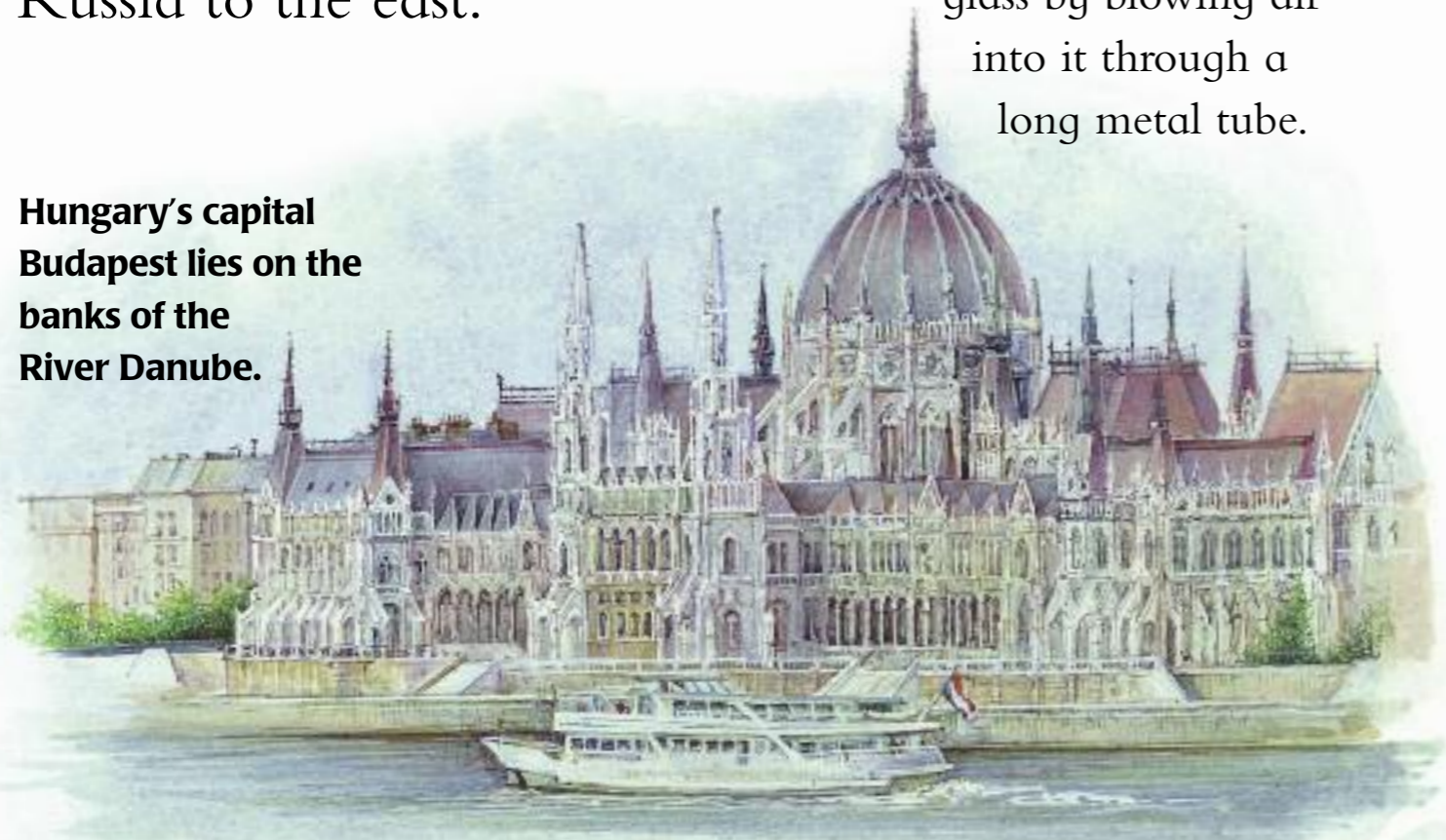
**The game of *pétanque* (left) is popular in France. Players throw hollow metal balls at a smaller wooden ball. The winner is the one who gets closest.**



## LIVING IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

**I**N THE HEART of Europe, far from the warming winds of the Atlantic Ocean, the winters are much colder than to the west. A lowland plain, mostly farmland, reaches across central Europe, from northern Germany as far as the Ural Mountains in Russia to the east.

**Hungary's capital Budapest lies on the banks of the River Danube.**



### LOCAL INDUSTRY

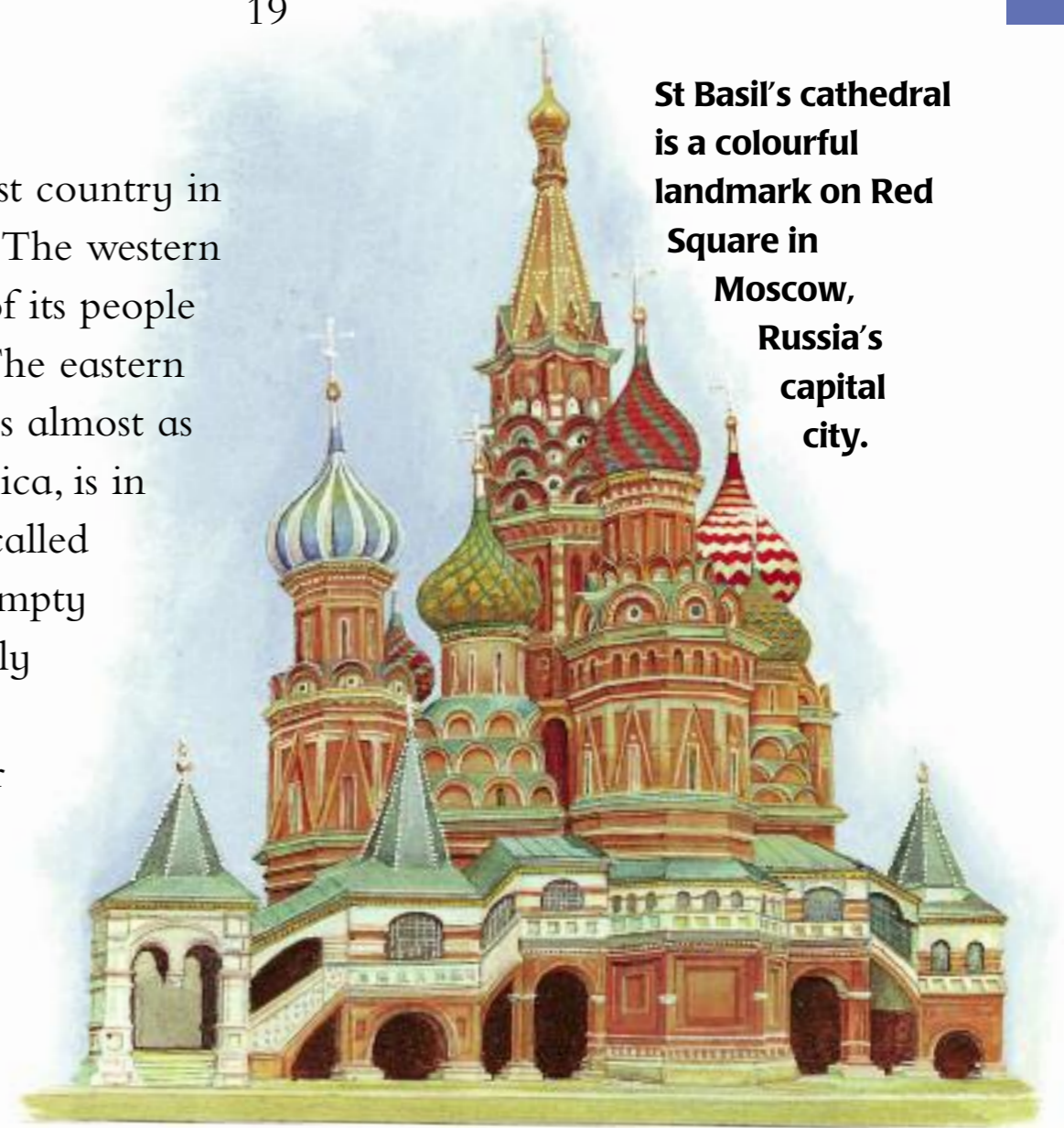
Glassblowing is a craft industry traditional to Poland. Here a skilled glassblower has shaped a white-hot blob of melted glass by blowing air into it through a long metal tube.

## RUSSIA

Russia is the largest country in the world by area. The western part, where most of its people live, is in Europe. The eastern part, which reaches almost as far as North America, is in Asia. This region, called Siberia, is a vast, empty land covered mainly by forests and mountains. The far north borders the Arctic Ocean. It is so cold here, the ground is always frozen.



**The Trans-Siberian Railway runs 9388 km from Vladivostok to Moscow. It is the longest in the world.**



**St Basil's cathedral is a colourful landmark on Red Square in Moscow, Russia's capital city.**

### PEOPLE OF THE NORTH

This woman is from northeastern Siberia. She is protected from the bitter cold by her headscarf and reindeer-hide coat. Her people, the Nenets, still live by herding reindeer in the treeless region known as the tundra.



# ASIA

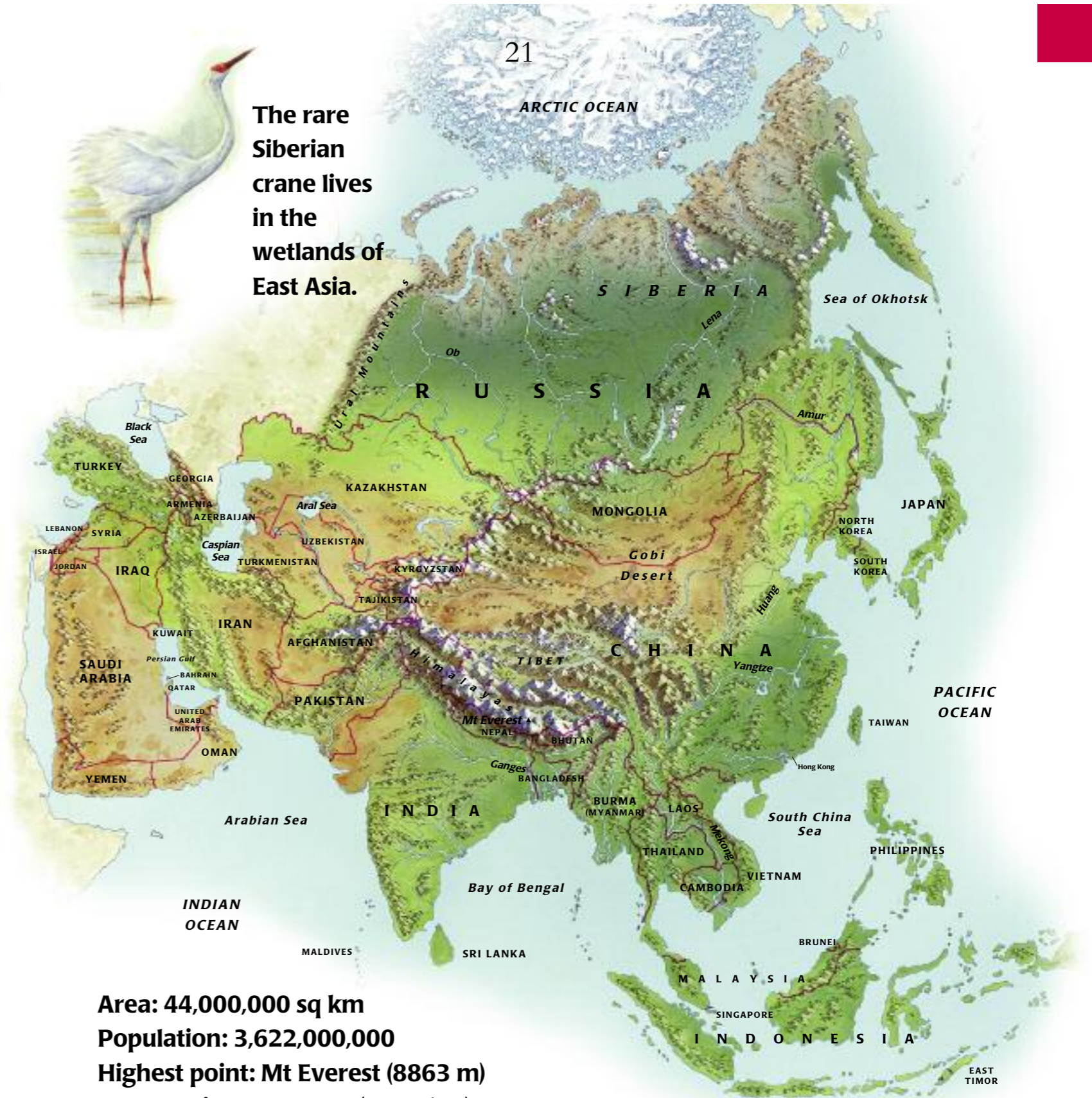
**A**SIA is the world's largest continent. It stretches nearly halfway round the world, and reaches from the Arctic to the Equator. The world's highest mountain, Mount Everest, is part of the Himalaya range. The lowest point on Earth, the Dead Sea, is also found in Asia.



**The Great Wall of China winds across the hills and mountains of northern China. First constructed more than 2000 years ago, it has been rebuilt many times since.**

## GROWING RICE

A farmer plants rice in a paddy, a waterlogged field. Rice needs lots of water to grow so paddies are often found in flat areas next to rivers. In hilly regions, rice is grown on flooded steps, called terraces, cut into the hillside. Half of all the people in the world rely on rice to eat, and most of these live in Asia.



**The rare Siberian crane lives in the wetlands of East Asia.**



**Area: 44,000,000 sq km  
Population: 3,622,000,000  
Highest point: Mt Everest (8863 m)  
Longest river: Yangtze (6300 km)**



**Many countries in the Middle East are rich in oil. Massive tankers like this one transport oil around the world.**

## LIVING IN SOUTH ASIA

FROM Turkey to India, much of this region has a hot climate. There are wide expanses of desert and mountains. Most people live on the fertile plains or near the sea.



**A Turkish man spins round and round in an energetic dance. These Muslim worshippers are called Whirling Dervishes.**

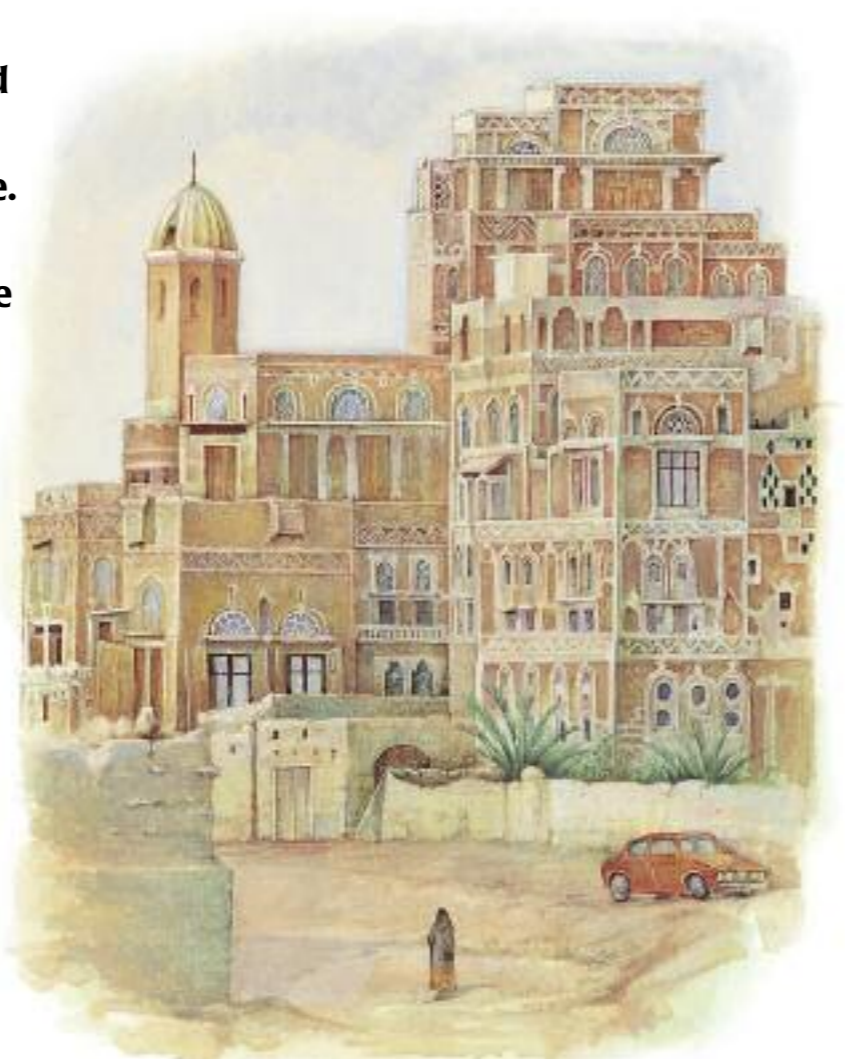
### SKYSCRAPERS

These beautiful tall buildings in the Yemen capital of San'a were built more than 500 years ago. Made of stone and mud-brick, some buildings are eight or more storeys high.



### BEDOUIN NOMADS

In the past, the Bedouin people moved from oasis to oasis across the Arabian deserts to find water and grazing for their goats, sheep and camels. Nowadays, most Bedouin live and work in cities.

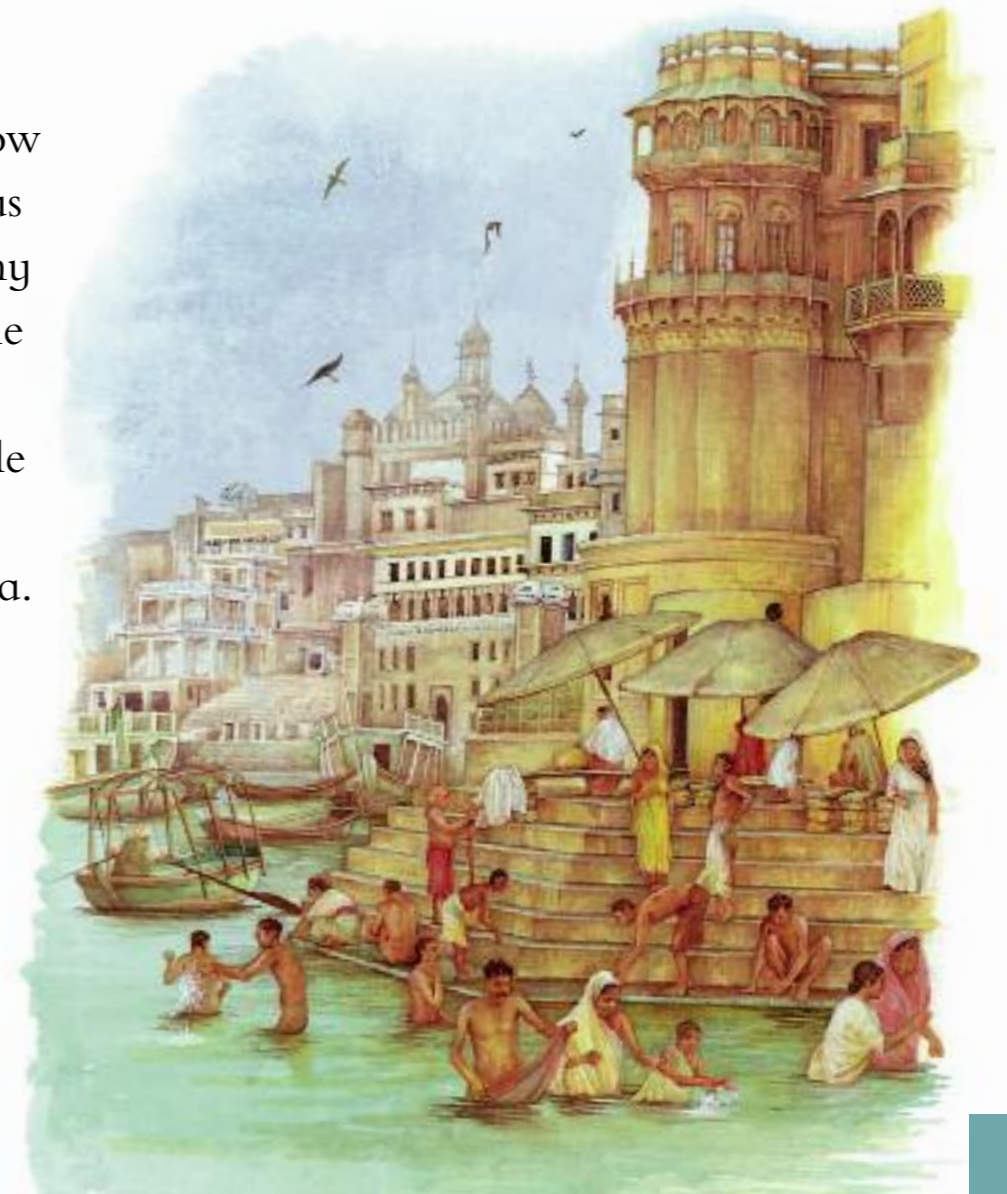


## SAMARKAND

The ancient city of Samarkand is in Uzbekistan. Years ago, it grew very rich and powerful as a trading centre. Many parts of the old city still stand, including this ornate madrasa (*left*), a Muslim school.

### HOLY RIVER

Most people in India follow the Hindu religion. Hindus have many gods and many holy places. Varanasi is one of the holiest Hindu cities in India. Millions of people visit it every year. It is dedicated to the god Shiva. Pilgrims bathe in the waters of the holy river Ganges (*right*) at Varanasi to wash away their sins. They have their ashes scattered in the river when they die.



## LIVING IN EAST ASIA

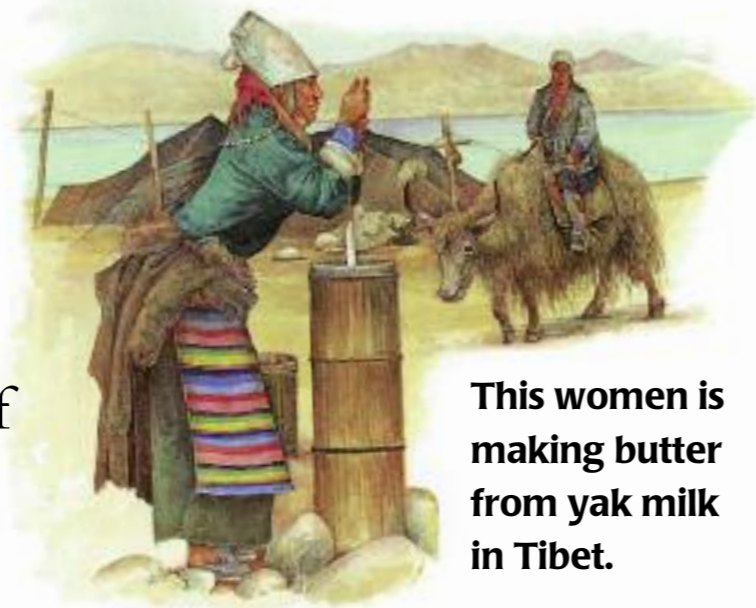
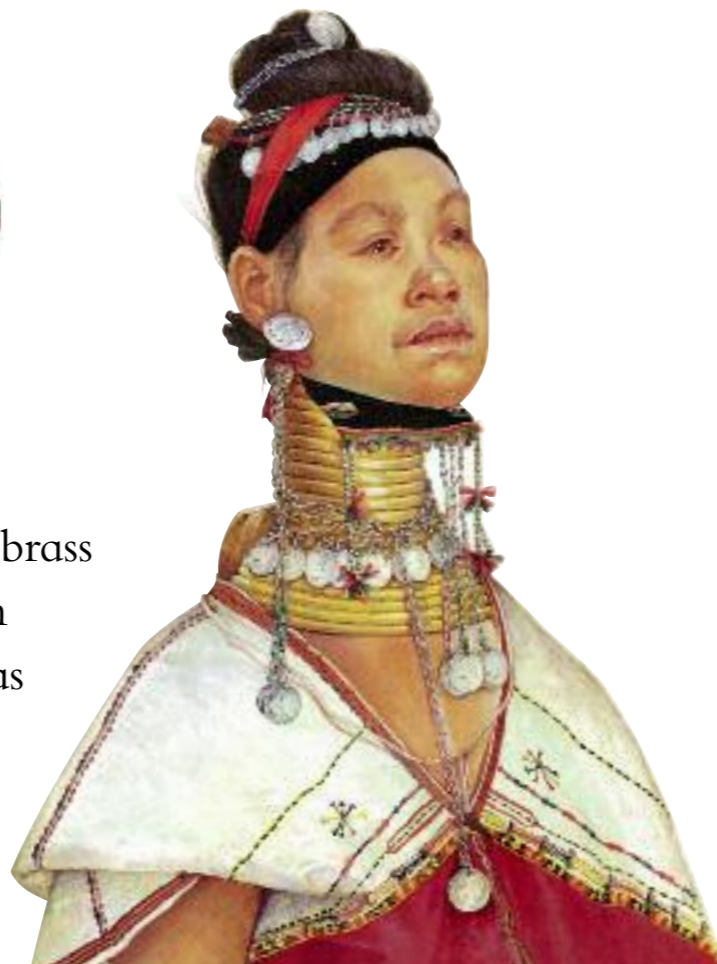
**E**AST ASIA stretches from the dry plains of Mongolia south to the tropical rainforests of Indonesia. China has the world's largest population at more than 1.3 billion.

**In Java, Indonesia, Wayang shadow-puppet shows are very popular. The puppets are made of leather and controlled by sticks attached to their arms. The shows can last several hours!**



### BRASS NECKS

The Padaung women of Burma wear brass rings around their necks to make them longer. The rings cannot be taken off as the woman's neck muscles become too weak to hold up her head.



**This woman is making butter from yak milk in Tibet.**

### ROOF OF THE WORLD

Tibet in southwest China is the highest region in the world. It is very cold and dry. Some Tibetan people still live by herding yaks—small, sturdy cattle with thick, hairy coats.

## JAPAN

Most Japanese people live in cities. The capital, Tokyo, is one of the largest and most crowded cities in the world. Getting on a rush-hour train can sometimes be difficult!



### RELIGION AND BELIEFS

Buddhism is one of the main religions of East Asia. It is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Guatama, an Indian prince who lived 2500 years ago. It urges its followers to think deeply, be kind and to live a good life. This pagoda (left), a Buddhist shrine, is in Japan.

Shinto is a Japanese religion in which people worship many gods and spirits. Followers of Islam, the main religion of Malaysia and Indonesia, are called Muslims. They worship in mosques.



### FISHING WITH BIRDS

This Chinese fisherman uses diving birds called cormorants to fish for him. He fixes bands around their necks so that they cannot swallow any fish they catch. When they return to the boat the man takes the fish.

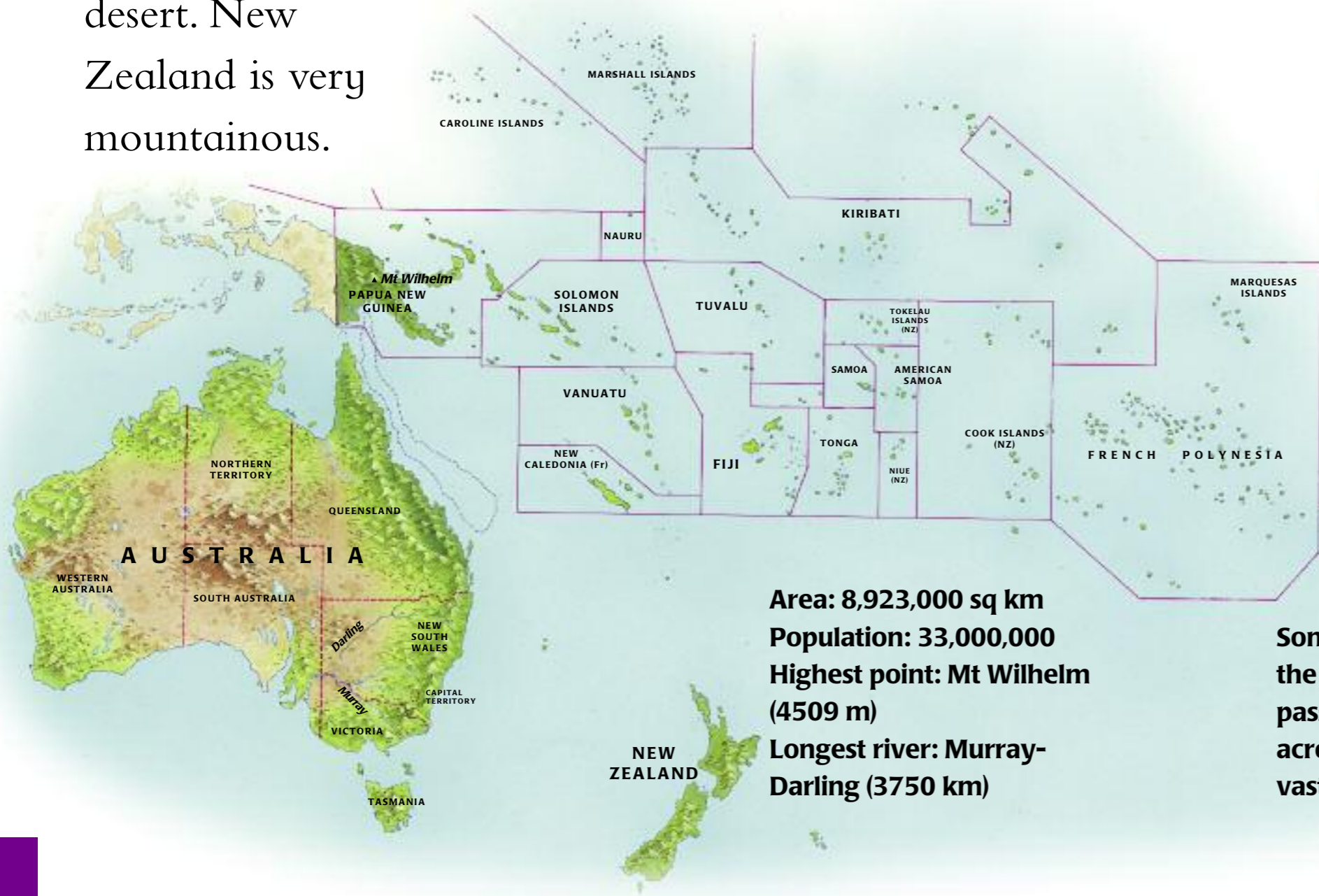


# OCEANIA

OCEANIA is not a single landmass like Africa or Asia, but a grouping together of Australia, the islands of the Pacific Ocean, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. Much of inland Australia is desert. New Zealand is very mountainous.



The Harbour Bridge in Sydney is one of Australia's best-known landmarks. It is the world's largest single-arch steel bridge



**Area: 8,923,000 sq km**  
**Population: 33,000,000**  
**Highest point: Mt Wilhelm (4509 m)**  
**Longest river: Murray-Darling (3750 km)**

## SHEEP FARMING

There is a large sheep-farming industry in both Australia and New Zealand. Here an expert shearer cuts the fleece off a Merino ram—a breed prized for its thick, silky wool. It is said there are about seven times as many sheep in Australia and New Zealand as there are people.



## PEOPLE OF THE PACIFIC

All the native peoples of the Pacific, New Zealand and Australia originally came from Southeast Asia. They must have been the first people to travel long distances by sea. The Aborigines have lived in Australia for at least 50,000 years. The Maori of New Zealand (*left*) are thought to have arrived there about 1000 years ago. The Maori call New Zealand *Aotearoa*, the Land of the Long White Cloud.



Some kangaroos leap out of the way as a "road train" passes. It is carrying goods across Australia's outback, a vast region of dry grassland.



# AFRICA

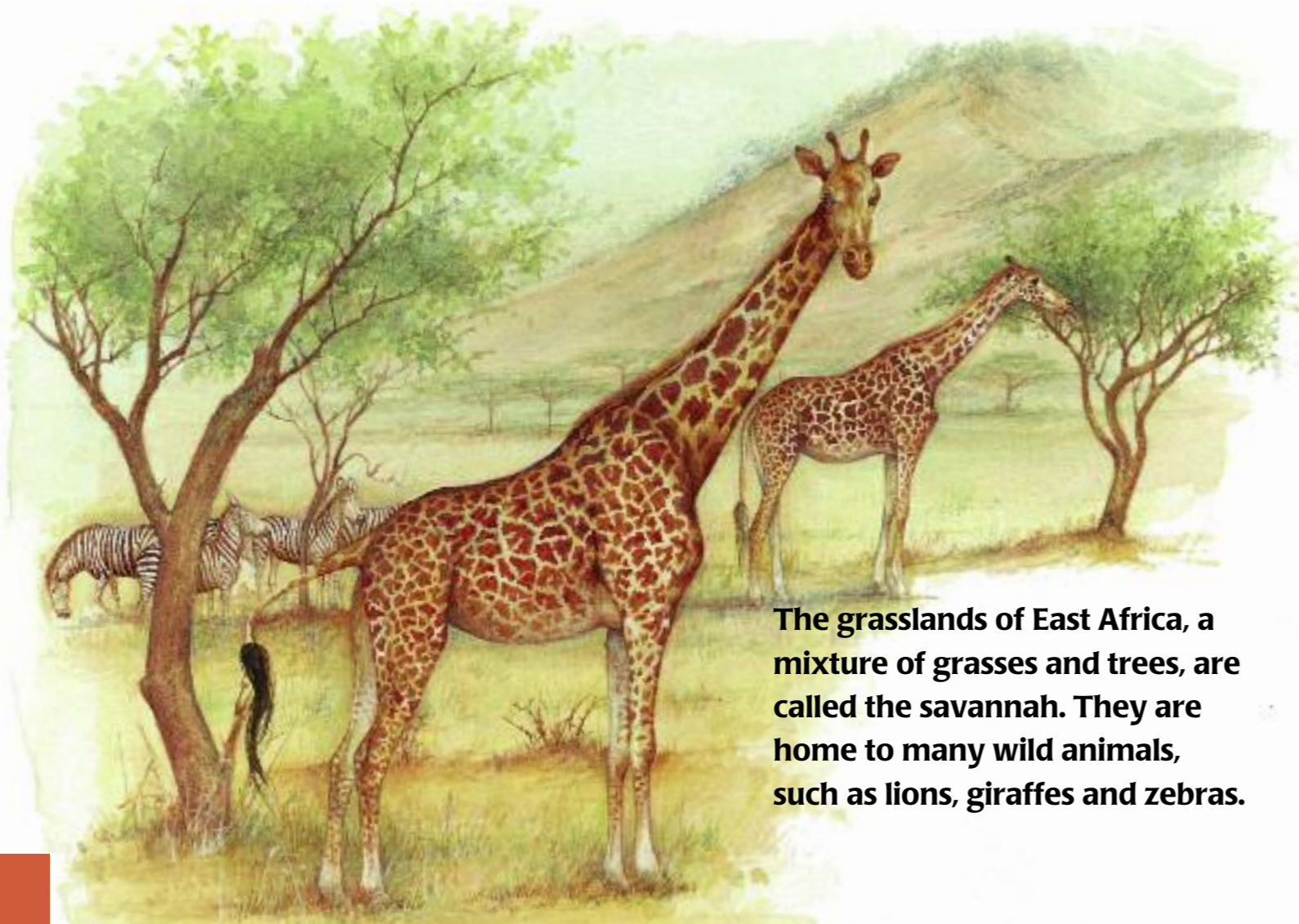
**I**N MOST parts of Africa, the climate is hot all year round.

There are great deserts in the north and in the southwest of the continent. Tropical rainforest and grasslands cover the central parts.

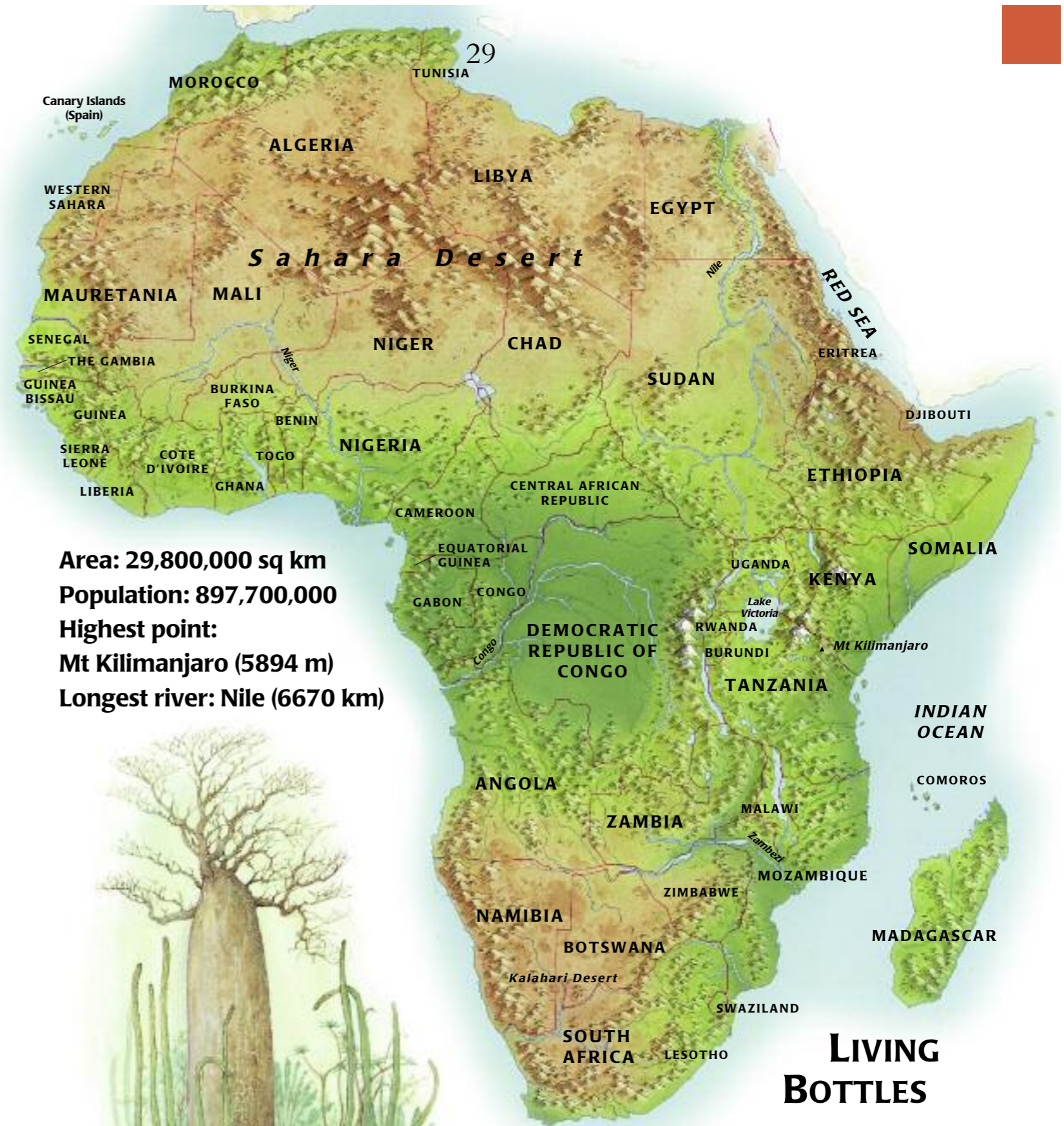


## THE SAHARA

The Sahara in North Africa is the world's largest and hottest desert. It is mainly dry rock and sand. An oasis is a place in the desert where water rises to the surface. Here, a small town has grown up around an oasis.



The grasslands of East Africa, a mixture of grasses and trees, are called the savannah. They are home to many wild animals, such as lions, giraffes and zebras.



**Area: 29,800,000 sq km**  
**Population: 897,700,000**  
**Highest point: Mt Kilimanjaro (5894 m)**  
**Longest river: Nile (6670 km)**



## LIVING BOTTLES

Madagascar has many unusual plants and animals. These baobab trees look like giant bottles. They store water in their thick trunks.

## LIVING IN AFRICA

**T**HE POPULATION of Africa is growing fast. Some Africans still follow traditional lifestyles. The Wodaabe of Niger (*right*) live by herding cattle. The men wear make-up when they perform courtship dances.



### RELIGION

Many people in northern Africa are Muslims. Christianity is the religion of much of the rest of Africa. Some people still follow traditional beliefs. In Congo, masks like this (*left*) are used in religious dances.



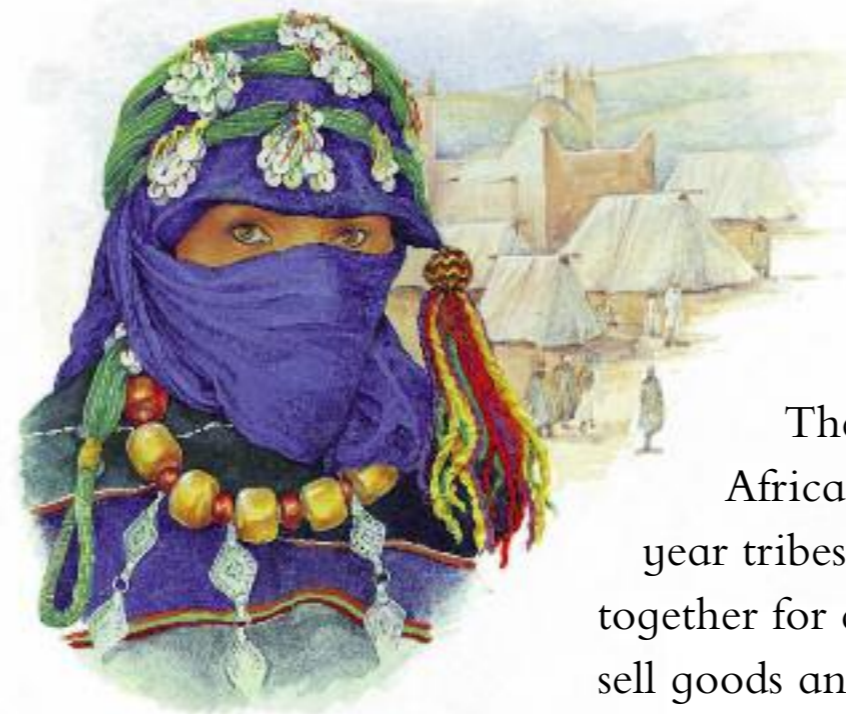
### AT THE MARKET

These West African women have carried fruit in baskets on their heads to sell at a town market. West Africa has much fertile farmland. Crops such as coffee, peanuts and cocoa are exported to countries all over the world.



## MAASAI

The Maasai of East Africa are cattle herders and crop farmers. They live in small villages. The boys and young men of the tribe look after the cattle. One of the jobs carried out by the women is to build the tribe's houses from mud and branches. They are also famous for their beautiful beaded jewellery (*right*).



## BERBERS

The Berbers have lived in North Africa for thousands of years. Every year tribes living in the mountains come together for a special meeting. They buy and sell goods and organize weddings. This girl (*left*) is dressed for an engagement ceremony.

**In southern Africa many people work in mines. Africa is rich in minerals such as copper, gold and iron. Here miners are drilling diamonds out of the rock deep underground. It is hard and dangerous work.**





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