

LEVELED Book • R

# Expedition Zero



Written by Celeste Fraser

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Java is the home of the largest Buddhist temple in the world.

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# Getting Ready for Your Trip

Pack light clothes and a hat to protect yourself from the Sun. Also, take **insect repellent**—the bugs are big where you're going. Throw in an umbrella because it rains often. Don't forget a camera; you might see monkeys, parrots, or pythons.

You will be traveling at zero degrees latitude along the **equator** (ee-KWAY-ter), the imaginary line that separates the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.



The equator passes through many different continents, countries, and cultures around the world. Can you find where the labeled locations are mentioned in this book?

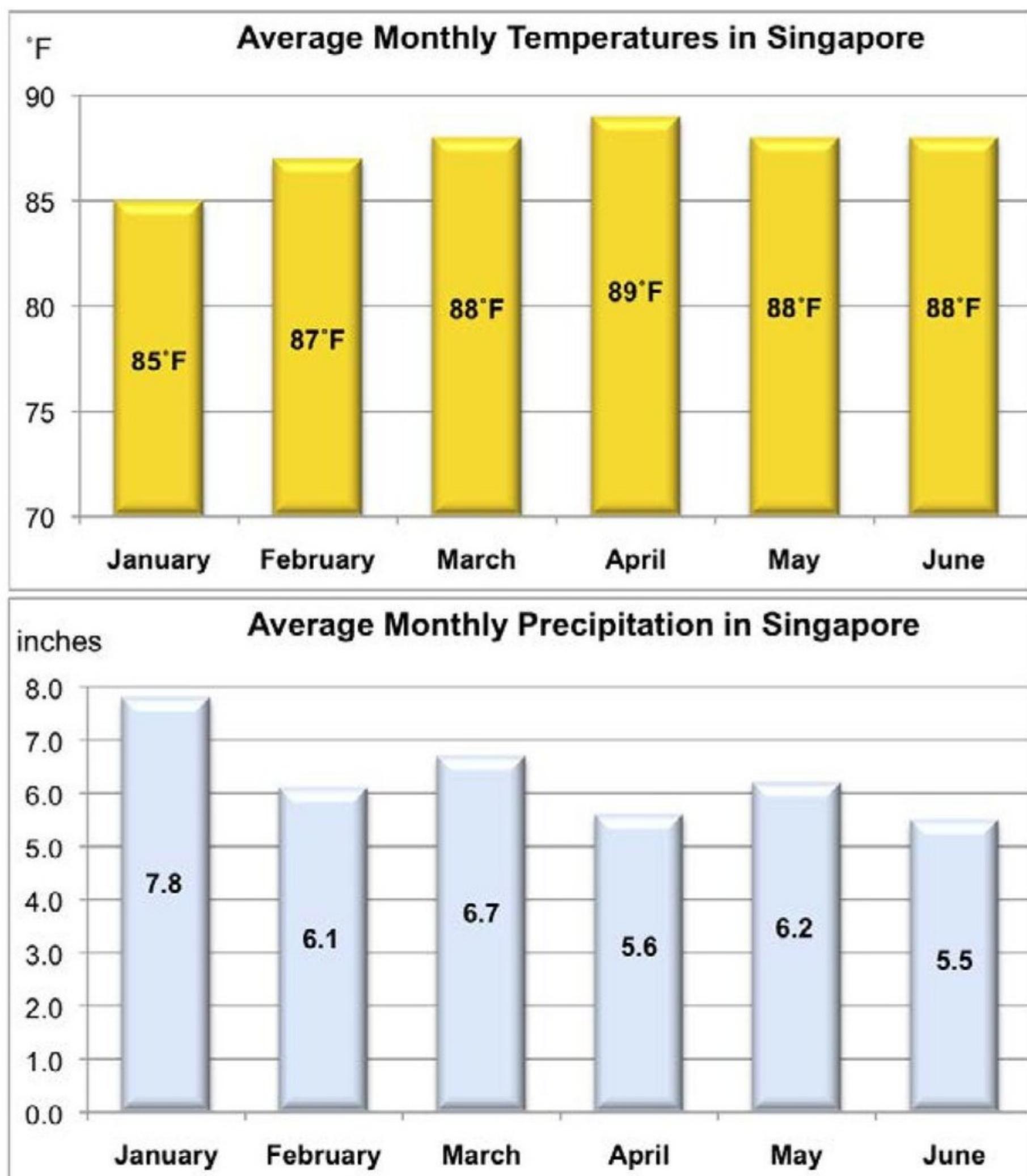


Singapore has many skyscrapers and a busy harbor.

## Starting Out in Singapore

As your plane nears the airport in Southeast Asia, you look down on Singapore. Its shiny skyscrapers make this small island country look very large. You can see hundreds of ships in the harbor. Singapore has one of the world's busiest ports.

As you begin to explore the city, the tropical heat takes your breath away. You come upon an outdoor market. You can tell that you are in a hot climate by looking at the plants for sale. Sugar cane, limes, papayas, and orchids love Singapore's hot, wet weather. The charts below show what the climate is like at one degree north latitude.





Volcanoes formed the island of Java. Many of them are still active.

## Island Hopping in Indonesia

Your next stop is Java, one of Indonesia's thousands of islands. You're traveling on a train without air-conditioning through the lowlands, and it's hot! In the distance, the tops of volcanoes poke above the clouds. You pass paddies—watery fields where rice is grown. The volcanic soil is good for growing crops.

All day long, the train stops in small villages. At each stop, you notice the tall spires of **mosques** (MOSKS), places of worship in the Islamic religion. Most Indonesians are Muslims. Five times a day, you hear the beautiful cries of men calling people to pray.



Muslims gather to worship at mosques in Indonesia.



Balinese people build terraces to farm land on hills and mountains.

From Java, you take a quick ocean ferry to Bali. Many people on the island live on the slopes of volcanoes. To create flat fields for growing rice, people have carved **terraces** into the mountainsides that look like huge stair steps. Hindu temples are everywhere. As Hindus, Balinese people leave food and flowers at temples as offerings to the gods.



Brazilians shop for fresh fish at a market in Manaus.

## Floating in the Amazon Rainforest

Once you leave Indonesia, you fly east along the equator. For hours, you see nothing but the vast Pacific Ocean.

Your plane lands in Manaus (mah-NOWS), Brazil, a city located on the Amazon River. As you walk through the old section, you come upon the fish market. It stretches for two city blocks. Thousands of fish—some of them six feet (1.8 m) long—are for sale on rows and rows of tables.

You hop on a boat on a small river that flows into the Amazon. The sounds of the **rainforest** make a jungle **symphony** as birds, monkeys, and insects call back and forth. Huge trees, ferns, and vines arch over the water.



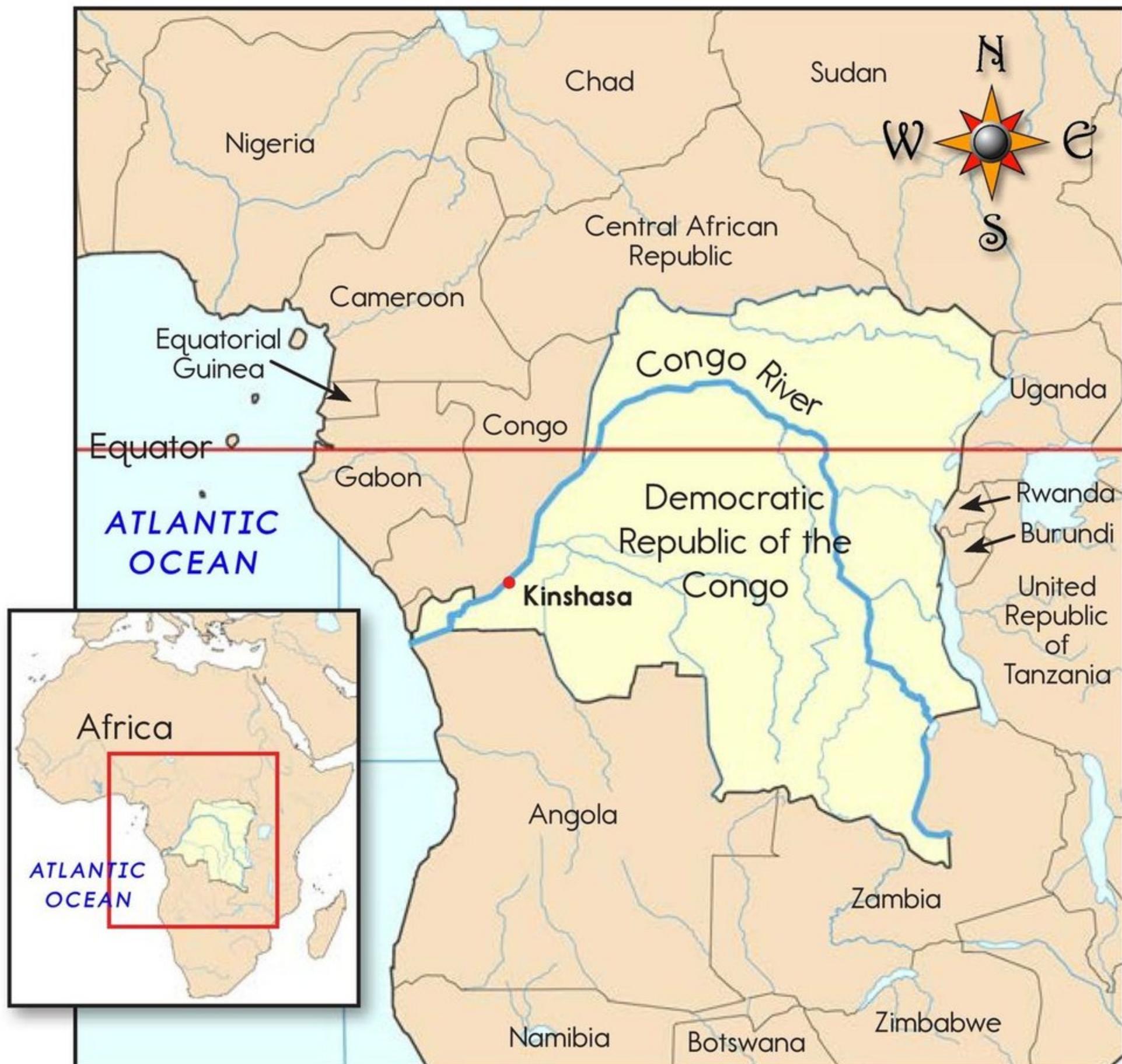
A houseboat travels on the Amazon River in Brazil.



A house built on stilts at the edge of the Amazon River

Because the level of the water can rise or fall as much as thirty feet, people build their homes on **stilts**. The homes are made of wood with roofs made of leaves. There are very few roads in the rainforest because most people live along waterways. You see almost no farms in this region—the forest is too thick, and the soil is too poor.

Suddenly, thunder booms, black clouds open up, and a heavy rain falls. After fifteen minutes, the rain stops as suddenly as it began, and the steamy heat returns.



## Seeing Life on the Congo River

Before you leave Manaus, you check the weather in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. You know you are going to need your rain gear. You fly all night across the Atlantic Ocean. When you wake, you are about to land in the capital, Kinshasa. It is located on the Congo River, a long river that drains the rainforest of Central Africa.

Wandering the city, you hear an interesting kind of music. You follow the sound and come upon a café. You are told it is *ndombolo* music, “Afro Pop,” a popular music invented in the Congo but known throughout the world.

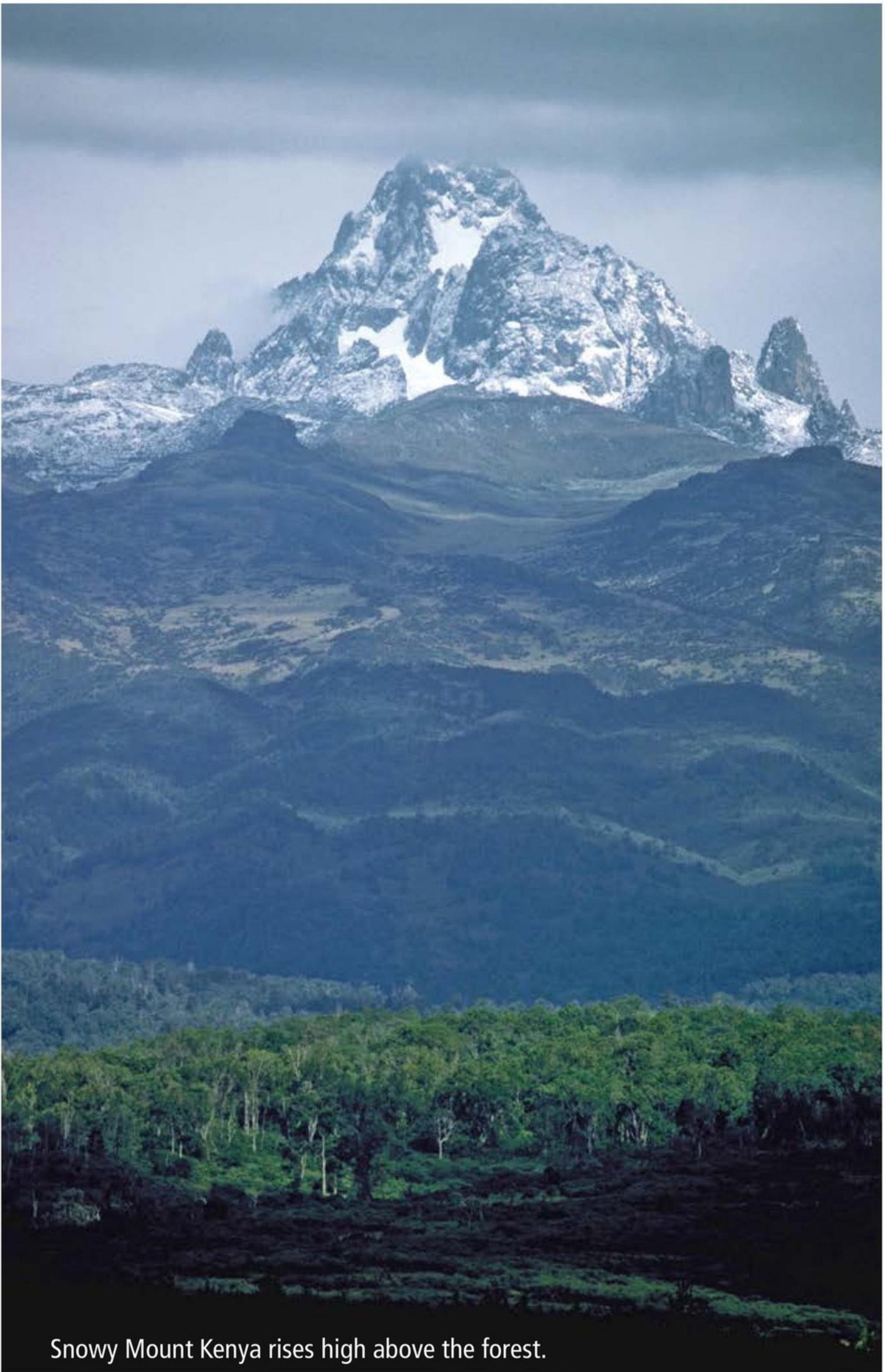


A woman carries fresh vegetables in a Kinshasa market.



Goat stew with *foufou* is a traditional Congolese food.

You are hungry. You ask the waitress for a typical dish. She brings you *foufou*, a dish made with **plantain**, yam, or **cassava** paste rolled into a ball and fried. It is served with either salted fish or barbecued goat meat.



Snowy Mount Kenya rises high above the forest.

## A Climate Riddle

Next stop is Kenya, a country on the east coast of Africa. You leave Nairobi (nye-ROH-bee), the capital, to begin a five-day trip. Starting in the town of Nanyuki, you cross the equator and enter Sirimon Park. All day, you hike through a forest of bamboo, a treelike grass that grows quickly in hot, wet weather. On day two, you enter a treeless area of low grasses. On day three, the land changes again—now it's rocky with little plant life. It's hard to catch your breath and you're freezing, even though you're wearing heavy clothes. You think to yourself, "How can this be? I'm on the Equator, but my feet are in snow!" It's because you are hiking to Mount Kenya, which rises to a height of 17,040 feet (5,194 m)!

### Do You Know?

North or south of the equator, days get longer in summer and shorter in winter. But at the equator, each day (and each night) is very close to twelve hours long, no matter what season of the year it is.

## Reflecting on “Expedition Zero”

The equator is a special place that gets lots of sunshine and often lots of rain as well. It is neither north nor south, and there isn’t much difference between winter, summer, spring, and fall.



Rice farmers work on terraced land outside a village in Bali.

Traveling the equator, you dripped with sweat in the heat. You had to run for cover in heavy rain. You saw huge rivers draining rainforests. You even saw snow on Mount Kenya.

During your journey, you saw many ways of life. Some people in big cities, such as Singapore, live and work in air-conditioned buildings. Others, such as those in the Amazon rainforest, build their homes high above ground in order to stay dry. Expedition Zero showed you that the world is full of variety, even on the same latitude line.

## Glossary

<b>cassava</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a plant with edible roots that is grown in the tropics (p. 15)
<b>equator</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an imaginary line that circles Earth halfway between the poles (p. 4)
<b>insect repellent</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a substance that drives away or discourages biting or stinging insects (p. 4)
<b>mosques</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	places of worship in the religion of Islam (p. 8)
<b>plantain</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a wild banana that grows in the tropics (p. 15)
<b>rainforest</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a dense forest, usually in a tropical area, that receives a lot of rain and contains diverse animal and plant life (p. 11)
<b>stilts</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	posts that support a structure above the ground or water level (p. 12)

**symphony** (*n.*) a classical musical composition for a full orchestra (used figuratively) (p. 11)

**terraces** (*n.*) wide stairs cut into a hillside to make flat ground for farming (p. 9)

**tropical** (*adj.*) having a hot, humid climate typical of latitudes near the equator (p. 6)

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**Teacher's note:** This book is part of the Trip on a Latitude Line series of books on geography and exploration.

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