

Part II

Living in the sky

Gabriela lives in El Alto, Bolivia. When people hear the words ‘South America’, they usually think of a very hot climate, with high temperatures and lots of sunshine. This is true in some places to the north, like Venezuela and parts of Brazil, but it isn’t like that in my city, El Alto, in Bolivia. El Alto is a large city – about 1.2 million people live here. But what’s very strange about it is that it’s high up – 4,150 metres above sea level! It is the only city in the world at this height. In comparison, the capital city of Bolivia, La Paz, is over 3,500 metres. Because it’s high up in the mountains, it has a cold climate and this means in winter the minimum temperature is -4 degrees Celsius. This feels absolutely freezing to me! And in summer the temperatures rise to a maximum of 17 degrees. Also, it can snow at any time of the year, even in summer! There are lots of totally awesome things to do here. Last weekend I went to our huge street market. They sell lots of nice food, clothes and other things there. While I was looking around, I found and bought a colourful hat from a local woman. One month ago my class went on a school trip to Moon Valley – a really beautiful area with mountains around it. While we were enjoying the view, we saw some unusual plants there, too. And at night we watched the stars. We could see hundreds of them there because the sky was so clear at night. El Alto has a problem, though. Last week at school we were learning about climate change, and we learnt that because temperatures are rising around the world, and sometimes there are droughts here, we need to save all the water that we can on rainy days. I hope the situation improves in the future because I love my city!