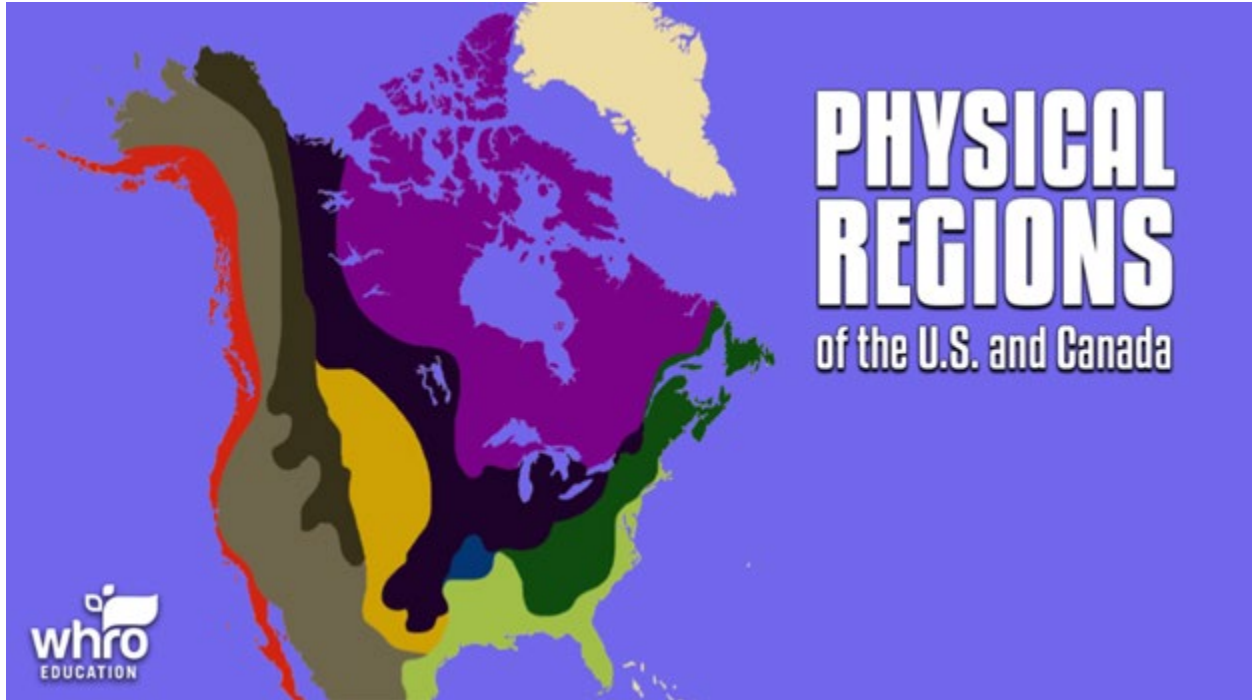


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Physical Regions of the U.S. and Canada



Click next to begin.

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Menu

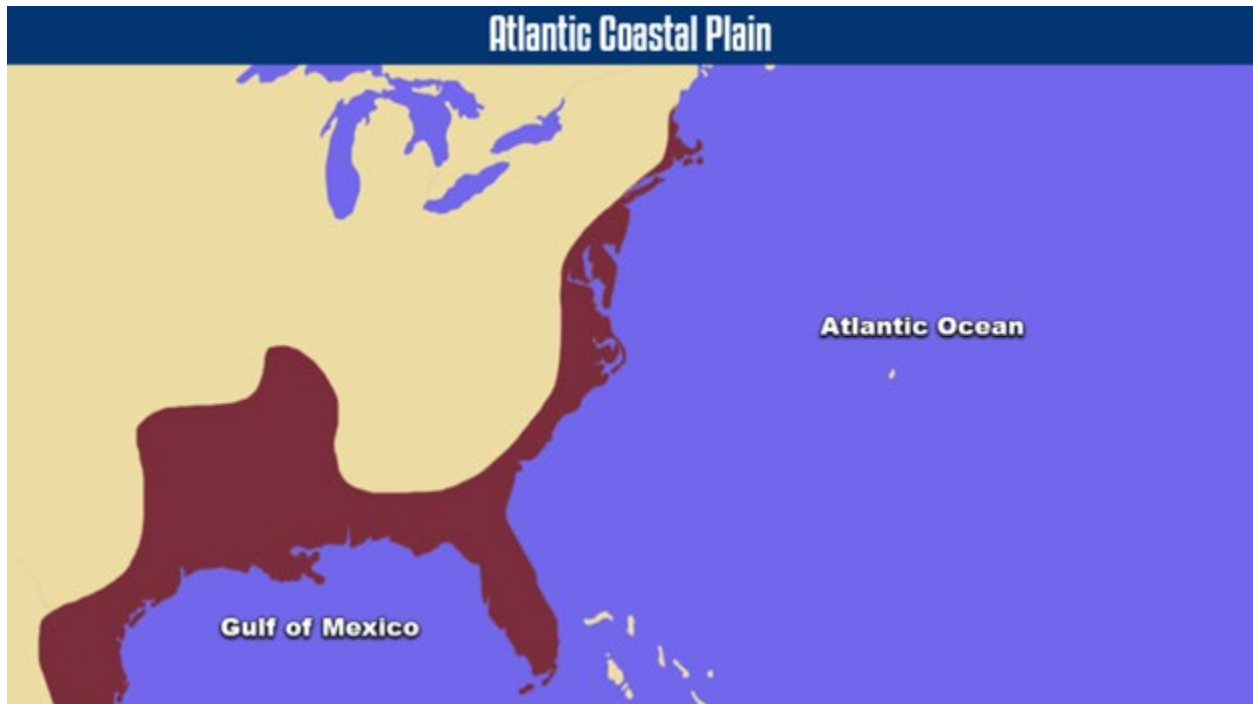


The image shows an interactive menu for learning about the physical regions of the United States and Canada. It features a map of North America on the left and a vertical list of ten buttons on the right. The buttons are labeled with the names of the physical regions: Atlantic Coastal Plain, Appalachian Mountains, Canadian Shield, Interior Lowlands, Interior Highlands, Great Plains, Rocky Mountains, Intermontane Plateaus, and Pacific Coastal Ranges. The text 'Click each button to learn more' is displayed at the top of the menu area.

Click each button to learn more about the physical regions of the United States and Canada.

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Atlantic Coastal Plain

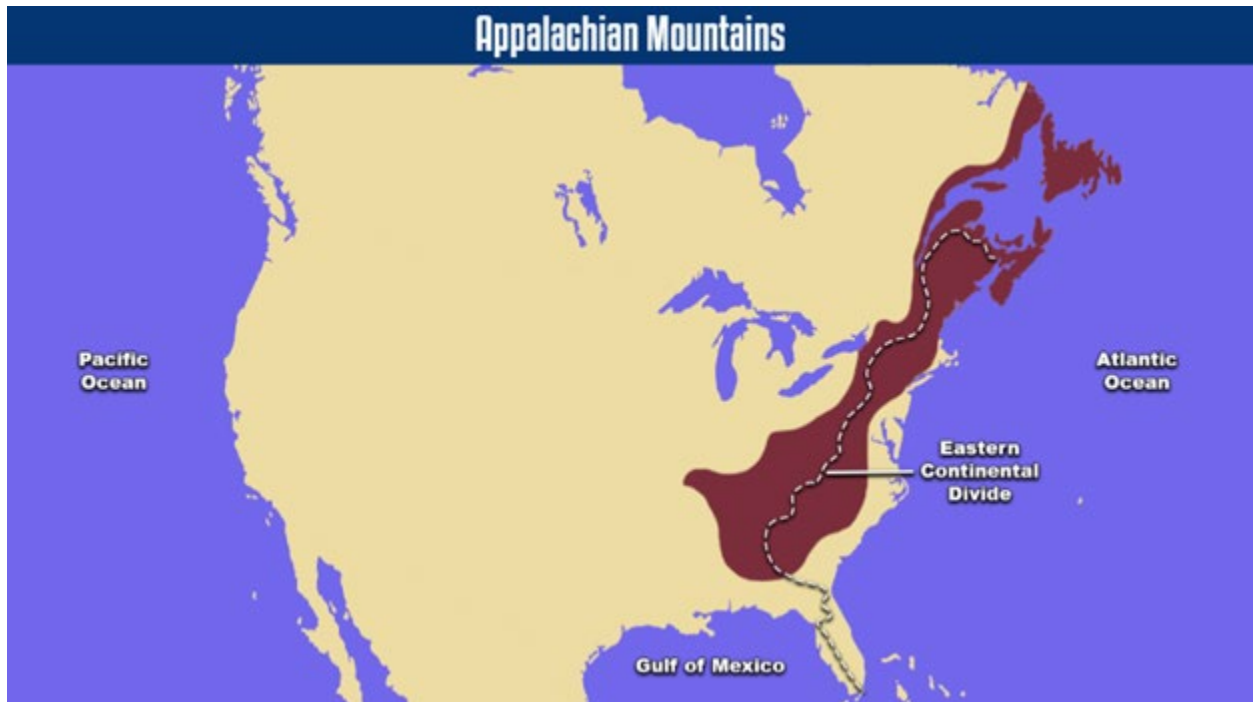


The Atlantic Coastal Plain is located along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, extending from the Northeast United States to Florida, and around the Gulf of Mexico. This landform region is one of the largest coastal plains in the world.

The terrain in this region is characterized by flat low-lying land, with some rolling hills farther inland. The climate is mostly humid subtropical, and experiences regular rain, warm summers, and cool winters. This type of climate supports a variety of vegetation, from palm trees to middle latitude forest.

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Appalachian Mountains



The Appalachian Mountain region spans from Newfoundland, Canada to Alabama in the Southern United States. The Appalachians mark the Eastern Continental Divide, which essentially divides the rivers that flow into the Atlantic Ocean and those that flow into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Appalachian Mountain region features a humid continental climate in the northern latitudes, and a humid subtropical climate in the southern latitudes. The vegetation in this region is primarily middle latitude forest, which is composed of evergreen and deciduous trees.

In this region, on the eastern side of the Appalachian Mountains, lies a large plateau called the Piedmont. A fall line is formed where the elevated Piedmont meets the lowland coastal plain. Where rivers cross the fall line, waterfalls and rapids form, creating a natural barrier for ships traveling inland from the mouth of a river. Many large cities were established at these fall line sites, including Trenton, New Jersey on the Delaware River; Washington, D.C. on the Potomac River; Richmond, Virginia on the James River; and Augusta, Georgia on the Savannah River.

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Canadian Shield

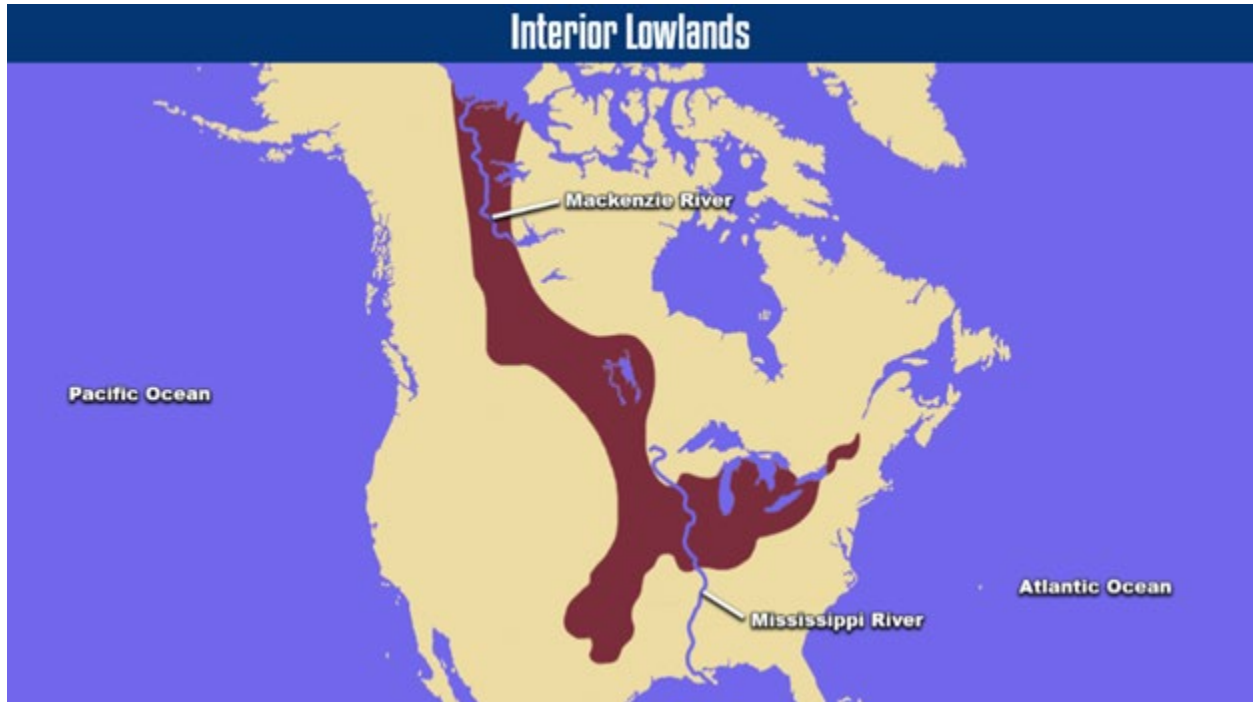


The Canadian Shield is a large landform region that covers more than half of Canada. It spans the area around the Hudson Bay, from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Saint Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. During the last ice age, massive glaciers scraped much of the terrain in the region down to bedrock, exposing rich deposits of minerals formed by ancient volcanic activity.

The climate of the region ranges from subarctic to tundra. Taiga forest is able to grow in the subarctic climate zone, while permanently frozen ground, known as permafrost, prevents most vegetation from growing in the tundra climate zone.

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Interior Lowlands



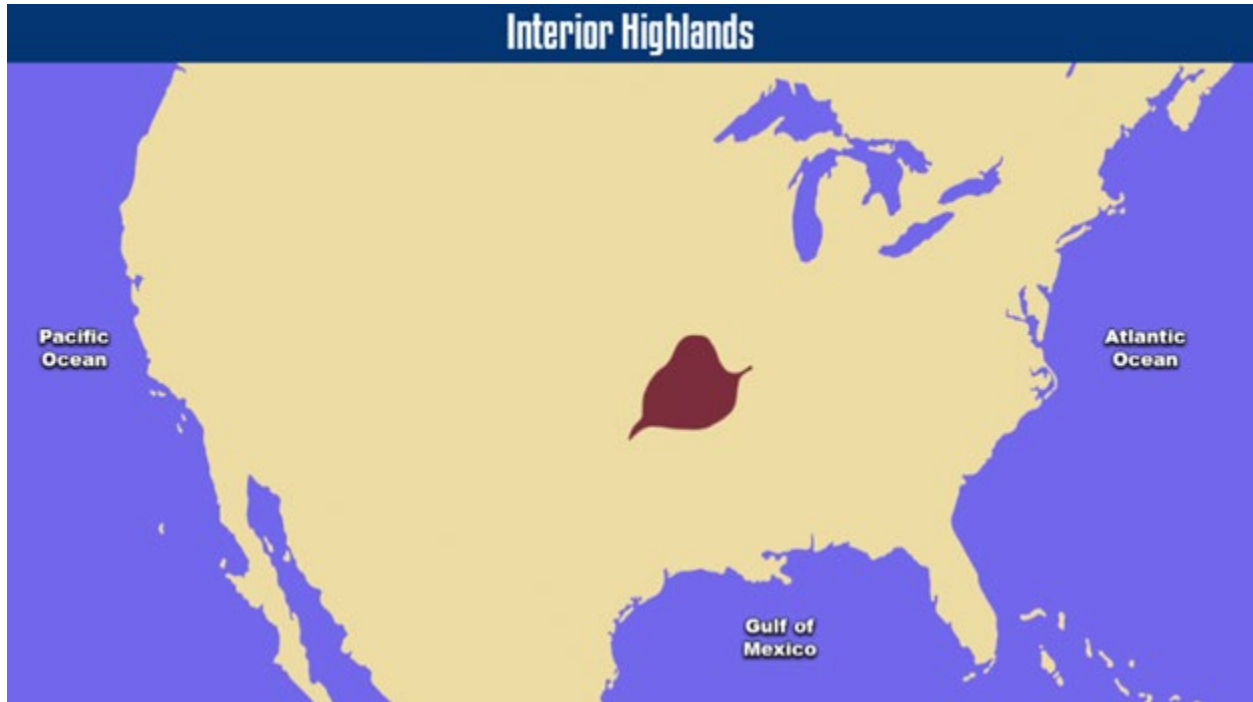
The Interior Lowlands is a large, relatively flat region that spans most of North America. Centrally located on the continent, the Interior Lowlands extend from the Mackenzie River Basin in northwestern Canada to the upper part of the Mississippi River Basin in the Southern United States.

The climate of this region is mostly humid continental, but it shifts to subarctic in high latitudes. The humid continental climate supports a wide variety of vegetation from grassland to mixed forest. The subarctic climate supports taiga vegetation, which is characterized by large areas of coniferous forest.

As previously stated, two important water features are located within the Interior Lowlands: the Mackenzie River and the Mississippi River. At 1,080 miles long, the Mackenzie River is the longest river in Canada. The Mackenzie River flows north, emptying into the Arctic Ocean. When combined with its tributaries, this river forms the Mackenzie River Basin, which is the second largest river basin in North America. The largest is the Mississippi River Basin, which, with its vast network of tributaries, drains the entire area between the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachian Mountains.

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Interior Highlands



The Interior Highlands is a rare mountainous region located between the Appalachian Mountains and the Rocky Mountains. This highland region includes the Ozark Plateaus and the Ouachita Mountains, and spans large portions of Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. The climate tends toward humid continental, and supports large areas of mixed forest.

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Great Plains



The Great Plains is a broad, flat physical region located west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains. The region spans a large portion of the United States and part of southern Canada.

The climate in the eastern part of the region near the Mississippi River is humid continental, and the climate in the western part of the region near the Rocky Mountains is semiarid. As the name suggests, the Great Plains is filled with large expanses of grassland, commonly called prairie in the U.S. and Canada.

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Rocky Mountains



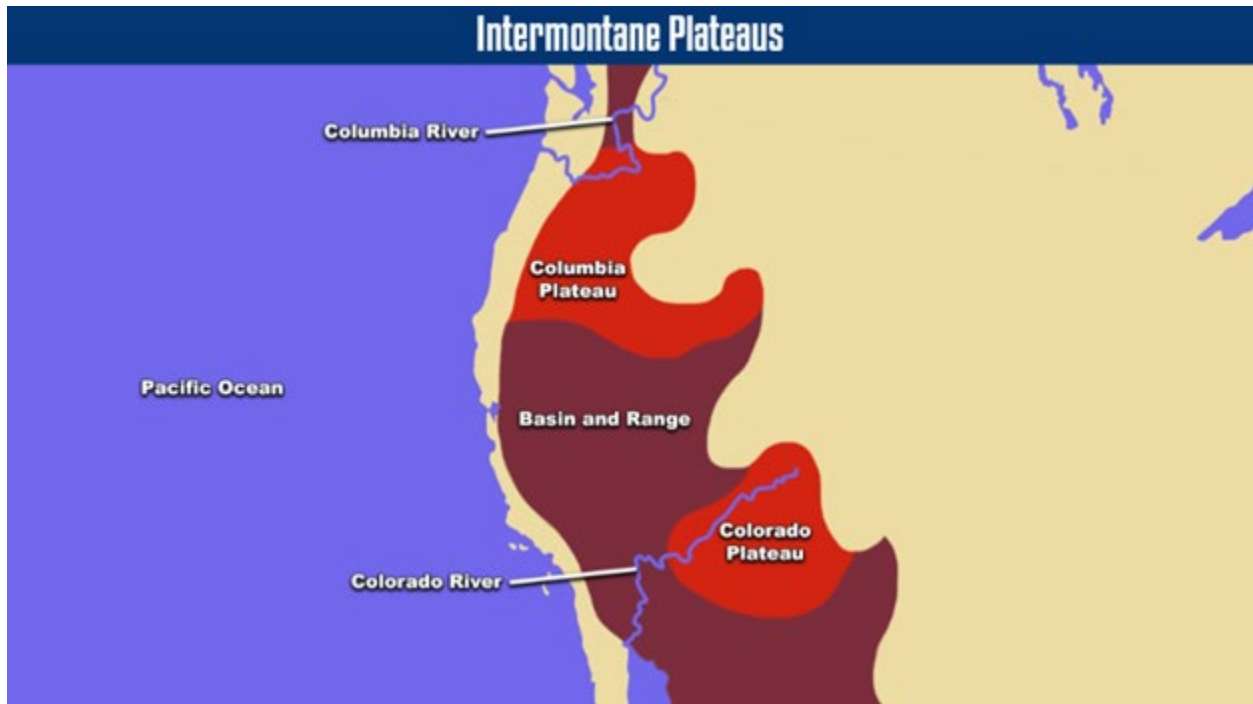
The Rocky Mountain region extends from northern Alaska to the Rio Grande in New Mexico. This region includes the Rocky Mountains and other smaller mountain ranges. Steep and jagged mountains define the terrain, with some peaks rising more than 14,000 feet in elevation.

The climate of the region is highland, which means that the temperature and precipitation vary greatly based on elevation. This also creates a wide variety of vegetation. For example, semiarid grasslands, subarctic forests, and tundra mosses can all be found in different parts of the Rocky Mountain region.

The Rockies are a part of a larger series of mountain ranges known as the Great Continental Divide of the Americas. The Great Continental Divide stretches across the North and South American continents, beginning in northern Alaska and continuing to the southern tip of Argentina. In North America, rivers located between the Great Continental Divide and the Eastern Continental Divide flow into the Gulf of Mexico. Rivers west of the Great Continental Divide, like the Colorado River and the Columbia River, flow into the Pacific Ocean.

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Intermontane Plateaus

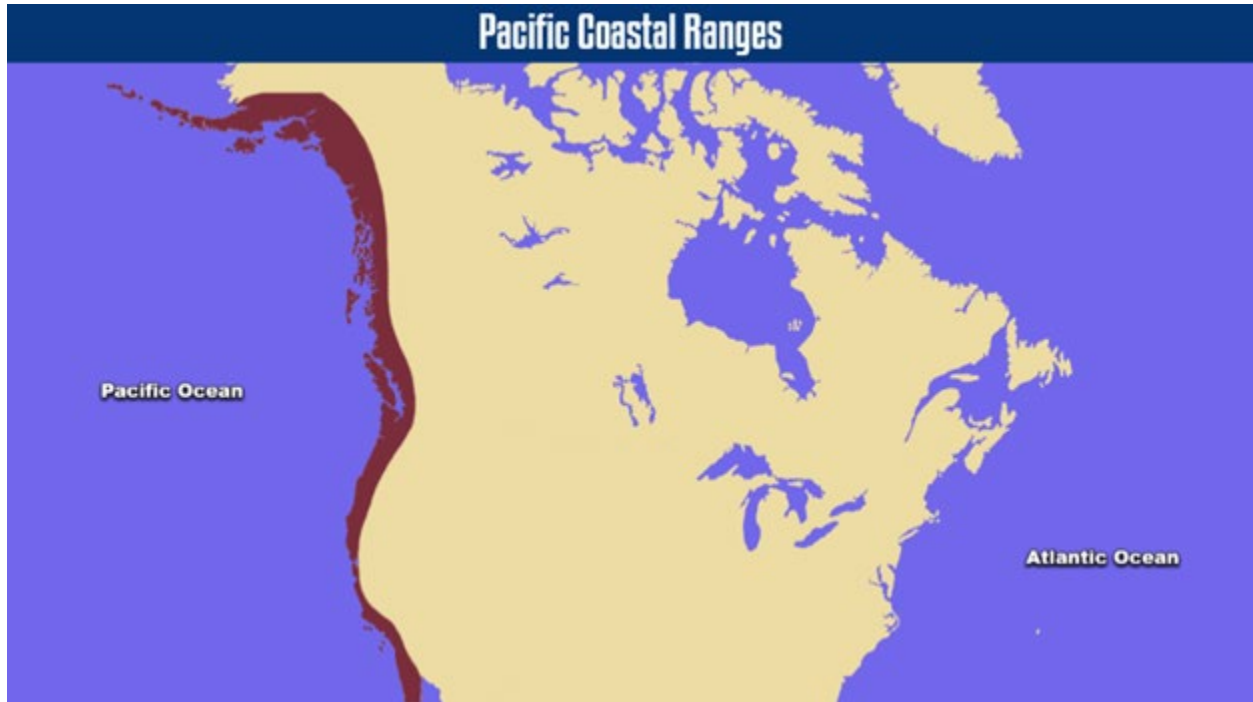


The Intermontane Plateaus constitute a vast physical region that incorporates three sub-regions: the Colorado Plateau, the Columbia Plateau, and the Basin and Range. The Colorado and Columbia Plateaus are relatively flat areas near the Colorado and the Columbia Rivers, respectively.

The terrain in the Basin and Range shifts drastically between narrow mountain ranges and deep basins. The Intermontane Plateau region receives very little precipitation and has a dry climate that varies between arid and semi-arid. Due to the lack of rain, vegetation is mostly limited to dry grasses and desert scrub.

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Pacific Coastal Ranges



Named for the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Pacific Coastal Ranges are a series of mountain ranges that extends from southern Alaska down the western coasts of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. A major fault line roughly traces the Pacific Coastal Ranges, which periodically causes earthquakes in the region.

The climate and vegetation in the Pacific Coastal Ranges can vary greatly based on latitude and elevation, as the region contains subarctic, Mediterranean, marine west coast, arid, semiarid, and highland climate zones.