# Module: The United States and Canada, Topic Content: Major Regions of the United States

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Major Regions of the United States. Click next to begin.

## Menu

The United States can be roughly divided into four major regions, based primarily on physical location and economic activity: the Northeast, the South, the Midwest, and the West. Click each button to learn more.

## Northeast

The Northeastern United States includes nine states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The Northeast occupies the smallest land area of the four major regions; however, it is also the most densely populated. Click each point on the map to learn more.

## Boston, Massachusetts

Boston, Massachusetts is located at a harbor site on the north Atlantic coast. It is one of the oldest cities in the United States, and functions as a trade center and the state capital of Massachusetts. Boston also functions as an education center, since it is the home of important educational institutions like Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## New York City, New York

New York City is located at a harbor site at the mouth of the Hudson River. It is the most populous city in the United States. New York City is an international trade center, and functions as a key center of the world’s financial markets. This is because many banking and financial institutions, like the New York Stock Exchange, are headquartered in the city. The city is also a cultural center that is home to Broadway theaters and some of the most well-known museums in the world.

## Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia is located in eastern Pennsylvania at the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. It is the most populous city in Pennsylvania, and the sixth most populous city in the United States. Philadelphia was founded as the state capital of Pennsylvania, and even served as a temporary capital of the United States while Washington, D.C. was being built. Although the city no longer functions as the state capital, Philadelphia remains an important center for culture, education, and trade.

## Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh was founded on a confluence site in western Pennsylvania. This site was chosen as a defensive position for Fort Pitt, which eventually became the city of Pittsburgh. As the city grew, the rivers that were initially used for defense were used for transportation and trade. Pittsburgh was once a major steel manufacturing center; however, this industry declined in the late-twentieth century, and the city became part of the Northeastern Rust Belt. In response, Pittsburgh successfully shifted its economy to industries in healthcare, finance, and technology.

## South

The Southern United States includes sixteen states: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. The economy of the South was once heavily reliant on agriculture, but the late-twentieth century saw a rise in manufacturing, technology, tourism, and financial industry. Click each point on the map to learn more.

## Atlanta, Georgia

Atlanta, Georgia is located in the southern Appalachian Mountain region along the Eastern Continental Divide. The city of Atlanta was founded as a transportation hub in the 1800s, at a location where two railroads met. The city has remained an important center for transportation, as it is home to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, which is considered the busiest airport in the world. Atlanta also functions as a cultural center and the state capital of Georgia.

## El Paso, Texas

El Paso, Texas is located on the northern bank of the Rio Grande, which acts as a natural border for southern Texas and northern Mexico. The Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez is located across the Rio Grande, on the southern bank. When combined, these two cities form a larger international metropolitan area. The close proximity of these cities has resulted in a blend of Mexican and American cultures. Most of the population is bilingual, and many signs are posted in English and Spanish.

## Houston, Texas

Houston, Texas is located at a harbor site on the northwestern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. It is the most populous city in the Southern region, and the fourth most populous city in the United States. Houston has a booming economy that includes the petroleum, healthcare, and aerospace industries. The Port of Houston allows the city to function as an international trade center. The city is also a cultural center, with a diverse population and large museum and theater districts.

## Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., formally known as the District of Columbia, is located on a fall line site on the Potomac River. Situated between the states of Maryland and Virginia, Washington, D.C. functions as the capital of the United States. The city is home to many famous landmarks, such as the Washington Monument, the U.S. Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

## Midwest

The Midwestern United States includes twelve states: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Agriculture is a major contributor to the Midwestern economy. In fact, large parts of the Midwest are known as America’s Wheat Belt. Click each point on the map to learn more.

## Chicago, Illinois

Chicago, Illinois is located on the southwestern shore of Lake Michigan. It is the most populous city in the Midwest, and the third most populous city in the United States. The city functions a major trade center, and is a transportation hub for shipping, railroads, and airlines. Chicago is also considered a cultural center, featuring renowned architecture, festivals, museums, and theaters.

## Detroit, Michigan

Detroit, Michigan is located on the Detroit River, which connects Lake Huron and Lake Erie. This site gives Detroit access to the entire Great Lakes region, making the city an important transportation hub and trade center. Detroit is best known as the center of the American automotive industry, as Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors are all headquartered in the city. Although the city has struggled financially in recent years, large parts of its economy remain strong.

## St. Louis, Missouri

St. Louis, Missouri is located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. This location has allowed the city to function as an important trade center for the Midwestern region. The city is arguably best known for the Gateway Arch, which was built as a monument to the westward expansion of the United States.

## Kansas

The state of Kansas is considered part of the Wheat Belt, also known as America’s Breadbasket. The Wheat Belt is a regional label given to the rural agricultural areas that primarily produce wheat and other grains. In the Midwest, the Wheat Belt spans large parts of Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota.

## West

The Western United States includes thirteen states: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, California, Alaska, and Hawaii. The West occupies the largest land area of the four major regions. Click each point on the map to learn more.

## Los Angeles, California

Los Angeles is located on a coastal basin in Southern California, along the Pacific coast. The city was initially established by Spanish settlers, and was a part of Mexico until it was ceded to the U.S. in 1848. Los Angeles is the second most populous city in the United States, and as the home of Hollywood, is the center of the nation’s entertainment industry. The city also functions as a center for transportation, trade, and tourism.

## Phoenix, Arizona

Phoenix, Arizona is located at a confluence site, providing the city with water in an otherwise arid region. The city was founded as a small agricultural community, but experienced massive economic and population growth in the late-twentieth century. Now, it is the fifth most populous city in the United States, and the capital of Arizona. Phoenix’s growth has also influenced the surrounding area. For instance, Mesa, Arizona is a suburb of Phoenix; however, this community actually has a larger population than major cities like Atlanta, Miami, and Pittsburgh.

## San Francisco, California

San Francisco is located at a harbor site in Northern California, along the Pacific coast. The city was established by Spanish settlers in 1776, and became part of the United States after the Mexican-American War. The population of the city grew immensely during the California Gold Rush in 1849. Now, San Francisco serves multiple functions, as a center for trade, culture, transportation, and tourism. The city’s most famous landmark is the Golden Gate Bridge.

## Seattle, Washington

Seattle, Washington is located at a harbor site on the Pacific coast, just south of the Canada-United States border. This area has a marine west coast climate, which produces dense forest vegetation. Because of this, Seattle was originally established as a center for logging, shipbuilding, and trade. Now, Seattle is home to companies like Microsoft and Amazon, which makes the city a major center of the technology industry. The city’s most famous landmark is the Space Needle.