

Physical Geography of Canada

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Foreword:

When studying Canada, people often talk about different regions. Splitting the country into regions makes studying this huge country a little easier. Regions also show us differences in the land and the people that live there. The Cordillera region covers most of the western coast of Canada. Provinces in this region include British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. The word Cordillera is actually a Spanish word that means mountain ranges. But mountain ranges are not the only thing found in this part of Canada. There are also deep valleys, plateaus, and coastal islands in this region. The climate found in this area varies greatly because of the mountains. Coastal temperatures tend to be warmer than those inland, and northern climates are cooler than southern climates. Winters can last up to 8 months in the northern part of the region. Forestry, fishing, and mining are the most significant industries in the Cordillera region. This region of Canada has the Cordillera as a boundary to the west, the Canadian Shield as a boundary to the east and north, and the United States to the south. Many people think of the prairies as being totally flat. But this is not true! Only half the prairies are flat land, the rest of the land is made up of hills, wide river valleys, escarpments, and even low mountains. The climate of this region tends to produce mild summers, and very cold winters. The average temperature in January across the region is about negative 16 degrees Celsius. Most of the region's precipitation comes in the summer months, but droughts are possible. This region of Canada is found in the most northerly areas of the country. All of the land in the North region is frozen all year round. This type of land is often called *Tundra*. This region does overlap with other regions of Canada, including the Cordillera and the Canadian Shield. Land in the Tundra region consists of lowlands, plateaus, mountains, and ice caps. Two main climate types are found in this region. Climate in the tundra regions is too cold for trees to grow, summers are cool and short, and the region is dry. Climate in the ice cap areas of the region are also very dry, but the temperature stays below zero degrees Celsius almost all year round. This region of Canada is found in the center of the country, surrounding Hudson Bay. Geographers have named this region because of its shield shape. This region makes up almost half of the land in Canada, but few people live here. The region is made up of hills, highlands, plateaus, lowlands, plains, and numerous rivers and lakes. This region reaches up to the North, and spans the country from the Prairies to the Atlantic. The large size of this region means that the climate will vary greatly inside the region. Industries in this region of the country include mining, forestry, and power production. The main mineral mined on the Canadian Shield is Nickel. Forestry is a large employer of people in this region. Most of the power production in the region is hydroelectric, using the force of flowing water to create electricity. The Great Lakes Lowland region of Canada consists mostly of Southern Ontario. Geographers believe that this whole region was once covered by large sheets of ice called *Glaciers*. These ice sheets carved and shaped the land as they moved and eventually melted. The water that came from these melting glaciers formed the Great Lakes. The land is covered with sand, dust, rocks and mud left behind by the ice. All this material formed hills, and plains across the region. Escarpments are also found in this region, the most important being named the Niagara Escarpment. Climate in this region can be described as having cold winters and hot summers. This area is in the path of many storm systems that cross the continent, which means that day to day weather can be very different. There are numerous industries

found in this region. Some of these include manufacturing, construction, power generation, mining, agriculture, forestry, and fishing. The Great Lakes themselves are often considered a resource of the region. The St. Lawrence River has always been one of Canada's most important rivers. It was this river that was explored by the first people from Europe. Many settlers found the flat lands along the river ideal for farming. Geographers identify this region of Canada as the section along the St. Lawrence river from Cornwall, Ontario to Quebec City, Quebec. This area is made up of three plains called the Quebec plain, the Trois Rivieres plain, and the Montreal plain. These plains are made up of layers of sediment rich soil, which is excellent for growing crops. The climate found in this region is difficult to describe. The climate may range from Tropical conditions to Arctic conditions. Summers may be hot, humid and uncomfortable, while winters are often bitterly cold. This region of Canada includes the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and part of Quebec known as the Gaspé peninsula. Physical features of the region include mountains, highlands, plains, and lowlands. The climate in this region is greatly affected by the Atlantic Ocean. Temperature and rainfall can vary greatly within the region. The ocean tends to keep temperatures on the mild side. Ocean currents can affect the weather of the region by bringing storms, heavy fog, rainfall or snowfall. Industries that can be found in this region include forestry, mining, and fishing. Forestry and fishing date back to the first settlers that chose to live here. Mining can produce resources such as iron ore, lead, gold, copper, and coal.

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