

The United States includes eight major physical regions. One region is the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Another is the Pacific Coast, the westernmost region of North America. East of the Pacific is the rugged Intermountain region. The high Rocky Mountains, another region, stretch from Alaska to Mexico. The Interior Plains are a flat region in the central part of the country. The Appalachian Mountains, another region, are in the eastern part of North America. The Canadian Shield is a lowland region extending from eastern

Canada into the United States. The Coastal Plains region includes flat lowlands along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.

The rivers and lakes of the United States provide water and shipping routes. The Mississippi and Missouri Rivers make up the longest and most important river system in the country. Lakes and rivers also provide borders between states and countries.

The United States has 10 major **climates**. (See chart.) Two aspects of climate are temperature and **precipitation**.

MAJOR CLIMATES IN THE UNITED STATES	
Location	Characteristics
Northwest	warm summers, cool winters; rainy
California	mild, wet winters; hot, dry summers
Western Mountains	cooler temperatures
Southwest	hot days, cold nights; very dry
Western Interior Plains	hot summers, cold winters; dry
Eastern Interior Plains; Northeast	mild summers, cold winters
Southern Florida; Hawaii	hot and humid
Southeast	warm
Northern Alaska	cold all year
Alaska	long, cold winters