

North American Climatic, Natural Vegetation, and Landform Regions

REGIONS CAN BE DEFINED AND MAPPED IN MANY WAYS

USING DIFFERENT CRITERIA.

CLIMATIC REGIONS RANGE FROM TROPICAL TO POLAR,

BUT MOST PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

ARE IN THE MIDLATITUDES OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

AND HAVE MIDLATITUDE CLIMATES.

MIDLATITUDE CLIMATES HAVE A DISTINCT CHANGE OF SEASONS.

WINTERS ARE MILD IN THE SOUTH

AND BECOME INCREASINGLY LONGER AND COLDER TOWARD THE NORTH.

VEGETATION REGIONS ARE SIMILAR TO CLIMATIC REGIONS,

BECAUSE NATURAL VEGETATION VARIES

WITH TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION.

THE NATURAL VEGETATION REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

CAN BE GROUPED INTO FOUR BROAD CATEGORIES.

FORESTS ARE FOUND WHERE THERE IS ENOUGH MOISTURE

FOR TREE GROWTH.

GRASSLANDS ARE COMMON IN DRIER REGIONS.

DESERT VEGETATION WITH BARREN GROUND BETWEEN PLANTS

IS FOUND IN AREAS THAT HAVE VERY LITTLE PRECIPITATION.

TUNDRA, A TYPE OF LOW VEGETATION,

IS FOUND AT HIGHER ELEVATIONS IN THE MOUNTAINS

AND ABOVE THE TREE LINE IN ARCTIC REGIONS.

EACH OF THESE VEGETATION REGIONS PROVIDES HABITAT

FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF WILD ANIMALS.

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MOST OF NORTH AMERICA'S NATURAL VEGETATION

HAS BEEN REPLACED BY PASTURES, AGRICULTURAL CROPLANDS,
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

MUCH OF THE NATURAL VEGETATION AND THE WILDLIFE
THAT WE CAN SEE TODAY

HAS BEEN PRESERVED IN NATIONAL PARKS.

LANDFORMS INCLUDE NEARLY LEVEL PLAINS,
ROLLING HILLS, CANYON-CUT PLATEAUS,
AND HIGH MOUNTAINS.

PLAINS ARE USUALLY LOW IN ELEVATION
AND HAVE LOW RELIEF.

ELEVATION IS THE HEIGHT OF A LAND SURFACE ABOVE SEA LEVEL,
AND RELIEF IS THE DISTANCE BETWEEN
THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST POINTS IN THE LANDSCAPE.

A LANDSCAPE WITH LOW RELIEF IS VERY FLAT TO GENTLY ROLLING
LIKE YOU CAN SEE HERE IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

A LANDSCAPE WITH HIGH RELIEF,
SUCH AS THIS MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE IN MONTANA,
HAS A LOT OF VERTICAL DISTANCE
BETWEEN ITS HIGHEST AND LOWEST POINTS.

PLATEAU SURFACES MAY BE AS FLAT AS PLAINS,
BUT PLATEAUS ARE USUALLY HIGHER IN ELEVATION THAN PLAINS.

IN SOME PLACES,
DEEP CANYONS MAY BE CUT INTO A PLATEAU'S SURFACE.

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HILLS HAVE A MODERATE RELIEF WITH A DISTINCT DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN THE ELEVATION OF VALLEYS AND SUMMITS.

MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES HAVE HIGH RELIEF,

AND THE MOUNTAIN SIDE AND PEAKS ARE OFTEN JAGGED

WITH EXPOSED ROCK FACES.