

# PLACES IN NEWS

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## North America

- North America is the third largest continent after Asia and Africa.
- It lies entirely within the Northern Hemisphere and almost wholly within the Western Hemisphere.
- It is bordered by the Arctic Ocean in the north, the Atlantic Ocean in the east, the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico in the southeast, and the Pacific Ocean in the west.

## **Important Mountain Ranges:**

- **Western Cordillera:** Extends from Alaska through Canada and the United States into Mexico. Includes the Rockies (North America's largest mountain system), the Coast Mountains, the Sierra Nevada, and the Cascades.
- **Appalachian Mountains:** Located in eastern North America.

## **Important Plains:**

- **Great Plains:** Stretch from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean, lying between the Rockies and the Appalachians.
- **Coastal Plains:** Lie along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.
- **Important Rivers:**
- **Mississippi River System:** One of the world's longest river systems. Drains a vast portion of the continent.
- **St. Lawrence River:** An important waterway connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Death Valley in California:** The lowest point in North America, 86 meters below sea level.
- **Highest Peak:** Denali (Mount McKinley) in Alaska, at 6,190 meters above sea level.

**Note:** The landmass of North America also includes Greenland, Central America, and the Caribbean Islands.

## GREAT LAKES OF NORTH AMERICA

- A series of large interconnected freshwater lakes located in the upper mid-east region of North America.
- They are one of the most significant freshwater resources on Earth by surface area.
- Bordered by Canada to the north and the United States to the south.
- The Five Great Lakes (from west to east):
  - i. Lake Superior
  - ii. Lake Michigan (the only Great Lake entirely within the United States)
  - iii. Lake Huron
  - iv. Lake Erie
  - v. Lake Ontario

**Lake Ontario:** The smallest and easternmost of the five lakes. It is connected to the Atlantic Ocean by the St. Lawrence River.

**Great Lakes Basin:** Drains into the Atlantic Ocean via the St. Lawrence River.

### **Niagara Falls:**

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- Located on the Niagara River, which connects Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.
- One of the most famous and powerful waterfalls in the world.
- Straddles the border between the United States (New York) and Canada (Ontario).
- Consists of three main falls: the Horseshoe Falls (Canadian Falls), the American Falls, and the Bridal Veil Falls.
- Has a combined flow rate that is one of the highest in the world.
- The Niagara River is about 56 kilometers (35 miles) long and includes the Niagara Gorge.
- The Welland Canal (in Canada) allows ships to bypass Niagara Falls

### **LAKE WINNIPEG**

- A large, relatively shallow lake located in Manitoba, Canada.
- The largest lake within and south of the borders of Canada.
- It is the twelfth-largest freshwater lake on Earth by surface area.
- Fed by the Saskatchewan River, the Red River, and several other smaller rivers.
- Drains northwards into the Nelson River and ultimately into Hudson Bay.

### **IMPORTANT MOUNTAIN SYSTEMS OF NORTH AMERICA**

North America has two major mountain systems: **The Western Cordillera**, Located in the western part of the continent and **The Appalachians**, Situated in the eastern part of the continent.

- They extend for thousands of kilometers and have significantly shaped the continent's geography and climate.
- They formed from the collision of tectonic plates over millions of years.
- The Western Cordillera is a complex system of parallel ranges, intermontane plateaus, and deep valleys. It includes:
  - i. The Rocky Mountains (extending from Canada to the southwestern USA)
  - ii. The Coast Mountains (along the Pacific coast of North America)
  - iii. The Sierra Nevada (in California and Nevada)
  - iv. The Cascade Range (in the Pacific Northwest of the USA and Canada)
- The Appalachian Mountains are older and more eroded than the Rockies. They extend from southeastern Canada to central Alabama in the USA.

### **Mackenzie River**

- The longest river system in Canada.
- Flows north into the Arctic Ocean.
- Its main tributaries include the Peace and Athabasca rivers.

### **Colorado River:**

- Located in the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico.
- Known for carving the Grand Canyon.
- An important source of water for irrigation and hydroelectric power in the arid Southwest.

### **Rio Grande:**

- Forms a significant part of the border between the United States (Texas) and Mexico.
- Flows into the Gulf of Mexico.

### **St. Lawrence River:**

- Connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.
- An important waterway for shipping and trade.
- Forms part of the border between Canada and the United States.

### **Yukon River:**

One of the longest rivers in North America.

Flows through Yukon Territory in Canada and the state of Alaska in the United States.

Empties into the Bering Sea.

## **IMPORTANT PLAINS OF NORTH AMERICA**

### **Great Plains:**

- A vast expanse of flat grassland located in the interior of North America.
- Stretches from the Gulf of Mexico in the south to the Arctic Ocean in the north.
- Bounded by the Rocky Mountains to the west and the Appalachian Mountains to the east.
- Characterized by a semi-arid climate and is a major agricultural region (wheat belt).

### **Coastal Plains:**

- Relatively flat, low-lying areas that border the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.
- Extend from New England in the north along the eastern and southeastern coasts of the United States, and westward along the Gulf Coast into Mexico.
- Features varied landscapes including marshes, swamps, and sandy beaches.

## **DEATH VALLEY**

- A desert valley located in Eastern California, in the northern Mojave Desert.
- One of the hottest, driest, and lowest national parks in the United States.
- Contains Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America at 86 meters (282 feet) below sea level.
- Known for its extreme temperatures, arid conditions, and unique geological formations.
- Features include sand dunes, salt flats, canyons, and mountains.

## **DENALI**

- The highest mountain peak in North America, with a summit elevation of 6,190 meters (20,310 feet) above sea level.
- Located in Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska, USA.
- Formerly known as Mount McKinley.
- A prominent and iconic peak in the Alaska Range.
- Experiences extreme weather conditions due to its high altitude and northerly latitude.

## **GREENLAND**

- The world's largest island.
- Geographically part of North America.
- Politically a constituent country within the Kingdom of Denmark.
- Largely covered by a massive ice sheet.
- Has a sparse population concentrated along the ice-free coastal areas.

## **MEXICO**

- A country located in the southern portion of North America.
- Bordered by the United States to the north, and Belize and Guatemala to the southeast.
- Has a diverse geography including mountains, plateaus, coastal plains, and deserts.
- Home to ancient civilizations such as the Maya and Aztec.
- A major economic and cultural power in Latin America.

**Ice Sheet:** Covers the majority of Greenland's landmass.

- Climate: Arctic, with cold temperatures and long winters.
- Population: Relatively small, concentrated in coastal settlements.
- Economy: Primarily based on fishing and hunting.
- Capital: Nuuk.

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### **BELIZE**

- A country located on the eastern coast of Central America.
- Bordered by Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east.
- Known for its diverse ecosystems including rainforests, coral reefs, and savannas.
- Home to Mayan ruins.
- English is the official language.
- Capital: Belmopan.

### **CUBA**

- The largest island in the Caribbean.
- Located south of Florida (USA) and east of Mexico.
- Known for its vibrant culture, historic cities, and beautiful beaches.
- Spanish is the official language.
- Capital: Havana.

### **CENTRAL AMERICA**

- A region in North America situated between Mexico and South America.
- Typically considered to comprise seven countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.
- Connects the landmasses of North and South America.
- Has a diverse geography including mountains, rainforests, and coastlines on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.
- Home to a rich history, including Mayan civilization.
- Spanish is the predominant language, although English is the official language in Belize.

### **COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

- Belize
- Costa Rica
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Nicaragua
- Panama

### **PANAMA CANAL**

- An artificial 82-kilometer (51 mi) waterway in Panama that connects the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.
- One of the most important shipping canals in the world.
- Has locks at each end to raise ships to the level of Gatun Lake (26 meters above sea level) and then lower them on the other side.
- Significantly reduces the time and distance for ships to travel between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

- Construction was completed by the United States in 1914.
- Panama assumed full control of the canal in 1999.
- The canal has been expanded to accommodate larger ships.
- Significance: Facilitates international trade and has major economic and strategic importance.

### **COUNTRIES IN SOUTH AMERICA**

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Ecuador
- Guyana
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Suriname
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

### **IMPORTANT MOUNTAINS OF SOUTH AMERICA**

#### **Andes Mountains:**

- The longest continental mountain range in the world.
- Extends along the western edge of South America.
- Stretches for about 7,000 kilometers (4,300 miles).
- Has many of the highest peaks in the Western Hemisphere.
- Includes peaks such as Aconcagua (the highest peak outside of Asia), Chimborazo, and Huascarán.
- Formed by the subduction of the Nazca Plate beneath the South American Plate.
- Influences the climate of a large part of South America.
- Creates a rain shadow effect, leading to arid regions on the leeward side (e.g., Atacama Desert).
- Historically significant for the Inca civilization, which developed in the Andes.

### **IMPORTANT RIVERS OF SOUTH AMERICA**

#### **Amazon River:**

- The largest river in the world by discharge volume of water.
- Generally considered the second-longest river in the world, slightly shorter than the Nile.
- Flows primarily through Brazil and Peru, but also through Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia.
- Its basin covers about 40% of South America.
- Home to the Amazon rainforest, one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth.
- Has numerous tributaries, many of which are also substantial rivers.
- Carries a vast amount of sediment into the Atlantic Ocean.
- The Amazon River basin plays a crucial role in the global carbon cycle and climate regulation.
- Supports a diverse array of aquatic life, including the piranha and the Amazon river dolphin.

### **Orinoco River:**

- One of the longest rivers in South America.
- Flows primarily through Venezuela and Colombia.
- Its basin covers a large area, including the Llanos grasslands.
- Known for Angel Falls, the world's highest uninterrupted waterfall, which is a tributary of the Orinoco.
- Supports diverse ecosystems and wildlife.
- Important for transportation and hydroelectric power in the region.

### **Paraná River:**

- Another major river in South America.
- Flows through Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina.
- Joins with the Uruguay River to form the Río de la Plata estuary, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean.
- The Itaipu Dam on the Paraná River is one of the largest hydroelectric power plants in the world.
- Important for navigation, fishing, and agriculture in the region.

### **São Francisco River:**

- A major river entirely within Brazil.
- One of the most important rivers in Brazil, especially for the semi-arid northeast region.
- Used for irrigation, hydroelectric power, and navigation.
- Historically and culturally significant for Brazil.

### **ATACAMA DESERT**

- A desert plateau in South America, west of the Andes mountains.
- Considered the driest non-polar desert in the world.
- Located primarily in northern Chile and extends into parts of Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina.
- Receives extremely low rainfall due to the rain shadow effect of the Andes and the presence of cold offshore currents.
- Parts of the Atacama have recorded no significant rainfall for centuries.
- Features a variety of landscapes including sand dunes, rocky terrain, and salt flats.
- Rich in mineral deposits, particularly nitrates and copper.
- An important location for astronomical observatories due to its clear, dry air and high altitude.

### **PAMPAS**

- Fertile South American lowlands.
- Covers parts of Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil.
- Primarily grasslands, with a humid subtropical and temperate climate.
- Known for cattle ranching and agriculture (especially grains).
- Historically associated with the gaucho culture.

### **ANDEAN REGION**

- The area surrounding the Andes Mountains.
- Includes parts of several South American countries: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina.
- Characterized by high altitudes, rugged terrain, and diverse climates depending on elevation and latitude.
- Home to a rich cultural history, including pre-Columbian civilizations like the Inca.
- Significant biodiversity, with unique flora and fauna adapted to high-altitude environments.
- Important for mineral resources.



### **AMAZON RAINFOREST**

- A vast tropical rainforest located in the Amazon Basin of South America.
- Covers parts of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana.
- The largest rainforest on Earth, known for its immense biodiversity.
- Plays a crucial role in the global climate system, producing a significant portion of the world's oxygen.
- Home to millions of species of plants, insects, animals, and microorganisms.
- Faces significant threats from deforestation, agriculture, and mining.

### **GUIANA HIGHLANDS**

- A vast geological formation located in northeastern South America.
- Covers parts of Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and northern Brazil.
- Characterized by ancient crystalline rocks, plateaus, and tepuis (table-top mountains).
- Known for its unique biodiversity, including many endemic species.
- Source of numerous rivers and waterfalls, including Angel Falls.
- Important for mineral resources such as gold and diamonds.

### **PATAGONIA**

- A sparsely populated region located at the southern end of South America.
- Shared by Argentina and Chile.
- Bounded by the Andes Mountains to the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.
- Features a diverse landscape including mountains, glaciers, steppes, and coastlines.
- Known for its dramatic scenery, including glaciers in the Southern Patagonian Ice Field.
- Experiences a cold and arid to subpolar climate.

### **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS**

- An archipelago of volcanic islands distributed around the equator in the Pacific Ocean.
- Part of Ecuador.
- Famous for their unique wildlife, which inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection.
- Many species are endemic to the islands.
- Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a national park.
- Important for scientific research and tourism.

### **TIERRA DEL FUEGO**

- An archipelago at the southern extremity of South America.
- Divided between Argentina and Chile.
- Separated from the mainland by the Strait of Magellan.
- Characterized by a cold, windy climate and rugged terrain.
- Includes mountains, glaciers, forests, and tundra.
- Ushuaia, on the Argentine side, is one of the southernmost cities in the world.

### **WORLD'S FIFTH OCEAN: SOUTHERN OCEAN**

- Recognized by the National Geographic magazine as the world's fifth ocean on June 8, 2021.
- The magazine followed the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) on marine names.
- The Southern Ocean is the only ocean to touch three other oceans and completely embrace a continent rather than being embraced by them.
- Its northern limit is a latitude of 60 degrees south.
- It is also defined by its Antarctic Circumpolar Current that was formed 34 million years ago.
- The current flows from west to east around Antarctica.