

North America

VOCABULARY

Continent, northern hemisphere, ocean, latitude, longitude

Lowlands, agriculture, predominant, climate zone, biome, rainforest, savannah, temperate

Colonise, indigenous, metropolitan, cosmopolitan, sparsely, populous, density, primate city

Irrigation, rises, numerous, confluence, pesticides, Native, Indigenous, colonisation.

Topographic, subduction, seismic, range



Location

The countries of North America



North America is a continent in the northern hemisphere and mostly within the western hemisphere. It is bordered to the north by the Arctic Ocean, to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west (where it is separated from Asia by the Bering Strait) and south by the Pacific Ocean, and to the southeast by South America and the Caribbean Sea.

See the next page for a larger map of the southern parts of North America



Diversity

Every climate zone can be found in North America as it extends to within 10° of latitude of both the equator and the North Pole. The biomes in North America include: tropical rainforests and savannah on the lowlands of Central America, and areas of permanent ice cap in central Greenland. These differences contribute to a diverse set of agricultural resources. In the tropical zones of North America, farmers harvest oranges, sugar cane, coffee, cocoa and bananas. Fruits, vegetables and cotton are predominant in the warm, sub-tropical zones of northern Mexico and the United States. The continent's cool temperate zones are ideal for fruits, such as apples and peaches. These areas are also suitable for cattle and corn agriculture.



Diversity

North America has an estimated population of 580 million. The most populous cities are:

1. Mexico City, Mexico
2. New York City, USA
3. Los Angeles, USA
4. Chicago, USA
5. Toronto, Canada



Human features

The northern half of North America – Canada and Greenland – is sparsely populated. This is largely due to the sub-polar and polar climate zones which makes agriculture, transport and living more difficult.

Population density in North America



Mexico City is the largest city, both in size and population. Its population is 21.3 million, which makes it the largest metropolitan area of the western hemisphere and the largest Spanish-speaking city in the world.



Aerial view of part of Mexico City



There are hundreds of rivers across North America. They are vital for irrigation for agriculture, fishing, the generation of hydro-electricity and as navigation routes for shipping. Rivers are also sacred to the Native American indigenous peoples who, for centuries before European colonisation, learnt to use this limited, precious resource wisely.



The topographic map on the left shows the mountainous areas of North America. The western coastline is dominated by the Rocky Mountain chain. This is also the location of a tectonic plate boundary and the mountains are formed through the process of subduction. There is a great deal of seismic activity in this area as it is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire.