

Summary: Land and Water

Florida's Land

The Florida peninsula is a landform. It is only a little above sea level. The elevation of most of the peninsula is less than 100 feet above sea level.

There are many barrier islands along the coast of the peninsula. Wind and ocean water left sand and tiny pieces of shell to make these low, narrow islands. Barrier islands are important because they protect the coast from storms. The Florida Keys is a chain of small islands at the southern tip of Florida. They are not barrier islands. They are made of layers of coral and limestone.

Most of Florida is flat. But, there are some hills in central and northern Florida. Most of them are only about 200 to 300 feet above sea level. The highest part of the state is in Walton County. It is 345 feet above sea level.

Florida's Water

Florida has many bodies of water. It has thousands of lakes. It also has rivers, wetlands, and swamps. Lake Okeechobee is in southern Florida. It is one of the largest lakes in the United States. The ocean is another body of water that is important to Florida. Ocean waves and winds change the shape of the land.

The St. Johns River is the longest river in Florida. It starts inland and flows north into the Atlantic Ocean near Jacksonville. Florida's state song is about another river, the Suwannee.

Florida also has wetlands. They protect the coast from flooding by gathering water during storms. They also help to refill the underground water supply by collecting rainwater. Many rare plants and animals live in the wetlands. The Everglades are a famous marshy wetland that covers a huge part of southern Florida.

Two of the biggest swamps in the United States are in Florida. A swamp is a wetland where trees and bushes grow. Mangrove trees grow in some of these swamps. Mangroves can grow in both salt and fresh water.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

landform *noun*, a feature of the earth's surface

sea level *noun*, the level of the surface of the world's oceans

elevation *noun*, the height of a landform above sea level

wetland *noun*, land that is covered by water for part of the year



After You Read

REVIEW Why are barrier islands important? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW Why are wetlands important? What do the wetlands do? What lives in the wetlands? Draw a box around three sentences that tell the answers.