

# Summary: Land and Water

## California's Land

California has many types of landforms, including two large mountain ranges. One, near the coast, is called the Coast Ranges. Most cities and towns are in low-lying parts of these mountains. The other range is the Sierra Nevada. California's largest mountain range is more than 400 miles long. Fewer people live in these mountains than in lower areas. The Sierra Nevada is on the eastern side of the state.

California's landforms have changed in three ways over time. First, volcanoes created many mountains. A volcano is an opening in Earth's surface through which very hot lava, ash, and gas escape. Then, earthquakes also reshape land. Movement of large plates in Earth's crust cause earthquakes. They raise or lower landforms and change the course of rivers.

Third, erosion changes landforms very slowly by wearing them away by wind or water. Over time, erosion creates valleys and canyons out of mountains.

## California's Water

California has rivers, lakes, and ocean bays. People use fresh water for drinking, farming, and fishing. In salt water, people enjoy swimming, surfing, and boating. High in the Sierra Nevada are two lakes partly created by volcanoes. Lake Tahoe is a freshwater lake, but Mono Lake is very salty.

The Colorado River, along the southeastern border of California, is used for farming. The two largest rivers in the state are the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River. They meet and flow into a delta that empties into San Francisco Bay.

California's long coast has hundreds of bays. Some bays have deep harbors for ships. The Port of Los Angeles, in San Pedro harbor, is one of the world's busiest ports.

Californians have worked hard to protect their environment. This is called conservation. People depend on the environment for important things such as food and drinking water.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**landform** *noun*, feature on Earth's surface, such as a valley

**delta** *noun*, flat, triangle-shaped area of land at the mouth of a river

**environment** *noun*, the natural landscape, such as air, water, plants, trees, and mountains



### After You Read

**REVIEW** What are three ways that California's landforms change over time? Forces of nature change landforms over time. Underline the sentences that discuss the three ways landforms change.

**REVIEW** What are the similarities and differences of three bodies of water in California? Fresh water and salt water have different uses. In California, there are lakes, rivers, and bays that supply water. Highlight sentences that give you specific information about this.