

Summary: Climate and Regions

Climate

Weather is the condition in a place at a particular time, such as rainy, foggy, windy, or sunny weather. Climate is the weather pattern of a region over time. Three things affect climate. Places closer to the equator or near the ocean have warmer climates, but the higher a place, the colder its climate. California has a variety of climates. Areas that share similar climates are called climate regions. Northern California has a temperate, or moderate, climate. Southern California and the Central Valley have a warmer climate with dry summers and rainy winters. The Valley climate makes it possible for farmers to grow crops year round.

Regions of California

California has four geographic regions: the coast, the mountains, the Central Valley, and the desert. The coast is a strip of land more than 1,300 miles long. It lies between the Pacific Ocean and the Coast Ranges. San Francisco and Los Angeles are both located in the coastal region.

Mountain ranges cover much of California. These include the Klamath Mountains and the Cascade Range in the north. The Sierra Nevada and the Coast Ranges form a ring around the Central Valley. The northern mountains get lots of rain and snow that feed streams and rivers. People in the mountains live in small towns or on ranches or farms.

The Central Valley and Deserts

The Central Valley is in the center of California. It is more than 400 miles long and about 50 miles wide. Long ago, woods, grasslands, and wetlands covered the Central Valley. People filled in many of the wetlands to make farmland. Because of the Central Valley's rich soil and long growing season, it supplies about half the country's fruits, vegetables, and grains. With little rain in the summer, dams, channels, pumps, and ditches are used to bring water.

California's deserts are east of its mountains. The mountains block moisture from the ocean and receive the rain. The Mojave Desert, California's largest, contains Death Valley. Death Valley has little water, few plants, and very hot summers. Almost no one lives there.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

climate *noun*, usual weather of a place

region *noun*, an area that has similar physical features

wetland *noun*, a low area with water on or near the surface

desert *noun*, a dry region that gets little rain



After You Read

REVIEW **What is the difference between weather and climate?** Draw a box around the sentences that explain the difference.

REVIEW **What are the coast and the mountains of California like?** Underline the sentences that give you this information about these two geographic regions.

REVIEW **In what ways are California's Central Valley and deserts similar and different?** How is the climate and geography in these two regions the same? How are they different? Highlight the sentences that answer the review question.