The North American Continent – Amazing Facts

America is well known for its hotdogs, baseball and celebrations (Independence Day and Thanksgiving). But is that all there is to it? Did you know America is divided into two continents? They are known as North America and South America. In this information text you will learn about North America, how the land and climates vary and the different cultures that exist within this continent.

Let's get started with the countries and regions that make up this incredible continent. Can you locate them all here on this map?

Did you know…?
North America is the third largest continent on earth. Its vast landmass (24,680,330km²) means it stretches from the blazing hot tropics near the equator to the freezing temperatures of Alaska, just a few hundred miles from the North Pole. That's nearly the same size as 3 and a half million football pitches!

Climate

The highest point of the continent is the freezing, snow-covered Mount McKinley in Alaska and the lowest point is Death Valley in California. Both of these are states in the USA (United States of America). Death Valley is also the hottest and driest place in the continent and is a part of the Mojave Desert. Interestingly, North America is the only continent that covers every type of climate!

Population

- The total population of North America is over 500 million, making it the fourth most populous continent in the entire world.
- Canada, North America's biggest country, is close to 10 million square kilometres in size. The UK could fit inside this forty times! Despite this, it has the smallest population of all six countries and regions.
- Alaska is the least densely populated state in the United States, with less than two people living per square mile.

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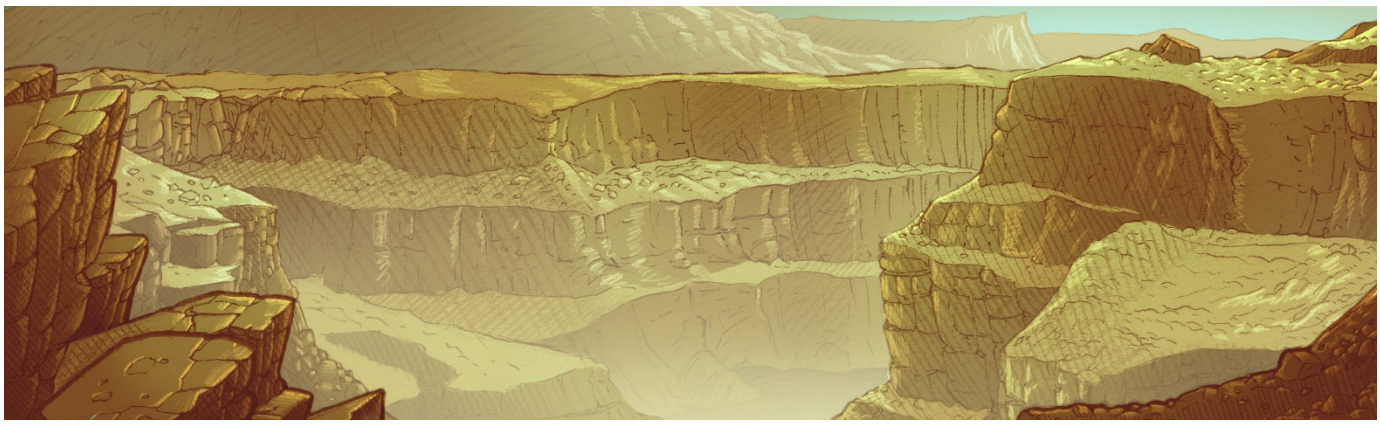
Natural Wonders

The Grand Canyon, an important geological site, is a natural beauty that attracts 5 million people every year. Carved from glaciers over 10,000 years ago, it is around 1800 metres deep. The type of rock found at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (schist) is around 2 billion years old.

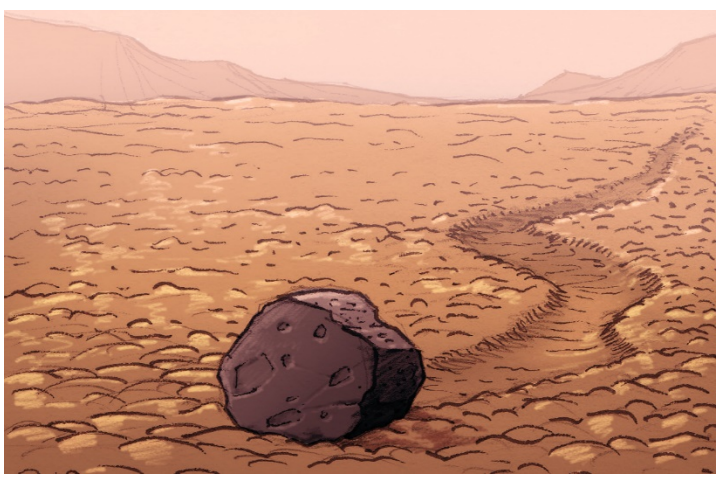


Interesting Fact

Five of the ten major cities in the world are found in the USA. These are New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia.

There are many natural wonders in North America, making it a popular tourist destination. The Niagara Falls lies between the USA and Canada. Its impressive 3 waterfalls – the American Falls, the Bridal Veil Falls and the Horseshoe Falls – combine to produce the highest flow rate of any waterfall on earth. The Niagara Falls is a source of hydropower, producing large amounts of electricity.

In Death Valley, there are rocks and stones which leave small paths behind them as they travel across the lake bed. These create curved or straight patterns. The rocks are not alive, of course, but they still move nevertheless. It is something which has confused many people for years!



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Alaska

Barrow, Alaska, 800 miles south of the North Pole, has the country's longest day and night. When the sun rises on May 10th, it doesn't set for nearly 3 months. When it sets on November 18th, residents of this area do not see the sun again for over two months! Alaska has 100,000 glaciers, ranging from tiny glaciers to huge valley glaciers. The largest glacier is the Malaspina at 850 square miles. Five percent of the state, or 29,000 square miles, is covered by glaciers.

The movement of people from around the world bring new foods, businesses and cultures to North America. This means the continent is always developing and growing.

Diet

North America is a rich and varied blend of different people, religions and cultures. This is reflected in the food that they eat. Italian-American food such as pizza, lasagne, manicotti, and meatballs, play an important role in everyday cooking, as well as Chinese-American. This includes foods such as fried rice, egg rolls and spare ribs. Burger and fries, hotdogs and fried chicken are all other popular foods that we associate with the American food.

North America is also home to the Caribbean. Many popular dishes and flavours which we use in our own cooking come from the Caribbean. These include jerk (a type of spice which can be used on meats such as chicken and pork), rice and papaya (a fruit).

Clothing

As the weather is so different in Alaska and Greenland compared to Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico, there is a wide variety of clothing which is found across the continent. If you are visiting the cold countries located close to the North Pole, you will need to wrap up warm, but if you are visiting the warmer countries which are close to the equator, you will need light clothing so you don't over heat!

Jeans, sneakers (trainers), baseball caps, cowboy hats and boots are some items of clothing that are closely associated with the USA which is located in the middle of the continent. Fashion is widely influenced by celebrities from America through the media, and fashion sales in America equal around $200 billion per year.

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The North American Continent – Follow-Up Work

What is this text about?

_____

How many countries and regions are there in North America?

_____

What is the lowest point in North America?

_____

Explain what the word 'populous' means.

_____

What type of text is this?

_____

How do you know?

_____

_____

Why do you think weather and climate can affect people's way of life?

_____

_____

Based on what you have read, give a reason why Alaska is the least populated country.

_____

_____

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The Niagara Falls are a source of hydropower, producing large amounts of electricity.

What do you think 'hydro' means?

_____

How far is Barrow from the North Pole?

_____

Study the image of The Niagara Falls. Use interesting adjectives to describe what you would hear if you were there.

_____

_____

_____

How old is the rock at the bottom of the Grand Canyon?

_____

Why do you think The Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon are huge tourist attractions?

_____

_____

What is the main difference between Alaska and Death Valley?

_____

_____

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The North American Continent – Vocab 1

Match the words to their meaning.

continent	a dense body of ice that moves across land
climate	the amount of people living in an area
hydropower	a very large landmass, covering lots of countries
glacier	the study of the structure of the earth
population	the average weather conditions in an area
geological	electricity produced by the force of water

Write the meaning of these words.

carved

_____

canyon

_____

schist

_____

lake bed

_____

equator

_____

tropics

_____

populous

_____

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The North American Continent – Vocab 2

Put the following words in the correct places in the sentences.

cultures	Canada	driest	Mount Malaspina
two	hottest	climate	Mount McKinley

North America has a rich and varied blend of different people, religions and

_____.

The highest point in North America is _____.

_____ is the biggest country in North America.

The _____ are regions of earth surrounding the equator.

The largest glacier in Alaska is _____.

Parts of North America do not see sunshine for over _____ months!

Death Valley is the _____ and _____ place in

North America.

Put these words into alphabetical order.

glacier _____

valley _____

continent _____

climate _____

rock _____

desert _____

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The North American Continent – SPAG 1

When two words are joined together to make one word, it is called a compound word.

Circle the matching word to make a compound word.

1.	Kilo	metre	mass	mountain
2.	Hydro	country	power	electric
3.	Water	flow	force	fall
4.	Land	curve	stretch	mass
5.	Base	valley	ball	boot

Use each of the words you created above in a sentence.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

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The North American Continent – SPAG 2

This paragraph has been taken from the text, but the punctuation has gone missing!

Mark where the capital letters, full-stops, exclamation marks and question marks should go.

did you know...

north america is the third largest continent on earth its vast landmass (24,680,330km^2) means it stretches from the blazing hot tropics near the equator to the freezing temperatures of alaska, just a few hundred miles from the north pole that's nearly the same size as 3 and a half million football pitches

Now copy the paragraph out below and include the missing punctuation and capital letters.

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The North American Continent – Oral Teacher Questions

What is this text about? The North American Continent

How many countries and regions are there in North America? Six

What is the lowest point in North America? Death Valley, California

Explain what the word 'populous' means. Full of people, crowded

What type of text is this? Non-Fiction/information text

How do you know? It has an introduction, the information is split up into parts with sub-headings, it give lots of facts

Why do you think weather and climate can affect people's way of life? Because the different conditions mean people have to face different challenges.

Based on what you have read, give a reason why Alaska is the least populated country. Harsh living conditions, living in constant light or dark for months at a time, freezing temperatures

The Niagara Falls are a source of hydropower, producing large amounts of electricity. What do you think 'hydro' means? Water

How far is Barrow from the North Pole? 800 miles

Study the image of The Niagara Falls. Use interesting adjectives to describe what you would hear if you were there. Personal response

How old is the rock at the bottom of the Grand Canyon? 2 billion years old

Why do you think The Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon are huge tourist attractions? Large, natural wonders that are breath-taking to see.

What is the main difference between Alaska and Death Valley? Highest and lowest points. Different areas of the continent with contrasting temperatures

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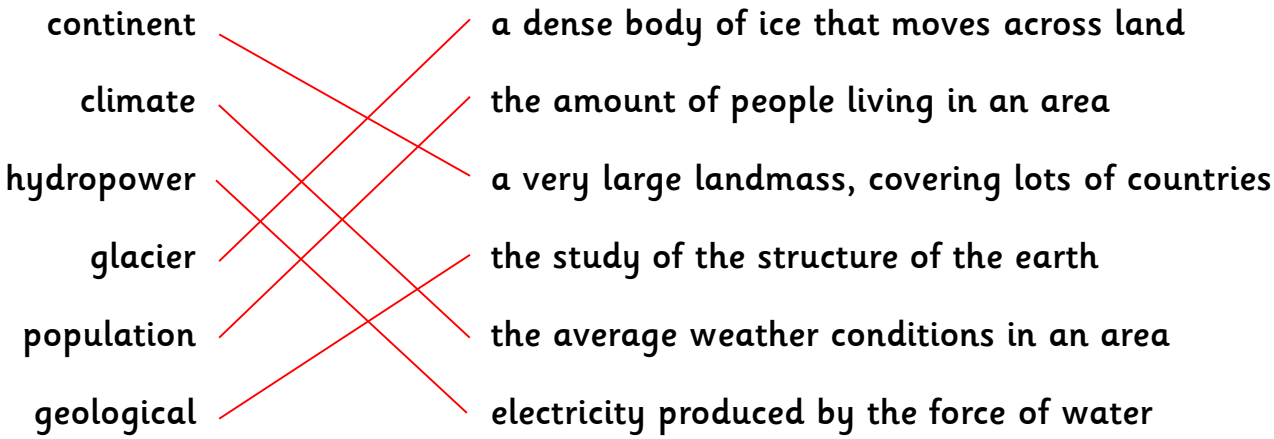
The North American Continent – Vocab 1

Match the words to their meaning.



Write the meaning of these words.

carved

cut through a material to make an object

canyon

a deep valley with steep rock sides cut from water

schist

a type rock with layers of minerals

lake bed

the floor of the lake

equator

an invisible line around the centre of the earth

tropics

two invisible lines around the earth, close to the equator which shows where the weather is very hot

populous

having a large population

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The North American Continent – Vocab 2

Put the following words in the correct places in the sentences.

cultures	Canada	driest	Mount Malaspina
two	hottest	climate	Mount McKinley

North America has a rich and varied blend of different people, religions and culture.

The highest point in North America is Mount McKinley.

Canada is the biggest country in North America.

The tropics are regions of earth surrounding the equator.

The largest glacier in Alaska is Mount Malaspina.

Parts of North America do not see sunshine for over two months!

Death Valley is the highest and driest place in North America.

Put these words into alphabetical order.

glacier	climate
valley	continent
continent	desert
climate	glacier
rock	rock
desert	valley

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The North American Continent – SPAG 1

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Circle the matching word to make a compound word.

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1. _____

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5. _____

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The North American Continent – SPAG 2

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