

THE SHAPE OF THE LAND

Want to see how the geography changes from one side of the United States to the other? Hop in the car, and let's take a road trip!

Let's start at the Atlantic Ocean.

Put some of that salty water in a jar. First, we'll drive across the mostly flat eastern coast. Next, we'll go over the Appalachians, a big mountain range. Then, it's pretty flat again for a few days in the middle of the country. In the West, it's all about low valleys and high mountains, including the massive Rockies. A week later, we're on the beach in California. Pour the water into the ocean. Atlantic, meet Pacific!

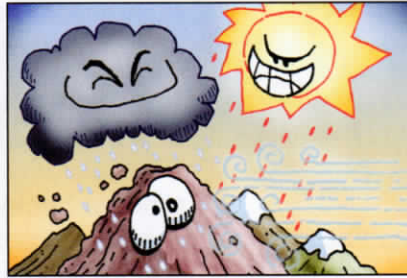


1 Atlantic Coastal Plain

This low-lying area is just above sea level. You'll find lots of rivers, bays, and swamps.

Changing Earth

The Outer Banks of North Carolina and Virginia have many islands, but the number changes all the time. Storms create – or wipe out – the small sandy islands.



2 Appalachian Mountains

The Appalachian Mountains were formed millions of years ago by colliding continents.

Changing Earth

The Appalachians are much older than the Rocky Mountains. They used to be higher, too. But erosion, being battered by wind and water, has lowered their peaks.



3 Great Lakes and Great Rivers Basin

One-fifth of the world's freshwater lies in these lakes and rivers.

By the Numbers

At 2,340 miles long, the Mississippi River is one of the longest rivers in the world.