

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.

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 – Y1m/Y2s/Y3d (Gold) – Text

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.

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?

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**