

Important facts

- North America is the world's third largest continent by area.
- North America is the fourth most populous continent, after Asia, Africa and Europe. Its population is about 580 million people.
- It is in the western hemisphere (apart from Hawaii and parts of Alaska) and the northern hemisphere.

Countries of North America

- There are 23 countries in North America, and a further 9 states that are listed as dependencies of other nations.



Key Vocabulary

climate	The general weather conditions that are typical of a place.
coastal	An area close to the sea.
compass points	Any of the main points of a compass e.g. north, south-east, etc.
dependencies	A country or province controlled by another.
equator	An imaginary line around the middle of the earth at an equal distance from the North Pole and the South Pole.
Microcontinent	A landmass which is not small enough to be considered an island but not big enough to be considered a continent.
temperate	A place which is never extremely hot or extremely cold.
tundra	A vast, flat, treeless Arctic region of North America in which the subsoil is permanently frozen.
tourist	A person who is visiting a place for pleasure or interest, especially when they are on holiday.
tropics	Part of the world that lie between two lines of latitude. The tropics have a humid climate, where the weather is hot and damp.
vegetation	Plants, trees or flowers.

The United States

The United States is a large country made up of 50 states – including 48 on the US mainland, plus Alaska and Hawaii. It has the largest population of any country in North America, and the third largest population in the world. The USA is considered the richest and most powerful country in the world, at the forefront of world politics and economy.



Canada

Canada is the largest country by area in North America, and the second largest in the world (after Russia). As a whole, Canada is very sparsely populated – most of its population lives along the US border in the south, whilst very few people live in the central and northern areas of the country. Most of its land is dominated by forest and tundra.



Central America

Central America is the region found on the southern tip of North America, and contains many smaller nations: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The countries have many cultural similarities, and Spanish is the main language in the region. The area is sometimes considered as its own microcontinent.



The Caribbean Islands

The Caribbean Islands are a number of tropical islands based in the Caribbean Sea off North America. The sea is considered as a part of the Atlantic Ocean. It is bordered by Mexico and Central America. Cuba is by far the largest Caribbean Island, with an area of 105,806 km². The Caribbean Islands are sometimes referred to as the West Indies.



Largest N. American countries

1. Canada – 9.98 million km²
2. USA – 9.83 million km²
3. Greenland (Den) – 2.16 million km²
4. Mexico – 1.96 million km²
5. Nicaragua – 130,375 km²