



Physiographic Regions

THE SHIELD REGION

- Shield

THE BORDERLAND REGIONS

- Arctic Coastal Plain
- Arctic Lowlands
- Innuitian
- Cordillera
- Interior Plains
- Appalachians
- St Lawrence Lowlands

**CANADA
Physiographic Regions**

BOUNDARIES

- Shield Region
- Borderland Regions
- Physiographic Division
- Physiographic Division (approximate)
- Major Cenozoic Volcanoes

Scale
0 125 250 375 km
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection

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The physical geography of Canada comprises two great parts: the **Shield** and the **Borderlands**.

The **Shield** consists of a core of old massive, Precambrian crystalline rocks. It is divided into five sub-regions: Kazan, Davis, Hudson, James and Laurentian regions. Each of these regions has its own geological characteristics.

The **Kazan** Region consists of vast areas of massive rocks that form flat, broad, sloping uplands, plateaus and lowlands.

The general aspect of the **Davis** Region's landscape is that of a broad, old erosion surface almost without surficial deposits. Viewed from an elevated location, the landscape presents an even horizon interrupted by rounded or flat-topped ranges of hills. Along the eastern coast, the relief is generally high.

The **Hudson** Region forms the main central depression on the surface of the Shield. One of its sub regions, the Hudson Bay Lowland, is a low, swampy, marshy plain with subdued glacial features and a belt of raised beaches that border Hudson Bay and James Bay.

James Region exhibits the characteristic features of the Shield that are apparent in major uplands and plateaus.

The **Laurentian** Region comprises uplands and highlands that rise abruptly above the St. Lawrence Lowlands along their northwestern border.

The **Borderlands** regions are formed by younger rocks and surround the Shield like two rings: an inner ring, and an outer ring. The inner ring comprises a chain of lowlands, plains and plateaus of generally flat lying sedimentary rocks. The outer ring consists of discontinuous areas of mountains and plateaus in which the younger rocks are deformed. Each of these areas is divided into regions each of which comprises many smaller subdivisions that are distinctive based on their topography and geology. The physiographic regions forming the Borderlands include the Innuitian Region, the Arctic Coastal Plain, the Arctic Lowlands, the Interior Plains, the Cordilleran Region, the St. Lawrence

Lowlands and the Appalachian Region.

The **Innuitian** Region is characterized by two zones of mountains that are separated by extensive and discontinuous terrain of more subdued topography formed by plateaus, uplands and lowlands.

The **Arctic Coastal Plain** includes the coastal terrain along the shores of the Arctic Ocean from Meighen Island to Alaska. It is divided into three sections each of which has distinctive physiographic characteristics.

The **Arctic Lowlands** lie between the Shield and the Innuitian Region and its landscape is low and smooth.

The **Interior Plains** is characterized in the southern part by semi-arid prairies; the central part is tree-covered; and the northern part is covered by tundra.

The **Cordillera** is divided into three large longitudinal zones called the Eastern System, the Interior System and the Western System. Each system is further divided into areas and subdivided into mountains, ranges, plateaus, hills, valleys, trenches, basins, and plains. Each has its own geological and physiographical characteristics. The Cordillera is also divided transversely into a number of segments by east-west belts of relatively low terrain.

The **St. Lawrence Lowlands** comprise three separate parts; the West St. Lawrence Lowland, the Central St. Lawrence Lowland and the East St. Lawrence Lowland. These lowlands are plain-like areas. They were all affected by the Pleistocene glaciation and are covered by surficial deposits and features associated to glaciers.

The **Appalachian** extends from southern Quebec and Gaspésie to encompass New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and the island of Newfoundland. The physiography is dominated by a well-developed peneplain that is generally highest in the northwest and slopes gently southeastwardly to the ocean.

Source: H. S. Bostock, 1967.