

## Geography Features Definitions

**Archipelago:** a group of islands such as the Galapagos or Hawaii.

**Biodiversity:** the assortment of species, flora and fauna, found in a specific area.

**Canyon:** a deep, narrow valley with steep sides that is cut into the earth by a river or other geological process.

**Cape:** a high point of land that extends into a river, lake, or ocean. Some capes, such as the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, are parts of large landmasses. Others, such as Cape Hatteras in the U.S. state of North Carolina, are parts of islands.

**Cartography:** the art of making maps or mapping.

**Delta:** a triangular plain at the end or mouth of a river where the soil is deposited.

**Gulf:** a large inlet of an ocean that extends into a landmass, forming a coastal indentation. Gulfs can vary in size, shape, and depth, but are generally larger and deeper than bays.

**Harbor:** a sheltered body of water that is deep enough to provide safety for ships, boats, and barges to move, moor, or anchor.

**Hemisphere:** half of a sphere and since the earth is a sphere it means half the earth. The earth is divided by the equator into two hemispheres: the Northern and the Southern. The eastern and western hemisphere can also be divided by the meridian.

**Island:** any area of land smaller than a continent and entirely surrounded by water.

**Isthmus:** a narrow strip of land that connects two larger landmasses and separates two bodies of water. A good example is Panama in Central America.

**Lagoon:** a body of water that lies between a reef and a coastline, usually protected by conservationists.

**Lake:** a body of water that is surrounded by land and is a part of the Earth's surface water:

**Latitude:** imaginary horizontal lines on the Earth that are utilized to specify the north or south position of a coordinate on the Earth's surface.

**Longitude:** imaginary vertical lines used to determine exact geographic coordinates that run along the eastern and western hemisphere of the earth.

**Magma:** molten rock that is below the surface of the earth; found in the mantle or crust of the planet.

**Meteorology:** a sub-branch of physical geography that involves the study of the atmosphere.

**Monsoon:** a prevailing seasonal wind that occurs during two seasons: summer (wet monsoon) and winter (dry monsoon).

**Oasis:** a fertile watering hole in a geographically arid place such as a desert. It is formed since there was water previously present in the specific area.

**Ocean:** a large body of salt water that covers almost three-fourths of the Earth's surface. The ocean covers nearly 71% of the Earth's surface and contains about 97% of the world's water.

**Ocean Current:** the flow of ocean water in a defined direction.

**Peninsula:** a body of land surrounded by water on three sides is called a peninsula. The word comes from the Latin *paene insula*, meaning "almost an island."

**Plain:** a large, flat area of land that covers a significant portion of the Earth's surface.

**Plateau:** a large area of flat and relatively high ground.

**Quarry:** an open-air mine from which rocks and minerals can be extracted.

**Ravine:** narrower than a canyon and the product of stream cutting erosion; usually very narrow and quite deep.

**River:** a ribbon-like body of water that flows downhill from the force of gravity. A river can be wide and deep, or shallow enough for a person to wade across. A flowing body of water that is smaller than a river is called a stream, creek, or brook.

**Sandbar:** a long and narrow sandbank that is usually located near the mouth of a river. It is built by the action of tides, currents, and waves.

**Savanna:** tropical grasslands with scattered vegetation primarily located on the African continent.

**Sea:** a body of salt water that is smaller than an ocean and is typically partially enclosed by land. Seas are usually located where the ocean meets the land.

**Strait:** a narrow body of water that connects two larger bodies of water. Good examples are the Straits of Malacca or the Strait of Gibraltar.

**Tributary:** a river or stream that flows into a larger body of water, like a lake or river, instead of directly into an ocean or sea.

**Tundra:** a vast and treeless region located in the Arctic and subarctic regions of the world such as Greenland, Europe, and North America.

**Volcano:** a landform or mountain that through which lava, rock fragments, hot vapor, and gas erupt from the earth's crust.

**Wilderness:** a wild and uncultivated region such as a forest or a desert; no one lives there; it is only inhabited by wild animals.