



### Physical Geography

California is the third largest state in area after Alaska and Texas. The northern coastline is mostly rocky **headlands** and small beaches. South of Santa Barbara, broad, sandy beaches are typical. The Coast Ranges rise above the ocean, and stretch from the Oregon **border** to Point Conception, which is the tip of land north of the Channel Islands.

The Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys fill the middle of California. Together, these two valleys make up the Great Central Valley. This is the most productive **agricultural region** in the world. The Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers meet in the California Delta, and flow west into San Francisco Bay. This is the only location where water from **interior** California reaches the Pacific Ocean.

East of the Great Central Valley, the Sierra Nevada stretches 400 miles from the northern **volcanoes** of Mt. Lassen and Mt. Shasta to the Tehachapi Mountains. The winter **snowpack** here provides water for crops and homes throughout much of California. Farther south, the San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and Peninsular Ranges divide the densely **populated** cities of Southern California from the **arid** Mojave Desert.

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