

## Chapter 2: Geography of Earth

Have you ever flown in a plane? If you have, you might already know something about Earth's **geography**. What did you see when you looked out the window? Mountains? The waves of an ocean?

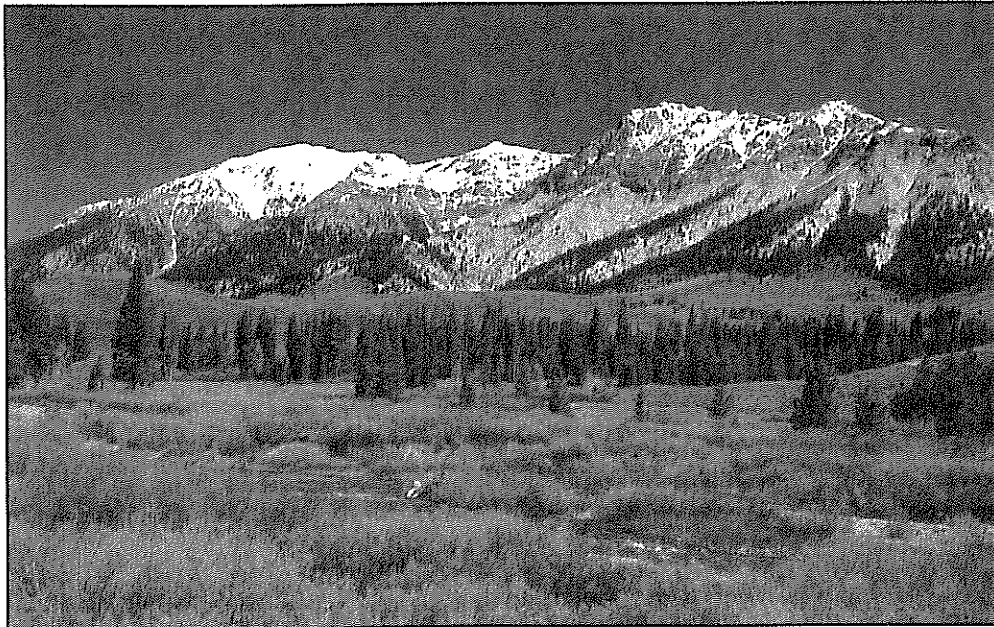
You might have seen both mountains and the ocean, because Earth's surface changes from place to place. Geography is the science that describes Earth's surface. It tries to explain how and why Earth changes. It also explains how people affect Earth and how Earth affects people.

### Earth's Land Regions

There are four main types of land regions found on Earth. They are **mountains**, **highlands**, **plateaus**, and **plains**.

➤ Look at the picture below. What kind of land region is shown in this picture?

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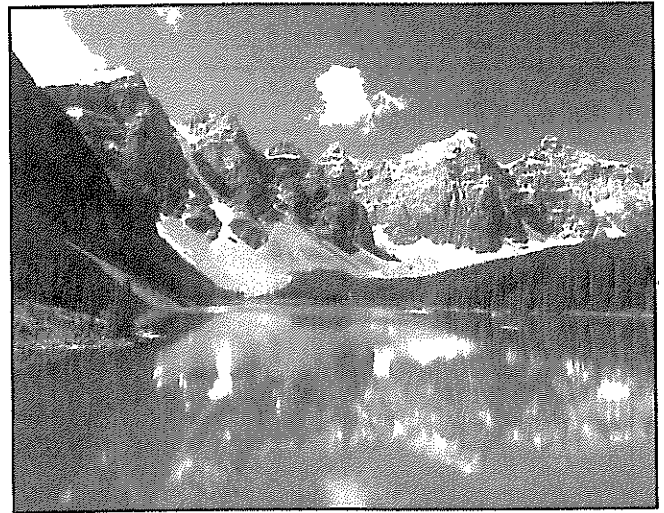
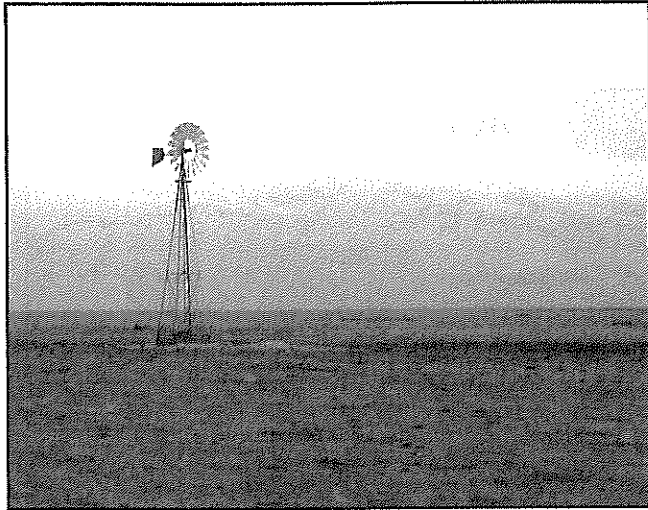
Mountain and highland regions are areas of land that rise far above sea level. These regions include many mountains, high hills, and deep valleys. About one-fifth of Earth's land surface is mountainous.

There are two great mountain regions on Earth. One can be found along the western side of North and South America. In the western part of North America, the region includes the Sierra Nevada, the Cascade Mountains, and the Rocky Mountains. In South America, the region is made up of the Andes Mountains.

The other mountain region goes through Europe and Asia. It includes the Himalayas and the Alps. The Himalaya Mountains are the highest mountains in the world. The highest peak is Mount Everest. It is nearly 30,000 feet above sea level. Mount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth.

➤ Look at the two photos below. Which two of the four main types of land regions do they show?

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## Plains and Plateaus

Plains are flat lands that are very close to sea level. Most people on Earth live in plains regions. It is easier to farm and build houses on land that is flat.

Plateaus are high lands that are usually flat. A plateau often rises up sharply on at least one side. Some plateaus rise up from the ground on all four sides.

- Look at the map below. Put an X near the Patagonian Plateau and the Great Central Plains. Near what mountain range is each of these plateaus located?

- Find the region on the map where you live. Write the name of the land region closest to your community.

