



Minimum January Temperatures

Mountains are the coldest places in the winter because the thinner air can not retain much of the heat reaching Earth from the sun. From December through April, snow typically covers the **landscape**, lakes freeze, and most birds and animals either **migrate** elsewhere or hibernate. There is little human activity except for winter sports like skiing and snowboarding. Two things keep the Great Central Valley cool in winter: cold air sinking down from the mountains and ground **fog**.

The coastline, southeastern **deserts**, and many inland valleys are much warmer because more dense air at low **elevations** retains more heat from the sun in the way a thick blanket traps in more warmth than a thin sheet. In addition, ocean water cools down more slowly than the air, so winds coming off the Pacific Ocean help to keep coastal areas warmer.

