



Physiographic Regions

Physiography is the shape of the land surface. California has 12 distinct physiographic **regions**. Most of the state is made up of high mountains and low valleys that orient north-south. The Great Central Valley is a very broad and level valley between the Coast Ranges and the Sierra Nevada. More mountains and small valleys along the eastern **border** of the state are part of the Basin and Range region. The Mojave and Sonoran Deserts make up the vast southeastern quarter of California. Mountains also rise above the coastline from the Klamath Mountains and Cascade Range at the Oregon border to the Northern and Southern Coast Ranges. A broad plain extends along the coast in the Transverse and Peninsular Ranges regions to the southern border with Mexico.

Image below: Mt. Whitney is the highest peak in California at 14,505 feet above sea level. Alaska is the only state with higher mountains.

