Western Hemisphere

Eastern Hemisphere

The United States is a country in the **Western Hemisphere**. It consists of *48 contiguous states* in North America + *Alaska + Hawaii*. There are several United States **territories in the Pacific and Caribbean.**

The term
"**United States**",
when used in the
geographical sense,
means the continental
*United States,
Alaska,
Hawaii,
Puerto Rico,
Guam, and
the Virgin Islands*
of the United States.

The country shares **land borders** with Canada and Mexico and **maritime (water) borders** with Russia, Cuba, and The Bahamas.

- Washed by the **Pacific Ocean**, the **Atlantic Ocean**, and the **Gulf of Mexico**.
- Alaska - the **Bering Strait** and the **Arctic Ocean**, while Hawaii - the **Pacific Ocean**.

The United States of America

50

- The group of forty-eight states in the **single region** between Canada and Mexico is referred as the **Lower 48.**
- **Alaska** is separated from the Lower 48 by Canada.
- **The State of Hawaii is an archipelago** in the Pacific Ocean.
- The capital city, **Washington, District of Columbia**, is a federal district located on land donated by the state of Maryland.
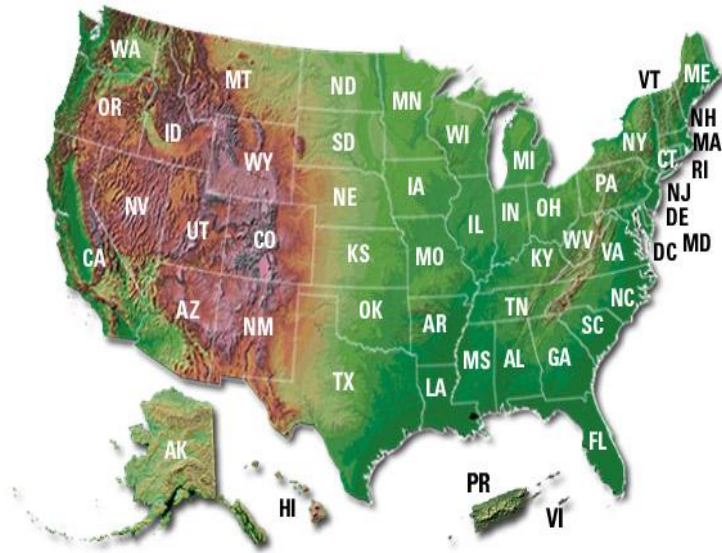
- The land area of Lower 48 is approximately **7,700,000 km^2**.

- Alaska is the largest state at **1,480,000 km^2**.

- Hawaii has just over **16,000 km^2**.

- The United States is **the world's third largest country**, ranking behind Russia and Canada and just above or below China.

- *two harbor indented coasts*
- *well watered coastal plains*
- *two mountain ranges*
- *an arable plain*
- *interconnected and navigable rivers*
- *the southerly deserts*
- *the basin*
- *ranges*

The eastern United States

- the *Atlantic and Gulf shores* +
- the Florida peninsula
- *Piedmont*
- *The Appalachian Mountains*
- the *Great Lakes*
- The five Great Lakes:
- **Lakes Superior,**
- **Michigan,**
- **Huron,**
- **Erie,**
- **Ontario.**

The southeast United States
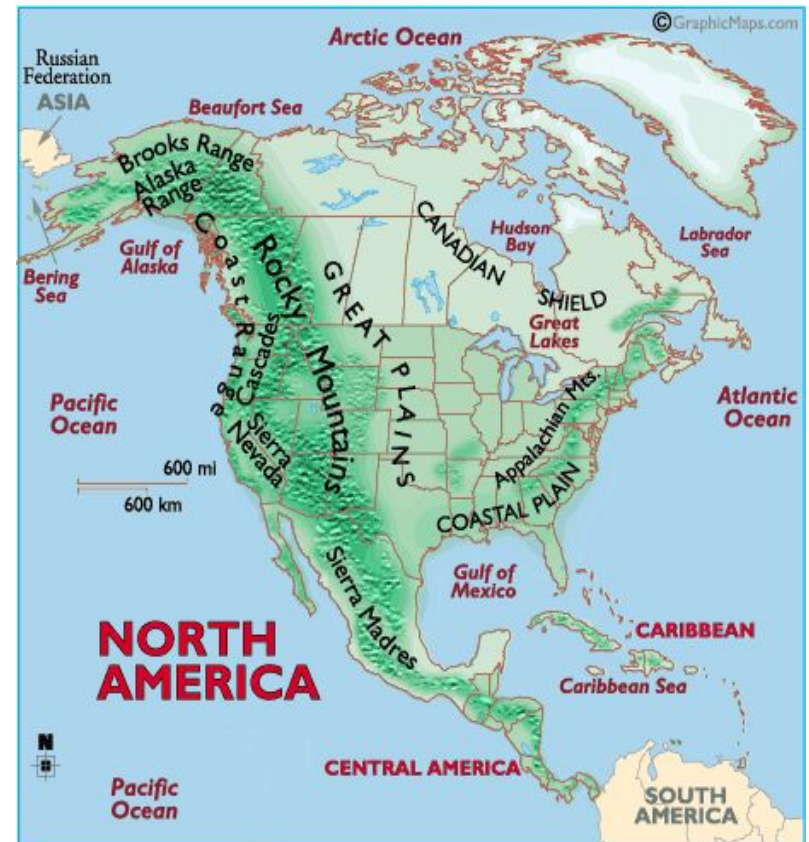
- *subtropical forests*
- *mangrove wetlands* in Florida.
- the *Mississippi River* with two tributaries, the *Ohio River* and the *Tennessee River*.
- rolling hills and productive farmland

- The ***Great Plains***
- ***agricultural*** part of the USA
- the ***Rocky Mountains***
- from Canada to Mexico
- ***the highest region***
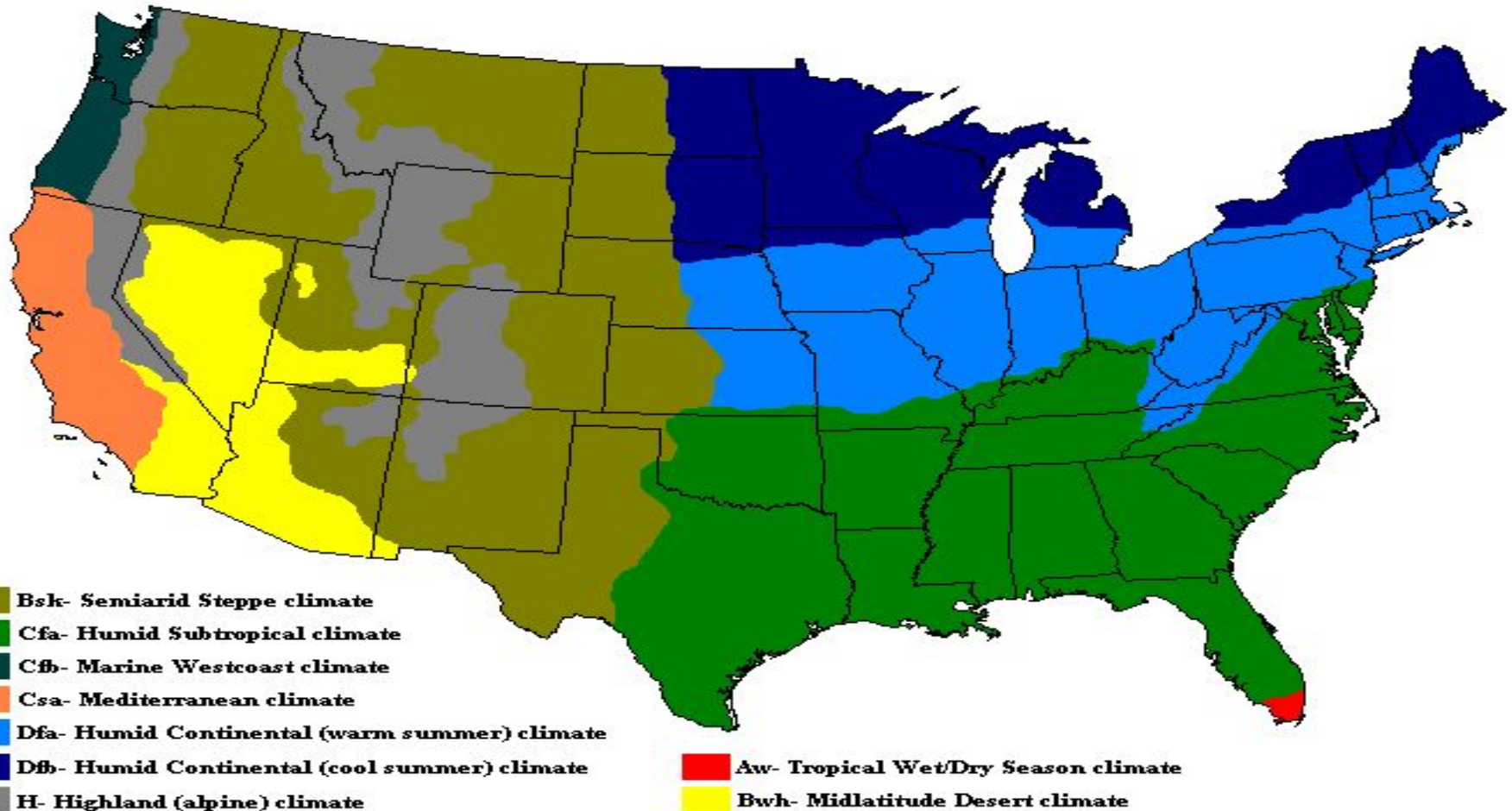- ***tallest peak*** –
- **Mount Elbert at 4,400 m**.
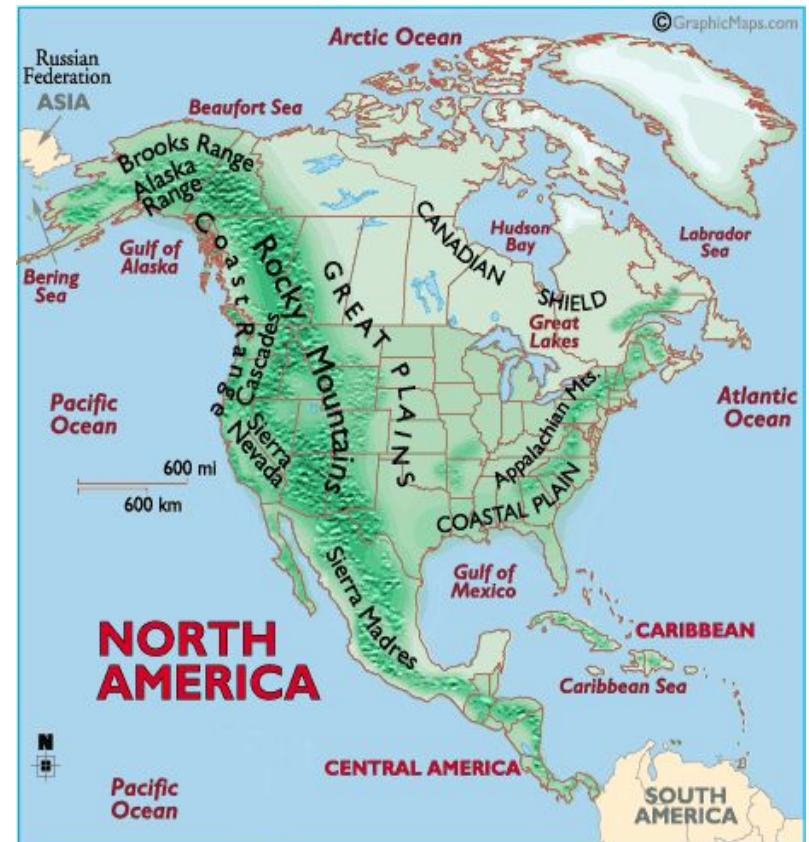
- **Intermountain West**
- the *Cascade Range*
- *the Sierra Nevada*
- the highest point - *Mount Whitney* (4,421 m).
- the *Pacific Coast Ranges*.
- the tallest trees in the world (**the Redwoods**).
- **The Mojave Desert**

CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY

Climate Zones of the Continental United States

Bsk- Semiarid Steppe climate
Cfa- Humid Subtropical climate
Cfb- Marine Westcoast climate
Csa- Mediterranean climate
Dfa- Humid Continental (warm summer) climate
Dfb- Humid Continental (cool summer) climate
H- Highland (alpine) climate
Aw- Tropical Wet/Dry Season climate
Bwh- Midlatitude Desert climate

Natural disasters

- *drought* - the Dust Bowl (1931–1942) – entire regions were virtually depopulated, and dust storms ravaged the land.
- *thunderstorms and tornado outbreaks* - 1,000 tornadoes occurring each year.
- The strip of land from Texas to Kansas and east into Tennessee is known as *Tornado Alley*
- *Hurricanes - Hurricane season* runs from June 1 to November 30
- the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, Hurricane Andrew in 1992, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.
- *Flooding*
- *Earthquakes*
- *Tsunamis* around Pacific basin,
- *Mud slides* in California,
- And *forest fires*

The U.S. ecology is considered "**megadiverse**":

- **400 mammal**
- **750 bird**
- **500 reptile and amphibian species**
- **91,000 insect species**

- There are *fifty-eight national parks* and hundreds of other federally managed parks, forests, and wilderness areas.

NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

It includes all

- **National Historical Parks/Sites, National Battlefields/Military Parks, National Memorials, and some National Monuments.**
- Delaware is the only state without a unit of the National Park System.

The City of Rocks, National Reserve, Idaho	**Devil Tower, National Monument, Wyoming**	**Whiteoak Canyon, Shanandoah, Virginia**	**Arches, National Park, Utah**
Great Smoky Mountains,	**Natural bridges, National Monument,**	**Statue of Liberty, National Monument, New York**	**Yellowstone, National Park, Wyoming**

POLITICAL DIVISIONS

The United States is a *federal union of 50 states*. The original *thirteen states* were the successors of the thirteen colonies that rebelled against British rule.

The United States also possesses

five major overseas territories:

Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands in the Caribbean; and American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific.