**Cascade Mountain Region**

**Physical Features**

The Cascade Mountains is one of the five land regions in Washington and divides the state down the middle ranging from the border of Canada on the north and the border of Oregon on the south. These tall rugged mountains divide the eastern and western part of our state. Scientists say the Cascade Range is about 40 million years old. The Cascades are part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, the ring of volcanoes around the Pacific Ocean. The western slopes of the Cascade Range are dominated by its temperate rainforests, while the eastern slopes are home to Washington’s magnificent ponderosa pine forests. Both sides of the range are graced by a wealth of glacier-fed rivers and waterfalls that give meaning to the name "Cascade."

**Climate and Natural Resources** 

You won’t be surprised to learn that the winters in the Cascade Mountains are long and cold, with lots of snow and temperatures below zero. The highest parts of the Cascade Mountains are covered with snow and ice for most of the year. High on the mountains it is too cold for trees to grow. Summers are short and cool with average temperatures of 60 degrees. The mountains on the western slopes can have an annual precipitation of 150 inches. The eastern side of the mountains is much drier and has an annual rainfall of only nine inches. The mountains themselves are the dominant natural resource of this region. Soil conditions for farming are generally good around the base of the Cascade Range, especially downwind of the volcanoes, such as Mt. St. Helens. This is due to the fact that volcanic soil is rich in minerals and stores water well. Timber is abundant at lower elevations.

**Industry**

The Cascade Mountains are a source of timber for the lumber industry. The western slopes are densely covered with Douglas Fir, Hemlock and Alder, while the drier eastern slopes have mostly Ponderosa Pine. The fertile land of the lower elevations provides farmland. Tourism is important to the Cascade Mountain Region, with skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing popular in winter, and fishing, mountain climbing, and hiking popular in the summer.

**Native American Tribes** 

Native American tribes have inhabited the Cascade Mountains for thousands of years. The Cascade Mountain Range divides the coastal Salish from the interior Salish peoples. Native Americans lived near the rivers and fished for food. The alpine meadows provided them with many edible roots and berries. Many of the mountains had Native American names, like Mount Rainier, which they called Tahoma. The Tulalip, Snoqualmie and Snohomish tribes also lived along some of the Cascade Range in the southern part of the state.



**Major Cities and Landmarks**

The Cascade Mountain range includes Mt. Baker, Glacier Peak, Mt. Adams, and Mt. Rainier, which is the highest point in the state at 14,410 feet high. It also includes Mt. St. Helens, which is a volcano that erupted in 1980. Many people go to the mountains and surrounding National Parks for hiking, camping, and outdoor recreation. The city of Leavenworth is a famous tourist town and ski resort in the mountains near Seattle. Wenatchee is also located in this area and is well known for its produce, especially its apples. Outdoor recreation brings many tourists from all around the world. Many of them travel along the North Cascade Highway to enjoy the scenic views and great outdoor recreation options.

