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**REGIONS**

The three landforms of North Carolina make up the four major geographic regions of the state: **the Tidewater, the** **Coastal Plain**, the **Piedmont**, and the **Mountains**.

**Tidewater**

The Tidewater is the area along the coast close to sea level. It is farthest east. The Outer Banks is a group of islands off the coast of NC. The sections of water between the Outer Banks and the mainland are called **sounds**. The islands form capes. A **cap**e is when the island points far out into the ocean. Cape Hatteras is known as the Graveyard of the Atlantic because shifting sand has caused many ships to run aground. The Outer Banks stretch more than 175 miles along the coast.

The mouths of the major streams and rivers empty into sounds or the ocean. This region has many low-lying areas called wetlands, where water covers the land. The Great Dismal Swamp, a series of swamps scattered from Virginia, to North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, is North Carolina's largest wetland area. It covers about 750 square miles, making it one of the largest swamps in the United Swamps.

**Coastal Plain**

The Coastal Plain, a higher, drier area, begins west of the Tidewater. The rich, sandy soil here is some of the state's best farmland. In the southwestern corner of the Inner Coastal Plain are the Sandhills, a subregion of rolling, sandy hills. This area has the highest elevation on the Coastal Plain, ranging from about 900 to 1,000 feet above sea level. Longleaf pines are native to this area.

**Piedmont**

The Piedmont is the middle region of the state, located between the Coastal Plain and the Mountain regions. Piedmont is a French word meaning "foot of the mountain." The elevations of this region range from about 300 feet in the western Coastal Plain to about 1,500 feet near the mountains. The boundary between the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont is called the fall line or fall zone. Along this are, rivers flow from the older, harder rocks of the Piedmont to the softer rocks of the coastal Plain. Along the fall line, rivers form shoals, low waterfalls, and rapids. Below the fall line, streams are usually sluggish and smooth-flowing. Above the fall line, the streams are rocky and shallow, making boating difficult. The land of the Piedmont is called a plateau because it is high and mostly flat.

**Mountains**

The western part of the state is the Mountain region. It is smaller in area that the Piedmont and Coastal Plain. The elevation in this region reaches to more than one mile high. The Blue Ridge Mountains separate the Piedmont from the Mountain region. North Carolina has at least 40 mountains that rise to 6,000 feet and 100 that rise more than 5,000 feet. Mount Mitchell in the Black Mountain range is 6, 684 feet high. This is the highest point in North Carolina and the highest in the United States east of the Mississippi River. The Eastern Continental Divide runs east from those flowing west. Rivers on the eastern side of the divide flow east toward the Atlantic Ocean. Rivers that run on the western side of the divide flow toward the Tennessee and Ohio rivers and into the Gulf of Mexico.