

# South Carolina Region Research



## **Physical Characteristics: What Our State Looks Like**

A region is an area of land that has something in common. South Carolina has five land regions. Each region has its own special traits. We are going to look at these traits:

Elevation: How high does the land rise above sea level?

Rainfall: How much does it rain?

Temperature: How cold is it in the winter? How warm is it in the summer?

The Mountain region is the highest area in South Carolina. The mountains are 1,400 to 3,500 feet tall. The air is cooler here because of the high elevation and it also rains more than in other parts of the state. In the summer, the temperature is 71 to 74 degrees. In the winter, it can be 38 to 40 degrees. Every year, it rains between 60 to 80 inches, which helps all the plants stay green. The rain also helps to form waterfalls, streams and rivers in this region.

The Piedmont region covers a much larger part of South Carolina. The land here is not as tall, and there are rolling hills and valleys. The elevation in this region is 300 to 1,400 feet. It rains less in this region, 46 to 54 inches every year, but the waterfalls and streams from the mountains bring lots of water to the Piedmont, forming wide rivers. These rivers have been blocked in parts to form man-made lakes called reservoirs. The winter temperatures range from 40 to 44 degrees and in the summer, it can be 74 to 81 degrees.

The Sandhills region is a special region in South Carolina. Millions of years ago, the ocean came up all the way to the middle of the state, and this region's sand comes from those ancient beaches. There are gently sloped hills with winding rivers, and the elevation ranges from 300 to 725 feet. The temperatures in the summer are between 79 and 81 degrees and in the winter it drops down to between 42 and 46 degrees. This area gets about 45 inches of rain every year.

The Coastal Plain region only has 300 feet of elevation at its highest point and goes down to sea level at its lowest point. This region has slow-moving rivers and floodplains and the rainfall here ranges from 46-52 inches. There are many swamps in this region, with trees that grow in the water. Winter temperatures are between 42 and 48 degrees and in the summer, the temperatures warm up to 79 to 81 degrees.

The Coast has wide beaches and salt marshes covered in tall grasses. The elevation here is at sea level, and the area is very flat without any hills. The Coast is affected by the tides and currents of the Atlantic Ocean, so the beaches can change a lot after a storm. On average, it rains 48 to 50 inches. This region has the warmest temperatures in the state of South Carolina. In the summer, it averages 80 to 81 degrees, and in the winter, it is about 46 to 50 degrees.

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## **Wildlife Communities**

Because there are so many different regions in South Carolina, we can also find many different plants and animals across the state.

In the Mountains, we see trees, like white pine and hemlock, that are not found in the rest of South Carolina; this is because of the cooler temperatures in this region. The large amount of rain in the Mountains means that plants grow thick and green. The cool temperatures are also the reason why we see less reptiles and more mammals in this region. The streams in the mountains are very cold, which makes the perfect home for fish, like trout.

The Piedmont is warmer than the Mountains, so we see hardwood and pine trees in this region. These trees are home to many mammals, reptiles, and birds. Fast-moving rivers are a good habitat for fish, like darters, and the slow-moving water of man-made lakes, or reservoirs, is perfect for sunfish.

The Sandhills region has less rainfall than any other region of the state. The sandy soil does not hold water well so the trees that grow here, like long leaf pines and turkey oaks, are adapted to dry soils. In the Sandhills, we find certain types of animals who can live in dry conditions, like gopher tortoises. These turtles get their water from the plants they eat.

The Coastal Plain is warm and humid. It contains swamps, because there are many areas of flat land that can hold standing water. Pine trees and hardwood trees live in this region, and one special kind of tree that lives in the swamp is the cypress tree, which can grow in water. An animal that is known for living in the Coastal Plain is the American alligator.

The Coast is close to the Atlantic Ocean, so the plants and animals who live here need to be adapted to salt and saltwater. Trees such as wax myrtles and live oaks have waxy leaves to protect them from the salt spray in the air. Spartina grass can drink the water and push out the salt. Animals like periwinkle snails move and eat with the cycle of the tides.