

2.3 Mapping Earth's Physical Features

In the winter, snowboarders look for a snowy mountain to practice their sport on. In the summer, vacationers seek to cool off by a lake or river. These are just three of the landforms and bodies of water that you might see on a physical features map.

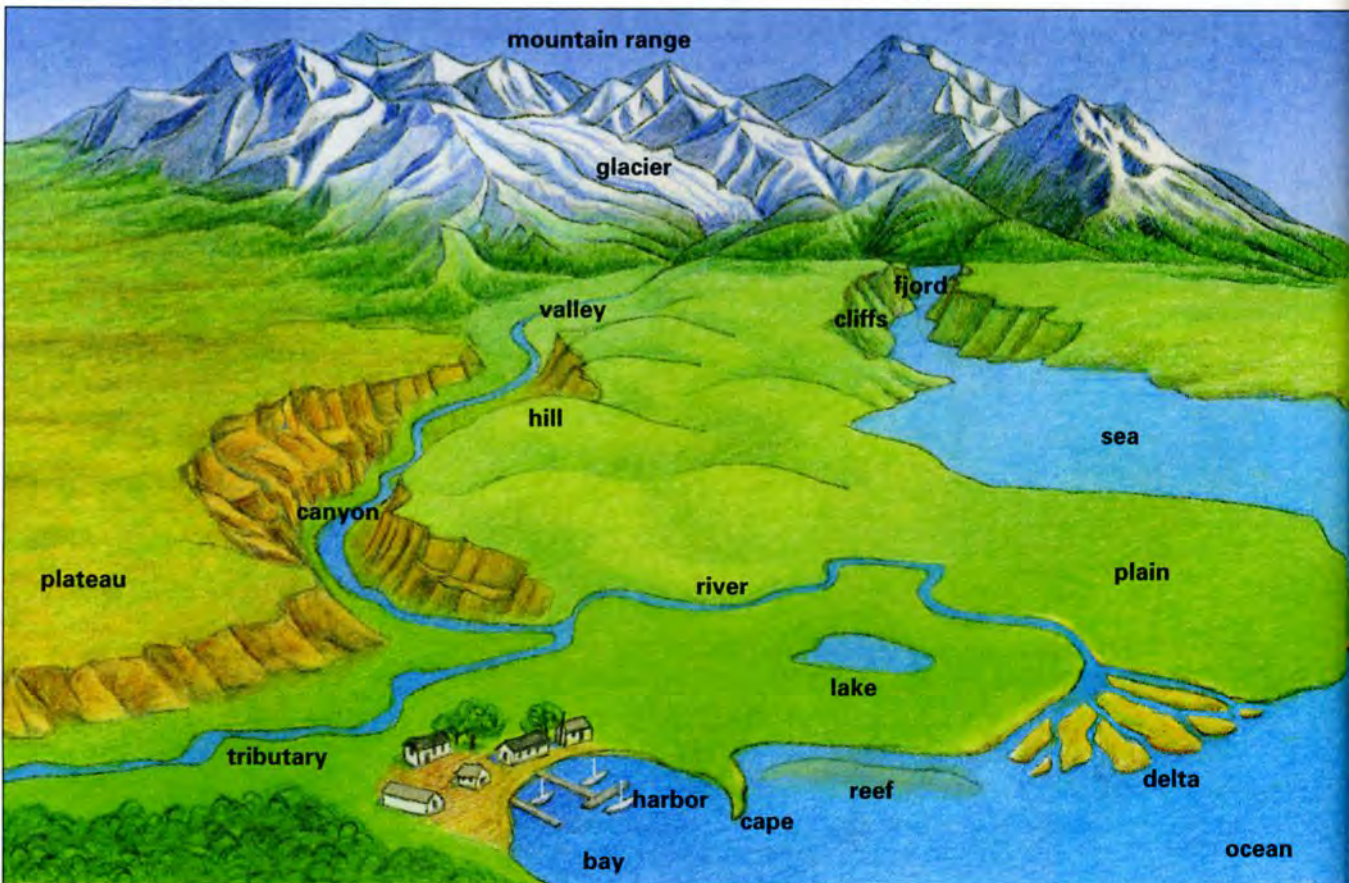
Common Landforms Geographers have given names to the many landforms found on Earth. Some landforms have distinctive shapes when viewed from above. A long, narrow **peninsula**, for example, juts out from a continent into the ocean and is surrounded by water on three sides. Other landforms have distinct shapes when viewed from ground level. Mountain ranges tower over low, flat plains. A **plateau** is a raised, flat area of land. A canyon is a deep, narrow valley with steep sides.

Physical features maps show the shapes of features as seen from above. They also show the elevation, or height above sea level, of various features. These maps typically use colors and shading to show changes in elevation.

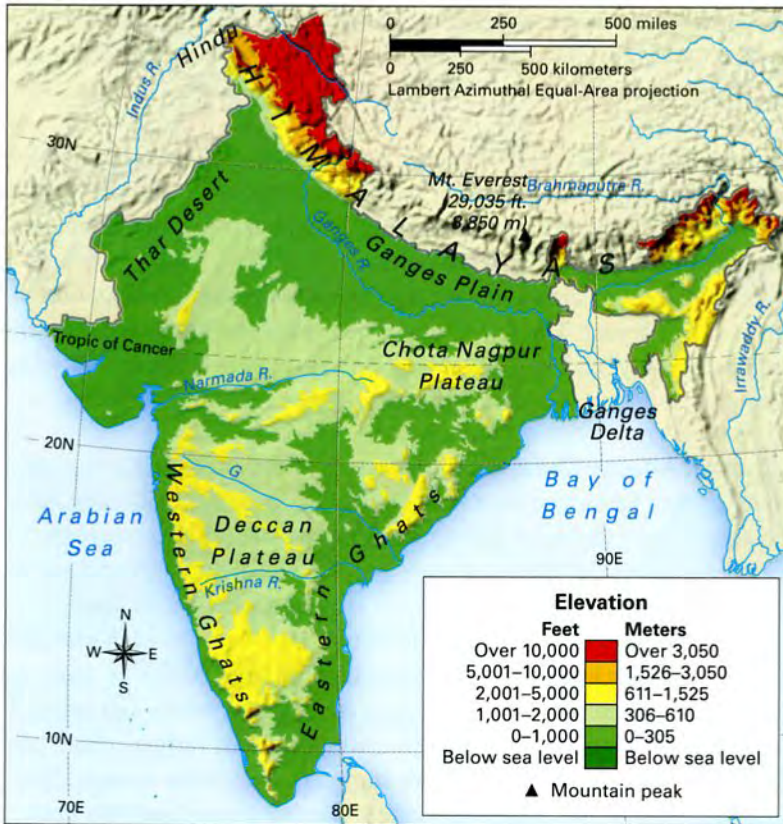
Bodies of Water Geographers also label bodies of water on physical features maps. Many kinds of water bodies appear on continents. For instance, rivers flow down from mountains and make their way to the sea. Lakes are entirely surrounded by land. Other water bodies are created where oceans and seas meet continents. A bay is part of an ocean that is enclosed by an inward-curving stretch of coastline. A **gulf** is a body of water that cuts deeply into the shoreline and is enclosed by land on three sides.

Landforms and Water Bodies

You will see both landforms and bodies of water labeled on maps. This diagram shows many of these physical features.



Physical Features of India



Physical Features Maps

This map shows major physical features in India. The Himalayas are India's highest physical feature. Two long rivers, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, flow out of the Himalayas. They form one of the world's largest river deltas where they meet the Bay of Bengal.

