



# Natural Environments of Mexico



## Chapter Ten Section One



# Mexico

- Large country- three times the size of Texas
- Most of the country made up of rugged central plateau called Mexican Plateau
- Mexican Plateau- gets to 9000 feet
- Three great mountain ranges border the Mexican Plateau
  - 1. Sierra Madre Oriental - east
  - 2. Sierra Madre Occidental - west
  - 3. Sierra Madre Del Sur - south



# Valley of Mexico

- At the southern end of the Mexican Plateau lies the Valley of Mexico
- Mexico City is located in the Valley of Mexico at 7,500 feet above sea level
- The mountains southeast of Mexico city include volcanoes... the biggest of which is Orizaba at 18,700 feet
- Earth quakes are also common in the region
- In southern Mexico there are small mountain ranges, narrow valleys and volcanoes

# The Isthmus of Mexico

- Mexico narrows in the south to become an isthmus - a narrow strip of land connecting two larger land areas
- The Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico are only 150 miles apart at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec

# The Yucatan Peninsula

- The Yucatan Peninsula is Mexico's flattest region
- Limestone lies beneath the Yucatan Peninsula
- Water drains through the limestone rather than flowing across it
- As a result there are very few rivers on the Yucatan
- The erosion of the limestone has created underground caves and sinkholes.

# Climate in Mexico

- Mexico's climate varies region by region
- Mexico is big enough to stretch through both tropical and subtropical latitudes.
- There are three factors that contribute to Mexico's climate
  - 1. Pacific subtropical high pressure cell- A regional high pressure system that creates the dry weather that dominates Northwestern Mexico.
  - The arid and semiarid climates and scrub vegetation of Baja California are a result of the high pressure cell
  - The system limits vegetation over 2/3 of Mexico



# The Northeast Trade Winds

- The Northeast trade winds bring humid air from the Gulf of Mexico to the Caribbean Sea
- Rains sweep into Mexico from the east and southeast especially during the summer
- The forested plains of southeastern Mexico have a tropical humid climate
- The winds also steer hurricanes toward Mexico's east coast



# Elevation and Climate

- Climates vary dramatically as elevation changes in Mexico
- Mexico's highest levels of rainfall occur where humid trade winds rise against the mountains of the southeast
- There are dry rain shadow climates on the western sides of the mountains
- The mountain valleys have mild climates.





# Cold weather in Mexico?

- During the winter cold polar air flows southward across the Mexican Plateau
- Snow can fall in the Sierra Madre Occidental
- Freezing temperatures can reach as far south as Mexico City



# Rivers in Mexico

- Mexico does not have many major rivers
- The biggest rivers are in central Mexico...they are used for hydroelectricity and irrigation



# Natural Resources in Mexico

- Mineral resources in Mexico include silver, gold, iron ore, lead and mercury
- Petroleum is the most valuable resource in Mexico
- The greatest oil and natural gas fields lie along the Gulf of Mexico
- Most of Mexico's oil is exported to the U.S.