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## Climate of Indiana

Indiana is one of the smallest states in area west of the Appalachian Mountains. Despite its size, the state's natural characteristics exhibit a sharp contrast north to south across its landscape.

## Topographic Features

Indiana topography is characterized by vast flat plains in the northern two thirds of the state. In the unglaciated south, hills, ridges, knolls, caves and waterfalls abound. A few counties in far westcentral Indiana also exhibit the southern topography due to their location in the Wabash River bed. Land elevations range from 324 feet above sea level at the mouth of the Wabash River in the southwest corner of the state to 1,257 feet in far eastcentral Indiana.

Most of the state is drained by the Wabash River system. The total drainage area of the Wabash is 33,000 square miles, of which 24,000 square miles is in Indiana. Other river basins are the Maumee in the extreme northeast, the St. Joseph (Lake Michigan) and Kankakee (Illinois River) in the northcentral and northwest, while some of the extreme south and southeast area drains into the Ohio River.

Southcentral Indiana has the most rugged terrain and is home to the Hoosier National Forest. The Kankakee Valley in the extreme northwest slopes gently toward the west and drains what was formerly marshlands. Many small lakes abound in northeastern Indiana among numerous glacial moraines and hills. Tourism has become a growing industry in southern Indiana while farming and manufacturing remain important on its northern and central plains.

## Soils

The characteristics of Indiana soils are important to the needs of farming. The sandy soils of the northernmost counties have a low water holding capacity. Drainage is rapid during rainy periods and flooding is rarely a problem. Some crop irrigation is done in these sandy areas in dry summers.

Rich prairie soils extend over west central and central Indiana, often producing the state's highest crop yields. Some of the clays in eastcentral Indiana are compact, with poor drainage and frequent ponding, but crop stress due to lack of rain occurs infrequently.

Much of the land in southcentral Indiana has a poor water retention capacity because of the underlying