

floored by deep fertile clay soils left by glacial lakes that once covered the area. It is separated from the Saskatchewan plain along its western boundary by the Manitoba escarpment, a narrow belt of hilly terrain.

Manitoba has the greatest water-power potential of the three Prairie provinces. The North is well forested but much of the productive area is so remote that forest industries are not highly developed.

Winnipeg, the capital, is the industrial centre of Manitoba.

**Saskatchewan** is two-thirds prairie lowland, the great grain-producing region of Canada. The demarcation line between the lowlands and the Canadian Shield, crossing into Saskatchewan near the 55th parallel, continues northwest across the province although it becomes less sharply defined. The second step of the prairie formation, covered with deep fertile soil, is exceptionally flat in some areas but elsewhere hummocky with innumerable sloughs. The next scarp is the Missouri Coteau from which extends the highest of the prairie steps. The Cypress Hills rise above this level. Cutting across the lowland are the branches of the Saskatchewan River which flow to Lake Winnipeg.

Saskatchewan's climate is continental with long cold winters and warm summers. The frost-free period in the fertile lowland areas ranges from 80 to 100 days. Precipitation is low with an average of less than 50 cm a year.

The urban centres — Regina, the capital, and Saskatoon — serve mainly as distributing centres for their surrounding areas.

**Alberta** lies mainly in the interior plains region. The southern part of the province is dry, treeless prairie changing toward the north into a zone of poplar interspersed with open prairie and giving way to mixed forests.

The boundary follows the 49th parallel, strikes northwest following the ridge of the Rocky Mountains to a point close to the 55th parallel and then turns directly north to the 60th parallel. From the Saskatchewan border in the southern area the plain rises gradually as it merges into the Rocky Mountain Foothills. This foothills area is part of the Western Cordilleran region. The Alberta Rockies have numerous high peaks close to or on the British Columbia boundary.

The South is subject in winter to cold dry air masses of continental polar air, occasionally moderated by Chinook winds. Summers are warm with abundant sunshine but rainfall is meagre and highly variable, particularly in the southwest, with periodic droughts. In some areas irrigation projects have been developed, taking water from the rivers rising in the mountains to the West.

The metropolitan areas of Edmonton, the capital, and Calgary are in the oil and gas producing areas.

**British Columbia** consists almost completely of the Cordilleran region made up of parallel mountain ranges oriented in a north-south direction with a set of parallel linear valleys.

The Rocky Mountains on the East present a continuous range of wall-like ridges, cut up by glaciation into sharp peaks, knife-like edges and deep hollows. Some of the highest peaks in the Canadian Rockies rise to 3500 m or more.

The central section is marked off by the Rocky Mountain Trench which contains the headwaters of the Kootenay, Columbia, Fraser, Peace and Liard rivers. Westward, relief is lower and broader and the effects of glaciation are not as spectacular. This section consists of several mountain ranges, with plateaus and lake basins between them.

In the western section the Coast Mountains extend southward from the St. Elias Mountains where the loftiest peaks on the continent thrust up out of glistening icefields.

The inner passage adjacent to the coast — the Strait of Georgia, Queen Charlotte Strait and Hecate Strait — is one of the finest natural waterways in the world. Vancouver Island rises steeply from a rocky coastline; in the Queen Charlotte Islands, individual mountain ranges are separated by deep, narrow valleys.

Prevailing westerly winds and the warm Pacific waters result in mild wet winters in the coastal area, warm summers and the longest average frost-free season in Canada. Inland, there are greater ranges of temperature and much less rainfall. Semi-arid conditions occur in some of the plateau areas of the interior. The North has long cold winters, short cool summers and moderate precipitation.

Vancouver is the largest city, a rapidly growing industrial complex and seaport. Victoria, the capital, is on the southern tip of Vancouver Island.

**Yukon**, north and slightly west of British Columbia, is a triangular area of plateaus and mountain ranges bounded by the Northwest Territories and Alaska. Its only seacoast extends along the Arctic Ocean west of the Mackenzie River Delta. Between the Coast Mountains on the West and the Mackenzie Mountains on the East lies a plateau of rough, irregularly rolling upland. Numerous river valleys cut through mountains and plateaus. In the southwest many peaks of the St. Elias Mountains reach heights of over 4000 m. The highest point in Canada, Mount Logan (5951 m), is located in this mountain range.