

Refinance Calculator

Rates are at historic lows!

Loan amount

\$400,000

Loan term

1995'S RATE

CANADIAN SHIELD

Article

Media

Additional Info

Home > Geography & Travel > Physical Geography of Land

Canadian Shield

shield, North America



Print



Cite



Share



More

WRITTEN BY

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

Encyclopaedia Britannica's editors oversee subject areas in which they have extensive knowledge, whether from years of experience gained by working on that content or via study for an advanced degree....

[See Article History](#)

Alternative Titles: Canadian continental shield, Canadian-Greenland Shield, Laurentian Shield, Precambrian Shield

Canadian Shield, one of the world's largest geologic **continental shields**, centred on **Hudson Bay** and extending for 8 million square km (3 million square miles) over

TRENDING ARTICLES



[Which Animal Is the Smartest?](#)



[What If the President Is Impeached?](#)



[Why Do Athletes Wear Numbered Jerseys?](#)



[How Did the Tradition of Christmas Trees Start?](#)

**Ready for anything?
We can help.**



eastern, central, and northwestern
Canada from the Great Lakes to the
Canadian Arctic and into
Greenland, with small extensions
into northern Minnesota,
Wisconsin, Michigan, and New
York, U.S.

Advertisement - Continue reading below



READ MORE ON THIS
TOPIC

Canada: The Canadian Shield

By far the largest of
Canada's
physiographic
regions, the **Canadian
Shield** (sometimes
called the
Precambrian Shield)
occupies...

The Canadian Shield constitutes the largest mass of exposed **Precambrian rock** on the face of **Earth**. The region, as a whole, is composed of ancient crystalline rocks whose complex structure attests to a long history of **uplift** and depression, **mountain building (orogeny)**, and **erosion**. Some of the ancient mountain ranges can still be recognized as a ridge or belt of hills, but the present appearance of the physical landscape of the Canadian Shield is not so much a

result of the **folding** and **faulting** and compression of the rocks millions of years ago as it is the work of **ice** in relatively recent **geologic time**. During the **Pleistocene Epoch** (2.6 million to 11,700 years ago), the vast continental **glaciers** that covered northern **North America** had this region as a centre. The ice, in moving to the south, scraped the land bare of its overlying **mantle** of **weathered** rock. Some of this material was deposited on the **shield** when the ice melted, but the bulk of it was carried southward to be deposited south and southwest of the Canadian Shield.



Canadian Shield

Map depicting the extent of the Canadian Shield in North

America. The Canadian Shield constitutes the largest mass of exposed Precambrian rock on the face of Earth.

Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

The resulting surface consists of rocky, ice-smoothed hills with an average relief of 30 metres (100 feet), together with irregular basins, which are mostly filled by [lakes](#) or [swamps](#). In places the old mountain ranges may be recognized by hills several hundreds of metres in height. The northeastern portion, however, became tilted up so that, in northern [Labrador](#) and [Baffin Island](#), the land rises to more than 1,500 metres (5,000 feet) above [sea level](#).

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

This article was most recently revised and updated by [Adam Augustyn](#), Managing Editor, Reference Content.

LEARN MORE in these related Britannica

articles:



Canada: The Canadian Shield

By far the largest of Canada's physiographic



North America: The Canadian...

The **Canadian Shield** is the principal area of North America



United States: The Interior...

...region, the formidable and ice-scoured **Canadian Shield**



HISTORY AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Sign up here to see what has On The Data every day in your ink



By
signi
up,
you
agr
to
our
Pri
Not

Inspire your inbox – Sign up for daily fun facts about this day in history, updates, and special offers.

Enter your email

Subscribe

By signing up for this email, you are agreeing to news, offers, and information from Encyclopaedia Britannica.

[Click here to view our Privacy Notice.](#) Easy unsubscribe links are provided in every email.

Truth Needs a Champion. Will It Be You?

For 250 years, Britannica has worked to provide balanced, accurate information to our readers — a responsibility that is as important in today's world of misinformation as it ever has been.

Please consider supporting us with a small donation or [click here to purchase a subscription.](#)

Make a Donation

[Continue reading](#)

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Instagram](#)

