

Continental Divide

Splitting America's watershed in two, the Continental Divide is what controls the drainage to the Pacific Ocean or to the Gulf of Mexico. The Continental Divide serves the same purpose as a ridge on the roof of a house. The water will flow where gravity takes it. This means that if the water falls just east of the Great Divide the water will then be taken by gravity towards the Gulf of Mexico. This same property serves for the west as well - water on the west side of the divide flows towards the Pacific Ocean. You may be looking out the window at this moment asking yourself, "Where is the mountain ridgeline which creates this divide?" Considering the scenery, this is certainly a valid question. Unfortunately, at this location the Continental Divide is almost hidden. Even though we are traveling at an elevation of 4,587 feet, this is the lowest railroad crossing of the entire North American Continental Divide. If you watch closely you may be able to pick out the marker along highway I-10 physically locating the divide. The Continental Divide, also known as the Great Divide, runs through the entire North American Continent, starting in the north on the Seward Peninsula of Alaska, running down the spine of the Rocky Mountains, then into this relatively flat portion of New Mexico...sending water either west or east all along the line.

Source(s):

<http://www.nationalatlas.gov/mld/condiv1.html>

Hoffman, Eva J. "A Guidebook to Amtrak's Sunset Limited." Flashing Yellow Guidebooks, Golden, CO, 2009.

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