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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SOUTH

Take an express train south, says Professor R. DeC. Ward, and you will find the average monthly temperature increasing about 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit for every hour of travel. Along the Maine coast the January mean is between 20 and 25, while in southern Florida the average is 65 degrees Fahrenheit. This means an increase of about 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit for each latitude degree, or a distance of 70 miles. Nowhere else in the world is there such a rapid rate of temperature change extending over such a great distance. It has been pointed out that the young colonies in America commanded both tropical and polar products, a great stimulus to early trade. We still appreciate the proximity of southern truck gardens and winter resorts.

Steep temperature gradients are typical of the east coast of continents, but eastern Asia shows less difference between north and south than does North America. Along the coast of Asia the rate of change is only 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit per latitude degree. Asia is as cold in the north but not so warm in the south, because cold offshore winds prevail. Along our eastern coast cold northwest winds are the rule in the north, but in the lower latitudes southwest winds off the warm Gulf of Mexico become increasingly prevalent.

On our western coast conditions are more like those in western Europe, the average January temperature changes less than 1 degree Fahrenheit in 70 miles, ranging from 40 degrees in Washington to 50 degrees in Southern California. People do not travel south on the Pacific coast so much to warm up as to escape the winter rains and dull days.

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