

# Mountains Matter

## Why Peopling Models Need a Third Dimension

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Archaeologists have long construed ice sheet and sea-level positions as the primary geographic features relevant to the Pleistocene peopling of the western hemisphere. This paper suggests that a third major feature of the landscape also played an important role in the peopling of the Americas: mountains. For reasons that include the familiarity of their environments, to their rich and diverse resources, to their visibility, mountains likely inspired and facilitated the peopling of the western hemisphere. Understanding that mountains mattered to the First Americans may point archaeologists to new research questions, testable hypotheses, and eventually, a more precise alignment of peopling models with archaeological evidence.