

# Package ‘cartographer’

March 19, 2026

**Title** Turn Place Names into Map Data

**Version** 0.2.2

**Description** A tool for easily matching spatial data when you have a list of place/region names. You might have a data frame that came from a spreadsheet tracking some data by suburb or state. This package can convert it into a spatial data frame ready for plotting. The actual map data is provided by other packages (or your own code).

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**Encoding** UTF-8

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**Imports** cli (>= 3.6.0), rlang (>= 1.1.0), sf (>= 1.0.12)

**Collate** 'cartographer-global.R' 'cartographer-package.R'  
'add\_geometry.R' 'data.R' 'resolve.R' 'zzz.R'

**Additional\_repositories** <http://packages.ropensci.org>

**Depends** R (>= 4.1)

**LazyData** true

**Suggests** dplyr (>= 1.2.0), ggplot2 (>= 3.4.2), knitr, maps,  
rnaturalearth, rnaturalearthhires, rmarkdown, testthat (>= 3.0.0)

**URL** <https://github.com/cidm-ph/cartographer>,  
<https://cidm-ph.github.io/cartographer/>

**BugReports** <https://github.com/cidm-ph/cartographer/issues>

**VignetteBuilder** knitr

**Config/testthat/edition** 3

**NeedsCompilation** no

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cartographer-package *Turn Place Names into Map Data*

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## Description

Cartographer is a framework for easily matching spatial data when you have a list of standardised place names. You might have a data frame that came from a spreadsheet tracking some data by suburb or state. This package can convert it into a spatial data frame ready for plotting. The actual map data is provided by other packages (or your own code) that register the data with cartographer.

## Author(s)

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- Western Sydney Local Health District, NSW Health (2023-2025) [copyright holder]

## See Also

Useful links:

- <https://github.com/cidm-ph/cartographer>
- <https://cidm-ph.github.io/cartographer/>
- Report bugs at <https://github.com/cidm-ph/cartographer/issues>

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add_geometry	<i>Convert input data frame into a spatial data frame</i>
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**Description**

Convert input data frame into a spatial data frame

**Usage**

```
add_geometry(x, location, feature_type = NA, geom_name = "geometry")
```

**Arguments**

x	Data frame with a feature name column.
location	Feature names (tidy evaluation).
feature_type	The registered map corresponding to values in location. If NA (the default), the type is guessed from the values in location.
geom_name	Name for the new column to contain the geometry.

**Value**

A spatial data frame containing all of the columns from the input data frame.

**Examples**

```
add_geometry(nc_type_example_2, county, feature_type = "sf.nc")
```

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feature_names	<i>List known feature names</i>
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**Description**

This gives the list of feature names that are part of the specified map data. The list includes any aliases defined when the map was registered. Note that the location column matching is case insensitive (see Details below).

**Usage**

```
feature_names(feature_type)
```

**Arguments**

feature_type	Type of map feature. See <a href="#">feature_types()</a> for a list of registered types.
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**Value**

Character vector of feature names.

**See Also**

[register\\_map\(\)](#) and [resolve\\_feature\\_names\(\)](#)

**Examples**

```
head(feature_names("sf.nc"))
```

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feature_types	<i>List known feature types</i>
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**Description**

Each feature type corresponds to map data that has been registered.

**Usage**

```
feature_types()
```

**Value**

Character vector of registered feature types.

**See Also**

[register\\_map\(\)](#)

**Examples**

```
feature_types()
```

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map_outline	<i>Retrieve a map outline registered with cartographer.</i>
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**Description**

Retrieve a map outline registered with cartographer.

**Usage**

```
map_outline(feature_type)
```

**Arguments**

feature\_type    Type of map feature. See [feature\\_types\(\)](#) for a list of registered types.

**Value**

The map outline that was registered under feature\_type. Note that the outline is optional, so this will return NULL if none was registered.

**Examples**

```
map_outline("sf.nc")
```

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map_sf	<i>Retrieve map data registered with cartographer.</i>
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**Description**

Retrieve map data registered with cartographer.

**Usage**

```
map_sf(feature_type)
```

**Arguments**

feature\_type    Type of map feature. See [feature\\_types\(\)](#) for a list of registered types.

**Value**

The spatial data frame that was registered under feature\_type.

**Examples**

```
map_sf("sf.nc")
```

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map_sfc	<i>Retrieve geometry of a single location.</i>
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### Description

Retrieve geometry of a single location.

### Usage

```
map_sfc(feature_names, feature_type)
```

### Arguments

**feature\_names** Name of the feature(s) to retrieve. This must be an exact case-sensitive match, and aliases are not consulted.

**feature\_type** Type of map feature. See [feature\\_types\(\)](#) for a list of registered types.

### Value

The geometry as a sfc object.

### Examples

```
map_sfc("Ashe", "sf.nc")
map_sfc(c("Craven", "Buncombe"), "sf.nc")
```

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nc_type_example_1	<i>Example datasets with a feature name column and random data</i>
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### Description

This dataset contains random data compatible with the `sf.nc` example map data for illustrating cartographer's features. `nc_type_example_1` contains a deliberate error in the county name for a single row, whereas `nc_type_example_2` contains correct data.

### Usage

```
nc_type_example_1
nc_type_example_2
```

### Format

Objects of class `data.frame` with 50 and 200 rows respectively, and 2 columns:

**county** Feature names that match the NAME field of the nc dataset

**type** Arbitrary categorical data

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register_map	<i>Register a new feature type</i>
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### Description

This adds a new feature type that can then be used by all the geoms in this package. If registering from another package, this should occur in the `.onLoad()` hook in the package.

### Usage

```
register_map(  
  feature_type,  
  data,  
  feature_column,  
  aliases = NULL,  
  outline = NULL,  
  lazy = TRUE  
)
```

### Arguments

feature_type	Name of the type. If registering from within a package, the suggested format is " <code>&lt;package name&gt;.&lt;map name&gt;</code> " to avoid clashes between packages.
data	A simple feature data frame with the map data, or a function that returns a data frame. When <code>lazy</code> is <code>TRUE</code> , the value will not be evaluated until the data is first accessed.
feature_column	Name of the column of data that contains the feature names.
aliases	Optional named character vector or list that maps aliases to values that appear in the feature column. This allows abbreviations or alternative names to be supported.
outline	Optional sf geometry containing just the outline of the map, or a function returning such a geometry. When <code>lazy</code> is <code>TRUE</code> , the value will not be evaluated until the data is first accessed.
lazy	When <code>TRUE</code> , defer evaluation of <code>data</code> and <code>outline</code> until it is used.

### Details

Registration supports delayed evaluation (lazy loading). This is particularly useful for larger datasets, so that they are not loaded into memory until they are accessed.

### Value

No return value; this updates the global feature registry.

### See Also

`vignette("registering_maps")`

**Examples**

```
# register a map of the states of Italy from rnatuarearth using the
# Italian names, and providing an outline of the country
register_map(
  "italy",
  data = rnatuarearth::ne_states(country = "italy", returnclass = "sf"),
  feature_column = "name_it",
  outline = rnatuarearth::ne_countries(country = "italy", returnclass = "sf", scale = "large")
)
```

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resolve\_feature\_names *Canonicalise feature names accounting for aliases and character case*

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**Description**

Names are resolved by checking for the first match using:

1. case sensitive match, then
2. case sensitive match using aliases, then
3. case insensitive match, then
4. case insensitive match using aliases.

**Usage**

```
resolve_feature_names(feature_names, feature_type, unmatched = "error")
```

**Arguments**

feature_names	Character vector of feature names in the data.
feature_type	Type of map feature. See <a href="#">feature_types()</a> for a list of registered types.
unmatched	Controls behaviour when feature_names contains values that do not match registered feature names. Possible values are "error" to throw an error or "pass" to return the original values unaltered.

**Value**

Character vector of the canonicalised names.

**Examples**

```
resolve_feature_names(c("LEE", "ansoN"), feature_type = "sf.nc")
resolve_feature_names(c("LEE", "ansoNe"), feature_type = "sf.nc", unmatched = "pass")
```

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resolve\_feature\_type *Guess the feature type if it was missing*

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### Description

If `feature_type` is provided, this simply checks that the type has been registered. If it is NA, however, an attempt is made to guess the appropriate choice. This is done by comparing the example values provided as `feature_names` with the names of all registered map datasets. If there is an unambiguous match, that will be filled in.

### Usage

```
resolve_feature_type(feature_type, feature_names)
```

### Arguments

`feature_type` Type of map feature. See [feature\\_types\(\)](#) for a list of registered types. If NA, the type is guessed based on the values in `feature_names`.

`feature_names` Character vector of feature names in the data. This can be a subset of the values.

### Details

Cartographer lazy loads map data for registered maps. In order to compare the example `feature_names` with registered maps, it might be necessary to force some of these datasets to load. To minimise the impact, any maps that have already been loaded are checked first. Other maps are then loaded one at a time until any matches are found. Consequently, the result returned by this function is not deterministic.

In the worst case where none of the registered maps matches, all of them will be loaded. This might take several seconds and occupy some memory, depending on which maps are registered. If a match is found, however, it will be found quickly on subsequent calls since the data will have already been loaded.

The best way to avoid these issues is to explicitly specify the `feature_type`.

### Value

The resolved feature type as a scalar character.

### Examples

```
resolve_feature_type("sf.nc")
resolve_feature_type(NA, feature_names = c("ANSON", "Stanly"))
```

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