

Summary: Physical Geography

Geographic Regions of South Asia

South Asia includes Afghanistan, the islands of the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and the South Asian subcontinent.

The South Asian subcontinent includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. The subcontinent has three main geographic regions: the Northern Mountain Rim, the Northern Plains, and the Deccan Plateau.

The Northern Mountain Rim is made up of the Hindu Kush Mountains, the Himalayas, and the Karakoram Mountains. Few people live in the region. The Northern Plains include the Ganges and Indus rivers. They form deltas where they empty into the sea. During floods, sediment from the Ganges River is deposited on the plains. This makes the plains fertile for farming. The Deccan Plateau has minerals, forests, and mountains. The soil in the interior is poor and water can be hard to find. It is always hot and few people live there.

Parts of mountainous Sri Lanka receive a lot of rain. The Maldives have more than 1,200 coral islands. People live on about 300 of these islands.

Regions of Southeast Asia

Mainland Southeast Asia includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and parts of Malaysia. The Mekong River flows through Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, producing water for crops. This rice-producing region is heavily populated. The islands of Southeast Asia include Borneo, Singapore, and the archipelagos of the Philippines and Indonesia.

Climate and Monsoons

Most of South Asia has three seasons: cool, hot, and rainy. Southeast Asia is hot and rainy. In South Asia, monsoon rains fall from June through October. November through February is cool and dry. March through late May is hot and humid. Summer in Southeast Asia lasts from April to September. Monsoon rains fall then. Winter lasts from October to March. It is cool and dry.

If the monsoons come early, farmers don't have time to plant seeds. If the rains are late or don't come, crops fail. Monsoons can cause flooding.

Before You Read

Find and circle each vocabulary word.

subcontinent *noun*, a large landmass that is part of a continent

delta *noun*, a triangular deposit of soil at the mouth of a river

sediment *noun*, minerals and debris that settle at the bottom of a river

archipelago *noun*, a group of islands

monsoon *noun*, a seasonal wind that blows over the northern part of the Indian Ocean

After You Read

REVIEW What are the three main geographic regions of the Indian subcontinent? Circle the sentence that answers the question.

REVIEW How does the Ganges River help farming in the Northern Plains? Underline the sentences that answer the question.

REVIEW How do you think the Mekong River contributes to growing crops in this region? Draw a box around the sentence that answers the question.

REVIEW How does the cycle of hot, cool, and rainy seasons compare with the cycle of seasons where you live? Highlight the sentences that explain the cycle of seasons.