

Summary: Physical Geography

The Lands of China and Japan

China is a large country with a varied geography. The Himalayas are the world's tallest mountains. They lie along the western edge of China. The Plateau of Tibet covers about one-fourth of China. The Taklimakan Desert is one of the world's largest deserts. The Gobi is another large desert in China. Its extreme temperatures may range from -40°F to 113°F . China's major rivers are the Huang He, the Chang Jiang, and the Xi Jiang. The Chang Jiang is over 3,400 miles long.

Japan is a country of mountainous islands. The capital city of Tokyo is on Honshu, Japan's largest island. Other main islands are Hokkaido, Shikoku, and Kyushu.

Japan sits on shifting plates of the Earth's crust, so it has many earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Japan is part of the Ring of Fire. This area of volcanic activity borders the Pacific Ocean. Mount Fuji, Japan's tallest mountain, is an active volcano. Mountains cover about 80 percent of Japan. Tokyo lies along the Kanto Plains.

Monsoons control Japan's climate. Winter monsoons bring rain and snow. Summer monsoons bring warm rain. Hurricanes called typhoons may occur in summer and fall.

The Koreas and the Pacific

North and South Korea lie on the mountainous Korean Peninsula. The countries have a temperate climate. North Korea has cold winters and warm, damp summers. South Korea has a mix of mountains, river valleys, and coastal plains.

Australia is both a country and a continent. It is the flattest continent on Earth. Deserts cover about one-third of the country. A large, flat plain called the outback covers most of the interior of the continent. Most people in Australia live along the northern and eastern coasts. These areas have the greatest supply of fresh water.

Many other islands lie in the Pacific. They include New Zealand, which has two main islands. The Pacific islands were formed in three different ways. Continental islands are parts of Earth's crust that rose above the surface of the ocean. High oceanic islands are mountainous and were formed by volcanic activity. Most of the islands are low oceanic islands formed from coral reefs.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

Ring of Fire *noun*, an areas of volcanic activity that borders the Pacific Ocean

typhoon *noun*, a hurricane that occurs in the western Pacific

outback *noun*, a huge stretch of interior land in Australia



After You Read

REVIEW Why do you think the Japanese built Tokyo where they did?

Underline the sentences that describe where Tokyo is located.

REVIEW Contrast the influence of physical features on settlement patterns in Japan and Australia.

Draw a box around the sentences that tell where most people live in Australia and how the country's physical features affected their choice.