

# South Asia

Chapter 24, Section 1  
Landforms and Resources

## Section 1

# Landforms and Resources

- South Asia is a subcontinent of peninsulas bordered by mountains and oceans.
- A wide variety of natural resources helps sustain life in the region.





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# 1 Landforms and Resources

## Mountains and Plateaus

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### The Indian Subcontinent

- India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives
- **Subcontinent**—large landmass that's smaller than a continent
  - called Indian Subcontinent because India dominates the region
- Though half the size of U.S., area has 1/5 of world's people
- Natural barriers separate subcontinent from rest of Asia
  - mountains form northern border, Indian Ocean surrounds rest
  - Arabian Sea to west, Bay of Bengal to east

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*continued* **Mountains and Plateaus**

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## Northern Mountains

- South Asia was once part of East Africa
  - split off 50 million years ago and collided with Central Asia
  - collision of tectonic plates pushed land into huge mountain ranges
- **Himalaya Mountains**—1,500-mile-long system of parallel ranges
  - include world's tallest mountain—Mt. Everest
  - form barrier between Indian subcontinent and China
  - kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan are also in these mountains

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## Northern Mountains

- At west end, Hindu Kush mountains separate Pakistan, Afghanistan
  - historically blocked invasions from Central Asian tribes
  - Khyber Pass is one of the major land routes through the mountains
- Karakoram Mountains are in northeastern part of Himalayas
  - include world's second highest peak, K2

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## Southern Plateaus

- Tectonic plate collision also created smaller mountain ranges
  - Vindhya Rang in central India
- Deccan Plateau covers much of southern India
- Western, Eastern Ghats: mountain ranges flank Deccan Plateau
  - block moist winds and rain, making Deccan mostly arid



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## Rivers, Deltas, and Plains

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### Great Rivers

Chart

- Northern Indian, or Indo-Gangetic, Plain:
  - lies between Deccan Plateau, northern mountain ranges
  - is formed by three river systems that originate in Himalayas
- Indus River flows west, then south through Pakistan to Arabian Sea
- Ganges River flows east across northern India
- Brahmaputra winds east, then west, south through Bangladesh
- Ganges and Brahmaputra meet, form delta, flow into Bay of Bengal

Image

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*continued* Rivers, Deltas, and Plains

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## Fertile Plains

- Rivers irrigate farmlands, carry rich alluvial soil
  - overflow deposits this soil on **alluvial plains**—rich farmlands
- Indo-Gangetic Plain has some of the world's most fertile farms
- Heavily populated area has 3/5 of India's people
  - area's big cities: New Delhi, Kolkata in India; Dakha in Bangladesh
- Plain is drier to west between Indus, Ganges
- The Thar, or Great Indian Desert, lies to the south



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## Offshore Islands

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### Sri Lanka: The Subcontinent's "Tear Drop"

- Island in Indian Ocean, off India's southeastern tip
- Large, tear-shaped country with lush tropical land
- Range of high, rugged, 8,000-foot mountains dominate center
- Many small rivers flow from mountains down to lowlands
- Northern side has low hills, rolling farmland
- Island is circled by coastal plain, long palm-fringed beaches

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## The Maldives Archipelago

- Maldives is **archipelago**—island group—of 1,200 small islands
  - stretch north to south for 500 miles off Indian coast, near equator
- Islands are **atolls**—low-lying tops of submerged volcanoes
  - surrounded by coral reefs, shallow lagoons
- Total land area of Maldives is 115 square miles
  - only 200 islands are inhabited

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## Natural Resources

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### Water and Soil

- Water and soil resources provide food through farming, fishing
- River systems help enrich land with alluvial soil, water
  - large- and small-scale irrigation projects divert water to farmlands
- Types of fish include mackerel, sardines, carp, catfish
- Waters provide transportation, power
  - India, Pakistan work to harness hydroelectric power

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### Forests

- Indian rain forests produce hardwoods like sal and teak
  - also bamboo and fragrant sandalwood
- Bhutan's and Nepal's highland forests have pine, fir, softwoods
- Deforestation is a severe problem
  - causes soil erosion, flooding, landslides, loss of wildlife habitats
  - overcutting has devastated forests in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka

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## Minerals

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- India is fourth in world in coal production, has petroleum, uranium
- Pakistan, Bangladesh have natural gas resources
- Iron ore from India's Deccan Plateau used in steel industry, exported
- Other minerals: manganese, gypsum, chromium, bauxite, copper
- India has mica for electrical equipment and growing computer industry
- India is known for diamonds; Sri Lanka for sapphires, rubies



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