

GEOGRAPHY

Our Country - India

India is the seventh largest country in the world and has varied physical features. India is bounded by the Himalayas in the north, the Arabian Sea in the west, the Bay of Bengal in the east and the Indian Ocean in the south. India is a peninsular country as it is surrounded by water bodies on three sides.

India - Area and Location

Following are some facts about India's size, area and location:

- The total area of India is 3.28 million sq. km. The total stretch of the country from north to south (Kashmir to Kanyakumari) is about 3,200 km. The east-west stretch (Arunanchal Pradesh to Kutch) of the country is about 2,900 km.
- India is located in the Northern Hemisphere. The Tropic of Cancer passes through the centre of the country at 23°30'N.
- From south to north, the main land of India extends between the 8°4' N and 37°6' N latitudes. From west to east, India extends between the 68°7' E and 97°25' E longitudes.
- Due to its large longitudinal extent of about 29°, there are wide differences between the local time of two places, located far from each other, within India.
- In India, the longitude of 82°30' E is taken as the standard meridian for the entire country. The local time at this meridian is considered as the Indian Standard Time.
- The Himalayas and the fertile plains in the north, the Thar Desert in the west, and the plateaus, coasts and islands present the diverse landforms in the country.
- All across the country, there is a great variety in the climate, vegetation, languages, customs, and culture.
- After China, India is the second most populous country in the world.

India - Political Division

As the total stretch of India is large, our country is divided into 29 states and seven union territories. The states have been formed mainly on the basis of the languages spoken by the people. New Delhi is the capital of India. Rajasthan is the largest state while Goa is the smallest state. The states are further divided into districts and districts into towns and villages.

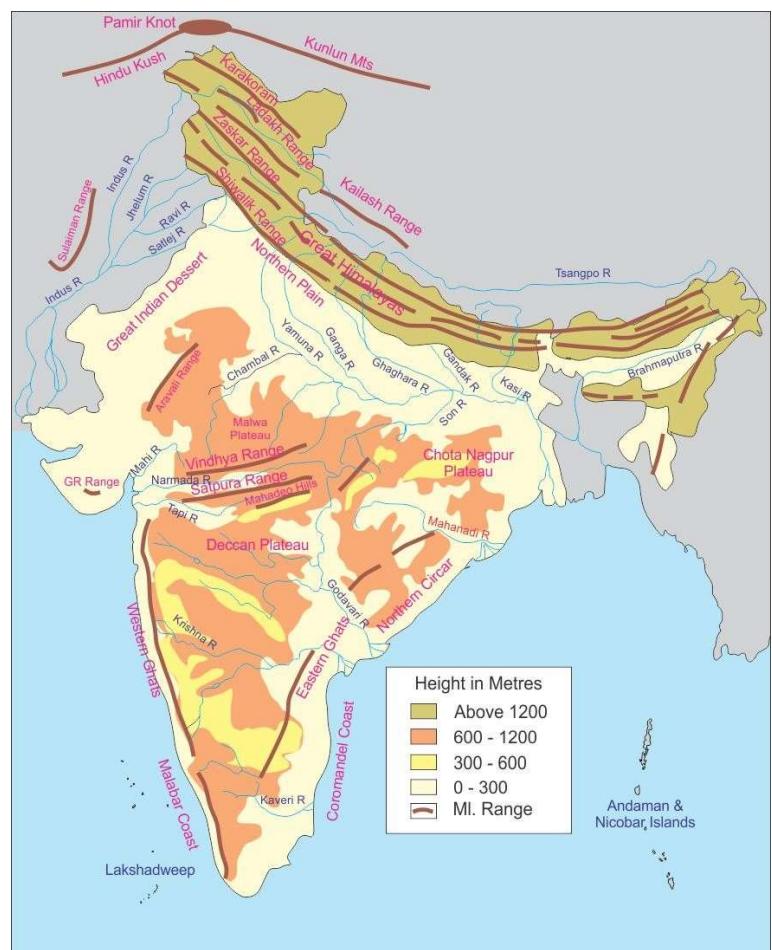
India's Neighbours

Since India has a long boundary line, it shares its geographical boundaries with seven countries, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is separated from India by the Palk Strait.

India - Physical Divisions

India has diverse physical features which can be broadly categorised as follows:

1. **The Himalayas:** They form the northern boundary of the country. The Himalayas are divided into three parallel ranges. They are:
 - **The Great Himalaya or Himadri:** This is the northernmost range of the Himalayas and some of the highest peaks are located here.
 - **Middle Himalayas or Himachal:** This range lies to the south of the Himadri and is a home to many popular hill stations.
 - **The Shiwaliks:** This is the southernmost range of the Himalayas.
2. **The Northern Indian Plains:** They lie to the south of the Himalayas. These plains have been formed by the alluvial deposits brought down by the rivers Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra and their tributaries. Due to the alluvial deposits, the northern plains are fertile. Therefore, this region is densely populated.
3. **The Great Indian Desert:** It lies in the western part of India and hardly receives any rainfall. Hence it is devoid of any vegetation and is a hot, sandy and dry stretch of land.
4. **The Peninsular Plateau:** This region has many hill ranges and valleys. The peninsular plateau is triangular in shape. The **Aravalli ranges**, one of the oldest ranges in the world, surround it on the north-west. The other important ranges are the Vindhya and the Satpuras. The rivers Narmada and Tapi are important rivers in this region. The **Western Ghats**, also known as the Sahayadris, form its boundaries in the west and the **Eastern Ghats** border it in the east. The plateau is rich in mineral resources like iron ore and coal.
5. **The Indian Coastal Plains:** The Indian coastal plains are divided into the eastern coastal plains and the western coastal plains. The western coastal plains are very narrow while the eastern coastal plains are broader and have many rivers flowing towards the east. These rivers form a fertile delta. The Sunderban delta formed by the rivers Ganga and Brahmaputra is the largest delta in the world.
6. **The Indian Islands:** Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar islands are two islands of India. While the Lakshadweep Islands are located in the Arabian Sea, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are located in the Bay of Bengal. The latter group of islands was badly damaged by the tsunami (a giant sea wave generated due to earthquake on the ocean floor) which occurred in 2004.



Map of India showing its physical features