

India: Country Overview

India comprising 28 states (Provinces) and 07 union territories, is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage.

Area – it covers an area of 32,87,2631 sq km, extending from the snow-covered Himalayan heights to the tropical rain forests of the south. Bounded by the great Himalayas in the north, it stretches southwards and at the tropic of cancer, tapers off into the Indian Ocean between the Bay of Bengal on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west.

Location – lying entirely in the northern hemisphere, the mainland extends between latitudes 8°4' and 37°6' north, longitudes 68°7' and 97°25' east, and measures about 3,214 km from north to south between the extreme latitudes and about 2,933 km from east to west between the extreme longitudes. It has a land frontier of about 15,200 km. The total length of the coastline of the mainland, Lakshadweep Islands, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is 7,516.6 km.

Boundaries – countries having a common border with India are Afghanistan and Pakistan to the north-west, China, Bhutan and Nepal to the north, Myanmar to the east and Bangladesh to the east. Sri Lanka is separated from India by a narrow channel of sea formed by the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.

Physical diversity – the main land comprises of four regions, namely, the great mountain zone, plains of the Ganga and the Indus, the desert region and the southern peninsula.

The Himalayas comprise three almost parallel ranges interspersed with large plateaus and valleys, which extends over a distance of about 2,400 km with a varying depth of 240 to 320 km in the northernmost part of the country.

The plains of the Ganga and the Indus, about 2,400 km long and 240 to 320 km broad, are formed by basins of three distinct river systems – the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. They are one of the world's greatest stretches of flat alluvium and also one of the most densely populated areas on the earth.

The desert region in the western part comprise of the great desert extending from the edge of the Rann of Kutch beyond the Luni River northward including the whole of the Rajasthan-Sind frontier. While the little desert extends from the Luni between Jaisalmer and Jodhpur up to the northern wastes. Between the great and the little deserts lies a zone of absolutely sterile country, consisting of rocky land cut up by limestone ridges.

The peninsular plateau is marked by a mass of mountain and hill ranges varying from 460 to 1,220 meters in height. Prominent among these are the Aravalli, Vindhya, Satpura, Maikala and Ajanta, flanked by the Eastern Ghats with average elevation is about 610 meters, and the Western Ghats where it is generally from 915 to 1,220 meters, rising in places to over 2,440 meters.

