

Lesson 1: Resource Sheet 1

Australia and its Asian neighbours

Asia is Earth's largest continent. It's also the continent with the most people. Asia stretches from Europe in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east and from the Indian Ocean in the south and the Arctic Ocean in the north. Asia covers 30 per cent of the Earth's total land area and 8.7 per cent of the planet's surface. The continent, which has long been home to the majority of the human population, now has 60 per cent of the world's population. That is 6 out of every 10 people live in Asia – a total population of 4.5 billion people.

Asia is home to several of the world's oldest civilizations and the birthplace of its great religions.

Figure 1: Asia covers a vast area of the Earth's surface.



Climate and landscapes of Asia

Asia has a wide variety of climates, landforms and landscapes.

The climate ranges from very cold in the north to hot and wet in the south. The interior of the continent is mostly dry.

Much of southern and southeast Asia is affected by the monsoon, a seasonal reversal of wind direction. When the wind blows from the warm oceans onto the land it brings large amounts of rainfall. When it blows from the dry interior of Asia the winds are dry and there is little rainfall. As a result, much of mainland Asia is seasonally wet and dry. Some parts, including Indonesia, get rainfall throughout the year because whichever way the winds blow, they pass over warm ocean waters.

Asia is also home to large deserts. These include the Gobi Desert in Mongolia and the Arabian Desert which stretches across much of the Middle East.

Tropical rainforests stretch across much of southern Asia and coniferous and deciduous forests are found across the north.

The Himalayas are Asia's largest mountain range and Mt Everest the world's highest peak at 8,848 metres above sea level (almost 9 kilometres high).

The cultures of Asia

The culture of Asia includes many different customs and traditions. These cover art, architecture, music, literature, lifestyle, ways of thinking, politics and religion. These customs and traditions have been practised and maintained by the ethnic groups of the of Asia for thousands of years. These traditions and customs had their beginnings in four river valley civilisations – those of the Nile (Egypt), Tigris and Euphrates (Ancient Mesopotamia), Indus (Pakistan) and Huang Ho (China).

The continent is often divided into six sub-regions based on cultural factors such as religion, language and ethnic origins. These regions are Central Asia, East Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and West Asia. (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sub-regions of Asia

