# *MAJOR NATURAL REGIONS OF THE WORLD*

The world is a phenomenal composite of natural regions and habitats. Its existing variety of geographical partitions, rich physiography, vivid ranging flora, and fauna makes it a wonderful and fascinating landscape.

Ideally, a natural region refers to an area governed by specific temperature, rainfall, relief, and other environmental conditions.

This article discusses the major natural regions of the world. It substantiates their different characteristics and features. All in all, the world comprises 12 major natural regions.

**TROPICAL GRASSLAND (SAVANNA) REGION**

Characteristics

* This is one of the natural regions that covers the interior of the continents extending up to the sea in the west in the tropical belt.
* It is influenced by the equa­torial belt of calms during summer and receives conventional rainfall.
* Tropical Grasslands surface under the garb of trade winds during winter which is dry winds while the re­gion experiences drought.
* It generally lies between 5°N and 20°S latitudes.
* This region has moderate rainfall and greater annual range of temperature.
* It occurs extensively in Africa, parts of the Brazilian Pla­teau, and the Orinoco basin in South America.

Human Lifestyle

* In East Africa, the primitive Masai people practice animal rearing.
* They migrate from place to place. Meat, milk, and other animal products are used for local consumption.
* There is a scope for the development of the pastoral industry on a com­mercial basis as has been done in a similar region in Queensland State in Australia.
* The Mausa tribesmen in the savanna region of Nigeria are mainly agricultural­ists (dry crops) but also keep cattle and goats for pro­viding milk and meat.

Features

* Due to water scarcity, natural vegetation consists of savanna or tropical grasslands known as Llanos in Venezuela and
* Campos in South­ern Brazil. Coarse tall grass grows to a height of about 3 meters is the typical vegetation.
* These tropical grasslands are known as the big game country as car­nivorous animals like lion, leopard, tiger abound in the region.
* These animals feed on deer, zebras, and other herbivores. An extensive national park in East Africa attracts many tourists.

***TROPICAL DECIDUOUS FOREST REGION***

Characteristics

* This region includes eastern mar­gins of the continents between 10°N to 30°N and 10°S to 30°S.
* Rainfall is moderate except in coastal re­gions and mountainous tracts. The summers are hot and rainy while winters are warm and dry.
* Parts of regions such as India, South East Asia, West Africa, and Northern Australia experience a typical monsoon climate having a seasonal reversal of winds. Trade winds prevail in winter and monsoon winds blowing in opposite directions prevail during summer.
* Winds are onshore during summer.

Human Adaptation

* The lowlands and river valleys have fertile soil and adequate water supply.
* They are intensively cultivated with some tracts producing more than one crop during the year. Besides rice, wheat, commercial crops like jute, cotton are also cultivated.
* The river valleys and delta are massively populated. Mountainous tracts are forested and yield hardwood timber, bamboo. Some forests have been cleared for plantations of tea, coffee, and rubber.
* Primi­tive tribes reside in the inaccessible forests.

Features

* The combination of heat and good rainfall in summer favors the growth of plants. Agricul­ture is the dominant occupation.
* Laterite soil occurs in these regions, except in river valleys where the allu­vial soils are found.
* The natural vegetation consists of tropi­cal forests that are less dense than equatorial forests.
* Teak, Rosewood, Mahogany are valuable trees.

***TROPICAL DESERTS***

Characteristics

* Tropical deserts are located on the western margins of continents in the Trade Wind belt roughly between 20° and 30°N and S latitudes and are known as hot or trade wind deserts.
* Annual pre­cipitation is generally less than 25 cm. In most of the region clear skies favor fired passage of insolation during day time and outgoing radiation from the earth during night.
* Therefore, the diurnal range of tem­perature is high.

Human Lifestyle

* The primitive Bushmen of Kalahari desert in South Africa and Aborigines of Australia practice food gathering and hunting.
* The Bedouins of Arabia are nomadic herdsmen rearing camels, horses, goats.
* They live in tents and migrate from place to place in search of pastures for their animals.
* In river valleys of desert regions are scattered oasis, where agriculture has developed. There are perma­nent rural settlements in the Nile Valley.
* Modern irriga­tion methods have ensured water supply, e.g. settled agriculture: Indus in Pakistan and Imperial Valley in California.
* Communication is very difficult and is carried on by camels that cross deserts by well-known routes from oasis to oasis.

Features

* On account of aridity, these regions are almost destitute of vegetation.
* Either there is no vegetation, or it consists of those species of plants that are physiologically adapted to stand droughts called Xerophytes.
* Palm is the most important and characteristic tree found in these regions.
* The char­acteristic animal is a camel that lives on thorny scrubs. Soils are sandy with saline deposits on the surface caused by evaporation.
* Thorny shrubs and bushes which are drought resistant occur in patches.
* The deserts are desolate and agriculturally unproduc­tive. The unproductivity is due to the dearth of water.
* The Discovery of petroleum and their mining in recent decades has led to rapid economic development in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

# *TROPICAL MONSOON CLIMATE*

* Monsoons are **land and sea breezes** on a much larger scale.
* Unlike equatorial wet climate, monsoon climate is characterized by **distinct wet and dry seasons** associated with **seasonal reversal of winds**.
* **Floods** in wet season and **droughts** in dry season are common.
* Usually there are three seasons namely **summer, winter and rainy** season.

**Distribution of Tropical Monsoon Climate**

* Occur within **5° to 30°** N and S of the equator.
* On-shore [sea to land] tropical monsoons occur in the summer and off-shore [land to sea] dry monsoons in the winter.
* They are best developed in the **Indian sub-continent, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, parts of Vietnam and south China and northern Australia**.



**Climate**

* The basic cause of monsoon climates is the difference in the **rate of heating** and cooling of land and sea (This is old theory. New theory will be explained while studying Indian Climate).
* In the summer, when the sun is overhead at the Tropic of Cancer, a low pressure is created in Central Asia.
* The seas, which warm up much slower, remain comparatively at high pressure. At the same time, the southern hemisphere experiences winter, and a region of high pressure is set up in the continental interior of Australia.
* Winds blow outwards as the South-East Monsoon, to Java, and after crossing the equator are drawn towards the continental low pressure area reaching the Indian sub-continent as the South-West Monsoon (Coriolis force).
* In the winter, conditions are reversed.

**Temperature**

* Monthly mean temperatures **above 18 °C.**
* Temperatures range from 30-45° C in summer. Mean summer temperature is about 30°C.
* In winters, temperature range is 15-30° C with mean temperature around 20-25° C.

**Precipitation**

* Annual mean rainfall ranges from 200-250 cm. In some regions it is around 350 cm.
* Places like **Cherrapunji & Mawsynram** receive an annual rainfall of about **1000 cm.** [They lie on the windward side of the Meghalaya hills, so the resulting **orographic lift (orographic rainfall)** enhances precipitation. Also, they are located between mountains which enhances cloud concentration due to **funneling effect**]

**Seasons**

* Seasons are chief characteristics of monsoon climate.

**The cool, dry season (October to February)**

* Out blowing dry winds, the North-East Monsoon, bring little or no rain to the Indian sub-continent.
* However, a small amount of rain falls in Punjab from cyclonic sources (Western Disturbances: Frontal precipitation brought by jet streams) and this is vital for the survival of winter cereals.
* North-East Monsoons blowing over the Bay of Bengal acquires moisture and bring rains to the south-eastern tip of the peninsula at this time of the year (Nov-Dec).

**The hot dry season (March to mid-June)**

* The temperature rises sharply with the sun’s northward shift to the Tropic of Cancer.
* Day temperatures of 35° C are usual in central India and the mean temperature in Sind and south India may be as high as 44° C.
* Coastal districts are a little relieved by sea breezes. There is practically little rain. [Hailstorms (thunderstorms with hail) occurs here and there]

**The rainy season (mid-June to September)**

* With the ‘burst’ of the South-West Monsoon in mid-June, torrential downpours sweep across the country. Almost all the rain for the year falls within this rainy season.
* This pattern of **concentrated heavy rainfall** in summer is a characteristic feature of the Tropical Monsoon Climate.

**The Retreating Monsoon**

* The amount and frequency of rain decreases towards the end of the rainy season. It retreats gradually southwards after mid-September until it leaves the continent altogether.
* The skies are clear again and the cool, dry season returns in October, with the out blowing North-East Monsoon.