

GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

What is a Geographic Region?

A **region** is a large land area that has special features that make it different from other areas.

- **Deserts** - One fifth of the land on earth is desert. A desert is an area that is arid and parched by the sun. It is hot in the day and freezing at night. It receives less than 10 inches of rainfall per year. Most deserts are covered in rock which lacks topsoil so there is little vegetation. In deserts of sand, high winds blow causing the sand to constantly shift. Camels are well suited to desert winds because of their bushy eyebrows, two rows of eyelashes, and nostrils that can close. A camel's hump contains stored fat which is used for food on long journeys. An oasis is a fertile and green area where water is found in a desert.



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- **Polar Regions** - very cold. The North Polar region is called the Arctic. It has been called "the land of the midnight sun" because the sun rises only once each year and does not set for six months. Permafrost is frozen soil that never thaws. Polar bears and seals are suited to the arctic region. Large amounts of coal, oil, iron and uranium are here. The South Polar region is called the Antarctic. Adelie Penguins, seals, whales, and birds live in the southern polar region.



- **Tundra** - vast, level treeless plain found in the Arctic Circle, where the ground is frozen 10 months of the year. Temperatures never rise above 45°F. Only moss, lichens and low bushes can grow in the two months when the ground thaws.

- **Tropical Rainforests** - a land of lush growth close to the equator where it is usually hot, humid and rainy. A bout 60 -100 inches of rainfall per year keeps the trees green. There are several layers of trees. The emergent layer is the top where trees can be 200 feet tall. Under that is the canopy and the understory. The forest floor gets little sun so few plants grow there. Many rainforests are found near mountains because mountains push wind upward. As wind rises, it cools, so clouds release land next to the mountain.
- **Temperate Forests** - cover about one third of the earth's surface. These woodlands have warm, rainy summers and cold, snowy winters. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the fall and grow new ones in the spring. Maple, oak, beech, and poplar are deciduous. Temperate forests are found in the eastern part of the US, southeastern Canada, northern Europe and Asia, and southern Australia.



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- **Evergreen** - Evergreens produce cones. Pines, firs, and spruces are evergreen. On mountains in the northern latitudes, there is a tree line above which no trees grow.
- **Mountain Regions** - very high places with cold climate. The tops of the highest mountains such as the Rockies, the Himalayas, the Andes and the Alps are called the alpine region. Only a few wildflowers and small shrubs can grow.
- **Grasslands or Plains** - Found in the middle latitudes between the polar and tropical regions, the plains are nearly flat land with no canyons or valleys, no tall trees. Grasses have deep roots. Temperatures range from below 0 in winter to over 100°F. in summer. Thunderstorms, hailstorms and tornadoes are common. The soil is fertile because of light rainfall so minerals are not washed away. Bison, antelope, and cattle are suited to the grasslands. Steppes and Prairies are grasslands.

- **Steppes** - semi-arid climate with less than 20 inches of rain per year, have short grasses. Russia and Central Asia have huge steppes.
- **Prairie** - are found in a sub-humid climate which gets 20 -30 inches of rain per year. They have tall grass with deep root systems. Grains such as wheat grow well. (The American Great Plains and the Pampa of Argentina are prairies)
- **Savanna** - a grassland with a tropical climate where short coarse grass grows. The Sudan in Africa is a savanna.

Try this!

In what type of geographical region do you live?



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