

GEOGRAPHY

India - Climate, Vegetation and Wildlife

The Climate of India

India has diverse climatic conditions. The two terms, climate and weather, largely differ from each other.

Weather	Climate
It deals with the changes in the atmosphere over a short period of time.	It deals with the changes in the atmosphere over a longer period of time, i.e., over thirty to forty years.
The weather of a place may change daily.	The climate of a place remains constant for a long period of time.

The climate of India can be divided into the following four major weather seasons:

- Cold Weather Season:** Winter in India begins in December and lasts till February. Since the Sun's rays do not fall directly over the region, the temperatures become low, especially in North India.
- Hot Weather Season:** This season begins in March and lasts till May. During this season, the Sun shines directly overhead. This leads to a rise in temperature. In northern India, local hot and dry local winds blow which are known as 'loo'. People during this season drink 'sharbat' and consume fruits with a high water content like litchi, watermelon etc.
- South-West Monsoon Season:** The Monsoon winds which blow from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal are laden with moisture. These winds strike the mountains bringing rainfall into the country. The monsoon season in India lasts for four months i.e., from June to September.
- Season of Retreating Monsoon:** The season from October to mid-November is known as the season of retreating monsoons. Also known as autumn, the monsoon winds in India begin to retreat. The states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh receive rainfall during this time.



The climate of India is broadly described as the monsoon type. This type of climate ensures ample rainfall to the country which is vital for the flourishing agriculture in the country. The climate of a place is affected by its location, altitude, distance from the sea and various physical or relief features. This is the reason why the desert regions of Jaisalmer and Bikaner are extremely hot, while the Drass and Kargil regions in Jammu and Kashmir experience extremely cold conditions. Coastal regions such as Mumbai and Kolkata experience a moderate climate. Mawsynram in Meghalaya receives the highest rainfall in the world.

Natural Vegetation

The trees, grasses and shrubs which grow on their own without any human interference are called **natural vegetation**. The growth of natural vegetation depends on various climatic conditions. Since India has varied climatic conditions, we find a rich variety of natural vegetation in the country. Following are the five types of natural vegetation in India:

Tropical Rain Forests

- These occur in the areas of heavy rainfall. Tropical rain forests are so dense that even sunlight is not able to reach the ground.
- These forests are also known as evergreen forests as all the trees do not shed their leaves at the same time and hence they always appear green.
- They are found in North Eastern India, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and a part of Western slopes of the Western Ghats.
- Important trees in these forests are ebony, mahogany and rosewood.



Tropical rain forests

Tropical Deciduous Forests

- Also known as the monsoon forests, tropical deciduous forests are less dense and are found over large parts of the country.
- The trees in these forests shed their leaves at a particular time in a year.
- These forests are found in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and in some parts of Maharashtra.
- Teak, sal, neem, shisham and sal are some important species of trees found in the tropical deciduous forests.

Thorny Bushes

- This kind of vegetation is found in the hot and dry regions of the country.
- The leaves have spines in order to prevent the loss of water. They are found in the states of Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat and the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats.
- Some important varieties of trees are khair, keekar and babool.

Mountain Vegetation

- These forests are mainly found in the mountainous regions of the country.
- The species of trees differ with an increase in altitude.
- As we go up to the height of 1500-2,500 metres, the temperature reduces and thus most of the trees are conical in shape. These trees are known as coniferous trees.
- Deodar, pine and cedar are some important species of trees in these forests.



Mountain vegetation- the coniferous forests in the Himalayas

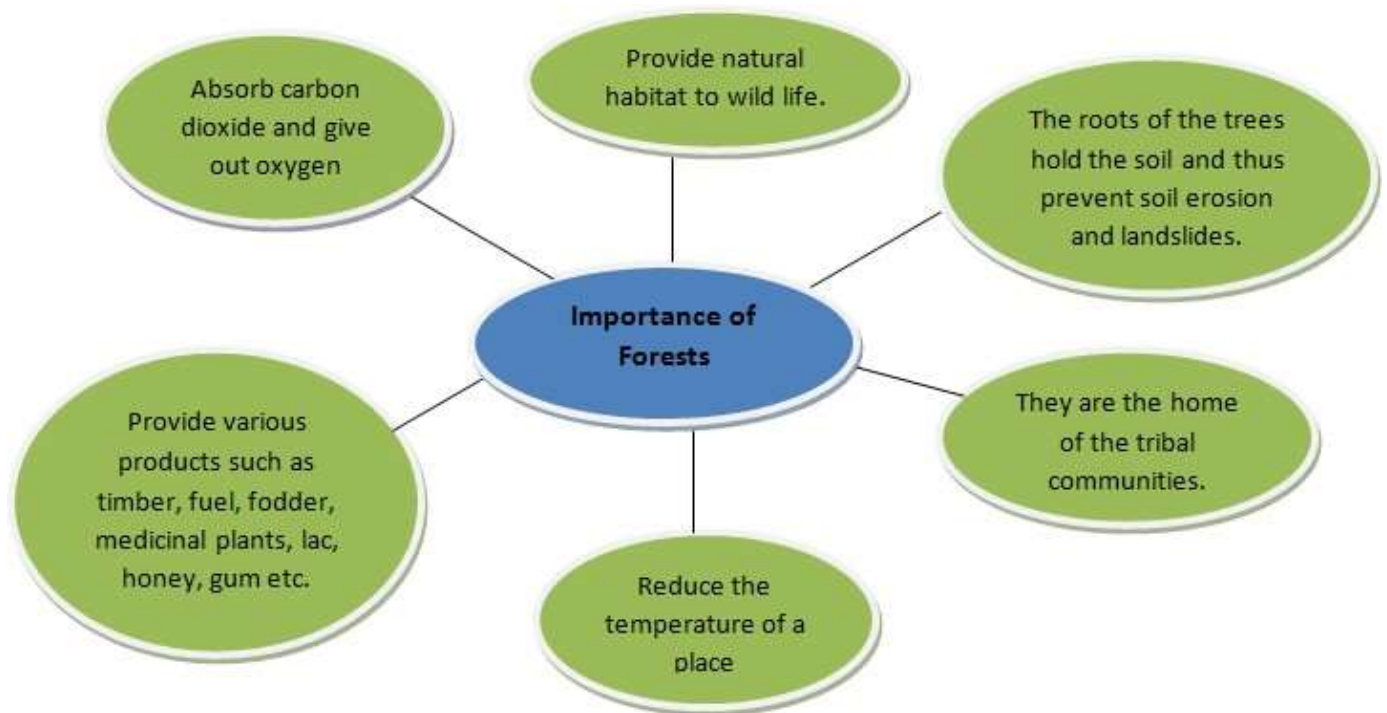
Mangrove Forests

- An important feature of these forests is that they can survive in fresh as well as saline water.
- They are found mainly in the Sunderbans in West Bengal and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The Sunderbans have been named after the Sundari trees, which are generally found in the mangrove forests.



The Sundari trees in the mangrove forests of the Sunderbans

Importance of Forests



The Indian Wild Life

Due to diverse climatic conditions and existence of different types of forests, India is home to a great variety of wild life.

- Many reptiles, amphibians, mammals, birds, insects etc are found in the Indian forests.
- The tiger is our national animal and is found in many parts of the country.
- Asiatic lions are found in the Gir forests of Gujarat.
- Assam and Kerala are the homes of elephants and the one horned rhinoceroses are found in the forests of Assam.
- While wild goats, snow leopards and bears are found in the cold regions of the Himalayan forests, camels and wild asses are found in the desert regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- Monkey, wolf, deer and jackal are some common animals which are found all over the country.
- India is also the home of colourful birds such as the parrots, mynahs, bulbuls, geese, duck etc.
- The peacock is the national bird of India.
- Many sanctuaries and forest reserves have been set up by the government to provide a natural habitat to the wild life of the country.



Asiatic lions are found in the Gir forests of Gujarat.