

Life in the Deserts

Deserts are characterised by low rainfall, scanty vegetation and extreme temperatures.

Depending on the temperature, there can be hot deserts or cold deserts.

The Hot Desert – Sahara

- The Sahara Desert in Africa is the world's largest hot desert.
- It touches 11 countries and has got gravel plains and elevated plateaus with a bare rocky surface.
- The climate of Sahara is scorching hot and parched dry with temperature as high as 50° C.
- The nights are freezing cold with the temperature nearing zero degrees.
- Vegetation in the Sahara Desert includes cactus, date palms and acacia. Camels, hyenas, jackals, foxes, scorpions, snakes and lizards are the main animal species found here.
- Despite its harsh climate, Sahara is inhabited by various groups of people. The main groups are Bedouins and Tuaregs.
- The oasis in the Sahara and the Nile Valley in Egypt supports the settled population.
- The discovery of oil is constantly transforming this region. Other important minerals found here are iron, phosphorus, manganese and uranium.
- More and more nomadic tribes are taking to city life.

The Cold Desert – Ladakh

- Ladakh is a cold desert lying in the Great Himalayas, on the eastern side of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The altitude in Ladakh varies from 3,000 m in Kargil to more than 8,000 m in the Karakoram.
- The area experiences freezing winds and burning hot sunlight.
- Due to high aridity, the vegetation is sparse. Groves of willows and poplars are seen in the valleys.
- The animals of Ladakh are wild goats, wild sheep, yak and special kinds of dogs.
- The animals are reared as they provide milk, meat and hides.
- The population consists of either Muslims or Buddhists.
- Some famous Buddhist monasteries are Hemis, Thiksey, Shey and Lamayuru.
- In the summer season, the people are busy cultivating barley, potatoes, peas, beans and turnips.

- Tourism is a major activity with several tourists streaming in from within India and abroad.
- People of Ladakh have over the centuries learnt to live in balance and harmony with nature.
- Pashmina wool of this region is famous.
- Leh and Kargil are the main towns in Ladakh.

The desert areas of the world are characterised by low rainfall, scanty vegetation and extreme temperatures. Depending on the temperatures there are hot deserts as well as cold deserts.

Sahara is a hot desert covering a large part of North Africa and Ladakh is a cold desert lying in the Great Himalayas on the eastern side of Jammu and Kashmir in India.

Sahara is the world's largest desert.

The Sahara desert touches eleven countries—Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara.

The Sahara desert is the vast stretches of sand. There are also gravel plains and elevated plateaus with a bare rocky surface.

The climate of the Sahara desert is scorching hot and parched dry. The rainy season is very short. The day temperature may soar as high as 50°C. But nights may be freezing cold.

Vegetation in the Sahara desert is comprised of cactus, date, palms and acacia. Date palms are found near an oasis. So far animals are concerned camels, hyenas, jackals, foxes, scorpions, several varieties of snakes and lizards are found in this desert.

Various groups of people such as the Bedouins and Tuaregs live in the Sahara desert. These groups are a nomadic tribe and they rear goats, sheep, camels and horses. They get milk and hides from these animals. These nomadic tribes wear heavy robes to protect themselves from dust storms and hot winds.

People get water from the oasis in the Sahara desert and the Nile valley in Egypt. They grow crops like rice, wheat, barley and beans.

The Sahara desert is undergoing fast change due to the discovery of oil in Algeria, Libya and Egypt. Other minerals found here are iron, phosphorus, manganese and uranium.

Trucks are now used in the salt trade.

The nomadic herdsmen with a change of time are now migrating to cities for better job opportunities in oil and gas operations.

Ladakh is a cold desert. The Karakoram range in the north and the Zaskar mountains in the south enclose it. Several rivers flow through Ladakh. Several glaciers are found here, for example, the Gangotri glacier.

The climate of Ladakh is extremely cold and dry. The day temperatures in summer are just above zero degree and the night temperatures are below -30°C . This desert receives very little rainfall. There is always a chance of both sunstroke and frostbite.

Ladakh has poor vegetation. There are scanty patches of grasses. Groves of willows and poplars are seen in the valleys.

Several species of birds such as robins, redstarts, Tibetan snow cock, raven and hoopoe are found here. The animals of Ladakh are wild goats, wild sheep, yak and special kinds of dogs.

People living in this desert are either Muslims or Buddhists.

Famous Buddhist monasteries are Hemis, Thiksey, Shey and Lamayuru.

People grow crops like barley, potatoes, peas beans and turnips during the summer season. During the winter months they are engaged in festivities and ceremonies.

The women of Ladakh are hardworking. They can manage indoor and outdoor activities skilfully.

Leh is the capital of Ladakh.

Ladakh is a famous tourist place. The tourists from within India and abroad like to visit the gompas.

Ladakh is being modernised fast. But people are very conscious here. They know the ways to live in balance and harmony with nature.

Desert: It refers to an arid area characterised by extremely high or low temperatures with poor vegetation.

Oasis: It is an area in the desert where there is water and where plants grow.

Shahtoosh: It is kind of wool obtained from Chiru or the Tibetan antelope.

Gangri: It is a glacier found in Ladakh.

Tuaregs: These are nomads of the Sahara desert.

Bedouins: These are nomads of the Sahara desert.

Khapa-chan: Ladakh is also known by this name. It means snow land.