

GEOGRAPHY

Chapter 9: Life in the Deserts



Life in the Deserts

Based on temperature and rainfall, deserts may be classified as cold deserts and hot deserts. Deserts receive extremely low rainfall, experience extreme temperatures and have scanty vegetation. People generally live in those parts of a desert where water is available so that cultivation could be carried out.

The Sahara Desert

The Sahara Desert is the largest hot desert in the world. It lies in the African Continent. It has an area of around 8.54 million sq. km, which is almost three times the size of India. The Sahara Desert is spread through eleven countries, Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara.

The most interesting thing to note about the Sahara Desert is that it was once a lush green plain where many animals such as elephants, lions, giraffes, sheep and cattle lived. Scientists have found the skeletons of fish in the desert. The gradual change in the climate turned this region into a desert.



Sahara Desert

Oasis

An oasis is a lush green island in a desert which is usually surrounded with date palms. An oasis is formed when winds blow away the sand creating depressions. When underground water reaches the surface of a depression, an oasis is formed. An oasis is a fertile area where people can grow date palms and some crops. Though, generally oases are small water

bodies, some of them can also be very large. The Tafilalet Oasis in Morocco is once such large oasis with an area of 13,000 sq. km.

Climate

- The climate of the Sahara Desert is extremely hot and dry.
- As the temperatures are high, the rate of evaporation is also high.
- Days are hot with temperatures reaching around 50°C at times. The highest temperature in the Sahara desert has been recorded to be 57.7°C in 1922 at Al Aziza, Libya.
- During the nights, the temperatures usually drop down to zero degrees.



Many people in the desert regions settle around an oasis

Flora and Fauna

- Palms, dates, acacia and cactus are generally found growing in the hot deserts.
- Around an oasis, animals such as camels, scorpions, jackals, foxes and varieties of snakes can be found.

People

- The Sahara Desert is sparsely populated due to its extreme climate.
- Two main groups of people living here are the Bedouins and Tuaregs.
- These are nomadic tribes who move from place to place. People of these tribes rear animals such as goats, camels, sheep and horses. These animals provide them with milk and leather.

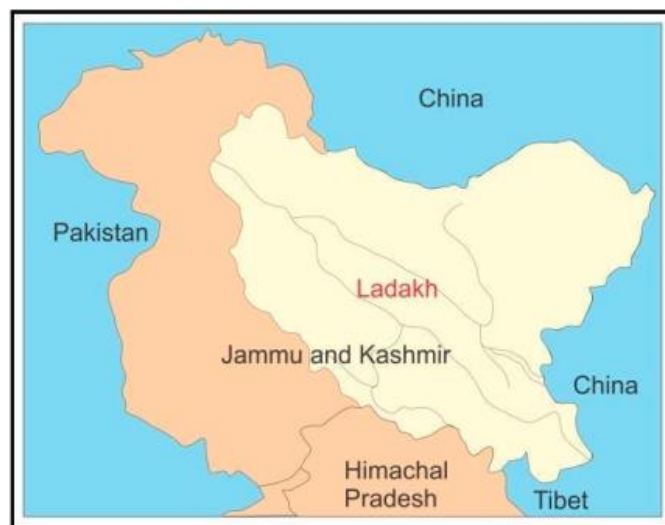
- The people living here wear heavy robes which protects them against the dust storms and hot winds.
- Settled inhabitants in the Sahara desert live mostly in the oasis of the Nile Valley in Egypt. The availability of water allows them to grow date palms and crops such as rice, barley, wheat and beans. Cotton is also grown in Egypt.
- Vast deposits of minerals in this region have transformed the life of the people. Oil is the major source of revenue for the people. Apart from oil, iron, manganese, uranium and phosphorus are also found here.
- The settled region of the Sahara Desert has been going undergoing a steady change. Many glass buildings have been constructed and trucks are used for the purpose of salt trade.
- Many nomadic tribes are taking up work in the cities especially in organisations dealing with oil and gas operations.



Bedouins

Ladakh - A Cold DesertBedouins

Ladakh is a cold desert lying in the Great Himalayas, located in the eastern region of Jammu and Kashmir. Leh is the capital of Ladakh. The region is bounded by the Karakoram Range in the north and the Zaskar Mountains in the south. The River Indus flows through this region. Ladakh is home to several glaciers such as the Gangri Glacier.



The Ladakh Desert

Climate

- As Ladakh is located at a great altitude, the climate here is extremely cold and dry.
- Since the air at such a high altitude is thin, the heat of the Sun can be felt intensely.
- While during the day, the temperatures may just rise above zero degrees, in the nights, the temperature may fall as low as -30°C .
- During winters the temperature generally remains below -40°C .
- Ladakh lies in the rain shadow of the Himalayans. This means that the region is sheltered from the rain bearing winds by the mountains. Rainfall is very scarce and it hardly rains above 10 cm every year.
- The region experiences cold winds with intense sunlight during the day time.

Flora and Fauna

- Due to the extreme climate and low rainfall the vegetation is scanty, though plenty of grass can be found at lower altitudes for the animals to graze.
- Willows and poplars are the two species of trees which are generally found in the region.
- During the summer, people grow fruits such as apples, apricots and walnuts.
- Redstarts, robin, Tibetan snowcock and raven are some species of birds which can be found here.

- Animals such as wild sheep, wild goats and yak are some commonly found animals. These animals are reared for their milk and milk products. Sheep are reared for wool.
- The Tibetan antelope or the Chiru has been listed as endangered species. It is famous for producing wool known as shahtoosh which is known for its light weight.



A Tibetan Antelope

People

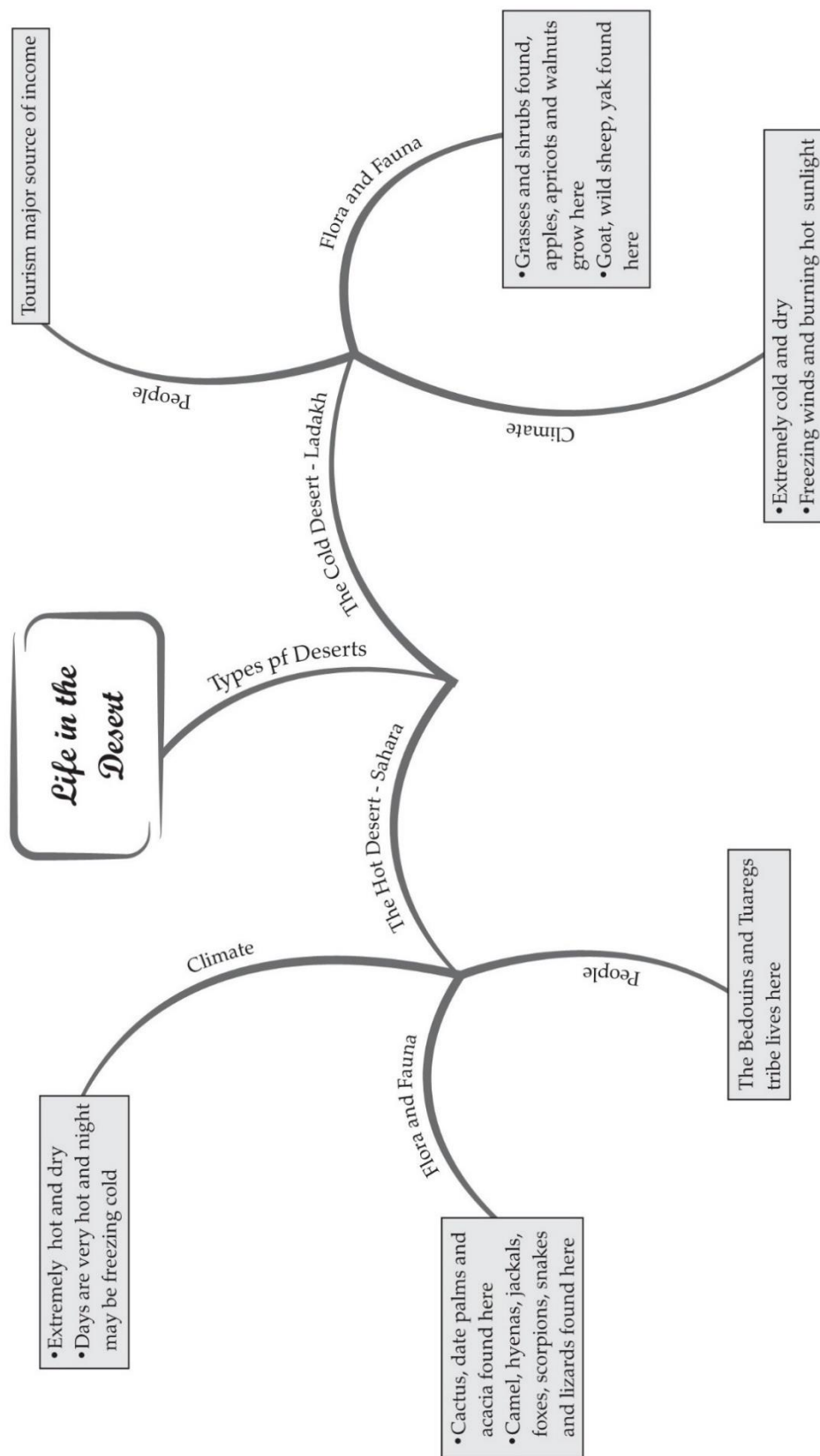
- Majority of the people in Ladakh are either Muslims or Buddhists. Several Buddhist monasteries can be found in this region. Some famous monasteries here are Hemis, Shey and Lamayuru.
- People cultivate potatoes, barley, peas, beans and turnip.
- During the winter, people stay indoors celebrating various festivities and ceremonies.
- Women in Ladakh are very hard working as they work in house, fields, manage small businesses and look after the shops.
- Tourism is a major activity in this region as many people visit the snow capped mountains, gompas, and glaciers.
- Since very few resources are available to the people, they do not waste any resources. People in the region live in harmony with nature.
- Leh is connected to the Kashmir Valley through the National Highway 1A.



A Buddhist Monastery

MIND MAP : LEARNING MADE SIMPLE

CHAPTER-10



Important Questions

➤ Multiple Choice Questions :

Question 1. Which of the following mineral is not found in the Sahara desert among the following?

- (a) Gold
- (b) Phosphate
- (c) Manganese

Question 2. Which of the following country is not touched by the Sahara desert?

- (a) Egypt
- (b) Libya
- (c) Saudi Arabia

Question 3. Ladakh is located in the:

- (a) Western side of the Jammu and Kashmir
- (b) Eastern side of the Jammu and Kashmir
- (c) Northern side of Jammu and Kashmir

Question 4. An animal found in Sahara is:

- (a) Jackal
- (b) Ostrich
- (c) Lion

Question 5. The altitude in Ladakh varies from 3000 m in Kargil to more than m in Karakoram.

- (a) 7,000
- (b) 8,000
- (c) 9,000

Question 6. Sahara desert touches how many countries?

- (a) 12
- (b) 11
- (c) 9

Question 7. The world's largest desert is:

- (a) Sahara
- (b) Thar
- (c) Ladakh

Question 8. One animal whose hair is not used to make woollen clothes is:

- (a) Sheep
- (b) Goat
- (c) Lion

Question 9. The cold desert is:

- (a) Ladakh
- (b) Sahara
- (c) Thar

Question 10. Nile valley is located in:

- (a) Egypt
- (b) Ghana
- (c) Mali

Question 11. What is another name of Khapa-chan?

- (a) Sahara
- (b) Ladakh
- (c) Egypt
- (d) None of these

Question 12. Where is Drass located?

- (a) In Ladakh
- (b) In Sahara
- (c) In Egypt
- (d) None of these

Question 13. What do you mean by the Gangri?

- (a) River
- (b) Glacier
- (c) Pond
- (d) Waterfall

Question 14. How many countries touch Sahara desert?

- (a) 11
- (b) 12
- (c) 20

(d) 17

Question 15. Sahara is located in which part of Africa?

- (a) Eastern
- (b) Northern
- (c) Western
- (d) Southern

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. Cactus is found in _____ desert.
2. Gravel plains are found in _____.
3. _____ is the capital of Ladakh.
4. Khapa-chan means _____.
5. Lamayuru is a famous _____ monastery.

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. Deserts are characterised by scanty vegetation.
2. Yak's milk is used to make cheese and butter.
3. Hyenas found in Sahara desert is a bird.
4. Ladakh is a hot desert.
5. Manali - Leh highway crosses four passes.

➤ **Very Short Questions :**

1. How many countries are touched by the Sahara desert? Name them.
2. What are the two characteristic features of a desert?
3. Mention the day and night temperatures of the Sahara desert.
4. What vegetation is found in the Sahara desert?
5. Name the two nomadic tribes living in the Sahara desert.
6. Name the animals reared by the Bedouins and Tuaregs.
7. What do these animals provide them?
8. Name the countries associated with the discovery of oil.
9. Ladakh is made up of two words. Mention these words with their meaning.
10. Where is Ladakh located?

➤ **Short Questions :**

1. Describe the Climate of the Sahara desert.
2. Mention the summer and winter activities of the people of the Ladakh desert.
3. Describe the flora and fauna found in the Sahara desert.
4. How did the Sahara become a desert?
5. Why do nomadic tribes of Sahara desert rear livestock?

➤ **Long Questions :**

1. Describe the people of the Sahara desert Also write about their activities.
2. Describe the flora and fauna found in the Ladakh desert.
3. Write about the people of Sahara desert?
4. What are the climatic conditions of the Ladakh desert?
5. What are the summer and winter activities of the people of Ladakh?

ANSWER KEY –

➤ **Multiple Choice Answer :**

1. (a) Gold
2. (c) Saudi Arabia
3. (b) Eastern side of the Jammu and Kashmir
4. (a) Jackal
5. (b) 8,000
6. (b) 11
7. (a) Sahara
8. (c) Lion
9. (a) Ladakh
10. (a) Egypt
11. (b) Ladakh
12. (a) In Ladakh
13. (b) Glacier
14. (a) 11
15. (b) Northern

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. Sahara

2. Sahara
3. Leh
4. snow land
5. Buddhist

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True

➤ **Very Short Answer :**

1. The Sahara desert touches eleven countries—Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara.
2. The climate of a desert is either very hot and dry or very cold and dry. The vegetation is sparse.
3. The day temperature—It may soar as high as 50°C.
The night temperature—Nearing zero degrees.
4. Vegetation in the Sahara desert is comprised of cactus, date, palms and acacia.
Green islands with date palms can be seen near the oases.
5. The Bedouins and Tuaregs.
6. Goats, Sheep, Camels and horses.
7. These animals provide them with milk and hides.
8. Algeria, Libya and Egypt.
9. The two words with which Ladakh is made up of are La meaning mountain pass and Dak meaning country.
10. Ladakh is located in the Great Himalayas, on the eastern side of Jammu and Kashmir.

➤ **Short Answer :**

1. The Sahara desert experience scorching hot and parch dry climate. The rainy season occurs for the short time. The sky is cloudless and clear. Days are extremely hot. The temperatures during the day may rise as high as 50°C. The nights may be freezing cold with temperatures nearing zero degrees.
2. In the summer season the people of the Ladakh desert are busy in cultivation work.

They grow crops such as barley, potatoes, peas, beans and turnip. The climate during winters is very harsh and people keep themselves engaged in festivities and ceremonies. The women manage the house and fields with great efficiency. They also manage small business and shops.

3. **Flora:** The Sahara desert has vegetation such as cactus, date palms and acacia. In some places there are oases where one can see green islands with date palms.

Fauna: The animals found in the Sahara desert are camels, hyenas, jackals, foxes, scorpions, several varieties of snakes and lizards.

4. Sahara once used to be a lush green plain. Cave paintings in Sahara desert show that there used to be rivers with crocodiles. Elephants, lions, giraffes, ostriches, sheep, cattle and goats were common animals. But the change in climate has changed it to a very hot and dry region.
5. Nomadic tribes of Sahara desert rear livestock because these animals provide them with milk, hides from which they make leather for belts, slippers, water bottles; hair is used for mats, carpets, clothes and blankets.

➤ Long Answer :

1. The Sahara desert experiences harsh climate. Despite that various groups of people such as the Bedouins and Tuaregs live here. These are nomadic tribes who pursue different activities. They rear animals such as goats, sheep, camels and horses. They get milk and hides from these animals. They prepare leather from hides. This leather is used in making belts, slippers, water bottles. They use the hair of these animals in making mats, carpets, clothes and blankets. The people of the Sahara desert wear heavy robes to protect themselves from the dust storms and hot winds.

The oasis in the Sahara desert and the Nile valley in Egypt support settled population. Since water is available, people grow date palms. They also grow rice, wheat, barley and beans.

The Sahara is undergoing change with fast speed. Tuaregs, the nomadic tribe, are now acting as guides to foreign tourists. More and more nomadic herdsmen are migrating to cities in search of jobs in oil and gas operations.

2. **Flora:** Vegetation is scanty in the Ladakh desert. There are scanty patches of grasses and shrubs. Groves of willows and poplars are seen in the valleys. During the summers, fruit trees such as apples, apricots and walnuts grow.

Fauna: Several species of birds are found in the Ladakh desert. Robins, redstarts, Tibetan snowcock, raven and hoopoe are common. The animals found in this region are wild goats, wild sheep, yak and special kinds of dogs.

3. **People of Sahara desert:**

- i. The Sahara desert despite its harsh climate has been inhabited by various groups of

people, who pursue different activities.

- ii. Among them are the Bedouins and Tuaregs. These groups are nomadic tribes rearing livestock such as goats, sheep, camels and horses. They wear heavy robes as protection against dust storms and hot winds.
- iii. The oasis in the Sahara and the Nile Valley in Egypt supports settled population. Since water is available, the people grow date palms. Crops such as rice, wheat, barley and beans are also grown. Egyptian cotton, famous worldwide is grown in Egypt.
- iv. The cultural landscape of the Sahara is undergoing change. Tuaregs are seen acting as guides to foreign tourists. More and more nomadic herdsmen are taking to city life finding jobs in oil and gas operations.

4. Climatic conditions of the Ladakh desert:

- i. The altitude in Ladakh varies from about 3000m in Kargil to more than 8,000m in the Karakoram. Due to its high altitude, the climate is extremely cold and dry. The air at this altitude is so thin that the heat of the sun can be felt intensely.
- ii. The day temperatures in summer are just above zero degree and the night temperatures well below -30°C . It is freezing cold in the winters when the temperatures may remain below -40°C for most of the time.
- iii. As it lies in the rain shadow of the Himalayas, there is little rainfall, as low as 10 cm every year. The area experiences freezing winds and burning hot sunlight.

- 5.** In the summer season the people are busy cultivating barley, potatoes, peas, beans and turnip. The climate in winter months is so harsh that people keep themselves engaged in festivities and ceremonies. The women are very hard working. They work not only in the house and fields, but also manage small business and shops.