

Southeast Asia

Section 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. Southeast Asia's physical features include peninsulas, islands, rivers, and many seas, straits, and gulfs.
2. The tropical climate of Southeast Asia supports a wide range of plants and animals.
3. Southeast Asia is rich in natural resources such as wood, rubber, and fossil fuels.

Key Terms and Places

Indochina Peninsula peninsula that makes up part of Mainland Southeast Asia

Malay Peninsula peninsula that makes up part of Mainland Southeast Asia

Malay Archipelago island group that makes up part of Island Southeast Asia

archipelago a large group of islands

New Guinea Earth's second largest island

Borneo Earth's third largest island

Mekong River most important river in Southeast Asia

Section Summary

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Two peninsulas and two large island groups make up the Southeast Asia region. Mainland Southeast Asia is made up of the **Indochina Peninsula** and the **Malay Peninsula**. Island Southeast Asia is made up of the many islands of the Philippines and the **Malay Archipelago**. A large group of islands is called an **archipelago**.

Mainland Southeast Asia has rugged mountains, low plateaus, and river floodplains. Island Southeast Asia has more than 20,000 islands, including **New Guinea**, the world's second largest island, and **Borneo**, the world's third largest island. Island Southeast Asia is part of the Ring of Fire, where earthquakes and volcanoes often occur.

For all of Southeast Asia, water is of great importance. The region's fertile river valleys and

Underline the two peninsulas that make up Mainland Southeast Asia.

Circle the two island groups that make up Island Southeast Asia.

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deltas support farming and are home to many people. The **Mekong River** is the region’s most important river.

CLIMATE, PLANTS, AND ANIMALS

Southeast Asia is in the tropics, the area on and around the equator. This region is generally warm all year round.

The climate on the mainland is mostly tropical savanna. Monsoon winds bring heavy rain in summer and drier air in winter there. Savannas—areas of tall grasses and some trees and shrubs—grow here.

The islands and the Malay Peninsula have a mostly humid tropical climate. Here, it’s hot, muggy, and rainy all year. This climate supports tropical rain forests. These forests are home to many different plants and animals. Some animals are only found here, such as orangutans and Komodo dragons. Many plants and animals are endangered, however, due to the cutting down of the rain forest.

What kinds of plants grow in the region’s tropical savanna climate?

Why are the plants and animals of the rain forest endangered?

NATURAL RESOURCES

Southeast Asia is rich in natural resources. Farming is very productive here thanks to the region’s climate and rich soil. Rice is a major crop. Rubber tree plantations are found on Indonesia and Malaysia. The rain forests supply hardwoods and medicines. The region also has fisheries, minerals, and fossil fuels.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Write an essay explaining the advantages and disadvantages of Southeast Asia’s water resources for its people.