

## **Revision Notes**

### **Class 7: Social Science (Geography)**

#### **Chapter 9 - Life in the Deserts**

##### **Overview**

The desert is a barren region characterized by extremely high or low temperatures and has little vegetation. According to the temperatures, there may be hot or cold deserts.

##### **The Hot Desert – Sahara**

- The Sahara is the largest desert on the globe.
- It covers approximately 8.54 million sq. km. The Sahara desert is found in 11 countries: Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara.
- In the Sahara Desert, there are gravel plains and upland plateaus with bare rock surfaces.
- These rock surfaces can reach over 2500 m in height in certain areas.

##### **Climate**

- The climate of the Sahara desert is extreme, blazing, and arid.
- The rainy season is not long. The sky is clear without clouds.
- In this case, moisture evaporates more quickly than it accumulates.
- During the day, temperatures can rise to 50°C, warming the sand and bare rocks that in turn emit heat, making everything around warm.
- Nights can get chilly with temperatures close to zero degrees.

##### **Flora and Fauna**

- In the desert of the Sahara, the vegetation includes cactus, date palms, and acacia.
- Some places have oasis – green islands surrounded by date palms.
- Camels, hyenas, jackals, foxes, scorpions, numerous varieties of snakes, and lizards are the main animal species that live here.

##### **People**

- The Sahara Desert despite its harsh climate has been inhabited by diverse groups of people, who carry out different activities.
- These include the Bedouins and the Tuaregs. These groups are nomadic tribes rearing livestock such as goats, sheep, camels, and horses.

- These animals supply them with milk, skins from which they make leather for belts, slippers, water bottles; the hair is used for mats, carpets, garments, and blankets.
- They wear heavy robes to protect themselves from dust storms and warm winds. The oasis in the Sahara and the Nile Valley in Egypt supports the colonized people. Given the availability of water, people grow date palms.
- They grow rice, wheat, barley, and beans as well. Egyptian cotton, known all over the world, is cultivated in Egypt.
- The discovery of oil, a product in high demand all over the world, in Algeria, Libya, and Egypt, is constantly changing the Sahara desert.
- Other important minerals found here include iron, phosphorus, manganese, and uranium. The cultural landscape of the Sahara is in a state of transformation.
- Trucks take the place of camels in the salt trade. Tuaregs are regarded as guides for foreign tourists.
- An increasing number of nomadic herdsmen are taking their lives in the city to find jobs in oil and gas operations.

### **The Cold Desert – Ladakh**

- Ladakh is a cold desert situated in the great Himalayas, the eastern side of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is surrounded by the Karakoram Range to the north and the Zaskar Mountains to the south.
- Many rivers cross Ladakh, among which Indus is the most important. There are several glaciers in Ladakh, such as the Gangri Glacier.
- The altitude in Ladakh ranges from around 3000m in Kargil to over 8000m in the Karakoram.
- Because of its high elevation, the climate is extremely cold and dry. The air at this elevation is so thin that the warmth of the sun can be felt intensely.
- Daytime temperatures in summer are slightly higher than zero degrees and night time temperatures are well below -30°C.
- Ladakh lies in the rain shadow of the Himalayas, because of which it receives little rain, as low as 10cm each year.
- The area is characterized by freezing winds and warm sunshine.

### **Flora and Fauna**

- Because of the strong dryness, the vegetation is sparse.
- There are scanty patches of grasses and shrubs for animals to graze.

- Groves of willows and poplars are seen in the valleys. In summer, fruit trees like apples, apricots, and walnuts bloom.
- Robins, redstarts, Tibetan snowcock, raven, and hoopoe are sighted in Ladakh. There are some that are migratory birds.
- Ladakh animals include wild goats, wild sheep, yaks, and dogs from particular species. Livestock is raised for milk, meat, and leather.

## **People**

- The people of Ladakh are either Muslims or Buddhists.
- In fact, several Buddhist monasteries dot the Ladakhi landscape with their traditional ‘gompas’.
- Well-known monasteries include Hemis, Thiksey, Shey, and Lamayuru.
- During the summertime, people grow barley, potatoes, peas, beans, and turnips.
- The winter climate is so severe that people indulge in celebrations and ceremonies. Women are not only employed at home and in the fields but also run small businesses and stores.
- Leh, the capital of Ladakh, has good road and air connections.
- Tourism is a major business with many tourists flocking from the interior of India and abroad.
- The lives of individuals are changing as a result of modernization.
- Throughout the centuries, the people of Ladakh have been taught to live in balance and harmony with nature.
- Because of the shortage of resources such as water and fuel, they are used reverently and carefully.