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The Great Indian Desert

In this lesson, we will learn about :

- F Location of the Great Indian Desert
- F Its climate, vegetation, and irrigation system.
- F Camel – ‘Ship of the Desert’
- F Life of people and places of tourist interest in Rajasthan.

As you know, a desert is a flat area covered with sand. It has very little vegetation. It receives little or no rainfall.

Rajasthan lies to the south-west of Northern Plains. The map shows that a huge area of Rajasthan is a desert.

The Aravalli Hills divide Rajasthan into two parts. The eastern part is quite fertile while

the western part is rocky and sandy. The river Chambal flows in the eastern part.

The western part of Rajasthan is known as the Indian Desert or the Thar Desert. The Thar Desert was formed due to low rainfall and heavy soil erosion. The Thar Desert spreads from the Aravalli Hills to the border of Pakistan in the west and from Rann of Kachchh in

the south-west to the border of Haryana in the north. In the west it forms a part of Sind desert in Pakistan.



India: Thar Desert

Climate

The desert region remains hot and dry throughout the year. In summers, the nights are cool and days are hot. In winters, the days are warm and the nights are very cold. There is very little rainfall in this region because the Aravalli Hills lie in the direction of rain-bearing winds and are not able to stop the winds to cause rain.

In the deserts, wind shifts sand from one place to another

to form small mounds called **sand dunes**. Sometimes strong winds blow away the sand with great speed. They are called sand storms.

The winds cause great damage to the soil. They blow away the topsoil. This type of damage to the soil is called **soil erosion**. Due to soil erosion, the large area of desert is dry and barren. Trees do not grow in the desert because the climate is very hot and dry and it rains little. Sometimes, it does not rain for many years.

It has scattered bushes and thorny shrubs at some places.



An oasis

At some places, palm, babool, cactus, and thorny kikar are also found. These plants require little water. The farmers grow wheat, gram, jowar and bajra on their fields. The government has set up our country's largest wheat farm at Suratgarh.

Water is, however, found at some places in the desert. The water comes mostly from small amount of rainwater that collects in streams and ponds or underground water that comes to the surface and forms a pool. This pool is called an oasis. An oasis is a fertile spot in a desert. Most of the villages in deserts come up around such an oasis. Date palm trees are found at such places.

Indira Gandhi Canal

The Government is trying to provide water to Rajasthan for irrigating fields and for daily use. The water from Satluj has been brought to the desert through the Rajasthan Canal, also called the **Indira Gandhi Canal**. It is the world's longest canal. At present, it waters Ganganagar and Bikaner districts. Many areas around Rajasthan Canal have turned green with the planting of trees, shrubs and other kinds of vegetation. There are some saltwater lakes in Rajasthan. Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan is India's largest salt lake. Besides tube-wells, there are streams which are filled up with rainwater.



Indira Gandhi Canal



Camel is the chief mode of transport in a desert

The camel is among the few domesticated animals found in the desert. It is also called the

'Ship of the Desert' because it can move easily on the sand and is used as the chief means of transport in a desert. Its padded hooves do not sink into the sand. The camel has a lump of fat in its hump. The fat provides nourishment to the body when there is no water to drink.

By destroying forests and allowing overgrazing by animals, we are increasing the desert area. There is a need to stop cutting of trees and overgrazing of grasslands. We should also grow grass and plant more trees.

In the western part of Rajasthan, people domesticate goats, sheep and camel, and feed them with small bushes or dry food. They move from one place to another in search of water and also to sell milk products, animal skin and handicrafts. As they keep moving with their belongings, they are called *nomads*.



Nomads of Rajasthan

Even today people move across the desert in groups with camels called a *caravan*.

In the eastern part of Rajasthan, farming and animal rearing are common. Water stored in tanks and wells helps to irrigate the land. People are employed in mica, copper and zinc mines. Marble and sandstone are found in the

region. Rajasthani craft items and tie and dye fabrics are admired everywhere.



A Caravan

The dryness of the air, sand storms and sand dunes have influenced the dress of the people. Both men and women cover their heads to protect themselves from the scorching heat of the sun and sand storms during the day. The men wear a turban. The women wear ghagra-choli with *odhni*. They like to wear clothes of bright colour with dark spots and jewellery. They speak Rajasthani, a dialect of Hindi.



Gangaur Festival

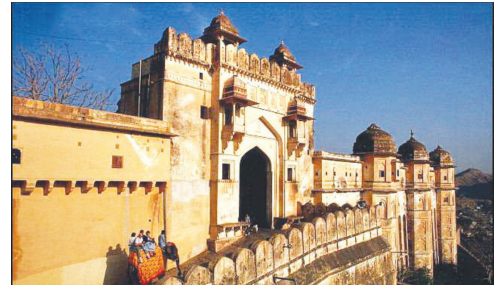
Dussehra, *Diwali*, *Holi* and *Eid* are celebrated in Rajasthan. *Teej* and *Gangaur* are festivals in which women take part heartily while swaying on swings and singing songs. *Ghoomar* dance is a famous folk dance performed by women on festive occasions.



Udaipur Lake Palace



Hawa Mahal



Amber fort

Famous places of tourist attraction are **Udaipur** and **Jaipur**. **Lake Palace** at Udaipur, **Hawa Mahal** and **Amber Fort** at Jaipur and cities of Jodhpur and Bikaner are well known. **Kota**, **Alwar** and **Chittor** are

historical cities. **Mount Abu** is a hill station of Rajasthan. Many devotees visit the **Dargah** at **Ajmer**. **Jaipur** the capital of Rajasthan is called the Pink City as most of the buildings here are of pink colour. Raja Jai Singh was the founder of Jaipur.



KEY WORDS

- ↳ **Soil erosion** — Loss of top soil due to action of wind and running water.
- ↳ **Sand dunes** — Small mounds of sand.
- ↳ **Oasis** — A fertile spot in a desert having a pool of water and palm trees.
- ↳ **Salt lake** — A lake having salty water.
- ↳ **Caravan** — A group of camels moving from one place to another, and laden with goods and people.



THINGS I HAVE LEARNT

1. The Great Indian Desert also called Thar Desert extends from the Rann of Kachchh to the borders of Haryana.
2. The land is rocky and has small mounds of sand called sand dunes.
3. Small thorny bushes and cactus grow in some parts of a desert.
4. An oasis is a place in the desert where water is found.
5. The Rajasthan Canal brings water from Satluj to large parts of the Indian Desert.
6. The camel is called the 'Ship of the Desert'.
7. Man is responsible for the spread of deserts.
8. Rajasthan is the only state which has a desert.
9. The vegetation in Rajasthan gets water from the Indira Gandhi Canal.
10. People speak Rajasthani which is a dialect of Hindi.
11. There are many places of tourist interest in Jaipur and Udaipur.



THINK AND ANSWER

A. Tick (✓) the correct answers.

1. Which river flows in the eastern part of Rajasthan?
(a) Betwa (b) Chambal (c) Sone
2. The government has set up India's largest wheat farm at
(a) Jaipur (b) Udaipur (c) Suratgarh
3. The Rajasthan Canal draws water from which river?
(a) Beas (b) Chenab (c) Satluj
4. Which is India's largest salt lake?
(a) Wolar Lake (b) Sambhar Lake (c) Chilika Lake
5. Which of the following minerals is found abundantly in Rajasthan?
(a) Marble and sandstone (b) Iron (c) Silver
6. Which is the only hill station of Rajasthan?
(a) Chittor (b) Mount Abu (c) Udaipur
7. Which popular folk dance is performed by women of Rajasthan on festive occasions?
(a) Gangaur (b) Ghoomar (c) Jatra

B. Match the following columns.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Dargah | (a) Festival |
| 2. Hawa Mahal | (b) Dialect |
| 3. Gangaur | (c) Desert vegetation |
| 4. Rajasthani | (d) Small hills of sand |
| 5. Palm, babool, Kikar | (e) Jaipur |
| 6. Sand dunes | (f) Ajmer |

C. Fill in the blanks. Choose words from the box.

Oasis

longest

Aravalli

desert

Camel

1. _____ hills divide Rajasthan into two parts.
2. The Western Part of Rajasthan is a _____.
3. An _____ is a fertile spot in a desert.
4. Indira Gandhi Canal is the world's _____ canal.
5. _____ is called the ship of the desert.

D. Write T for the true and F for the false statements.

1. People move across the desert in groups with camels called a caravan.
2. Amber Fort is located in Udaipur.
3. Jaipur is called the Green city.
4. Raja Jaimal was the founder of Jaipur.
5. Eastern part of Rajasthan is fertile.

E. Answer these questions.

1. Describe the location and extent of the Thar Desert.
2. What is a sand storm?
3. Explain the importance of an oasis.
4. How has the Indira Gandhi canal helped the farmers of Rajasthan? [VALUE BASED QUESTION]
5. Name important places of tourist attraction in Rajasthan.
6. Why is the climate of the Thar desert harsh? [HOTS]



MAP WORK

- F. On an outline map of India, mark the Thar desert and colour it. Label the neighbouring states also.**



DO AND LEARN

- G. Collect five pictures of monuments of Rajasthan. Paste them in your scrapbook. Write two lines about each monument.**



SURF AND LEARN

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thar_Desert

www.bharatonline.com/rajasthan/thar-desert/inden.html



LIFE SKILLS

EMOTIONAL & THINKING

Make a model of an Oasis. Take a big tray and fill it with sand. Make a part of the tray empty by using a plastic partition. Put some water in the empty part. Take small plants and make them stand in the sand. The model of an Oasis is ready.