

Amazon Rainforest

The Amazon rainforest, alternatively, the Amazon jungle or Amazonia, is a moist broadleaf tropical rainforest in the Amazon biome that covers most of the Amazon basin of South America.

Latest News

- On July 14, 2021 scientists confirmed that the Amazon rainforest was emitting more carbon dioxide than it could absorb.
- Most of the emissions were a result of forest fires deliberately started to clear the land for the beef or soy industry.
- Following the alarming rate of deforestation the Amazon Rainforest was undergoing, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on June 29, 2021 banned unauthorised outdoor burning and deployed the army to better protect the environs of Amazonia.

Amazon Rainforest is featured in the geography segment of the UPSC Syllabus.

As such candidates preparing for the UPSC Exam will find this article useful.

Facts about the Amazon Rainforest

- The Amazon Basin encompasses 7,000,000 km² (2,700,000 sq mi), of which 5,500,000 km² (2,100,000 sq mi) are covered by the rainforest.
- The majority of the forest is contained within Brazil, with 60% of the rainforest, followed by Peru with 13%, Colombia with 10%, and with minor amounts present in Venezuela, French Guiana, Bolivia, Ecuador, Suriname.
- More than 30 million people of 350 different ethnic groups live in the Amazon, which are subdivided into 9 different national political systems and 3,344 formally acknowledged indigenous territories.
- More than 56% of the dust fertilizing the Amazon rainforest comes from the Bodélé depression in Northern Chad in the Sahara desert. The dust contains phosphorus, important for plant growth.

- The region is home to about 2.5 million insect species, tens of thousands of plants, and some 2,000 birds and mammals. To date, at least 40,000 plant species, 2,200 fishes, 1,294 birds, 427 mammals, 428 amphibians, and 378 reptiles have been scientifically classified in the region.

Importance of the Amazon Rainforest

The Amazon rainforest plays an important part in regulating the world's oxygen and carbon cycles. It produces roughly six percent of the world's oxygen and has long been thought to act as a carbon sink, meaning it readily absorbs large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

But when trees are logged and the forest is burned, that carbon is released into the atmosphere at alarming rates. Recent research has suggested that these forests might actually be emitting more carbon dioxide than they're absorbing. Luckily, if we're able to conserve large parts of the fragile ecosystem, scientists believe we may be able to restore its status as a carbon sink.

The Amazon rainforest stores a huge amount of carbon in its vegetation and soil. If the burning of vegetation released all that carbon into the atmosphere, efforts to limit climate change by cutting down on carbon dioxide emissions from motor vehicles and industrial processes would become pointless.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Amazon Rainforest

What is the amount of deforestation the Amazon Rainforest has undergone?

A total of 11,088 sq km (4,281 sq miles) of rainforest were destroyed from August 2019 to July 2020. The Amazon is a vital carbon store that slows down the pace of global warming.

What is the population of the indigenous people living in the Amazon Rainforest?

The number of indigenous people living in the Amazon Basin is poorly quantified, but some 20 million people in 8 Amazon countries and the Department of French Guiana are classified as "indigenous". Two-thirds of this population lives in Peru, but most of this population dwells not in the Amazon, but in the highlands.