

Hindu Kush Mountain Range

The Hindu Kush is an 800-kilometre-long (500 mi) mountain range that stretches through Afghanistan from its centre to Northern Pakistan and into Tajikistan. The range forms the western section of the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region.

To the north, near its northeastern end, the Hindu Kush buttresses the Pamir Mountains near the point where the borders of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan meet.

The eastern end of the Hindu Kush in the north merges with the Karakoram Range. Towards its southern end, it connects with the Spin Ghar Range near the Kabul River.

This article in length will describe further the geographic features of the Hindu Kush mountains. The details of this will be useful in the Geography segment of the IAS Exam.

To know more in detail about the segment, be sure to visit the UPSC Syllabus page.

Geographical facts about the Hindu Kush - HKH Region

- The range has numerous high snow-capped peaks, with the highest point being Tirich Mir or Terichmir at 7,708 metres (25,289 ft) in the Chitral District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
- Many peaks of the range are between 4,400 and 5,200 m and some much higher, with an average peak height of 4,500 metres.
- The mountains of the Hindu Kush range diminish in height as they stretch westward.
- The most important mountain pass in Afghanistan is the Salang Pass (Kotal-e Salang) (3,878 m or 12,723 ft) north of Kabul, which links southern Afghanistan to northern Afghanistan.
- The Hindu Kush forms the boundary between the Indus watershed in South Asia, and Amu Darya watershed in Central Asia.
- These mountainous areas are mostly barren, or at the most sparsely sprinkled with trees and stunted bushes.
- The inner valleys of the Hindu Kush see little rain and have desert vegetation.

- Over 240 million people live in the region's mountains. 1.7 billion live in the river basins downstream, while food grown in these basins reaches three billion people.
- The glaciers feed at least 10 major river systems, which have bearings on agricultural activities, drinking water and hydroelectricity production in the region.

Environmental Concerns about the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region

As per the assessment made by International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, the Hindu Kush will still have warmer temperatures even if the global warming limit is capped at 1.5 degrees Celsius as per the Paris Agreement ([link](#)).

In the future, even if global warming is kept to 1.5 degrees C above the pre-industrialisation levels, warming in the HKH region is likely to be at least 0.3 degrees C higher, and in the northwest Himalayas and Karakoram at least 0.7 degrees C higher.

There might be a potential water crisis in South Asia if a certain part of its cryosphere is lost in the next decade on account of the melting glacier. Because this will affect the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region's water storage abilities.

Note:*A cryosphere comprises portions of Earth's surface where water is in solid form, including sea ice, lake ice, river ice, snow cover, glaciers, ice caps, ice sheets, etc.

The glaciers are being melted away due to increased human activity in the region which has led to an overall increase in pollution levels in the Himalayas itself.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region is located downwind of some polluted places on Earth, which disrupts monsoon patterns and in turn poses a threat to agriculture.

To mitigate the worst effects of climate change, it has been recommended that a shift from fossil fuels must be encouraged more strictly.

In addition, the countries in the region need to reduce emissions of black carbon and other air pollutants as well.

The mandate is to evolve measures to sustain and safeguard the Himalayan glaciers, mountain ecosystems, biodiversity and wildlife conservation & protection.

Frequently Asked Regarding the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region

What is the climate like in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region?

The region experiences rainy or snowy summers (from July to September) and dry winters. The central and western Hindu Kush, however, border the Mediterranean climatic zone, characterized by hot, dry summers and cold, wet or snowy winters (from December to early March).

What type of physical feature is the Hindu Kush?

The Hindu Kush is one of the great watersheds of Central Asia, forming part of the vast Alpine zone that stretches across Eurasia from east to west. It runs northeast to southwest and divides the valley of the Amu Darya (the ancient Oxus River) to the north from the Indus River valley to the south.