



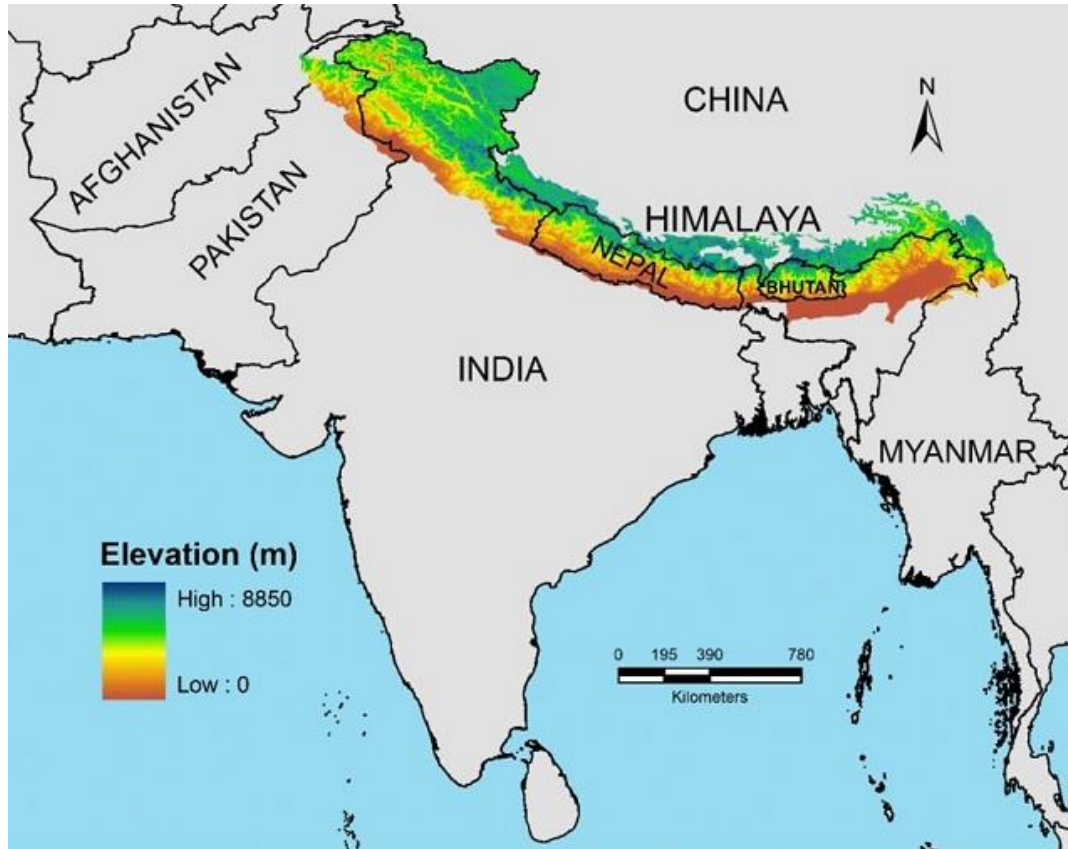
My Drift

Title: The Himalayas

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Date: 17 Nov 2021

Article Number: 376-2021-25



The Himalayas Mountain Range in Asia separates the plains of the Indian subcontinent from the China Tibetan Plateau. The range has most of the planet's highest peaks, including the highest, Mount Everest with an elevation of 8,849 meters (29,032 feet). There are over 100 peaks exceeding 7,200 meters (23,622 feet) in elevation in the Himalayas. By contrast, the highest peak outside Asia (Aconcagua in the Andes) is 6,961 meters (22,838 feet) tall. Denali (better known as Mount McKinley) is the highest mountain peak in North America, with a summit elevation of 6,190 meters (20,310 feet) above sea level. The tallest mountain in the lower 48 United States is Mount Whitney which stands at 4,418 meters (14,494 feet) and is located in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.



Mount Everest (Nepal – China)



Aconcagua (Argentina)



Denali (Mount McKinley) Alaska



Mount Whitney California



K2, at 8,611 meters (28,251 feet) above sea level, is the second-highest mountain on Earth. It lies in the Karakoram range, mostly in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan.

All of these mountain heights are measured from sea level. **The real tallest mountain on earth is Mauna Kea, one of six volcanoes that formed the big island of Hawaii.** From its Pacific Ocean base, it is 9,966 meters (32,696 feet, 6.2 miles) high. This is 1,116 meters (3,661 feet, 0.7 miles) taller than Mount Everest and roughly the same height in the atmosphere where commercial airplanes fly. Mauna Kea's peak is 4,207 meters (13,803 feet) above sea level, making it the highest point in the state of Hawaii and second-highest peak of an island on Earth. The peak is about 38 meters (125 feet) higher than Mauna Loa, its more massive neighbor.

Did you do the arithmetic? 5,759 meters (18,843 feet) of Mauna Kea Mountain is under water.



Back to the Himalayas

Take another look at the map on page 1 and let's see if we can figure out what countries the Himalayas Mountain Range is in or touches? From west to east, it looks like it touches the northeastern tip of Afghanistan and the northern border of Pakistan. The India plains to the south and China's Tibetan Plateau to the north are the dominant borders. Then we have two countries located right in the Himalaya Mountains – Nepal and Bhutan on the eastern end. The total length of the Himalayas is approximately 1,500 miles (2,400 km).



The Himalayas Mountain Range

You might have guessed this fact, but the two countries in the world with the highest average elevations are #1 Bhutan (10,760 feet) and #2 Nepal (10,715 feet). Let's take a closer look at these two countries.

Bhutan (the last Buddhist Kingdom on Earth)



The small predominantly Buddhist nation of Bhutan, tucked between China and India, is lanced by deep ravines and coated with thick woods. The country has no traffic lights. Smoking as well as tobacco products are illegal, as are hunting and fishing (except for catch and release). It is forbidden to climb high peaks (where spirits dwell), and employees must wear traditional clothing—a gho robe for men and kira dress for women—during work hours. A few years ago, Gross National Happiness was identified by the nation as being more important than Gross National Product (GNP).



Gho and Kira

Monasteries—often massive and commanding—abound; monks, when not in prayer or meditation or chores are often found playing board games, sharing stories, laughing or all three. Archery is the national sport and green chili peppers together with ‘cheesy sauce’ is the national dish. Ask any resident, and likely you’ll find they truly do love their King and Queen.



Buddhist Monastery

This country—with an area of 14,824 square miles is slightly larger than the state of Maryland. This sounds relatively small until you spend hours crossing thin and switch backed roads through jungles and over mountain passes. Suddenly the land appears gigantic. Seventy percent of the terrain is coated with forests, while seven percent is pressed beneath glaciers. The highest Himalayan peak—Gangkhar Puensum—soars to almost 25,000 feet (7,570 meters) above sea level. That’s higher than any peak in Europe, Africa, the Americas or Australasia.

Bhutan's population is about 790,000 people and its capitol is Thimphu (population 115,000). The Kingdom of Bhutan was, by and large, a mystery to the outside world until 1974, when the borders came down and outsiders were allowed entry into the country. Before 1974, unless you were from India or Bangladesh, the country was off-limits.



Buddhist Monk

Now, the number of annual visitors is controlled at about 55,000. To deter low-cost tourism (cheap tourists), Bhutan requires visitors to spend a minimum amount per day—several hundred dollars. To ensure compliance, visitors must sign up with a registered Bhutanese tour agency before arriving. The fee also helps to control the number of visitors entering Bhutan. Before visiting Bhutan, visitors must pay a lump sum fee to any of many authorized Bhutanese travel agents. Travelers once considered such fees, and the need for a specific itinerary, as a costly hassle. Many visitors now realize that these pre-paid dues—which cover accommodation, meals, vehicle and driver, fuel, a guide, permits for visits and daily excursions—are not unreasonable for guided visits to still largely uncrowded sites. Local food—while palatable and filling—is more geared for sustenance than sensory pleasure.

A huge attraction of Bhutan is its perceived (and actual) focus on peacefulness. In hotels and restaurants, attractively dressed locals are astutely polite and genuinely helpful. Their encouragement to visit the countryside and monasteries instead of shopping malls gives visitors more of an opportunity to immerse themselves within, rather than simply pass through, the spirit of Buddhism.

Nepal (Officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal)

Nepal (population 30,000,000) is a landlocked country in South Asia mainly situated in the Himalayas, but also includes parts of the Indo-Gangetic Plain, bordering Tibet of China to the north, and India in the south, east, and west, while it is narrowly separated from Bangladesh by the Siliguri Corridor, and from Bhutan by the Indian state of Sikkim. Nepal has a diverse geography, including fertile plains, subalpine forested hills, and eight of the world's ten tallest mountains, including Mount Everest, the highest point on Earth. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural state, with Nepali as the official language. Kathmandu (population 1,500,000) is the nation's capital and the largest city.



Since Mount Everest is the biggest attraction in Nepal, let's look at a few interesting facts:

MOUNT EVEREST IS EVER-GROWING

Mount Everest is estimated to be 50-60 million years old. Yet, it has not stopped growing taller. The collision force of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates is still sending pressure to the Himalayas height. The summit of Everest increases a quarter of an inch each year.

WIND SPEED AT EVEREST CROSSES OVER 100 MILES PER HOUR

The summit of Everest reaches the upper troposphere, close to the borderline of the stratosphere. This exposes the mountain to fast and freezing winds of jet streams. A wind speed of 175 mph was recorded in February 2004. Winds over 100 mph are frequent at the summit.



Mt. Everest View from Nepal

YOUR BODY STARTS DYING AT THE SUMMIT OF EVEREST

In the death zone, above 8000 meters (26,246 feet), body cells start to die in the absence of oxygen. The oxygen level at the summit of Everest is only one-third of oxygen at sea level. The temperature is extreme, getting below -50 degrees Celsius (-58 degrees Fahrenheit). The average temperature at the summit of Mount Everest is -19C in summer and -36C in winter. These conditions are not favorable for human survival.

A SPIDER LIVES AT EVEREST

Above the clouds, into thin air of Everest, lives an abominable creature. *Euophrys Omnisuperstes*, one of the Himalayan jumping spiders, lives at elevations as high as 6,700 m (22,000 ft). It is one of the permanent residents in high altitudes living among rocky debris.

HIGH ALTITUDE GRAVEYARD

Everest is the graveyard at the highest altitude. Nearly 300 mountaineers have died while attempting to climb Everest. There are at least 200 dead bodies on

the slopes of Everest, most of them around the Death Zone. The corpses are mummified in cold temperatures. It is extremely difficult and dangerous to bring the bodies down. So, they are left as they died on the mountain. An occasional rescue by their loved ones has been made to some of the high-profile families private funding of at least \$70,000 USD.

FIRST-EVER ATTEMPT TO CLIMB

The first attempt to climb Mt. Everest was by a team of British climbers, including George Mallory in 1921. Mallory and Andrew Irvine made another attempt in 1924. They were spotted on the way to the summit. With their death on the mountain, it remains a mystery if they reached the summit.

FIRST SUCCESSFUL CLIMB TO THE SUMMIT

The first successful summit was on May 29, 1953, by Sir Edmund Hillary from New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay, a Sherpa from Nepal. Since then, about 9,000 people have reached the summit of Mount Everest. Among them, the eldest climber is 80 years old, and the youngest is 13.

COST OF CLIMBING EVEREST

On average, it costs more than \$35,000 USD to climb Everest. It includes a \$11,000 USD royalty fee per climber.

An average of 800 people a year attempt to climb Mount Everest and as you might have guessed, most of them don't make it to the summit.



Many Hikers Heading up Mt. Everest



These Climbers Made It!

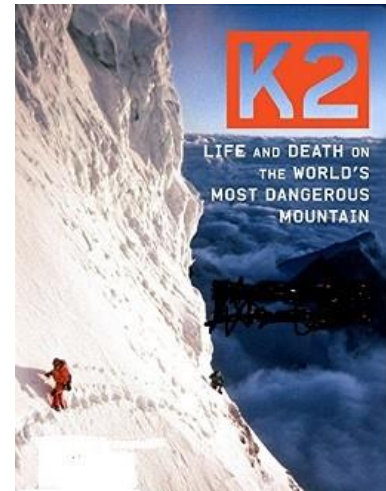
SUMMIT OF EVEREST IS THE BORDER OF NEPAL AND CHINA

The summit of Everest is on the border of Nepal and China. Nepal is on the south and China is on the north side of the mountain. There is a trail or route

on both sides, but the China side is much harder. Therefore, the majority of climbers choose the route via Nepal. One of the main reasons is because its gradual hiking trail to Everest Base Camp helps them to get acclimated. The Sherpa, indigenous and local people living in the area, are the heroes who usually lead the expeditions.

K2 IS THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS MOUNTAIN

K2, on the Chinese-Pakistani border in the Karakorum Range, has one of the deadliest records: 87 climbers have died trying to conquer its treacherous slopes since 1954. Only 377 have successfully reached the summit. In contrast, Mt. Everest has been climbed more than 9,000 times, while approximately 300 have died on the mountain.



More Himalayas Information and Fun Facts

What does the word Himalaya Mean?

The name of the mountain range, Himalaya, originally came from the word Himā-laya, which means 'Abode of Snow' in Sanskrit. In Tibetan, the Himalaya means 'Land of Snow'. And in Chinese, it is called 'Ximalaya'.

Physical Features of Himalayas

There are fourteen peaks exceeding 8000 meters (26246 feet) in elevation in the Himalaya Ranges, namely Mount Everest (8848 meters), Godwin Austen (8611 meters), Kangchenjunga (8586 meters), Lhotse (8516 meters), Makalu (8463 meters), Cho Oyu (8201 meters), Dhaulagiri (8167 meters), Manaslu (8163 meters), Nanga Parbat (8125 meters), Annapurna (8091 meters), Gasherbrum I (8068 meters), Broad Peak (8047 meters), Gasherbrum II (8035 meters) and Shisha Pangma (8013 meters). Moreover, there are another thirty-six mountains over 7200 meters (23,622 feet) above the sea level. That's why the Himalaya is the highest mountain range on the Earth.

The Importance of Himalayas

Thanks to the Himalaya ranges, the monsoon rains can be kept on the Indian plain, and there is a limited amount of rainfall on the Tibet plateau. The glacier and snowfields on the top of Himalaya Mountains are the source of the most

important rivers in Asia, such as the Indus River, the Ganges River, and the Yarlung Tsanpo River. The forests at the foot of the Himalaya on the southern side are the home to many endangered species, like the Snow Leopard, Wild Yak, Himalayan Blue Sheep and many others.



Snow Leopard



Himalayan Blue Sheep

The Best Time to Visit the Himalaya Regions:

- **Best time to Visit Tibet: April to October**
- **Best time to Visit Nepal: February to April and October to November**
- **Best time to Visit Bhutan: October to December**

Himalayan Population

There are over 50 million people living in the entire range of the Himalayas in northeast India, Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan. The population of the Himalayas includes Aryans, Mongoloids and Negroids. Furthermore, there are about 600 million people living in the basins that are formed by the rivers rising in the Himalayas, such as the Indus, the Ganges and the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra.

Himalaya Story

What makes the Himalaya so attractive? Not only because of the wonders of the Nature, the unique cultures, and the mysterious religions, but also some of the interesting folklores, such the world-famous story of Yeti.

In the legend, the Yeti is a kind of huge creature that inhabits in the Himalaya regions in Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. It is taller than ordinary people and covered with thick hair. Not until the 19th century did the western world know the story of the Yeti. Reports of seeing odd creatures in the Himalayas had been increasing during the 20th and 21st century. The so-called footprints and the scalp of the Yeti have been found in the past, but until now, it is still hard to say whether there are Yetis or not in the Himalaya Regions. However, the legend

of the Yeti has always kept people's attention to the Everest, making the Himalaya a destination for the curious explorers from all over the world.



Some Comments

I have no interest in hiking or climbing Mount Everest or any of those tall mountains in the Himalayas. A sightseeing trip to Nepal and Bhutan would be interesting. But when I think about it, the thing I found the most interesting is Bhutan's psychology where the happiness of its citizens is more important than money. More countries should take this approach. So, I wouldn't mind visiting Bhutan – I could use a little more happiness in my life.

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