



Consistency. Right Direction. Discipline.

GEOGRAPHY QUICK REVISION

PRELIMS 2026

Important Topics and Map Based Themes



RAJINIKANTH RAMAREDDIPETA

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Geography Quick Revision Important Topics and Map based themes for Prelims 2026

Major Topics

1. Straits
2. Glaciers
3. Seas and Lakes
4. Mountain Passes
5. Bays and Gulfs
6. Deserts and Grassland
7. Countries passing through major latitudes

Most Important Straits for UPSC

Asia & Indian Ocean (VERY HIGH PRIORITY)

1. **Strait of Hormuz**
Connects: Persian Gulf Gulf of Oman
Countries: Iran, Oman
Importance: ~20% of global oil trade passes here
2. **Bab-el-Mandeb**
Connects: Red Sea Gulf of Aden
Countries: Djibouti, Eritrea, Yemen
Importance: Suez Canal route, piracy & geopolitics
3. **Strait of Malacca**
Connects: Andaman Sea South China Sea
Countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore
Importance: One of the busiest trade routes globally
4. **Palk Strait**
Between: India & Sri Lanka
Connects: Bay of Bengal Gulf of Mannar
Project link: Sethusamudram
5. **Sunda Strait**
Between: Java & Sumatra (Indonesia)
Alternative to Malacca

6. **Lombok Strait**

Between: Bali & Lombok

Deep-water strait → used by submarines

Europe

7. **Bosporus Strait**

Connects: Black Sea Sea of Marmara

Country: Turkey

8. **Dardanelles**

Connects: Sea of Marmara Aegean Sea

Strategic under Montreux Convention

9. **Strait of Gibraltar**

Connects: Mediterranean Sea Atlantic Ocean

Countries: Spain, Morocco

10. **English Channel (Strait of Dover)**

UK France

One of the busiest sea lanes

Americas

11. **Bering Strait**

Asia North America

Russia USA (Alaska)

12. **Strait of Magellan**

Atlantic Pacific

Southern Chile

13. **Drake Passage**

South America Antarctica

Roughest seas, cold currents

Africa

14. **Mozambique Channel**

Madagascar Mozambique

Important Indian Ocean current pathway

Important Glaciers of India

VERY IMPORTANT (Frequently asked / CA-linked)

1. **Siachen Glacier**

Location: Karakoram Range, Ladakh

River source: Nubra → Indus system

Importance: World's highest battlefield

2. **Gangotri Glacier**

Location: Uttarakhand (Garhwal Himalaya)

River: Bhagirathi (Ganga source)

Town: Gaumukh

3. **Yamunotri Glacier**

Location: Uttarakhand

River: Yamuna

4. **Zemu Glacier**

Location: Sikkim (Kanchenjunga region)

Largest glacier in Eastern Himalayas

Teesta river system

5. **Milam Glacier**

Location: Uttarakhand (Kumaon Himalaya)

River: Goriganga

MODERATE IMPORTANCE

6. **Pindari Glacier**

Location: Uttarakhand

River: Pindar → Alaknanda

7. **Bara Shigri Glacier**

Location: Himachal Pradesh (Lahaul–Spiti)

Largest glacier in Himachal Pradesh

River: Chenab

8. **Drang-Drung Glacier**

Location: Zaskar Range, Ladakh

River: Stod → Indus

9. **Satopanth Glacier**

Location: Uttarakhand

River: Alaknanda

LESS FREQUENT BUT UPSC-TRICKY

10. **Kolahoi Glacier**

Location: Kashmir Valley

River: Jhelum source

11. **Chhota Shigri Glacier**

Location: Himachal Pradesh

Important for climate research (mass balance studies)

12. **Machoi Glacier**

Location: Zoji La, Kashmir

Prelims Smart Pointers

UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS

- Eastern Himalayas glacier → Zemu (ONLY major one)
- Largest glacier in India → Siachen
- Largest in Himachal → Bara Shigri
- Indus system glaciers = Ladakh + Karakoram

Important Mountain Passes of India

VERY HIGH PRIORITY (Asked repeatedly)

1. **Karakoram Pass**

Location: Ladakh (India–China region)

Range: Karakoram

Historic Silk Route

2. **Nathu La Pass**

Location: Sikkim

Connects: India China (Tibet)

Part of ancient Silk Route

3. **Jelep La Pass**

Location: Sikkim

Connects: India Bhutan/Tibet

4. Zoji La Pass

Location: J&K Ladakh

Connects: Srinagar Leh

Vital military logistics

5. Rohtang Pass

Location: Himachal Pradesh

Connects: Kullu Lahaul–Spiti

MODERATE PRIORITY (Tricky in Prelims)

6. Shipki La Pass

Location: Himachal Pradesh

Connects: India China

Sutlej enters India nearby

7. Lipulekh Pass

Location: Uttarakhand

India Tibet (China)

Kailash–Mansarovar route

8. Mana Pass

Location: Uttarakhand

Near Badrinath

India Tibet

9. Niti Pass

Location: Uttarakhand

India Tibet

10. Bomdi La Pass

Location: Arunachal Pradesh

Strategic eastern sector

EASTERN & NORTHEASTERN PASSES (UPSC loves region-wise)

11. Dihang Pass

Arunachal Pradesh

Brahmaputra (Siang) entry route

12. Diphu Pass

Location: India–China–Myanmar tri-junction

Arunachal Pradesh

13. Pangsau Pass

Arunachal Pradesh

India Myanmar

Stilwell Road

SOUTH INDIA (LOW FREQUENCY BUT POSSIBLE)**14. Palghat Gap**

Western Ghats

Kerala Tamil Nadu

Wind & rail corridor

15. Bhor Ghat

Maharashtra (Western Ghats)

16. Thal Ghat

Maharashtra

Prelims Smart Traps**UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS**

- Eastern Himalaya pass → Nathu La, Jelep La, Bomdi La
- Tri-junction pass → Diphu Pass
- Western Ghats “pass” = gap (Palghat Gap)
- Sutlej enters India near Shipki La

IMPORTANT SEAS & LAKES**SEAS (India, Neighbourhood & World)****VERY HIGH PRIORITY**

1. Arabian Sea – West of India
2. Bay of Bengal – East of India
3. Red Sea – Asia–Africa, Suez route
4. South China Sea – Islands + geopolitics
5. Mediterranean Sea – Europe–Africa–Asia
6. Black Sea – Europe (Bosporus link)
7. Caspian Sea – Largest inland water body (lake geographically)

MODERATE / TRICKY

8. Andaman Sea – Tsunami zone
9. Laccadive Sea – Near Lakshadweep
10. Baltic Sea – Low salinity
11. Sea of Japan
12. Sea of Okhotsk
13. North Sea – Oil & wind energy
14. Barents Sea – Ice-free Arctic sea

CURRENT-AFFAIRS / STRATEGIC

15. Persian Gulf – Oil trade
16. Gulf of Aden – Piracy, Red Sea crisis
17. Aegean Sea – Greece–Turkey
18. Caribbean Sea
19. Philippine Sea – Mariana Trench
20. Coral Sea – Great Barrier Reef

LAKES — INDIA

VERY HIGH PRIORITY

1. Wular Lake (J&K) – Largest freshwater lake in India
2. Sambhar Lake (Rajasthan) – Largest salt lake in India
3. Chilika Lake (Odisha) – Brackish, Ramsar, dolphins
4. Vembanad Lake (Kerala) – Longest lake in India
5. Loktak Lake (Manipur) – Phumdis, floating NP
6. Pulicat Lake (TN–AP) – Brackish
7. Pangong Tso (Ladakh) – Saline, India–China

MODERATE / UPSC-TRICKY

8. Dal Lake – Srinagar
9. Kolleru Lake – Krishna–Godavari basin
10. Tso Moriri – Ramsar, Ladakh
11. Tso Kar – Saline, Ladakh
12. Suraj Tal – Source of Bhaga
13. Chandra Tal – Source of Chandra river

RAMSAR / CA-LINKED

14. Ashtamudi Lake – Kerala
15. Sasthamkotta Lake – Freshwater Ramsar
16. Hokera Lake – J&K
17. Hussain Sagar – Artificial lake
18. Bellandur Lake – Urban pollution case

IMPORTANT WORLD LAKES (PRELIMS GOLD)

19. Lake Baikal – Deepest freshwater lake
20. Lake Superior – Largest freshwater (area)
21. Lake Victoria – Largest in Africa
22. Lake Tanganyika – Longest freshwater lake
23. Lake Titicaca – Highest navigable lake
24. Dead Sea – Lowest point on land
25. Aral Sea – Shrinking lake
26. Lake Chad – Rapidly shrinking
27. Great Salt Lake – Saline (USA)

LAST-MINUTE UPSC FACTS (MEMORISE)

UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS

- Largest freshwater lake (India) → Wular
- Largest salt lake (India) → Sambhar
- Longest lake (India) → Vembanad
- Caspian Sea = lake geographically
- Chilika & Pulicat = brackish
- Pangong = saline + transboundary

IMPORTANT GULFS & BAYS (WITH MEANING & EXAMPLES)

QUICK MEANING (1-LINE REVISION)

- Gulf → A large, deep, and more enclosed part of a sea/ocean with a narrower opening.
- Bay → A broad inlet of the sea, less enclosed, with a wider opening.

IMPORTANT GULFS OF INDIA (HIGH PRIORITY)

1. Gulf of Kachchh (Gujarat)

Arabian Sea

Coral reefs, mangroves

Major ports (Kandla)

2. Gulf of Khambhat (Cambay)

Arabian Sea

Narmada, Tapi, Mahi drain here

Very high tidal range

3. Gulf of Mannar

Between India & Sri Lanka

Bay of Bengal side

Biosphere Reserve (rich biodiversity)

UPSC FACT: India has only 3 gulfs

IMPORTANT GULFS OF THE WORLD

4. Persian Gulf

Oil hub of the world

Connected to Arabian Sea via Strait of Hormuz

5. Gulf of Aden

Between Yemen & Somalia

Links Red Sea with Arabian Sea

Piracy & Red Sea crisis

6. Gulf of Oman

Connects Persian Gulf to Arabian Sea

7. Gulf of Mexico

USA–Mexico

Hurricanes, offshore oil

8. Gulf of Guinea

West Africa

Near Equator

9. Gulf of Suez

Northern arm of Red Sea

Suez Canal

10. Gulf of Aqaba

Eastern arm of Red Sea

Deep, tectonically active

IMPORTANT BAYS OF INDIA

1. Bay of Bengal

Largest bay in the world

Cyclone-prone

Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna system

2. Palk Bay

Between India & Sri Lanka

Linked with Palk Strait

IMPORTANT BAYS OF THE WORLD

3. Bay of Fundy

Canada

Highest tidal range in the world

4. Hudson Bay

Canada

Inland sea-like bay

5. Bay of Biscay

France–Spain

Rough seas

6. Baffin Bay

Arctic region

Greenland–Canada

7. Tokyo Bay

Japan

Industrial hub

8. Bay of Campeche

Southern Gulf of Mexico

9. Caribbean Sea (often confused as bay in MCQs)

Atlantic Ocean region

GULF vs BAY

Aspect	Gulf	Bay
Enclosure	More enclosed	Less enclosed
Opening	Narrower	Wider
Depth	Generally deeper	Comparatively shallow
Example	Persian Gulf	Bay of Bengal

PRELIMS TRAPS (VERY IMPORTANT)

UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS

- Highest tides → Bay of Fundy (NOT gulf)
- Oil choke point → Persian Gulf
- India's gulfs → Only 3
- Red Sea branches → Gulfs of Suez & Aqaba
- Largest bay → Bay of Bengal

IMPORTANT DESERTS

DESERTS OF INDIA (VERY HIGH PRIORITY)

1. Thar Desert (Great Indian Desert)

Location: Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab

Type: Hot subtropical desert

Extension: Pakistan

River: Luni (only long river)

UPSC focus: desertification, Indira Gandhi Canal

2. Rann of Kachchh

Gujarat

Salt desert (seasonal marsh)

White desert (Great Rann)

UPSC trap: NOT sandy desert

3. Cold Desert of Ladakh

Ladakh (Trans-Himalaya)

Cold desert

Rain shadow region

HOT DESERTS (SUBTROPICAL)

VERY IMPORTANT

4. Sahara Desert

Africa

Largest hot desert in the world

Trade wind desert

5. **Arabian Desert**

Arabian Peninsula

Oil-rich region

6. **Kalahari Desert**

Southern Africa

Semi-arid

7. **Namib Desert**

South-west Africa

Oldest desert

Coastal desert (cold Benguela current)

MODERATE IMPORTANCE

8. **Atacama Desert**

Chile

Driest desert in the world

Cold current + rain shadow

9. **Thar (Pakistan side)**

Continuation of Indian Thar

10. **Sonoran Desert**

USA–Mexico

Hot desert with biodiversity

COLD DESERTS (UPSC FAVOURITES)

VERY IMPORTANT

11. **Gobi Desert**

Mongolia–China

Cold desert

Interior Asia

12. **Patagonian Desert**

Argentina

Rain shadow of Andes

Cold desert

POLAR DESERTS (CONCEPTUAL QUESTIONS)

13. Antarctic Desert

Largest desert in the world (overall)

Cold polar desert

14. Arctic Desert

Greenland, Canada, Russia

UPSC PRELIMS SUPER TRAPS

UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS

- Largest hot desert → Sahara
- Largest desert overall → Antarctica
- Driest desert → Atacama
- Oldest desert → Namib
- Indian desert NOT sandy → Rann of Kachchh
- Cold desert in India → Ladakh

MAINS VALUE ADDITION (2–3 lines)

Deserts are classified into hot, cold, and polar types based on temperature and precipitation patterns. While subtropical deserts like the Sahara result from descending air of Hadley cells, coastal deserts such as Atacama form due to cold ocean currents, and cold deserts like Gobi arise from continentality and rain-shadow effects.

ONE-LOOK REVISION TABLE

Desert	Type	Special fact
Sahara	Hot	Largest hot desert
Atacama	Hot	Driest
Namib	Hot	Oldest
Gobi	Cold	Interior Asia
Antarctica	Polar	Largest desert
Thar	Hot	India
Ladakh	Cold	India

GRASSLANDS

WHAT ARE GRASSLANDS? (1-liner)

Grasslands are regions dominated by grasses with moderate rainfall, lying between forests and deserts.

TYPES OF GRASSLANDS

1. TROPICAL GRASSLANDS (Savanna type)

Location: Between equatorial forests & deserts

Climate: Hot with wet–dry seasons

Vegetation: Tall grasses, scattered trees

IMPORTANT EXAMPLES

1. Savanna – Africa
2. Campos – Brazil
3. Llanos – Venezuela & Colombia
4. Australian Savanna – Northern Australia

2. TEMPERATE GRASSLANDS (PRELIMS FAVOURITE)

Location: Mid-latitudes, continental interiors

Climate: Moderate rainfall, hot summers, cold winters

Vegetation: Short to tall grasses, almost no trees

IMPORTANT EXAMPLES (VERY IMPORTANT)

1. Prairies – North America
2. Steppes – Eurasia
3. Pampas – Argentina & Uruguay
4. Velds – South Africa
5. Downs – Australia

3. POLAR / COLD GRASSLANDS

Location: High latitudes

Climate: Very cold, low rainfall

EXAMPLES

Tundra – Arctic regions

GRASSLANDS OF INDIA

IMPORTANT TYPES

1. Semi-arid tropical grasslands
 - Deccan Plateau
 - Central India
2. Banni Grasslands
 - Gujarat (Rann of Kachchh)
 - Largest tropical grassland in India
3. Terai Grasslands
 - Himalayan foothills
 - Tall elephant grasses
4. Shola Grasslands
 - Western Ghats (montane grasslands)

UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS (VERY IMPORTANT)

UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS

- Prairies Pampas Steppes (region specific)
- Banni grassland desert
- Savanna = tropical grassland (not temperate)
- Tundra = cold grassland (almost no trees)

MAINS VALUE ADDITION

Grasslands act as major carbon sinks, support pastoral livelihoods, and maintain biodiversity, yet they remain among the most threatened ecosystems due to agricultural expansion and afforestation bias.

ONE-LOOK REVISION TABLE

Grassland	Region
Savanna	Africa
Prairies	North America
Pampas	South America
Steppes	Eurasia
Velds	South Africa
Downs	Australia
Banni	India
Terai	India

MAJOR LATITUDES & COUNTRIES PASSING THROUGH THEM

MAJOR LATITUDES (WITH DEGREE)

Latitude	Degree
Equator	0°
Tropic of Cancer	23½° N
Tropic of Capricorn	23½° S
Arctic Circle	66½° N
Antarctic Circle	66½° S

1. EQUATOR (0°)

Countries passing through (Important):

Ecuador
 Brazil
 Colombia
 Gabon
 Congo
 Democratic Republic of Congo
 Uganda
 Kenya
 Somalia
 Indonesia
 UPSC trap: India does NOT lie on the Equator.

2. TROPIC OF CANCER (23½° N) (VERY IMPORTANT)

India (passes through 8 states)

Gujarat
 Rajasthan
 Madhya Pradesh
 Chhattisgarh
 Jharkhand
 West Bengal
 Tripura
 Mizoram
 Other Countries:
 Mexico
 Bahamas
 Egypt
 Saudi Arabia
 UAE
 Oman
 Bangladesh
 China
 Taiwan

3. TROPIC OF CAPRICORN ($23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ S)

Chile

Argentina
Paraguay
Brazil
Namibia
Botswana
South Africa
Mozambique
Madagascar
Australia

4. ARCTIC CIRCLE ($66\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ N)

USA (Alaska)

Canada
Greenland (Denmark)
Iceland
Norway
Sweden
Finland
Russia

5. ANTARCTIC CIRCLE ($66\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ S)

Passes only through Antarctica

No countries (only research stations)

UPSC PRELIMS TRAPS

- Only one latitude passes through India → Tropic of Cancer
- Maximum countries crossed → Equator
- Arctic Circle passes through 8 countries
- No permanent population south of Antarctic Circle

MAINS VALUE ADDITION

Major latitudes influence the global distribution of climate, vegetation, and human settlements by controlling solar insolation and seasonal variations.