

MINI HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY UNIT

India



Welcome to India!

Before we dive in, meet Archie and his friends, the Intrepid Explorers. They are five adventurous Aussie kids who travel the world on missions to recover stolen artefacts or protect endangered species. This time, they are headed to India.

Before landing, they have decided to read up on the country's geography, history, culture and wildlife, and we hope you have fun learning with them!

And the adventure does not stop there. On our website, www.thelittleexplorersjournal.com, under the resources page, we've also shared fun resources from their journey, including landmarks, more wildlife facts, quizzes, games, and activities to keep your kids learning and having fun every step of the way.



Welcome to India!

India is a vast and culturally rich country in South Asia. It is officially called the Republic of India and is one of the world's oldest continuous civilisations, with history stretching back thousands of years. Its capital city is New Delhi. India is currently the most populous country on Earth, with more than 1.4 billion people, and is home to a huge variety of ethnic groups, traditions, and religions. In fact, the country is one of the most linguistically diverse in the world. The Indian Constitution recognises 22 official languages, including Hindi and English, which are widely used in government and education, alongside hundreds of regional languages spoken across its states.

Geography of India

India has very different landscapes from north to south. In the north rise the Himalayas, the highest mountain range in the world. Their tallest peak, Mount Everest, reaches 8,848 metres high (29,029 ft), with snowy peaks that stay frozen all year. As you travel south, the land becomes warmer and greener, stretching into wide plains where the Ganges River flows. This river provides water and fertile soil for farming and has supported people for thousands of years. Farther south, India ends in tropical coastlines with palm trees and sandy beaches. India also has a very long coastline, stretching over 11,000 kilometres (based on a new study) along the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Along these coasts are busy ports, fishing villages, and natural harbours. Because India is so large, it has many climates, from cold mountain winters to hot deserts and rainy monsoon seasons.



History of India

India has one of the oldest histories in the world, stretching back thousands of years. Over 4,500 years ago, people settled near the Indus River and formed one of the world's first great civilisations, called the Indus Valley Civilisation, building well-planned cities with brick houses, straight streets, and clever water systems. Later, powerful kingdoms and empires ruled different parts of India. The Maurya Empire united much of the country for the first time, and its famous ruler, Ashoka, spread messages of peace and kindness after choosing Buddhism. The Gupta Empire followed and is known as a golden age of learning, with major advances in maths, science, art, and astronomy, including early ideas about the number zero. In the south, kingdoms like the Chola Empire built grand temples and became skilled sea traders. In the 1800s, India came under British rule, but after years of peaceful protest led by leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, India gained its independence in 1947. Today, India is the largest democracy in the world.



Famous Landmarks

The Taj Mahal in Agra is one of the world's most famous buildings; a beautiful white marble mausoleum built by Emperor Shah Jahan as a symbol of love, and admired for its symmetry and delicate design. In Delhi, the Red Fort is a huge red sandstone fortress that was the main home of the Mughal emperors for nearly 200 years and is now a symbol of India's history and independence. The Gateway of India in Mumbai is a giant arch built in 1924 by the British to welcome King George V and Queen Mary. Hawa Mahal, or the "Palace of Winds," is in Jaipur and was built in 1799 from pink sandstone. Its 953 tiny windows, called jharokhas, let cool air flow through the building. The palace was designed so that royal women could watch festivals and street life without being seen. Mysore Palace in Karnataka is a grand royal palace that was once the home of the Wodeyar kings. Built in the late 19th century, it is famous for its beautiful domes, arches, and towers.



Famous Landmarks

The Himalayas are the highest mountains in the world, stretching across northern India. They have snow-covered peaks, rushing rivers, and deep valleys. The mountains are home to many rare and amazing animals, like the shy snow leopard, the colourful Himalayan monal bird, and the small red panda. The Sundarbans is the largest mangrove forest in the world, located in eastern India. It is famous for its Bengal tigers, crocodiles, and many kinds of birds. The Thar Desert, also called the Great Indian Desert, is in western India. It has golden sand dunes, camels, and colourful desert festivals. Located in the mountains of Uttarakhand, the Valley of Flowers is a beautiful national park filled with colourful wildflowers, streams, and waterfalls. In summer, the valley bursts into bloom, attracting people from all around the world!

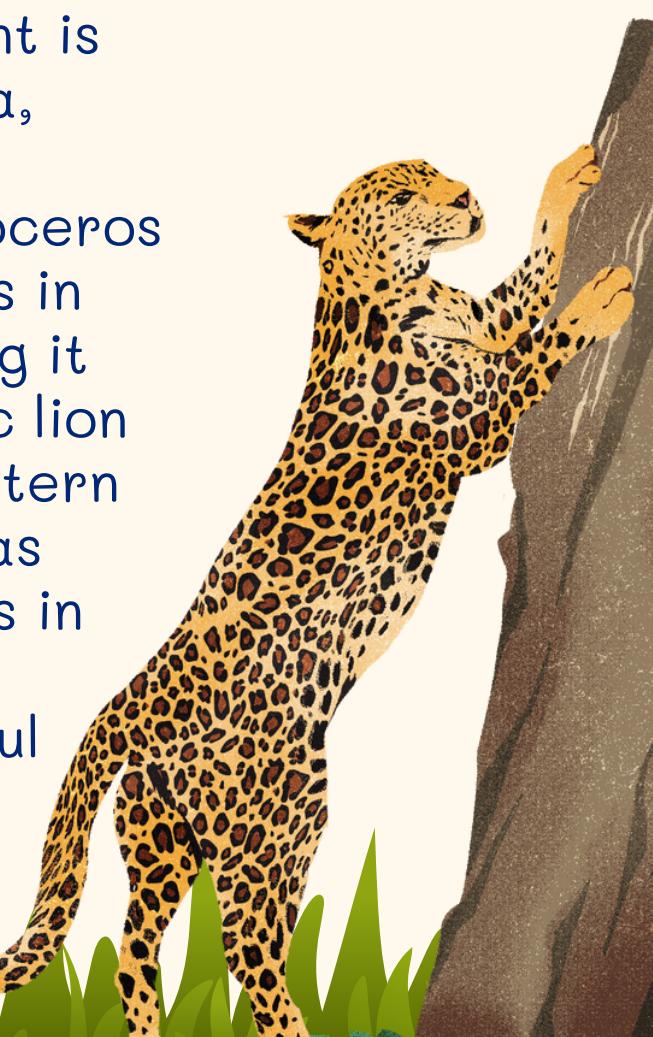




Wildlife in India



The Bengal tiger, India's national animal, mainly lives in the sundarbans mangrove forests in the east, the dense forests of Madhya Pradesh, and the grasslands of western India. Known for its strength and beautiful orange-and-black stripes, it is one of India's most famous animals. The Indian elephant is mostly found in the forests of Kerala, Karnataka, Assam, and West Bengal, and is admired for its intelligence and strength. The one-horned rhinoceros lives in the Kaziranga and Manas National Parks in Assam, with its thick skin and single horn helping it survive in tall grasses and wetlands. The Asiatic lion is found only in the Gir Forest of Gujarat in western India and is smaller than African lions but just as majestic. Other unique animals include leopards in forests across India, snow leopards in the high Himalayas, monkeys in many regions, and colorful birds in national parks and wetlands.



Indian Festivals and Traditions

India is a country of many religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and each has its own traditions and celebrations. Music and dance are central to Indian culture, with classical forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak, as well as folk music and dances. Some of the most famous festivals include Diwali, the festival of lights, which celebrates the victory of good over evil and light over darkness, and Holi, the festival of colours, which marks the arrival of spring and the triumph of good over evil, with people singing, dancing, and throwing colored powders. Eid celebrates the end of Ramadan with prayers, feasting, and giving to those in need, while Christmas marks the birth of Jesus Christ with decorations and family gatherings. Guru Nanak Jayanti, celebrated by Sikhs, honours the birth of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, with prayers, processions, and community service.



Indian Food

Indian food is famous for its rich flavours, spices, and variety. Every region has its own special dishes. Biryani from Hyderabad and northern India is made with rice, meat or vegetables, and spices. Dosa from South India is a thin pancake made from a fermented rice-and-lentil batter, often served with chutney or sambar (a spicy vegetable stew). Samosas come from a filled pastry called sanbusak from the Middle East, brought to India long ago. In North India, it was adapted into the crispy triangular pastry we know today, usually filled with spiced potatoes, peas, or meat, and it is now a favourite snack all over the country. Parathas from Punjab are flatbreads stuffed with vegetables or lentils and cooked on a griddle. Butter Chicken also originates from Punjab and is a creamy, mildly spiced dish made with chicken cooked in a tomato, butter, and cream sauce. It is soft, rich, and often eaten with naan bread or rice. Jalebi is a sweet, spiral-shaped treat made by frying coiled batter and soaking it in sugar syrup. It originated in the Middle East but became very popular in North India and is now enjoyed across the country. Food in India is more than something to eat. It is a way to share traditions, bring people together, and celebrate the country's culture through meals and flavours.



Sports in India

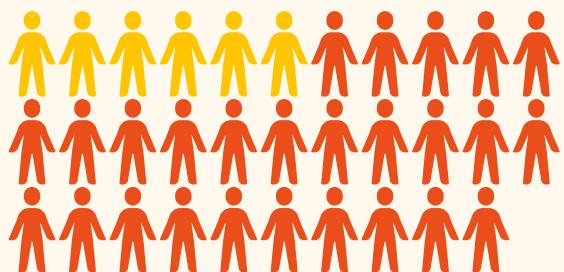
India has a strong cricket tradition, and the national cricket team has won many important international tournaments, including the Cricket World Cup. Cricket is so popular that kids and adults often play it in streets, parks, and schools all over the country. Field hockey is another sport where India has done really well, winning many Olympic medals over the years. India also has traditional sports like kabaddi, a game where players try to tag opponents while holding their breath, which is now played in international competitions. Other sports are growing in popularity too, like football, badminton, and tennis, with Indian athletes winning medals and titles around the world. Sports are an important part of Indian culture because they bring communities together, teach teamwork, and celebrate skill and effort.



Fun Facts about India

India's official name is the Republic of India. The country is known for its rich diversity, with more than 2,000 different ethnic groups and more than 1,600 languages spoken. India is the largest democracy in the world and has one of the fastest-growing economies. The Indian film industry produces more films each year than any other country. Yoga, which originated in India, is practised by millions of people around the world as a form of exercise and meditation. And India is also famous for space exploration, including satellites and missions to the Moon and Mars. India's national symbol is the lotus flower, which represents purity and beauty, and its national animal is the Bengal tiger, which stands for strength and power.

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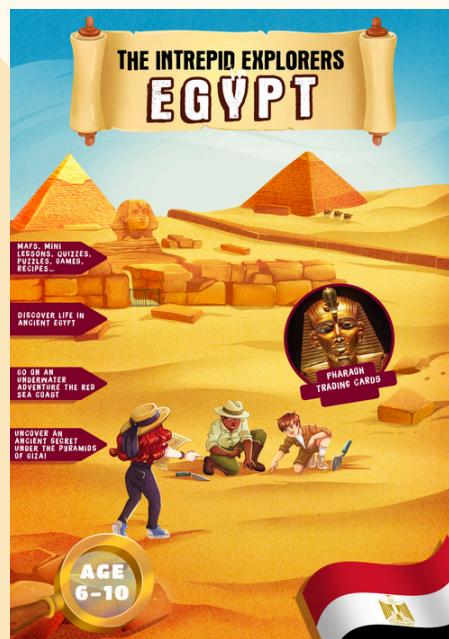


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Thank You!

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