

## Mountain regions

Mountains are areas of land that are higher than 610m (2000ft) and so tend to have a distinguishable climate of their own. They are found all around the world, from the Rockies in North America and the Andes in South America, to the Himalayas in Asia and the Alps in Europe. There are also many other smaller ranges or individual mountains which have their own distinctive climates.

Typical characteristics of mountain regions include:

- Temperatures which decrease, often rapidly with height
- Great contrasts in vegetation over short distances
- Snow for much or all of the year at very high altitudes
- A generally wetter climate than at lower levels
- Relatively clear air with little pollution
- Micro-climates which develop in shady, sheltered and sunny places
- Changeable weather over minutes and hours, as well as days
- Harsh living conditions and sparse populations

Many mountains have permanent snow on the higher areas. This can even happen in places near the equator such as Mt Kilimanjaro which has a sub tropical climate at its base but permanent snow on its peak. However, during the last 2-3 years the snow cover at the summit has been significantly reduced, possibly caused by the process of global warming.

Weather can change very rapidly on mountains: if the sun is suddenly obscured by clouds the temperature can drop several degrees in a matter of moments. Fog and low cloud can descend quickly bringing rain and low temperatures with them. Winds are also often a problem on mountains and can reach gale force very rapidly. These sudden changes in weather can make mountains extremely hazardous for people who are unprepared to cope with such rapid changes. When venturing out in mountainous areas it is important to take clothing and equipment which will protect you in an environment which is sometimes said to have all four seasons in one day.

<http://woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/mountains/climate.htm>

is a school website with pupil-friendly information and pictures

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/weatherwise/factfiles/basics/climate\\_cold.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/weatherwise/factfiles/basics/climate_cold.shtml)

has useful background information for teachers

<http://www.kbears.com/climates/printmountain.html>

Mountain climates

<http://www.keswick.u-net.com/>

has an excellent range of pictures of the Lake District and other mountainous areas around the world

<http://www.kbears.com/climates.html>

is a good general website with lots of pupil-friendly activities and information about all types of climate

<http://www.peakware.com/photos.html?pk=1089>

has useful pictures of the Matterhorn