

Temperate regions

This is perhaps the most varied climate system in the world and is divided into two main types: the maritime and the continental.

Maritime temperate regions are found in areas near coasts where the sea and onshore winds provide more rain and help to keep the temperatures level throughout the year. Continental temperate regions have more pronounced dry periods and, as there is less of a moderating influence by the sea, temperatures are often hotter in summer and colder in winter.

Typical characteristics of temperate regions include:

- Being found between the Tropic of Cancer and the Arctic Circle in the northern hemisphere, and the Tropic of Capricorn and the Antarctic Circle in the southern hemisphere.
- Generally having four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter.
- Unpredictability - whilst having recognised characteristics, most of the seasons will also have very varied weather within them. Rain, fog and lower temperatures may not be uncommon even in summer.
- The most popular climate to live in as it does not experience the wide variations of some of the more extreme climates.
- The ability to grow a large variety of crops and fruit meaning agriculture is a major income earner in these regions. Grain crops such as wheat, barley and oats are extensively grown. Pears, apples, strawberries and other soft fruit are grown to sell either as fresh produce or for manufacturing into products such as jam.
- Deciduous trees in many areas giving way to coniferous trees where the temperatures are lower for example in hilly or mountainous regions.

Britain is a good example of a country with a maritime temperate climate where the summer temperatures are generally cooler than further into Europe. This is because the sea has a moderating effect, keeping the land cooler in summer and warmer in winter. However, Britain does experience very changeable weather so accurate weather forecasting is difficult to achieve. Rain often comes in the form of storms which develop in the North Atlantic and blow across Britain from west to east at all times of the year. Even in such a small island, the weather, and to some extent the climate, differs from north to south and east to west. Mountainous areas get a lot more rain than the lowlands and this has a large effect on what can be grown. Lowland areas tend to be warmer and more suitable for large-scale agriculture.

Useful websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperate_climate
http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/features/weatherbasics/zones_temperate.shtml
General information sites for temperate climates.

<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/japan/nature.html>
Explains, with pictures, how the weather of Japan is so varied. It shows how a large temperate region is also affected by monsoon rains.

http://www.ecn.ac.uk/Education/climatic_factors.htm
is a useful site explaining about the weather in Britain as well as other temperate areas.