

## 24. Southeast Asia

**Southeast** (or Southeastern) **Asia** is a region in Asia, consisting of 11 diverse countries. The region lies geographically south of China, east of India and west of New Guinea.

Southeast Asia consists of two geographic regions:

- Mainland Southeast Asia: Indochina and Malay Peninsula
  - countries: Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore
- Maritime Southeast Asia: Greater and Lesser Sunda Islands, Philippines
  - countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei and East Timor

Malaysia extends to both parts – to mainland and maritime parts, which consists of the Greater and Lesser Sunda Islands. The Sunda Islands are part of the **Malay Archipelago** (East Indies), the most numerous archipelago on our planet with over 21 000 islands. Most of the region is located in the Northern Hemisphere, a large part of Indonesia lies in the Southern Hemisphere.



Colour and fill in the map the countries of Southeast Asia:

1. Myanmar (Naypyidaw)
2. Thailand (Bangkok)
3. Cambodia (Phnom Penh)
4. Laos (Vientiane)
5. Vietnam (Hanoi)
6. Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur)
7. Brunei (Bandar Seri Begawan)
8. East Timor (Dili)
9. Singapore (Singapore)
10. Indonesia (Jakarta)
11. Philippines (Manila)

### Natural conditions

- climate: tropical (equatorial) with a lot of precipitation
  - mainland part is influenced by monsoon winds
- biomes: tropical forests, rainforests in maritime part
- mountain ranges: the Himalayas (only in the north of Myanmar), Maoke Mts
- rivers: Mekong
- largest islands: Borneo, Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan

Exercise: Name and locate on the map the names of the Greater Sunda Islands



### Population

The European colonization had a significant influence on the development of countries in Southeast Asia. Except of Thailand the whole territory was divided between Spanish, Portuguese, French, British and Dutch. The countries in the region gained their independence after WWII. The path to their independence was accompanied by many civil wars. The worst conflict was in Vietnam.

The population of SE Asia consists of many different nations, cultures and religions. Christianity can be found in the Philippines and East Timor. The mainland part of the region is mostly buddhist. In Vietnam and Laos there are many non-religious people (because of the political system).

Most populous country in the region and the largest muslim country in the world is **Indonesia**. The country with over 260 million people is the fourth most populous on our planet. The capital of Indonesia is Jakarta (over 10 million) located on Java island. Indonesia consists of hundreds of distinct native ethnic and linguistic groups. The largest are the Javanese.

Among the largest cities in SE Asia are Kuala Lumpur, Surabaya, Manila and Bangkok. **Singapore** is the modern city-state and island country that lies off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. Singapore is one of the world's major commercial hubs, financial centres and busiest ports. Singapore places highly in rankings with regard to standard of living, education, health care and has one of the highest GDP per capita in the world.

Economy of the countries in SE Asia varies a lot. Only a few countries are rich (e.g. Singapore), the rest is very poor – Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. A large part of their population works in agriculture. The typical and most important crop of the region is rice, that is also exported to the rest of the world.

The region is typical also for its plantations of oil palm, tropical fruits and rubber. Logging and growth of plantations comes at the expense of tropical forests and is causing serious ecological losses. SE Asia has vast resources of raw materials, but many of them are not used. Brunei and Indonesia benefit from oil mining. For most of the countries in the region fishing is a very important part of their economy.

**Key words:**

Southeast Asia, Maritime Southeast Asia, Indochina, Malay Archipelago, Sunda Islands, Borneo, Sumatra



There are many volcanoes in Indonesia, on the photo is Mount Kelud on Java Island



Worker in rubber plantation in Malaysia