# Geography of Southeast Asia

## Location

1. Southeast Asia is located south of China, east of India, and north of Australia. It is an area that is made up of nations that are attached of the Asian continent, and nations that are islands or island clusters. A grouping of islands or an island cluster is often called an **archipelago**. Several nations in Southeast Asia are considered archipelagos.

2. The location of Southeast Asia has historically supported vast trade. Even in ancient times, the Indian Ocean was teeming with ships which made their way from India to China and back.

## Mainland

1. Six nations make up mainland Southeast Asia (nations that are directly attached to the mainland of Asia). These nations include Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), and peninsular Malaysia.

2. The nations make up a peninsula which extends southeast from the main landmass of Asia — although Malaysia extends into its own slender peninsula.

3. Much of the northern portion of the peninsula is quite mountainous, as the terrain cascades down from the Tibetan plateau. Several Southeast Asian rivers also originate on the Tibetan plateau, and flow downward to the South China Sea, the Bay of Bengal or the Gulf of Thailand. The mouths of these rivers often form marshy deltas which are ideal for rice production.

## "Maritime"

1. The area known as "Maritime" Southeast Asia refers to the island nations of the region. These nations are not connected to the mainland of Asia and include: Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, East Malaysia, East Timor, Singapore and Christmas Island.

2. Many of these nations were directly in the path of Indian Ocean trade between India and China (particularly Singapore, East Malaysia, Brunei, and the Indonesian islands).

3. This has resulted in significant cultural diversity in these nations.

4. Most of these nations lie along the Pacific Ring of Fire. The ring of fire is so named for the numerous volcanoes (and earthquakes) that result from the collision of tectonic plates in the area. These nations frequently suffer from the effects of earthquakes, tsunamis (a result of underwater earthquakes), and active volcanoes.

## Climate

1. All of Southeast Asia lies in the tropics (23 1/2 degrees above and below the equator), and nearly all of the climate there would be classified as tropical — with warm winters and hot and humid summers.

2. There are areas in Southeast Asia which have a "vertical" climate due to extreme elevation. These areas actually are cool or cold all year long, and routinely receive snow.

3. The nations of Southeast Asia are also significantly impacted by seasonal monsoons. These winds blow toward the continent bringing heavy rains in the Spring, and blow away from the continent, bringing cool dry air in the Fall.
Geography of Southeast Asia

1. What is the general location of Southeast Asia?

2. Define: archipelago –

3. How did the location of Southeast Asia have an historical impact on the region?

4. What does ‘mainland’ Southeast Asia mean? And which nations are part of this region?

5. What geographic shape does it make up?

6. How would the northern portion of mainland Southeast Asia be described?

7. Why is the northern area so mountainous?

8. Describe the flow of Southeast Asian rivers, and what they are used for.

9. What does the term ‘maritime’ Southeast Asia refer to? And which nations are part of this region?

10. What is the ring of fire? How does it affect Southeast Asian nations?

11. Describe the climate of most of Southeast Asia.

12. What does a ‘vertical’ climate suggest?

13. How is Southeast Asia affected by monsoons?