

exploring
ASIA

My Homeschool | By Jo Lloyd



My Homeschool – Year 6 Course – Exploring Asia

By Jo Lloyd

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Jo Lloyd asserts her right to be known as the author of this work.

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Introduction to Parents

With the Asian continent so close to Australia, it is natural that this region is a focus of study within the Australian Curriculum. There is great diversity in the environments, settlements and people of Asia that fascinate so many students. Children of this age are often seeking to know how other people live in different parts of the world, wishing to know what the everyday life of other children their age is like, how they live, what they eat and enjoy doing. They want to understand how they are similar and where they differ. This resource seeks to answer those questions and teach them more about this part of the world.

Both my husband and I have university majors in Geography as part of our qualifications, and he is of Eurasian heritage so our children are growing up in a cross-cultural home, embracing aspects of Australian and Asian culture. As homeschooling parents, we have been disappointed with the offerings to families when teaching students about Geography, including learning more about the Asian continent. Too often such resources are merely a dry account of facts, or more akin to a traveller's view of a region or country, with little appreciation of broader geographical themes and considerations. Map work is often forgotten or boring and sadly, many intriguing aspects of physical and social geography are missed.

Yet, it doesn't have to be like that. Families can use this resource, feeling confident to teach key geography principles, content, and skills. Learning about geography can be delightful, and engage and interest your child.

Through *Exploring Asia* your Year 6 student will better understand the continent of Asia. They will come to know what it is like to live, work, and play in Asian cities and rural areas alike. They will learn about the people of Asia and start to develop some cultural sensitivity and awareness. Mapping exercises are also included, reflecting good practice in current Geography education and modern teaching techniques.

Exploring Asia helps your child to open a window to see various aspects of this diverse, beautiful, and amazing part of the world. My hope is that it sparks an interest in the people and places of Asia, and that one day they may experience this part of the world firsthand for themselves.

Jo Lloyd

Lesson 1 – Welcome to Asia

Continents are the largest landmasses on earth and Australia, Antarctica and Africa are all continents, as are North and South America. Eurasia is the largest continent on earth and, as such, is divided into two: Europe in the west and Asia in the east. Asia is the most populous continent with approximately 60% of the world's current population living in Asia. It is also the biggest of the continents too. It covers around 30% of the total land area on earth, and China and Russia – two of the largest countries on Earth – are a part of Asia. The boundary dividing the European peninsula from the Asian continent can vary, but most geographers consider the Ural Mountains, Ural River, the Bosphorus Strait, and the Black Sea to divide the two.

In Latin, the verb “to rise” is *oriri* and *oriens* means “rising”. It is from these Latin roots that we get the place name “the Orient”, meaning the eastern lands of Asia where the sun rises. Today we use the word “orientation” to describe getting our bearings and this is because over time the term was used to reflect how cathedrals were built to face east, so they would be oriented towards Jerusalem. “The Orient” still carries connotations of the mysterious east of Asia, some of which you will discover for yourself through this *Exploring Asia* resource.

Asia accounts for our largest populated continent and some of the world's biggest countries, and also includes thousands of islands through the Indian and Pacific Oceans that border the continent. Indonesia, in south-east Asia, is the largest archipelago in the world and it alone has more than 17,000 islands. Given it is a huge area, representing nearly fifty countries and diverse peoples, biomes and climates, geographers approach Asia by dividing it into smaller regions to help understand this part of the world. This is one way to piece together the regions of Asia:

- Northern Asia
- Central Asia (“the Stans”)
- Western Asia (often referred to as “the Middle East”)
- Southern Asia (also called “the Indian Subcontinent”)
- Eastern Asia (sometimes named “the Far East”)
- South-East Asia

Northern Asia

Siberia, or “Asian Russia”, borders the Arctic and Pacific Oceans and represents more than half of the giant nation that is Russia. East of the Ural Mountains, this region is punctuated by taiga forests of conifers and is home to rich fields of oil, natural gas and gold. The famous Trans-Siberian Railroad stretches across this part of Asia, from Moscow to Vladivostok, and the region is so huge that it takes passengers one week to travel from one side to the other.

Central Asia

In Persia the word “stan” meant “place of”. Today, the *stans* of Asia are the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, all of which formed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990’s. These are largely Muslim nations and, together with Mongolia, form Northern Asia. Rugged mountains, arid areas and the short grass of the steppes define this region of Asia.

Western Asia

While often referred to as “the Middle East”, this part of the Asian continent is the western most part, closest to the European peninsula. The Mediterranean, Aegean, Caspian, Black, and Arabians Seas are some of the major water bodies of this region, along with the famous Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Christians, Jews, and Muslims, along with people of other faiths, live in this area which includes the countries of Israel, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, and feature some of the holiest places to Christians and Jews.

Southern Asia

The highest mountain range in the world dominates this region of the Asian continent. The Himalayas of Nepal dictate India’s climate, blocking the flow of air from the north to make the nation very hot during the monsoonal season. The Himalayas are also the source of the great rivers of the region: the Ganges and the Indus Rivers which snake through the country down to the flat plains. Formerly known as Ceylon, the teardrop-shaped island of Sri Lanka at the south of India is also part of Southern Asia, as are the Maldives, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Eastern Asia

China is the giant of the “Far East”, a region that also includes Korea and Japan. As the third largest country in the world, it does indeed loom large over Asia. Given it is such a big country, China has many climatic zones and has substantial reserves of natural resources, and is a major world power.

South-East Asia

Many rich cultures and a varied geography define this portion of the continent which is bordered by China in the north, India in the west, and the Pacific Ocean to the east. Most of this region is within the humid equatorial tropical zone, so the weather is warm to hot all year round, and there are seasonal heavy monsoonal rains too. Part of this region is on the mainland of the continent, including the countries of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, and is sometimes called “Indochina”. The other part is within the Malay Archipelago, spreading across the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and the Pacific Ocean. Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines are just some of the nations that make up this part of the region.

As you can see, the Asian continent represents both the highest points on earth (Mount Everest) and the lowest (the Dead Sea which is nearly 500 metres below sea level). It is also the part of the world where well over 4.5 billion people live, meaning over 60% of the world’s population lives in Asia. The people of Asia include farmers raising food for the ever-increasing number of citizens but also those living in the massive megacities. These are cities that have 10 million inhabitants and many of the world’s megacities can be found in Asia, including Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou in China, along with Delhi and Mumbai in India, and Jakarta in Indonesia. This is a continent of giants and contrasts, and you will be amazed as you learn more about its diverse places and people.

Notebook Entry

As you begin this new resource, please start by creating a cover page for this section of work in your Geography Notebook. You can simply call it “Exploring Asia” and add some pictures that represent what you now know about the Asian continent.