

Chapter 18 The Hot Desert and Mid-Latitude Desert Climates

Distribution

Deserts are regions of **aridity** which may be **hot** like the hot deserts of the Sahara type, or **colder** as are the mid-latitude deserts like the Gobi. The aridity of the hot deserts is mainly due to the effects of off-shore Trade Winds, hence they are also called Trade Wind Deserts. The temperate deserts are aridness because of their isolation location in the temperate latitudes, well away from the rain-bearing winds.

The major hot deserts of the world are located on the **western coasts** of continents between latitudes 15° and 30° N. and S. as shown in Fig. 1.21. They include the Sahara Desert, the largest single stretch of desert, which is 3,200 miles from east to west and at least 1,000 miles wide. Its total area of 3.5 million square miles is larger than all the 26 states of U.S.A. put together. The next biggest desert is the Great Australian Desert which covers almost half of the continent. The other hot deserts are the Arabian Desert, Iranian Desert, Thai Desert, Kalahari and Namib Deserts. In North America, the desert extends from Mexico into U.S.A. and is called by different names at different places, e.g. the Mojave,

Sonoran, Californian and Mexican Deserts. In South America, the Atacama or **Patagonian Desert** is the **smallest** of all deserts with less than 0.1 inches of rainfall annually.

Amongst the mid-latitude deserts, many are found on **plateaus** and are at a considerable distance from the sea. These are the Gobi, Turkmenian and Patagonian Deserts. The Patagonian Desert is more due to its **continental position** on the inland side of the lofty Andes than to continentalities.

Climate

Rainfall. Few deserts whether hot or mid-latitude have an annual precipitation of more than 10 inches. For example Wilkes Creek in Australia has 2.4 inches, Kotah in India has 4 inches, Yuma, Arizona, U.S.A. has 3.1 inches. In Sahel in the mid-Sahara and Arica in the mid-Atacama have practically no rain at all. In the latter, less than 0.02 inches fell within a period of 17 years in three hot deserts! In another station less than 1 in miles away at Iquique, not a single drop of rain was recorded for five years and then a horrendous down-



Fig. 1.21 The hot deserts and mid-latitude deserts of the world

Homework From Peterson Et Al Physical Geography

Chapter 1 6

S Ben Porath



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