

# Physical Geography

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. The main physical features of Japan and the Korea are rugged mountains.
2. The climates and resources of Japan and the Korea vary from north to south.

### The Big Idea

Japan and Korea are both rugged, mountainous areas surrounded by water.

### Key Terms and Places

Fuji, p. 592

Korean Peninsula, p. 592

tsunamis, p. 594

fishery, p. 595

### TAKING NOTES

Draw a table like the one below. As you read, take notes about the physical geography of Japan in one column and about the Korean Peninsula in the other column.

Physical Geography	
Japan	Korean Peninsula

## If YOU lived there...

You are a passenger on a very fast train zipping its way across the countryside. If you look out the window to your right, you can see the distant sparkle of sunlight on the ocean. If you look to the left, you see rocky, rugged mountains. Suddenly the train leaves the mountains, and you see hundreds of trees covered in delicate pink flowers. Rising above the trees is a single snowcapped volcano.

## How does this scenery make you feel?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** The train described above is one of the many that cross the islands of Japan every day. Japan's mountains, trees, and water features give the islands a unique character. Not far away, the Korean Peninsula also has a distinctive landscape.

## Physical Features

Japan, North Korea, and South Korea are on the eastern edge of the Asian continent, just east of China. Separated from each other only by a narrow strait, Japan and the Korea share many common landscape features.

### Physical Features of Japan

Japan is an island country. It is made up of four large islands and more than 3,000 smaller islands. These islands are arranged in a long chain more than 1,500 miles (2,400 km) long. This is about the same length as the eastern coast of the United States, from southern Florida to northern Maine. All together, however, Japan's land area is slightly smaller than the state of California.

About 95 percent of Japan's land area is made up of four large islands. From north to south, these major islands are Hokkaido (hoh-KY-doh), Honshu (HAWN-shoo), Shikoku (shee-KOH-koo), and Kyushu (KYOO-shoo). Together they are called the home islands. Most of Japan's people live there.

Rugged, tree-covered mountains are a common sight in Japan. In fact, mountains cover some 75 percent of the country. For the most part, Japan's mountains are very steep and rocky. As a result, the country's largest mountain range, the Japanese Alps, is popular with climbers and skiers.

Japan's highest mountain, **Fuji**, is not part of the Alps. In fact, it is not part of any mountain range. A volcano, Mount Fuji rises high above a relatively flat area in eastern Honshu. The mountain's cone-shaped peak has become a symbol of Japan. In addition, many Japanese consider Fuji a sacred place. As a result, many shrines have been built at its foot and summit.

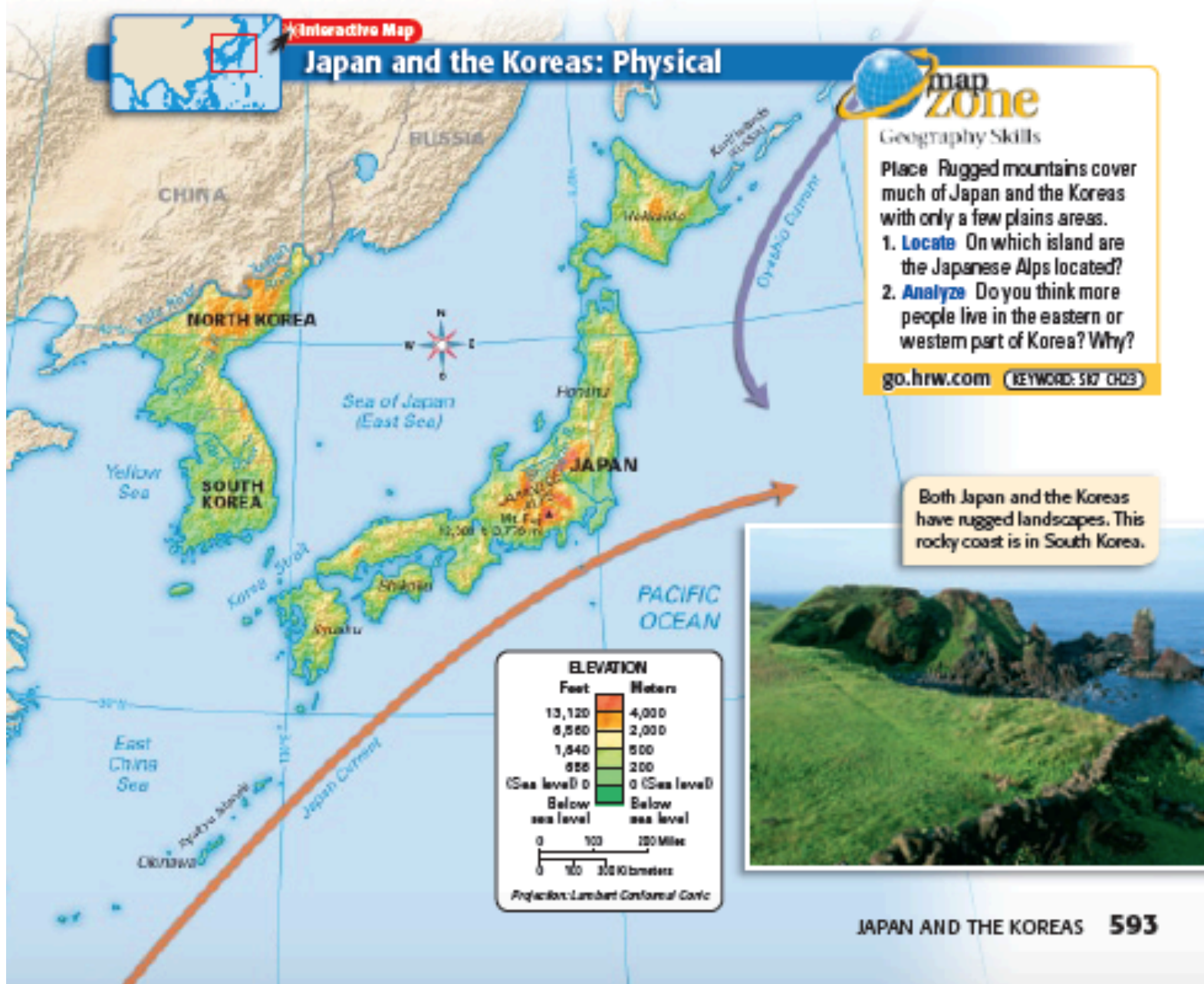
## Physical Features of Korea

Jutting south from the Asian mainland, the **Korean Peninsula** includes both North Korea and South Korea. Like the islands of Japan, much of the peninsula is covered with rugged mountains. These mountains form long ranges that run along Korea's eastern coast. The peninsula's highest mountains are in the north.

Unlike Japan, Korea also has some large plains. These plains are found mainly along the peninsula's western coast and in river valleys. Korea also has more rivers than Japan does. Most of these rivers flow westward across the peninsula and pour into the Yellow Sea.

### FOCUS ON READING

Are these sentences facts or opinions? How can you tell?



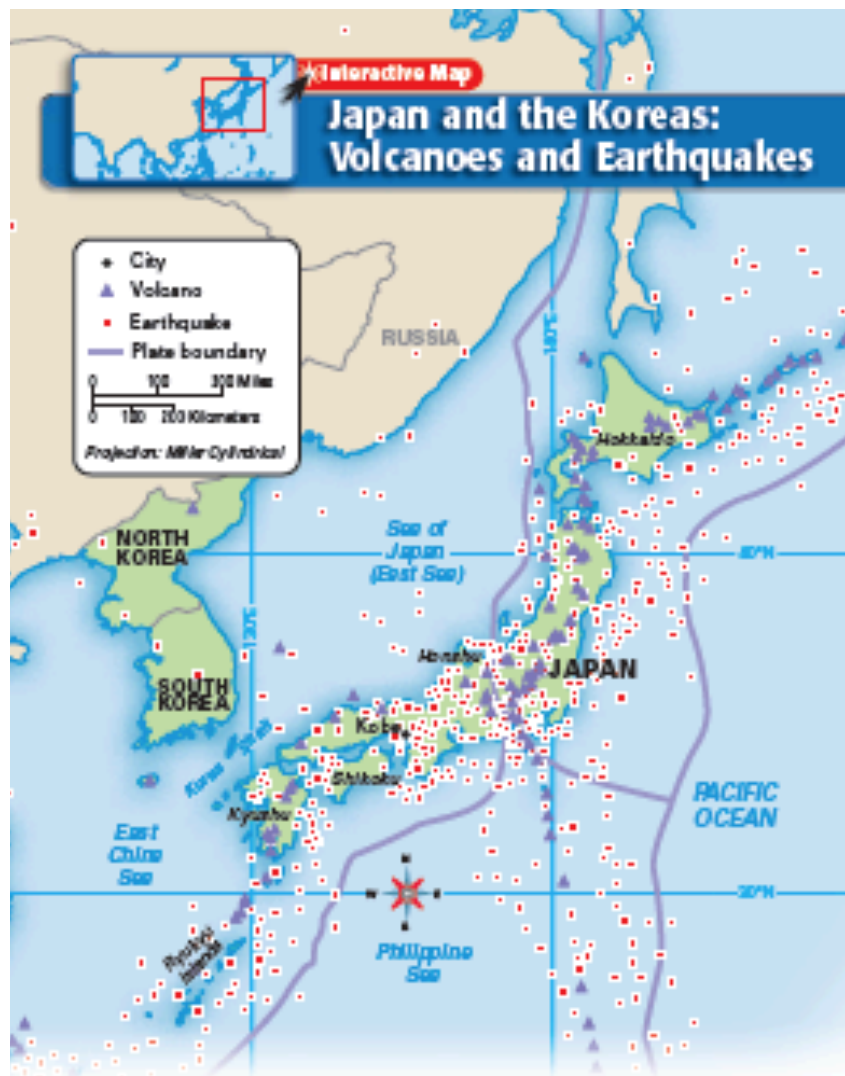


## Japan and the Koreas: Volcanoes and Earthquakes

**Human-Environment Interaction** More than 1,000 earthquakes hit Japan every year. Most are minor, but some cause huge amounts of damage.

1. **Locate** On which large island did the 1995 Kobe earthquake occur?
2. **Compare** How does volcanic activity in Korea compare to activity in Japan?

go.hrw.com **KEYWORD:** SK7 CH23



A devastating earthquake struck Kobe (KOH-bay), Japan, in 1995. It caused more than \$100 billion in damages and left thousands homeless.

### Natural Disasters

Because of its location, Japan is subject to many sorts of natural disasters. Among these disasters are volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. As you can see on the map, these disasters are common in Japan. They can cause huge amounts of damage in the country. In addition, large underwater earthquakes sometimes cause **destructive waves** called **tsunamis** (sooh-NAH-meess).

Korea does not have many volcanoes or earthquakes. From time to time, though, huge storms called typhoons sweep over the peninsula from the Pacific. These storms cause great damage in both the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

**READING CHECK** **Contrasting** How are the physical features of Japan and Korea different?

### Climate and Resources

Just as Japan and the Koreas have many similar physical features, they also have similar climates. The resources found in each country, however, differ greatly.

#### Climate

The climates of Japan and the Koreas vary from north to south. The northern parts of the region have a humid continental climate. This means that summers are cool, but winters are long and cold. In addition, the area has a short growing season.

To the south, the region has a humid subtropical climate with mild winters and hot, humid summers. These areas see heavy rains and typhoons in the summer. Some places receive up to 80 inches (200 cm) of rain each year.

## Resources

Resources are not evenly distributed among Japan and the Koreas. Neither Japan nor South Korea, for example, is very rich in mineral resources. North Korea, on the other hand, has large deposits of coal, iron, and other minerals.

Although most of the region does not have many mineral resources, it does have other resources. For example, the people of the Koreas have used their land's features to generate electricity. The peninsula's rocky terrain and rapidly flowing rivers make it an excellent location for creating hydroelectric power.

In addition, Japan has one of the world's strongest fishing economies. The islands lie near one of the world's most productive fisheries. A **fishery** is a place where lots of fish and other seafood can be caught. Swift ocean currents near Japan carry countless fish to the islands. Fishers then use huge nets to catch the fish and bring them to Japan's many bustling fish markets. These fish markets are among the busiest in the world.

**READING CHECK** Analyzing What are some resources found in Japan and the Koreas?



This fish market in Tokyo, Japan, is the busiest in the world. People gather here every morning to buy freshly caught fish.

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** The islands of Japan and the Korean Peninsula share many common features. In the next section, you will see how the people of Japan and Korea also share some similar customs and how their histories have been intertwined for centuries.

## Section 1 Assessment

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Online Quiz  
KEYWORD: 517 H923

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- Identify** What types of landforms cover Japan and the Korean Peninsula?
  - Compare and Contrast** How are the physical features of Japan and Korea similar? How are they different?
  - Predict** How do you think natural disasters affect life in Japan and Korea?
- Describe** What kind of climate is found in the northern parts of the region? What kind of climate is found in the southern parts?
  - Draw Conclusions** Why are fisheries important to Japan's economy?

### Critical Thinking

#### 3. Categorizing

Draw a chart like this one.

In each row, describe the

region's landforms, climate, and resources.

	Japan	Korean Peninsula
Landforms		
Climate		
Resources		

### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Thinking about Nature** Many Japanese poems deal with nature—the beauty of a flower, for example. What could you write about the region's physical environment in your poem?