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The Coromandel Coast

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The Coromandel Coast

Most of India gets its rain in summer. This one coast waits until winter, and gets hit by cyclones because of it.



The Coromandel Coast at Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu. Photo: epidemiks, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.

The Coromandel Coast, at a glance

India’s east coast, named for a lost dynasty, and shaped by rain that arrives out of season

01
Krishna to Point Calimere

Runs along the Bay of Bengal, across Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu.

02
Named for the Cholas

From Cholamandalam, “the realm of the Cholas,” shortened by Portuguese traders to Coromandel.

03
Rain arrives in winter

Sits in the Western Ghats’ rain shadow, so it depends on the October-December northeast monsoon instead.

04
That’s also why it floods

The same monsoon forms directly over the Bay of Bengal, organising into cyclones instead of steady rain.

CholamandalamTamil for “the realm of the Cholas”; Portuguese traders shortened it to Coromandel.
Northeast monsoon Also called the retreating monsoon, it brings this coast’s main rain between October and December.
Rain shadowA drier zone on the far side of a mountain range, here caused by the Western Ghats.

ArikameduA site near Puducherry that traded directly with Rome between roughly 100 BCE and 200 CE.

Where the Coast Runs, and Why the Name

Must Know

Where does the Coromandel Coast run, and where does its name come from?

The Coromandel Coast is the eastern coastal plain of peninsular India, facing the Bay of Bengal. It runs roughly from the Krishna river's mouth in the north to Point Calimere in the south, with the Eastern Ghats forming its western boundary. It covers parts of Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu.

Here's where the name comes from: **Cholamandalam, Tamil for "the realm of the Cholas," which Portuguese traders later shortened to Coromandel.** Several major rivers form deltas along this coast, including the Krishna, Godavari, and Kaveri. Their silt gives the coast rich alluvial soil.

> **Quick check 1.** Q1. True or False: the Coromandel Coast runs roughly from the Krishna river's mouth to Point Calimere. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Quick check 2.** Q2. True or False: the name "Coromandel" comes from Cholamandalam, Tamil for "the realm of the Cholas." *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Rain Out of Season, and Why It Floods

Good to Know

Why does this coast get rain in winter, not summer?



The Coromandel Coast faces the Bay of Bengal, source of its winter rain.

The Coromandel Coast sits in the rain shadow of the Western Ghats. So it gets far less rain from the summer southwest monsoon than most of India. Instead, it depends on the northeast monsoon, also called the retreating monsoon. That monsoon arrives mainly between October and December, months after the rest of the country's rainy season ends. This delayed rain, combined with the deltas' alluvial soil, makes this coast an important rice-growing zone.

Why does that same rain turn into cyclones here?

Because the northeast monsoon forms directly over the Bay of Bengal, its energy tends to organise into cyclones. It clusters into storms rather than spreading out as steady, even rainfall. That makes the Coromandel Coast one of India's most cyclone-prone stretches, with storms clustering between October and January. The coast also holds important wetlands, including Pulicat Lake, a major habitat for migratory birds.

Quick check 3. Q3. True or False: the Coromandel Coast depends on the northeast monsoon because it sits in the Western Ghats' rain shadow. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 4. Q4. True or False: the Coromandel Coast is cyclone-prone because it has no mountains at all to block storm formation. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Think it through, before reading on. Every source says the Coromandel Coast sees mass nesting of olive ridley turtles. So is it India's largest mass nesting site for them?

Show the explanation

No, and this is a genuine exam trap. Olive ridleys do nest along the Coromandel Coast. But the largest mass nesting site in India is Gahirmatha, on Odisha's coast, further north on the same Bay of Bengal. Seeing a species somewhere isn't the same as that place holding the record for it.

Exam Point of View

Test Yourself

Remember the trap. Arikamedu gets tested repeatedly, sometimes without even naming the Coromandel Coast. And Pulicat Lake's larger share sits in Andhra Pradesh, not Tamil Nadu, which is why exams list it there.

Current Affairs

Current Affairs

What hit this coast in late 2025?

Cyclone Ditwah reached the north Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coast on 29-30 November 2025, exactly the northeast-monsoon window this article describes. **Three people died in rain-related incidents in Tamil Nadu, with Kodiyakarai in Nagapattinam district recording 25 cm of rainfall as the storm passed.** Here's why it matters here: Ditwah is a

textbook case of this article's own core mechanism. A northeast-monsoon system formed over the Bay of Bengal, and it struck this exact coast as a storm, not steady rain. (Source: All India Radio News, November 2025)

> **Quick check 5.** Q5. True or False: Cyclone Ditwah struck India's southwest coast in November 2025. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

Where does the Coromandel Coast run?

From the Krishna river's mouth to Point Calimere, across Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu.

Where does its name come from?

Cholamandalam, Tamil for "the realm of the Cholas," shortened by Portuguese traders.

Why does it get rain in winter instead of summer?

It sits in the Western Ghats' rain shadow and depends on the northeast monsoon instead.

Why is it so cyclone-prone?

The northeast monsoon forms over the Bay of Bengal, favouring cyclones over steady rainfall.

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Practice MCQs

1. The Coromandel Coast is the eastern coastal plain of India, running roughly from the Krishna river's mouth to which southern point?

A. Point Calimere

B. Cape Comorin lighthouse

C. Kanyakumari

D. Rameswaram

See answer ↓

2. Where does the name "Coromandel" come from?

A. From Cholamandalam, Tamil for the realm of the Cholas, shortened by Portuguese traders

B. From the Sanskrit word for river delta

C. From a Dutch word for eastern coastline

D. From a British East India Company trading post name

See answer ↓

3. Why does the Coromandel Coast receive most of its rainfall between October and December, unlike most of India's June-to-September pattern?

A. It sits in the Western Ghats' rain shadow and depends on the northeast, or retreating, monsoon instead

B. Its rivers dry up completely every summer, delaying the local rainy season

C. It follows Sri Lanka's monsoon calendar rather than India's

D. It lies too far south for the southwest monsoon to ever reach it

See answer ↓

4. Why is the Coromandel Coast one of India's most cyclone-prone stretches?

A. It sits directly on a tectonic plate boundary

B. The northeast monsoon forms over the Bay of Bengal, a pattern that favours cyclones over steady rainfall

C. Its rivers artificially generate low-pressure zones during flood season

D. It has no mountains at all to block any storm formation

See answer ↓

5. Besides the Krishna, which other major rivers form deltas along the Coromandel Coast, and what colonial-era activity did the coast attract as a result of its ports?

A. The Indus and the Sutlej; Mughal naval shipyards

B. The Godavari and the Kaveri; early trading settlements from Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British companies

C. The Narmada and the Tapi; Maratha coastal fortresses

D. The Mahanadi and the Brahmani; Sultanate-era spice warehouses

See answer ↓

6. Which of the following statements about the olive ridley turtles is/are correct?

1. They are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.

2. They live in warm waters of Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

3. The Coromandel Coast in India is the largest mass nesting site for the olive ridley turtles.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

A. 1, 2 and 3

B. 1 and 2 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1 only

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The Coromandel Coast runs roughly from the Krishna river's mouth in the north to Point Calimere in the south, facing the Bay of Bengal. ↑ Q1
2. **A.** Coromandel derives from Cholamandalam, Tamil for the realm of the Cholas; Portuguese traders shortened this to Coromandel. ↑ Q2
3. **A.** The Coromandel Coast sits in the rain shadow of the Western Ghats, so it depends on the northeast monsoon (the retreating monsoon) for most of its rain, arriving mainly between October and December. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** Because the northeast monsoon forms over the Bay of Bengal, its weather pattern favours cyclones rather than steady, even rainfall, making the Coromandel Coast highly cyclone-prone between October and January. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** The Godavari and the Kaveri also form deltas along the Coromandel Coast; its ports and textile trade drew early European trading settlements from the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** The answer is 1 and 2 only. Olive ridleys are indeed the smallest and most abundant sea turtles, found across three oceans, but their largest mass nesting site in India is Gahirmatha in Odisha, not the Coromandel Coast. ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **False.** ↑ 4
5. **False.** ↑ 5

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