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The Deccan Plateau

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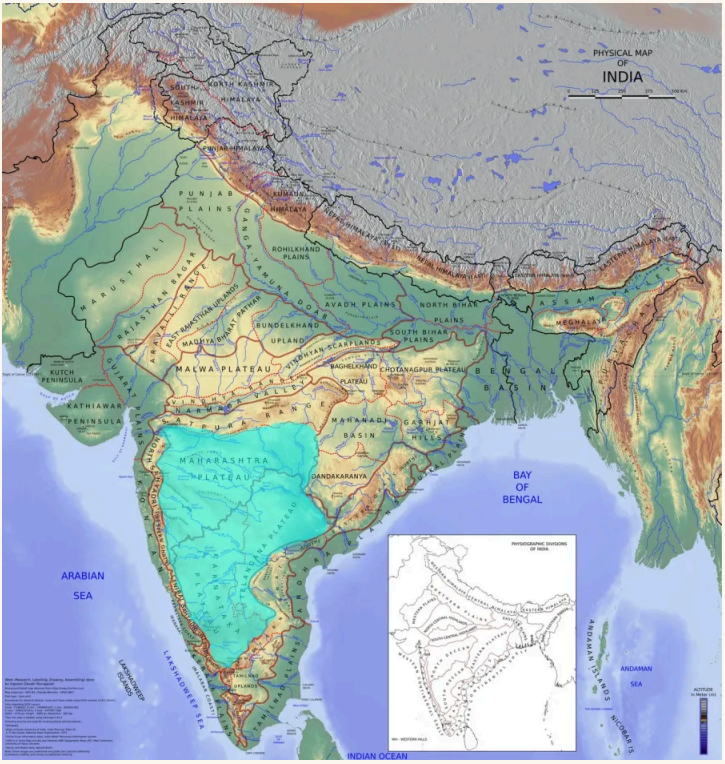
The Deccan Plateau

The Deccan Plateau is the rock beneath peninsular India. It is a high, flat-topped region that slopes gently towards the Bay of Bengal. It also sits at the centre of a debate about why the dinosaurs died out.

1 Where does the Deccan Plateau lie, and what bounds it?

The Deccan Plateau is a triangular tableland. A tableland is a high, flat-topped stretch of land. It forms the main part of the Peninsular Plateau.



Physical map of India, showing the Deccan Plateau (cyan) tilted toward the Bay of Bengal. Map: PadFoot2008, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Which hills form its edges?

It is bordered by the Western Ghats in the west and the Eastern Ghats in the east. In the north it is bordered by the Satpura, Maikal range and Mahadeo hills. Think of a triangle with these three sides.

What is the Satpura's role?

The Satpura range is a series of scarped plateaus on the south. A scarp is a steep slope. Their height is roughly 600 to 900 metres. This range is the northernmost boundary of the Deccan plateau.

Is the Vindhya range the boundary?

No. The Vindhyas lie further north. They only mark the wider edge of the peninsula. For the plateau itself, the exam answer is the Satpura, Maikal and Mahadeo line.

Which states does it cover?

The plateau spreads over Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Maharashtra holds a large share of it.

> **Quick check 1.** NCERT names the Western Ghats, the Eastern Ghats and the Satpura-Maikal-Mahadeo line as the three sides of the Deccan Plateau. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ncert.nic.in

2 Why does the Deccan Plateau tilt from west to east?

The plateau is higher in the west and lower in the east. Its general elevation runs from the west to the east. The flow of rivers proves this.

What do the rivers show?

Most of the big peninsular rivers flow east into the Bay of Bengal. The Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri are the best-known ones. Rivers always run downhill. So if they run east, the land must slope east.

Where do the rivers start?

Most Peninsular rivers have their origin in the Western Ghats. So the rivers rise near the western edge and travel the whole width of the plateau. That is why their courses are so long.

Can you picture the tilt?

Hold a tray with the left side raised. Water poured near the raised side runs right across the tray. The plateau works the same way. The high edge is in the west, and the water travels east.

Which rivers cut the Eastern Ghats?

The Eastern Ghats are highly eroded by rivers such as the Mahanadi, the Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri. This is why that range looks broken.

> **Quick check 2.** Most big peninsular rivers flow east because the Deccan Plateau slopes from west to east. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ncert.nic.in

3 How do the Western and Eastern Ghats differ?

Both ranges frame the plateau, but they look very different. The western side is high and continuous. The eastern side is low and broken.



Granite boulder hills typical of the Deccan Plateau, near Hyderabad. Photo: Zeman, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

What are the Western Ghats like?

They are comparatively higher in elevation and more continuous than the Eastern Ghats. Their average elevation is about 1,500 metres. It increases from north to south.

Do they have local names?

Yes. They are Sahyadri in Maharashtra, the Nilgiri hills in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, and the Anaimalai and Cardamom hills in Kerala.

Which are the highest peaks?

Anaimudi at 2,695 metres is the highest peak of the Peninsular plateau. Dodabetta at 2,637 metres comes next.

What are the Eastern Ghats like?

They are discontinuous and low hills. They are cut by the great rivers listed above. They meet the Western Ghats at the Nilgiri hills.

Why does the difference matter?

A continuous high wall in the west makes rivers start close to the western coast. A broken low line in the east lets the rivers pass through. Together they explain the tilt.

> **Quick check 3.** The Eastern Ghats are higher and more continuous than the Western Ghats. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ncert.nic.in

4 How was the Deccan built from lava?

Much of the plateau is made of basalt. Basalt is a dark volcanic rock that forms when lava cools. The great lava floods are known as the Deccan Traps.

Is the plateau a fold mountain?

No. The Himalayas are fold mountains, pushed up when two plates collided. The Deccan is different. Most of its surface was laid down as lava, layer on layer, and then worn down over time.

How fast did a flood like this erupt?

A 2020 research paper on the Deccan Traps explains that large igneous provinces usually erupt in less than a million years. Earlier thinking had put it at tens of millions of years. A large igneous province, or LIP, is a vast outpouring of volcanic rock.

How long was the main phase?

The paper says that the main phase of eruptions began near the C30n-C29r magnetic reversal. It waned shortly after the C29r-C29n reversal. The authors give a duration of about 700 to 800 thousand years.

Is the dating settled?

Not entirely. The same paper says the uranium-lead dataset was read as showing four major eruptive pulses. The argon dataset was used to argue that eruption rates rose along with the Chicxulub impact. Scientists are still comparing the two.

What is the rock called today?

The peninsula is one of the oldest and most stable landmasses of India. It also notes the Bhima fault, where seismic activity has recurred. Old rock can still shake.

> **Quick check 4.** The Deccan Plateau is a fold mountain formed when two plates collided. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: doi.org; ncert.nic.in

5 Did the Deccan eruptions help end the dinosaurs?

This is one of science’s open questions. Two events happened close together at the end of the Cretaceous. A large asteroid struck at Chicxulub, and the Deccan volcanoes poured out lava.

Why do scientists link volcanoes to climate?

The 2020 paper notes that volcanic gases such as CO2 and SO2 are thought to drive climate change. Large uncertainties remain about how much gas the eruptions released.

What is the K-Pg boundary?

The K-Pg boundary is the line between the Cretaceous and Paleogene periods. It marks the mass extinction. The paper says dating errors scale roughly linearly into the ages of rocks near this boundary.

Who is right, the asteroid or the volcano?

The honest answer is that scientists still debate it. Many see the asteroid as the main trigger. Others give the volcanic gases a large role. Exams only expect you to know that both are discussed.

> **Quick check 5.** Scientists agree that the Deccan eruptions alone ended the dinosaurs. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: doi.org

6 Why is black soil found in the north-west of the plateau?

The western and northwestern part of the plateau has an emphatic presence of black soil. Black soil forms from weathered basalt. It is also called regur soil.

What is special about regur soil?

It holds moisture well. That is why cotton grows widely on it, especially in Maharashtra. To learn more, read the full lesson on black regur soil linked below.

Does the plateau extend beyond the peninsula?

Yes. There is an extension in the northeast. It takes the form of the Shillong and Karbi-Anglong plateau. This detached piece lies in Assam.

Why is it water-poor in places?

Tors, block mountains, rift valleys and quartzite dykes are listed as natural water-storage sites on the Peninsula. Where such sites are few, farmers depend on rain.

Sources: ncert.nic.in

7 What did the 2026 groundwater report show?

The plateau still shapes how people live on it. Water is the clearest example. A report in July 2026 covered Telangana, which lies on the plateau.

What did the Central Ground Water Board find?

The Deccan Chronicle reports that groundwater levels declined in 17 districts of Telangana in June 2026. The state average was 9.46 metres below ground level. That was against 9.47 in June 2025, so the state average improved by only 0.01 metre.

Which place fell the most?

Hyderabad recorded the sharpest fall, 2.47 metres. This is striking because the city was in the normal rainfall range for the month.

Was it a wet June?

No. Telangana received a cumulative 115 mm of rain against the normal 130 mm. That is a deficit of 12 per cent. Do not call it a wetter-than-usual June.

How was it measured?

Readings came from 1,771 piezometers across 33 districts. A piezometer is a well fitted to measure underground water level.

What does South First add?

South First points to urbanisation, concretisation, shrinking lakes, encroachment and extraction as causes of the fall.

Sources: deccanchronicle.com; thesouthfirst.com

8 Which exam traps should you avoid?

- The plateau slopes west to east, so its rivers flow east.
- The Satpura marks the northern boundary, not the Vindhya.
- Of the Narmada, Chambal and Mahi, only the Narmada basin sits inside the plateau edge.
- The Karbi Anglong plateau is an extension in Assam.
- The Western Ghats are higher and more continuous than the Eastern Ghats.
- The Deccan is built mostly of lava, not folded rock.

What was asked in NDA & NA II 2025?

Question 125 asked for the northernmost basin that lies within the Deccan plateau. The answer was Narmada. View NDA & NA II 2025 GA paper, Q125 →

What was asked in CAPF ACS 2022?

Question 85 asked which of Aravalli, Karbi Anglong, Shivalik and Vindhyan is part of the Deccan plateau. The answer was Karbi Anglong. View CAPF ACS 2022 GA paper, Q85 →

What is the memory hook?

Deccan: three sides of hills, one tilt to the east, lava below, black soil above.

Sources: ncert.nic.in

Practice MCQs

1. The Deccan Plateau is triangular in shape, bounded by which three ranges?

A. The Western Ghats, the Eastern Ghats, and the Aravalli Range

B. The Vindhya Range, the Western Ghats, and the Eastern Ghats

C. The Himalaya, the Aravalli, and the Vindhya Range

D. The Vindhya Range, the Satpura Range, and the Himalaya

See answer ↓

2. According to NCERT, which range is the northernmost boundary of the Deccan Plateau?

A. The Vindhya range

B. The Shivalik range

C. The Aravalli range

D. The Satpura range

See answer ↓

3. Which is the highest peak of the Peninsular plateau?

A. Anaimudi

B. Mahendragiri

C. Arma Konda

D. Dodabetta

See answer ↓

4. Which statement about the 2026 Telangana groundwater report is correct?

A. Levels rose in all districts after a wetter-than-usual June

B. Hyderabad recorded the smallest change in the state

C. The state average fell by over 2 metres

D. Levels declined in 17 districts and Hyderabad fell the most, by 2.47 metres

See answer ↓

5. Which of these is part of the Deccan Plateau as an extension in the north-east?

A. Shivalik hills

B. Aravalli hills

C. Karbi Anglong plateau

D. Vindhyan range

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** The Deccan Plateau is a triangular tableland. The Western Ghats form its west side and the Eastern Ghats its east side. In the north, the Vindhya Range marks the wider edge of the peninsula. NCERT draws the plateau's own northern line at the Satpura, Maikal and Mahadeo hills. Memory hook: three sides of hills, one tilt to the east. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** NCERT describes the Satpura scarped plateaus, about 600 to 900 metres high, as the northernmost boundary of the Deccan plateau. The Vindhyas lie further north and only mark the wider edge of the peninsula. Memory hook: Satpura, not Vindhya. ↑ Q2
3. **A.** Anaimudi, at 2,695 metres, is the highest peak of the Peninsular plateau. Dodabetta in the Nilgiris comes next at 2,637 metres. Both lie in the Western Ghats. Memory hook: Anaimudi first, Dodabetta second. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** The Deccan Chronicle reported that groundwater levels declined in 17 districts of Telangana in June 2026. Hyderabad fell the most, by 2.47 metres. The state average was 9.46 metres below ground level, against 9.47 a year earlier. Rainfall was 12 per cent below normal. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** NCERT notes that the peninsular plateau has an extension in the north-east. It takes the form of the Shillong and Karbi-Anglong plateau in Assam. CAPF ACS 2022 asked this very question. Memory hook: Karbi Anglong is the detached piece. ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** The plateau is a triangle bordered by these three sets of hills. ↑ 1
2. **True.** Most of them rise in the Western Ghats and run east to the Bay of Bengal. ↑ 2
3. **False.** It is the other way round. The Western Ghats are higher and more continuous. ↑ 3
4. **False.** The Himalayas are fold mountains. Much of the Deccan was laid down as lava. ↑ 4
5. **False.** The cause is still debated, and the Chicxulub asteroid impact is the other main suspect. ↑ 5

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