

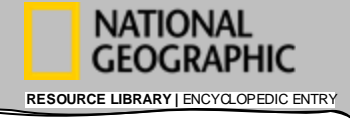
5 Where in the world can you find other examples of steppe lands?

6 Name the regions of the Plains.

9 What is overcultivation?

Answer in full sentences

STEPPE



1 What is a steppe?

A steppe is a dry, grassy plain. Steppes occur in temperate climates, which lie between the tropics and polar regions. Temperate regions have distinct seasonal temperature changes, with cold winters and warm summers. Steppes are semi-arid, meaning they receive 25 to 50 centimeters (10-20 inches) of rain each year. This is enough rain to support short grasses, but not enough for tall grasses or trees to grow. Many kinds of grasses grow on steppes, but few grow taller than half a meter (20 inches).

2 In which climate region can the steppe be found?

Eurasian Steppe

The largest temperate grassland in the world is the Eurasian steppe, extending from Hungary to China. It reaches almost one-fifth of the way around the Earth. The Eurasian steppe is so well-known, the area is sometimes referred to as just The Steppe.

The Eurasian steppe has historically been one of the most important routes for travel and trade. The flat expanse provides an ideal route between Asia and Europe. Caravans of horses, donkeys, and camels have traveled the Eurasian steppe for thousands of years. The most famous trade route on the Eurasian steppe is the Silk Road, connecting China, India, and Europe. The Silk Road was established around 200 BCE, and many Silk Road trade routes are still in use today.

3 Where is the largest steppe?

During the 13th century, Mongolian leader Genghis Khan conquered almost the entire Eurasian steppe. With expert horsemen, Khan conquered territory from his home in what is now Mongolia, through China, Central Asia, and the land around the Caspian Sea.

The equestrian culture that was so important to Genghis Khan is still important for most cultures native to the Eurasian steppe. From the Mongolian tradition in the east to the Cossack traditions of western Russia, these cultures have relied on horses for travel, trade, and conquest on the vast steppe. To this day, many festivals and community activities focus on horseback riding.

4 What is the name of the most famous trade route and what was traded?

Other Steppes

The dry, shortgrass prairie of North America's Great Plains is also a steppe. The shortgrass prairie lies on the western edge of the Great Plains, in the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains. It extends from the U.S. state of Texas in the south to the province of Saskatchewan, Canada, in the north.

Many of the world's steppes have been converted to cropland and pasture. Short grasses that grow naturally on steppes provide grazing for cattle, goats, horses, camels, and sheep. Sometimes steppes are overgrazed, which occurs when there are more animals than the land can support.

When the short grasses of the steppe are plowed under for agriculture, the soil can erode very quickly. Important nutrients anchored in the soil by grasses are simply blown or washed away. Agricultural development can also degrade the soil with fertilizer and other chemicals. This is called overcultivation.

Overcultivation can make grasslands look like deserts. The soil cannot retain enough water or nutrients for vegetation to grow. True deserts, however, receive less rainfall (less than 25 centimeters per year) than steppes.

7 Which countries does the Eurasian steppe connect?

8 How was the Eurasian steppe conquered and by whom?

10 Describe what has happened to the steppe lands in North America.

11 **Reflection:** describe one thing you have learnt from reading this article, that you did not know before?