



JOURNEY INTO ASIA

Objectives:

- Students will learn about the size and diversity of the Asian continent.
- Students will be introduced to physical features on the map.

Recommended Grades: K-4

Materials (all included in the trunk):

- Red knotted rope
- Colored cones
- World Map
- Inflatable Globe

Preparation: 10 minutes

- Read over the activity and choose the items you want to emphasize. Add ones of your own that relate to your students' prior knowledge.
- Place colored cones on the North Pole, Mount Everest, and the Dead Sea.

Rules:



Shoes are not allowed on the map.
Please have students remove shoes before walking on the map.



No writing utensils on the map.

BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY INTO ASIA

Introduction

Begin by directing students to stand along the left border of the map so they are closest to Africa, looking inward toward the Asian continent.

Introduce students to the giant map. Suggested introduction by teacher:

Welcome to Asia! Today you are going to explore this amazing place. You will stand on the highest point in the world! You will stand on the lowest point in the world. You will walk thousands of miles. You are going to be warm and sweaty in the tropics and freezing cold in the Arctic. You will play games, have fun, and learn a whole lot about Asia!

Freely Explore

Give students two minutes to explore the continent on their own. This is an independent exploration, giving them the opportunity to walk around on the map before the structured activity that follows.

This Is Asia

Have students sit along the base of the map, facing north. Using either a classroom globe, inflatable globe (included in trunk), or a flat world map, show the students the location of Asia in relation to other continents. Use the globe or map to identify the seven continents (Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Australia & Oceania).

Optional extension: If using an inflatable globe, ask a couple students to help you deflate it, flattening the globe into a flat surface. Show them that the map of Asia is a flat representation of the portion of the globe featuring Asia.

Share this information about Asia:

- Asia is the biggest continent in the world. Almost one third of the land on Earth is in Asia. Its area is approximately 12,262,691 square miles.
- Asia has 47 countries.
- Asia has the largest population of any continent. Over 4 billion people live in Asia – that's over half the people in the world.
- Asia has the highest mountain – Mount Everest; the lowest point – the Dead Sea; the wettest place – Mawsynram, India; and the deepest lake – Russia's Lake Baikal. Can you see it from where you are?
- Hundreds of different languages are spoken in Asia.
- Many Americans come from Asia or have ancestors who came to America from Asia.

Begin the Guided Tour

Line up students along the right side of the map, so they are facing inward toward Japan. The teacher should be positioned on the green "base camp" (circle located in the upper right corner of the map) with the red braided (and knotted) rope in hand. Ask each student to hold a knot. The teacher holds the lead end of the rope for a guided tour of the continent.

As you tour Asia following this suggested route, point out the following places and characteristics:

- **Aleutian Islands** – part of the United States (Alaska). This is the only place on this map where you can stand on North America. Point out the direction of the rest of the U.S. beyond the yellow border. Wave goodbye to North America!
- **Kamchatka Peninsula** – Brrrr! Put your parka on; it's freezing here in Siberia! Lots of reindeer here! You are just below the Arctic Circle.
- **Mainland Russia** – Largest country in the world (that is, the most land area), and home to 142 million people. Russia straddles two continents, Asia and Europe (note that Europe is colored in gray on the other side of the map). Russia has the deepest lake in the world – Lake Baikal.
- Look up toward the **North Pole** and wave to the polar bears!
- Walk down the coast, over the border, into **China**. 1.3 billion people live in China - more than any other country in the world. The Yangtze River is Asia's longest river, supplying many people with drinking water. Great Wall of China.

- **Beijing** – Point out the star (symbol for a country’s capital). Home to the Chinese emperors for thousands of years. Beijing will host the 2008 summer Olympics.
- Step on to **Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos**. It’s getting warmer and warmer. Look out for these nations’ capitals.
- Island hop around **Indonesia!** Tropical climate; Largest Muslim country; Spices (nutmeg, cardamom); Orangutans
- **Point out Australia**, separate continent, colored in gray like the Aleutian Islands and Europe.
- **Time to swim!** Jump into the Pacific Ocean heading toward Japan (make swimming motion). All these islands are volcanoes, but very few are still active. Don’t step on any of those! Ouch!
- **Japan** – Step on to mainland Japan and dry off. Japan is an island nation, made up of 4,000 islands. Tokyo is the largest city in the world, 22 million people. Mt Fujii, Sushi, Hello Kitty, Pokemon, futons, Sumo wrestling.
- **Mongolia** – Gobi Desert, nomads, plateau.
- **Mount Everest** – Go south, crossing desert, heading toward mountains, toward India. Notice color of map changing where there are mountains. Stand on the highest point in the world, Mount Everest (29,035 feet above sea level – that’s five and a half miles up in the air!). Mount Everest is part of a mountain range called the Himalayas.
- **India** – Has the second highest population in the world – 1.1 billion. The Ganges River flows down from Himalayas into the Indian Ocean. Both a Hindu and Muslim country, Taj Mahal, saris, sacred cow, Asian elephants, Bengal tigers, cobras.
- **Pakistan** – Notice how mountainous this area is. Pakistan used to be part of India, but was made a separate country. It is almost entirely a Muslim country.
- **Afghanistan** – Capital is Kabul. Look for the Kyber Pass. Historically, this was one of the best ways for travelers on foot to cross from Europe into Asia.
- **Iran** – Oil, Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf.
- **Iraq** – Ancient civilizations, part of the “fertile crescent” that stretches from here to Egypt. Many inventions come from this land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, including written language, calendars, the first cities, the wheel, and even the first world map!
- **Turkey** – This is the border of the western edge of Asia. Look how far it is to where we began in Russia! Now we are close to Europe and the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Europe** – Not part of Asia (notice the gray color) but part of the Asian landmass. The Ural Mountains divide Asia and Europe.

- **The Middle East** - Have students use their rope to circle around the Middle East. Point out Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. This region is home to three major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
 - The Dead Sea (in Israel) is the lowest point in the world!
 - It is hot here, but it is arid, not humid like it is in the tropical areas of Asia in Indonesia.
 - This is one of the world's leading oil-producing areas.
 - Suez canal – Look how far a ship would have to travel if it needed to go from India to Spain if it were not for the Suez Canal (this is best illustrated on a world map or globe).
 - Sinai Peninsula.
- Africa – Stand on Egypt. We have spent most of our time on Asia, but how many other continents have we seen on this map? [Four - North America, Australia, Europe, Africa]
- End by encircling the National Geographic logo.

At Journey's End

Wrap up the activity with the suggested closing:

We have traveled thousands of miles across dozens of countries, yet this is only a beginning into an exploration of the fascinating geography of Asia.

It is the mission of the National Geographic Society to create and diffuse geographic knowledge, and to inspire people to care about the planet. Spend some more time on this giant, fun map and learn all about Asia!

