



FACTS SHEET “MOUNTAIN PROTECTED AREAS OF THE WORLD”

- Mountains are defined (operational definition) as being conspicuous, steep features having altitudinal plant zonation, and at least 300 metres in relative relief.
- Mountains are found on every continent on Earth, and on many oceanic islands.
- As a single great landscape type, reaching almost from pole to pole, they encompass the most extensive array of topographic, soils, climatic, faunal, floral and cultural differentiation known to mankind.
- The conspicuous beauty and awesomeness of mountains, and their seeming immutability have made them sacred to the major religions of the world, and often the abode of ancestors. Many are magnets attracting alpinists, hikers, artists and tourists.
- Mountains are the origin home of the 5 most important food staples of the world.
- Mountains are refuges of great biological diversity and high levels of endemism, they are critical as water towers and catchments for almost all of our major rivers providing water to at least half of humanity. They are often the last sanctuaries for endangered cultures and endangered wild plants and animals
- 32% of the world’s protected areas are found in mountains.
- The 2003 United Nations Protected Areas list gives a total of 9,345 mountain protected areas covering 1,735,828,000 hectares.
- Many regions with mountains have no representative protected areas such as the Atlas Mountains, Antarctica, Papua New Guinea and the Middle East.
- For high mountains 61 World Heritage areas have been designated, and 28 additional sites have been recognized to fill gaps.

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