

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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LIMITS OF VISIBILITY

How far can a large non-luminous object, such as a mountain, be seen under the most favorable atmospheric conditions, assuming it or the observer to be sufficiently elevated so that it does not lie below the horizon? No definite answer has ever been given to this question, but in the light of the following statement we can say, "At least 200 miles":

"To the northwest of Peshawar, which is 1,500 feet above sea level," writes R.G. Veryard, an officer of the Royal Air Force, stationed in India, "the Hindu Kush Mountains, a large branch of the western Himalayas in Afghanistan, can quite often be seen, especially in the winter months. The range has a general height of 12,000 to 13,000 feet, with peaks extending up to 18,000 feet, the nearest point being 175 miles away from Peshawar. After the passage of a western disturbance the peaks are remarkably clear and seem to be much nearer than they really are. Occasionally in the cold weather the high peaks over 200 miles away to the north of Peshawar, where the Hindu Kush joins the Pamirs, can also be seen from the air at a height of 5,000 feet. These peaks are all over 20,000 feet high - Terichmir, for example, is 25,000 feet above sea level - but they cannot be seen from the ground owing to the intervening hills. Another famous mountain that can sometimes be seen from certain points in the Peshawar district is Nanga Parbat. This mountain is in the Gilgit Agency of Kashmir and extends to a height of 26,620 feet, towering many thousand feet above the adjacent hills. It is situated northeast of Peshawar and is approximately 200 miles away."

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