

# *The Best* COFFEE REGIONS *(and Coffee) in the World*

Coffee is one of the most popular beverages. You might even be drinking your favorite brew as you read this. But, do you know where coffee comes from? Can you choose between the various beans to ensure you consume the best cup?

Good beans make good coffee. And, while it's possible to ruin good beans and turn them into crummy coffee, you can't brew a spectacular cup from bad beans.

Some coffee-growing regions are better than others for producing great beans. We'll show you where to find the best coffee beans so you can ensure your next cup is nothing short of fabulous.

## HOW MANY COFFEE-GROWING REGIONS ARE THERE?

The International Coffee Organization says it has 42 exporting member countries (they produce coffee and export more than they import) and seven importing member countries (they produce coffee but import more than they export). These 49 countries represent 97% of the world's coffee production.

## WHAT IS THE BEAN BELT?

South and Central America, Africa, The Middle East, and Southeast Asia are the leading coffee-producing regions. They all exist along the equator between the Tropic of Capricorn and the Tropic of Cancer—an area known as the “Bean Belt.”

Ideal climate, soil, and altitude conditions make for excellent coffee growing in the Bean Belt. So, it's here that you'll find fantastic specimens with rich flavor and healthy properties.

Coffee trees, like bushes, grow bunches of cherries—two seeds (coffee beans) in each cherry. Trees grown in the Bean Belt enjoy similar climate, soil, and altitude conditions, however, their environment varies slightly by region—each region, therefore, is known for producing beans of a specific flavor profile.

The following countries produce the most coffee in the world (all are located in the Bean Belt):

- Brazil
- Columbia
- Ethiopia
- Indonesia
- Vietnam

## ROBUSTA VS. ARABICA

Before talking about the various coffee growing regions, we need to mention two important coffee categories: robusta and arabica. More than 120 types of coffee plants exist, but most of the coffee we drink comes from beans harvested from the *Coffea canephora*/*Coffea robusta* and *Coffea arabica* plants.

### ROBUSTA

Robusta beans account for roughly 30% of the world's coffee beans. The robusta plant originated in Africa. It's a highly resilient tree that grows at lower altitudes (650 to 2,500 feet) and produces more bitter beans than arabica trees, with a more neutral and earthy taste. Robusta beans are typically used for instant coffees, espresso, and dark roast coffee. They're higher in caffeine than arabica beans and aren't as healthy, because they grow on the same crops year after year, depleting the soil of its nutrients.

### ARABICA

Arabica beans account for nearly 60% of coffee beans produced worldwide. They originated in Ethiopia and grow in subtropical areas (coffee beans need moisture, rich soil, and sun). Arabica beans are more delicate than robusta beans, so they need higher elevations (2,000 to 6,500 feet) to thrive. These beans have a sweeter and fruitier flavor than robusta beans, with a tangier taste. Because arabica beans are fragile and difficult to grow, they're more expensive to buy. But, arabica beans are healthier than their robusta counterparts.



## THE WORLD'S COFFEE REGIONS

If you're looking for the best single-origin beans, you need to know about specific regions producing exceptional coffee. These regions include those in the Bean Belt and more.

### AFRICA

Many African countries grow exquisite coffee beans. Those in the eastern part of the continent produce primarily arabica beans and others in the west grow mostly robusta beans. African coffee beans come in many varieties and flavors, but they're typically delicate, sweet, floral, fruity, and full-bodied.

Top arabica-producing countries in Africa include:

- Burundi
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Malawi
- Rwanda
- Tanzania
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

Top robusta-producing countries in Africa include:

- Angola
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Liberia

### CENTRAL AMERICA

Central America is known for well-balanced arabica beans with a bright flavor profile and medium acidity. Coffee beans harvested in this region are generally mild or medium-bodied.

Top coffee-producing countries in Central America include:

- Costa Rica
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Nicaragua
- Panama

### NORTH AMERICA

North America grows many specialty coffees—Kona beans from Hawaii are especially notable for their smooth flavor and aroma.

Top coffee-producing regions in North America include:

- California
- Caribbean (Jamaica)
- Dominican Republic
- Hawaii
- Mexico
- Puerto Rico



### SOUTH AMERICA

South American coffee is creamier and more chocolaty than many coffees grown in other regions. Beans harvested here produce a mild-bodied, light, and clean cup.

Top coffee-producing countries in South America include:

- Brazil
- Columbia
- Ecuador
- Peru

### INDIA

India is known for its high-quality robusta and arabica beans. The country's high-altitude rain forests, hilly slopes, and mountainous regions produce sweet—and often spicy—beans with low acidity. Indian beans typically generate a flavorful medium or full-bodied coffee.

### THE MIDDLE EAST

Yemen produces some of the best coffee beans in the world (the country grows arabica plants that originated in 15th-century Ethiopia). High-altitude growing means coffee lovers enjoy a beverage with a sweet, complex flavor and chocolate, floral, and fruity notes.

### SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia produces most of the world's robusta beans. Coffee brewed from these beans is earthy, rich, bold, and herbal—full-bodied and perfect for any time of day.

Top coffee-producing countries in Southeast Asia include:

- Indonesia
- Laos
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Vietnam

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