

# The Ring is on Fire!

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**Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and a tsunami warning all in one week - what's happening in the Ring of Fire?!**

**This past week has been a very eventful one for earth watchers and geologists. There has been a lot of seismic activity in many places around the world, particularly in the Ring of Fire. 'Seismic' means relating to earthquakes or other vibrations of the earth and its crust.**

**What activity is this?** The Philippines most active volcano, **Mt. Mayon**, which is on the island of Luzon, is presently rumbling. It's spewing ash, superheated gases and lava just like a fountain upto three miles high and threatening a huge eruption very soon. The molten rocks and lava debris that plume out of its crater land miles away. So about 600,000 people have been evacuated from their homes around the area to stay safe. This volcano has erupted some 50 times in the past 500 years. When it erupted in 1814, the entire town of Cagsawa was buried under volcano mud killing over 1,200 people.

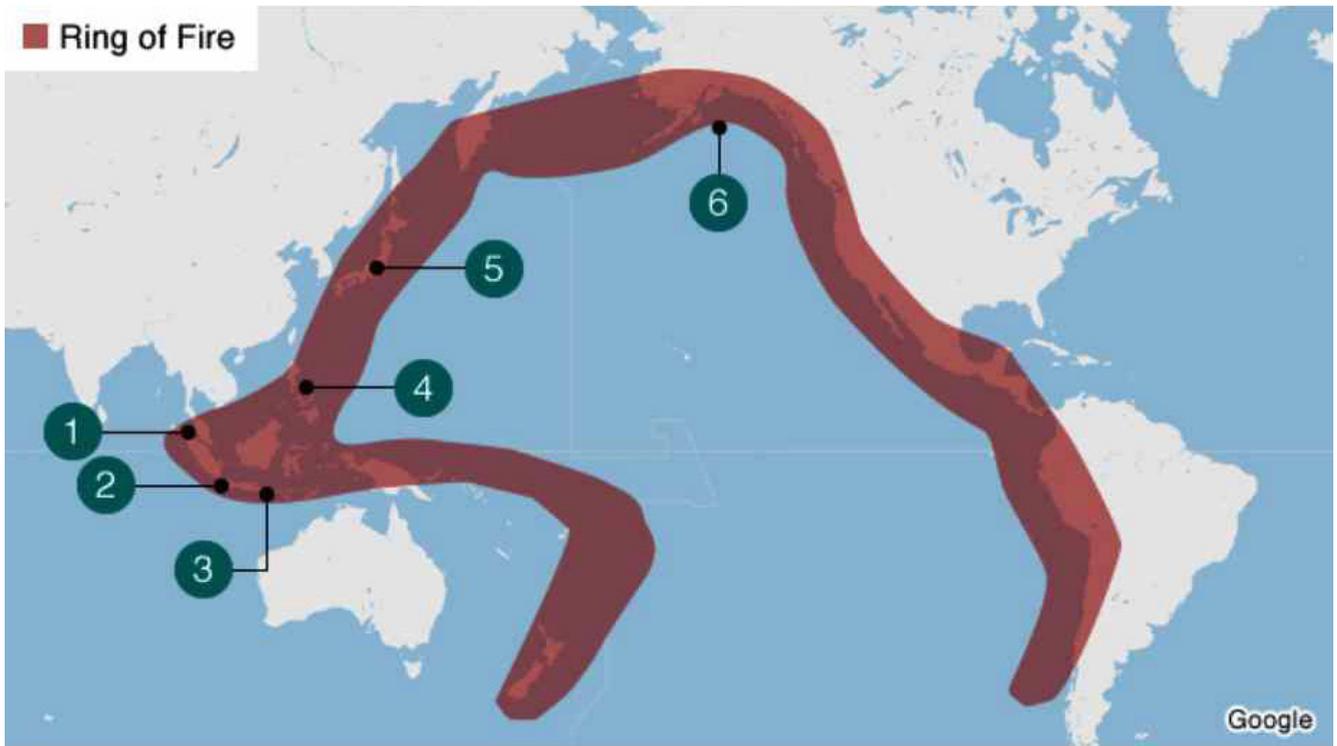
Then last week in **Japan** just 100 miles from Tokyo, Mt. Kusatsu-Shirane another volcano erupted and created an avalanche. If that weren't enough activity, in **Bali, Indonesia**, Mt. Agung, which has been spewing ash since November, erupted four times.

And some more action - In the **Gulf of Alaska**, an earthquake which recorded at a magnitude of 7.9 (that's pretty high!) on the Richter scale took place off the coast of Kodiak Island. This quake prompted a tsunami warning for parts of Alaska and Canada and many people were evacuated. Luckily, the big tsunami wave did not come. Many smaller earthquakes were also recorded in California last week.

**Can we tell when an earthquake will occur or when a volcano will erupt?** Scientists, known as seismologists and volcanologists have been studying the movement of the tectonic plate very carefully. The tectonic plate is the two sub-layers of the earth's crust that move, float, and sometimes fracture and whose interaction causes continental drift, earthquakes, volcanoes, mountains, and oceanic trenches. They study this to try and predict when some activity which can be a threat to life may occur and so that people can be warned to stay away from those areas.

**Are there any connections between these volcanos and earthquakes?** Again scientists are trying to study whether there are any connections. What scientists do know is that the area which is mostly around the Pacific Ocean is very prone to volcanos and earthquakes because of all the activity in the rocks that make the earth's crust in this area. This area is called the Ring of Fire because all this activity has resulted in a large number of volcanoes and earthquakes around here.

Here is what the recent activity in the Ring of Fire looks like:



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|---|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | Mount Sinabung, Indonesia | 4 | Mount Mayon, Philippines     |
| 2 | West Java earthquake, 6.0 | 5 | Mount Kusatsu-Shirane, Japan |
| 3 | Mount Agung, Indonesia    | 6 | Alaska earthquake, 7.9       |

Photo Credit: USGS, BBC



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