

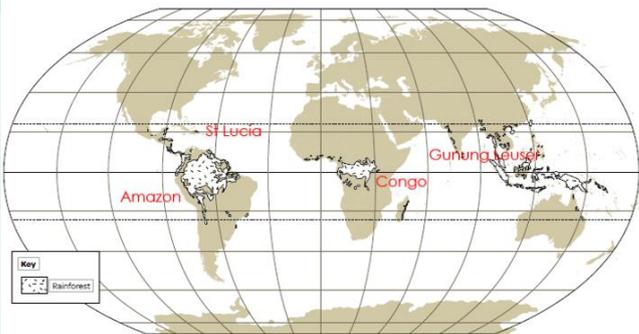
Rainforests

Background Information

A rainforest is a tall, dense forest that receives lots of rain every year. Rainforests are full of biodiversity, meaning there are lots of different species of plants and animals that live there. There are two types of rainforests: tropical rainforests and temperate rainforests. Tropical rainforests are found north and south of the Equator between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. Rainforests are home to over half the species of plants and animals in the world and are a fantastic source of foods and medicines. A rainforest has many layers of vegetation (plants) growing within it. All of these plants grow to different heights and create layers within the rainforest. Rainforests are a kind of forest habitat. It's called 'rainforest' because it also gets a lot of rain every year, helping all the plants grow. It's important to protect rainforest habitats for all the creatures who live there, and for humans too; rainforests produce 20% of the oxygen that all of us in the world need to breathe.

In this unit the children will discover:

- What a rainforest is.
- The different layers of a rainforest.
- The features of a rainforest.
- The characteristics of the Congo.
- The impact of deforestation.



Geographical skills

- Locational knowledge
- Place knowledge
- Human and physical geography
- Map work



Key facts

- South America's biggest country is Brazil. Here you will find the Amazon Rainforest, home to a huge number of animals, plants and insects.
- Deforestation is a threat to the Amazon Rainforest. A lot of forest has been destroyed, for example to make space for cattle ranches, from which beef is exported worldwide.
- Manaus is a city in the heart of the Amazon Rainforest region and sits on the Rio Negro, one of two major rivers that flow into the River Amazon.
- There are five main spots where rainforest habitats are located – Africa, Asia, Australia, Central America and South America.
- The largest rainforest habitat in the world is the Amazon rainforest in South America
- This area of immense natural beauty plays an important role in limiting climate change. This is because the rich vegetation takes carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) out of the air and releases oxygen. You can learn more about this in our feature on the lifecycle of plants!
- Rainforests produce 20% of the oxygen that all of us in the world need to breathe
- Due to the thickness of the canopy (the top branches and leaves of the trees), the Amazon floor is in permanent darkness. In fact, it's so thick that when it rains, it takes around ten minutes for the water to reach the ground!
- Most rainforests are structured in four layers: emergent, canopy, understory, and forest floor. Each layer has unique characteristics based on differing levels of water, sunlight, and air circulation.
- Most rainforests get at least 75 inches of rain with many getting well over 100 inches in areas.

Glossary

Northern hemisphere: The Northern Hemisphere is the half of the Earth that is north of the Equator. For example, United States, Canada and Russia.

Southern hemisphere: The Southern Hemisphere is the half of Earth south of the Equator, containing 80.9% water (20% more than the Northern Hemisphere) from four oceans, including the Indian, South Atlantic, Southern, and South Pacific).

Tropic of Cancer: The Tropic of Cancer, which is also referred to as the Northern Tropic, is the most northerly circle of latitude on Earth at which the Sun can be directly overhead.

Amazon River: The Amazon River in South America is the largest river.

Deforestation: Deforestation is the permanent removal of trees to make room for something besides forest. This can include clearing the land for agriculture or grazing, or using the timber for fuel, construction or manufacturing.

Biodiversity: The number of different types of plants and animals found in a particular environment.

Biome: A community of plants and animals that is suited to a particular climate.

Equatorial: The hot, wet climate in areas close to the Equator.

Continents: A continent is one of several large landmasses. Generally identified by convention rather than any strict criteria, up to seven regions are commonly regarded as continents. Ordered from largest in area to smallest, these seven regions are: Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe, and Australia.