

Key Stage 2 Geography – Desert

Would you like to live in a desert?

Expected Outcomes

Pupils will be able to:

- Identify the lines of latitude where hot desert biomes are located.
- Describe the characteristics of a hot desert biome.
- Locate the largest deserts in each continent.
- Describe ways the Mojave Desert is used.
- Name and describe the physical features found in a desert.
- Identify how humans use the desert.
- Explain how human activity may contribute to the changing climate and landscape of a desert.
- Recognise that the Mojave Desert has a different time zone to the UK.
- Describe some of the threats to deserts.
- Give the benefits and drawbacks of living in a desert environment.
- Identify characteristics of two contrasting biomes and compare land use.
- Discussing if a desert environment is hospitable and why.
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Developmental Focus Opportunities

- Use globes and maps to identify desert latitudes near the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.
- Describe desert characteristics using sensory prompts and word banks.
- Locate major deserts on each continent with atlas work and interactive mapping.
- Explore Mojave Desert land use through role-play and photo analysis.
- Name and model physical desert features like dunes and plateaus.
- Sort and discuss human uses of deserts including tourism and farming.
- Explain climate change impacts with cause-effect diagrams and videos.
- Compare UK and Mojave time zones using clocks and schedules.
- Identify desert threats through poster-making and sorting activities.
- Weigh pros and cons of desert living with debates and charts.
- Compare two biomes using Venn diagrams and land use examples.
- Discuss desert hospitality through structured discussions and persuasive writing.

Key Learning Points

Powerful Knowledge

Key Stage 2 Geography – Desert

• Understand the climate of desert biomes: extreme temperatures and low rainfall. • Identify typical desert vegetation and animal adaptations. • Recognise the difference between hot and cold deserts. • Locate major deserts on a world map using atlases and globes. • Identify and describe physical features such as sand dunes, rocky plateaus, salt flats, mountains, canyons, and oases. • Understand how wind and water shape desert landscapes. • Explore human uses of deserts including tourism, farming, mining, and solar energy. • Understand how people adapt to living in harsh desert conditions. • Discuss sustainable and unsustainable land use in desert regions. • Identify threats to desert environments such as desertification, climate change, pollution, and overuse. • Explore conservation efforts and possible solutions to protect desert ecosystems. • Compare desert biomes with other environments (e.g., rainforest or tundra). • Identify differences in climate, vegetation, and land use between contrasting biomes. • ? Discuss how people live and work in different physical environments.	• Biomes and Climate Systems: Understanding how desert biomes form, their location in relation to global climate zones, and the impact of latitude and atmospheric circulation on temperature and rainfall. • Physical Geography: Recognising and describing key landforms and processes (e.g. erosion, deposition, wind shaping landscapes) that define desert environments. • Human-Environment Interaction: Exploring how humans adapt to, use, and impact desert environments through activities like farming, tourism, and energy production. • Environmental Challenges and Sustainability: Investigating threats such as desertification, climate change, and resource exploitation, and considering how these affect ecosystems and communities. • Global Interconnectedness: Comparing deserts with other biomes to understand how geography influences culture, economy, and land use across the world. • Critical Thinking and Debate: Evaluating whether deserts are hospitable, weighing benefits and drawbacks of living in extreme environments, and forming reasoned arguments.
Subject-Specific Vocabulary	Reading Opportunities
• agriculture • airstrip • arid • barren • biome • climate • desert • desertification • drought • flash flood	Why Oh Why Are Deserts Dry? by Tish Rabe Cactus Hotel by Brenda Z. Guiberson A Day and Night in the Desert by Caroline Arnold Deserts (A True Book: Ecosystems) by David Petersen Desert Biomes Around the World by M. M. Eboch

Key Stage 2 Geography – Desert

- mesa
- mining
- mushroom rock
- national park
- natural arch
- nature reserve
- rainfall
- ranching
- renewable energy
- salt flat
- sand dune
- sparse
- time zone
- tourist attraction
- vegetation
- weather

Possible Misconceptions

All deserts are hot and sandy.
Deserts have no life.
Deserts are completely uninhabited.
All deserts look the same.
Deserts are always dry all year round.

Cross-Curricular Links

English: Spoken language, writing – composition
Science: evolution and inheritance, states of matter, earth and space, living things and their habitats
Mathematics: number – number and place value, statistics
Computing