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## Describe rainforest habitat

Join us on a tropical trip... Join us as we discover one of our planet's most fascinating habitats, teeming with wildlife and incredible ecosystems in our awesome facts about rainforests! Rainforest facts 1. Rainforests cover about 6% of the Earth's land surface. 2. In Central American rainforests, rival strawberry poison dart frogs might wrestle for up to 20 minutes! Love animals? You'd love our magazine! Ask your parents to check out Nat Geo Kids magazine! (AD) 3. It can take ten minutes for a falling raindrop to travel from a rainforest's thick canopy to the floor. 4. A tree known as the idiot fruit grows in Australia's Daintree rainforest. 5. The rhinoceros hornbill bird from southeast Asian rainforests has a hornlike structure on its head that looks like an extra beak! 6. Rainforests get at least 250cm of rain a year. Sometimes it's almost double that at 450cm. 7. The Amazon rainforest in South America is so big that if it were a country, it would be the ninth biggest in the world. 8. Latin American forests are home to black howler monkeys, whose calls can be heard almost 5km away! 9. Veiled stinkhorn fungi, found in tropical rainforests, smell like rotting food! 10. The Korowai people of New Guinea live in tree houses as high as 45m off the ground! 11. A quarter of ingredients in modern medicines come from rainforest plants. 12. 80% of the flowers in the Australian rainforests are not found anywhere else in the world. Did you know that we have a FREE downloadable rainforests resource? Great for teachers, homeschoolers and parents alike! 13. Living in Central American rainforests, a sloth can carry algae, beetles and cockroaches in its fur! 14. Some pine trees in Tasmania's temperate rainforests can live for 2,000 years! 15. A lake inside a rainforest on the Caribbean island of Dominica sizzles at around 88°C. What do you make of our cool facts about rainforests? Let us know by leaving a comment, below! Photos: Getty Images UK. SPONSORED Get messy, explore and appreciate nature, all from the safety of home! Learn all about these mammoth forces of nature! A storm's a-brewin', gang! Discover this incredible natural wonder and invaluable source of life... Type whatever you want to search What is a woodland habitat?What is a desert habitat?More Key Stage 1 Science guides and clipsFind more primary resources from BBC Bitesize Poison dart frogs live in the rainforests of Central and South America.Poison dart frogs live in the rainforests of Central and South America.Photograph by Dirk Ercken. DreamstimeA beam of sunlight makes its way through the leaves and lights up the brightly colored wings of a macaw. An enormous butterfly flits from plant to plant. Monkeys shout and chatter as they swing from tree to tree looking for breakfast. The rainforest is waking up.Rainforests are lush, warm, wet habitats. Trees in the rainforest grow very tall because they have to compete with other plants for sunlight. Kapok trees, which are found in tropical rainforests around the world, can grow to 200 feet. The tallest trees spread their branches and leaves blocking the light from the trees below, and creating a canopy over the forest. When one of the big trees dies and falls, the opening lets in more sunlight so that a smaller tree can grow and take its place.The rainforest has four layers. The emergent layer is made up of the very tallest trees that rise higher than the rest of the forest. In the next layer, the canopy, the leaves and branches of the trees all touch one another or are connected by vines. Most animals in the rainforest live in the canopy. The layer below the canopy is called the understory. Small trees and plants that do not need much light grow here. The last layer is the forest floor where only a few plants grow because it's so dark.There are rainforests in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Central and South America. The biggest rainforest is the Amazon rainforest. It's about the size of the contiguous United States, which doesn't include Alaska or Hawaii. More than half of it is in Brazil, but parts are in several other South American countries, including Ecuador and Bolivia. The next biggest rainforest is the Congo in Africa. Parts of the Congo can be found in several other countries too, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon.Most rainforests are found along or near the Equator, where it tends to be hot. But some rainforests grow in temperate regions where it's cooler. Hoh Rainforest in Olympic National Park on the Pacific northwest coast of North America is an example of a temperate rainforest. Like tropical rainforests, temperate rainforests get lots of, well, rain.Many kinds of plants grow in rainforests. Lianas are thick, woody vines that grow up the trees. When these vines get to the top of the trees, they spread to other trees and form a network of vines over the forest below. Orchids, bamboo, and bromeliads are other rainforest plants.Trees and other plants release water into the atmosphere—something called transpiration—then the water falls back to Earth as rain. Rainforest trees can release a lot of water, up to 200 gallons each year. The water forms a thick cloud-cover over the rainforest, so it is always warm and humid.In some rainforests it rains more than an inch every day! Rainforests help to stabilize the climate of the world not only by making rain but also by absorbing carbon dioxide. That's good because too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can make the planet too warm.More than half of the world's animals live in the rainforest. Vampire bats and anacondas live in the rainforests of South America. Bengal tigers and orangutans live in Asia's rainforests, and chimpanzees live in the rainforests of Africa. Lots of smaller animals live in rainforests too, including dragonflies, tree frogs, and at least hundreds of species of ants. Many of the plants and animals in the rainforest haven't even been discovered yet! Thick forests found in wet areas of the world are called rainforests. Most people are familiar with hot, tropical rainforests filled with trees that stay green year-round. But there are other kinds of rainforests, too. Temperate rainforests grow in cooler parts of the world, such as the northwestern United States and southern Australia. Monsoon rainforests have a dry season and trees that shed their leaves each year. They grow in Southeast Asia. Montane rainforests, or cloud forests, grow in mountainous regions. The rest of this article will focus on tropical rainforests because they are important to the health of the entire planet. Tropical rainforests occur around the equator in the hot, wet region called the tropics. They are found in parts of the tropics that get more than 70 inches (180 centimeters) of rain each year. Parts of South America and Central America, western and central Africa, Southeast Asia, and Australia have tropical rainforests. The world's largest rainforest is located in the Amazon River basin of Brazil and covers about 40 percent of that country. However, tropical rainforests cover less than 5 percent of the Earth's total land surface. Tropical rainforests can be divided into several sections. At the top of the forest is a thick layer called the canopy. It is formed by the spreading branches and thick leaves of tall trees. The canopy blocks much of the sunlight from the area below. The canopy can be between 100 and 170 feet (30 and 50 meters) above the ground. A few very tall trees stick up above the rest of the canopy. They are called emergent trees. Many animals and insects live among the treetops of the canopy.The section below the canopy is called the understory. It contains small trees, shrubs, and plants. Many of these are saplings (young trees). Their stems reach up toward the light. However, these smaller trees generally do not receive enough sunlight to grow into adult trees.On the forest floor, it is usually dark because the canopy blocks so much of the sunlight. For this reason, only plants that can tolerate shade grow there. So little sunlight reaches the ground that the forest floor may be only lightly covered by ground vegetation. There may be open spaces between the tree trunks. If one of the trees that creates the canopy dies or falls, however, a gap may open in the canopy, allowing sunlight to reach farther down into the forest. In such cases the ground vegetation may become thick and dense.The constant rain washes away many of the nutrients in the soil. To make up for that loss, bacteria, fungi, and insects on the forest floor help to break down dead plants and animals. This process creates a thin, rich top layer of soil that provides nutrients to the roots of the plants and trees. Because this layer of soil is thin, most of the trees have shallow root systems. Tropical rainforests are known for the diversity of their plants and animals. It has been estimated that more than half of the world's plant and animal species live in tropical rainforests. Scientists believe that many of these species have not yet been discovered.PlantsThe trees found in tropical rainforests stay green all year, though they do shed their leaves sometimes. Palms are among the most common trees.Below the thick canopy, other plants have to compete with each other to get enough light. As a result, many plants use other plants to reach toward the sunlight. For example, woody plants called lianas attach to the stems of other plants and climb from the ground to the canopy. Epiphytes, or air plants, are also abundant in the rainforest. These plants are not attached to the ground. They live on other plants and get water and minerals from rain and also from debris that collects on the supporting plants. Mosses, ferns, and orchids can often be found attached to larger plants.AnimalsEach area of the rainforest has thousands of species, or types, of animals. Many plant-eating animals live in the canopy—for example, monkeys, flying squirrels, and sharp-clawed woodpeckers. At the lower levels of the forest are animals that run, flutter, hop, and climb in the undergrowth. On the rainforest floor are such animals as chimpanzees, gorillas, elephants, pigs, deer, and leopards.Many animals in the rainforest have unusual characteristics. For example, sloths hang upside down, resting for hours at a time. The bright colors of the tiny poison dart frog warn other animals that it is poisonous and should not be eaten. Other common animals throughout the forests include ants, beetles, snakes, and bats. There are also many brightly colored birds such as toucans, parrots, and macaws. A tropical rainforest is a delicate network of relationships between plants and animals. Many plants, for instance, rely on animals to spread their pollen from flower to flower. At the same time, animals may depend on plants for their food and shelter. In addition, millions of people live in the forests. For them the forests are sources of food, shelter, and other materials.Even people who live far away from tropical rainforests are affected by the forests. Many rainforest plants are used as medicines to help treat diseases such as cancer. Scientists believe there are many more plants there that will help treat or even cure serious diseases. In addition, products such as fruits, nuts, rubber, rattan, and wood come from rainforests.Tropical rainforests also help to control the water supply of the areas where they grow. They do this by absorbing the constant rain and then releasing it slowly back into the atmosphere. Some of the water is released steadily into area rivers. Many people rely on the rivers for their water supply and to irrigate their crops. Some of the water is released back into the air through evaporation. This keeps the air moist and leads to more rain. This important process is called the water cycle.Finally, like all green plants, rainforest plants absorb carbon dioxide gas from the atmosphere and produce oxygen. They do this through the process of photosynthesis. Because the number of plants in the rainforests is so huge, the forests produce much of the world's oxygen, which all animals need to live. For this reason, tropical rainforests have been called the "lungs of the planet."Tropical rainforests grow in many poor countries. Some poor countries sell the wood and other resources of rainforests to make much-needed money. This often means that entire sections of the forest are destroyed. Rainforests are also cut down or burned away so that the land can be used for other purposes, such as cattle grazing and farming. The rainforests that are destroyed for these reasons are rarely replaced.The loss of rainforests endangers many plants and animals that live nowhere else in the world. Over time, some of these plants and animals may become extinct if their rainforest habitat is destroyed.When rainforests are cleared, the water cycle is disrupted as well. Rainwater washes away quickly instead of being stored in the plants and returned slowly to the atmosphere. Eventually, rain falls less often, and the region may experience drought.The destruction of rainforests also affects the environment of the rest of the world. When forests are burned, massive amounts of carbon dioxide escape into the atmosphere. This carbon dioxide contributes to a problem known as global warming.





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