

All about...

Rainforests

What is a Rainforest?

Rainforests are really big forests that get a lot of rain. They are found in all continents of the world apart from Antarctica (it's far too cold there). There are two types of rainforest: tropical (in the tropical, warm zone near the Equator) and temperate (in the temperate zone further away from the Equator). Most rainforests are tropical, with tall trees, warm climates (weather patterns), and lots of rain. It can rain one inch of rain per day in some rainforests! The largest of these is the Amazon Rainforest in South America.



Fact File in Numbers

- 2% of the Earth's surface is covered in rainforest.
- 50% of the plants and animals of the world live in rainforests.
- 20% of our water is found in a rainforest in the Amazon Basin.
- 25% of natural medicines have been found in rainforests.
- 70% + of the plants that are used to treat cancer are found only in the tropical rainforests.

The Canopy

The rainforest trees are so close together, that the branches and leaves at the top of the trees touch each other and make what is called a 'canopy', which is a bit like a roof for the forest. The canopy can be about 30m above the ground. Animals that live in the canopy have to use loud calls to communicate because they cannot see each other in the thick leaves and some can jump from tree to tree.

The Forest Floor

This is dark because the canopy blocks a lot of the light and it is humid (damp). The floor is where dead animals and plants decompose (rot) and recycle all the nutrients and materials. Also, the larger animals are found here including tapirs, elephants, tigers and jaguars.

Why are they so important?

Rainforests do a few things that are super-important to our life on Earth. One is that they use photosynthesis to take in carbon dioxide and make oxygen which we need to breathe and survive. This is why they are called 'The Lungs of The Earth'.

They also help keep our weather system stable by absorbing carbon dioxide, creating rainfall and keeping temperature stable. They also affect the water cycle as they hold so much water which condenses into the atmosphere.

So, how can we manage without them?