

Knowledge Organiser – Deserts

Important Topic Vocabulary

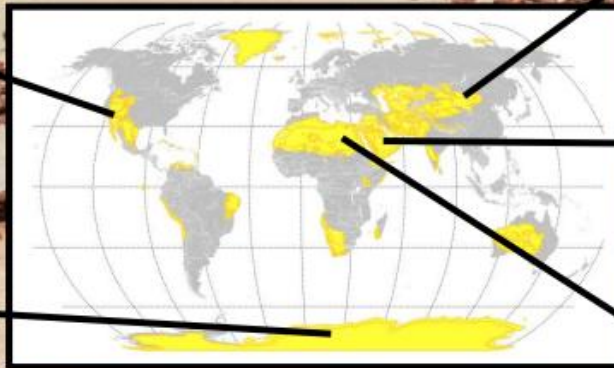
desert	A dry place that gets less than 250mm rainfall a year.
climate	The weather in a certain place over a long period of time.
arid	A place or climate with little or no rain; too dry for plants to grow.
hostile	A place which is difficult to live in or not suitable for living or growing.
vegetation	A group of plants found in a particular place or habitat.
oasis	A place where water is found in a desert.
desertification	The expansion of a desert into its surrounding areas.
inhospitable	An environment which is harsh and difficult to live in.
irrigation	Applying controlled amounts of water to land to help plants grow.

What should you already know?

- The North Pole is the top most northerly point on the globe and the South Pole is the bottom most southerly point on the globe.
- The Equator is an imaginary line that runs around the middle of the earth. The countries close to the Equator line have either a hot and dry climate or a hot and wet climate. The places that are furthest away from the Equator have a cold and dry climate.
- Deserts can be found in both hot and cold places. The largest hot desert in the world is the Sahara. The largest cold desert is Antarctica.
- Iceland has the largest glaciers in Europe and is an Arctic desert. In summer, people in Iceland experience 24 hours of daylight and in winter, there are only up to five hours of light. Iceland has a cool, temperate climate and there can be significant snowfall, frost and ice.
- Egypt's climate is hot and dry. Egypt has arid desert land to the East and West and not many of the population live in the desert.
- A compass is a tool for finding direction and has the points north, east, south and west.
- The world's seven continents:
Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia, Australia and Antarctica.
- The world's five oceans:
Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic, Southern

The Mojave Desert is located in the USA in the continent of North America. The Colorado River can be found in this desert. Las Vegas is a city found in this desert. Part of the Grand Canyon is located in this desert.

Antarctic Desert is the largest desert in the world and is located in the continent of Antarctica. In this desert, it is very dry and very cold all year round. Temperatures rarely reach above freezing. Humans do not permanently live in Antarctica because it is too cold but several thousand people live and work at various research facilities found on the continent.



The Gobi Desert is in Mongolia and China in the continent of Asia and has a very varied climate. Temperatures can reach 40°C in the summer and -40°C in the winter.

The Arabian Desert is located in the south western continent of Asia. Almost half of the world's oil supplies are found here.

Sahara Desert is in the continent of Africa and is the largest hot desert. This desert stretches across at least ten countries that are located in the north of Africa. Lack of cloud cover makes temperatures very hot during the day and very cold at night. The average temperature in the Sahara is 30°C but can reach 50°C. The Nile and Niger rivers cross the edges of the Sahara.

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Desert Features

Sand Dunes



Sand dunes are a recognisable feature of sandy deserts. Dunes are formed when the wind moves sand particles to form mounds.

Salt Basins



Salt basins are also a feature of some deserts. Salt basins are formed when water evaporates and leaves the salt that was in the water behind.

Rock Formations



Only 20% of all the world's deserts are made up of sand. The rest are rocky or gravelly. In rocky deserts, rock formations are caused by the effects of temperature, wind and flash floods.

Desert Trade

Much of the desert land in the world is too hostile to live in easily. However, there are many resources in the desert that can be used as trade is an important part of desert life.

Energy



Some deserts are used as a place to generate energy from the sun or wind using solar panels and wind turbines.



Oil



Oil is one of the most valuable resources found in the desert and is mined to be sold around the world.

Salt

The salt collected from salt basins, salt flats or salt plains can be collected and traded for money.



Precious Metals and Diamonds

Precious metals like gold, silver and copper are also mined in some deserts. Diamonds can be extracted from the gravel under the sand in some deserts. These are then processed and sold around the world.



Desert Life

Because of the lack of water in deserts, there is not much vegetation and crops for food cannot easily grow. Some plants, like cacti, have adapted to survive in deserts.



Lack of vegetation and water means people cannot keep animals to raise for food. Extreme changes in temperature also make it difficult for people to live in desert lands. Those people who do live in the deserts are nomads which means that they don't live in one place but move around to find food and water. Most towns in deserts are built up around an oasis. An oasis is a place where water is found in a desert.



Desertification

Desertification is the expansion of a desert into its surrounding area. Often when this expansion happens the land that people may live or farm on can become inhospitable. The main causes of desertification are:

- Farmers allowing their animals to overgraze, leaving the soil bare
- Humans removing trees and other plants for firewood and farming, making the soil infertile
- Climate change causing warmer weather
- Poor farmers being unable to irrigate their crops