

The Chihuahuan Desert

Mexico and USA



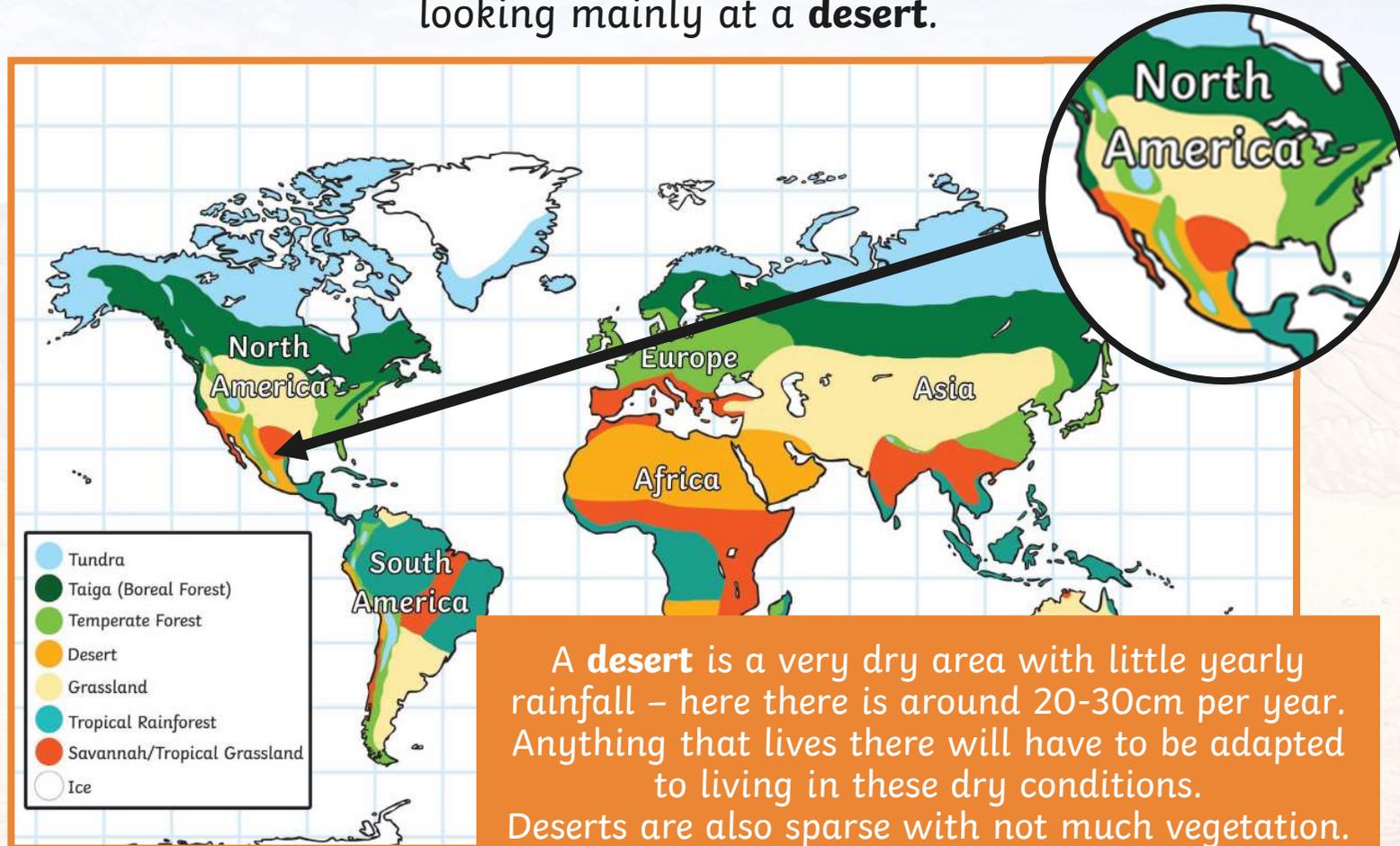
Where Is the Chihuahuan Desert?

The Chihuahuan Desert is the largest desert in North America, covering an area of over 200 000 square miles. It is mainly in Mexico but also covers parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.



The Chihuahuan Desert Biome

A biome is the type of environment and here we are looking mainly at a **desert**.



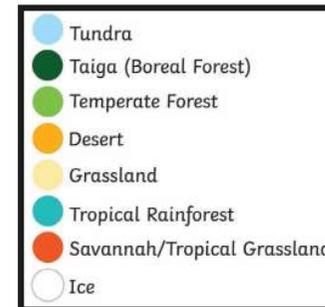
A **desert** is a very dry area with little yearly rainfall – here there is around 20-30cm per year. Anything that lives there will have to be adapted to living in these dry conditions. Deserts are also sparse with not much vegetation.

The Different Areas

The Chihuahuan Desert covers a large area from Mexico into the USA and as the temperature, soil, height and rainfall changes so does the environment.

You will notice from the biome map that there is more than just desert there and this is mainly down to the climate and height of the terrain.

Down through the central area, the land is much higher and therefore cooler than the lower parts and this affects the climate. More plants can grow with more rain and cooler temperatures.



The Rio Grande and Rio Bravo

The Rio Grande and the Rio Bravo are in fact the same river running through the Chihuahuan Desert. It is called the Rio Grande in the parts that fall in the USA and called Rio Bravo in the Mexican parts.



The river provides a lifeline to plants and animals along its length.



What Is the Climate Like?

The climate in the Chihuahuan Desert is, as you would guess, dry. It only has two seasons, summer and winter. Summer is the rainy season with smaller amounts of rainfall occurring in the winter.



The average temperature is 24°C but this changes with altitude.

The hottest temperatures are found in the lower areas and valleys.

What Animals Live There?

There are hundreds of species of animals living in the Chihuahuan Desert, all of which are able to live in its dry conditions. Here are a few of those species. Click the photographs to find out more...

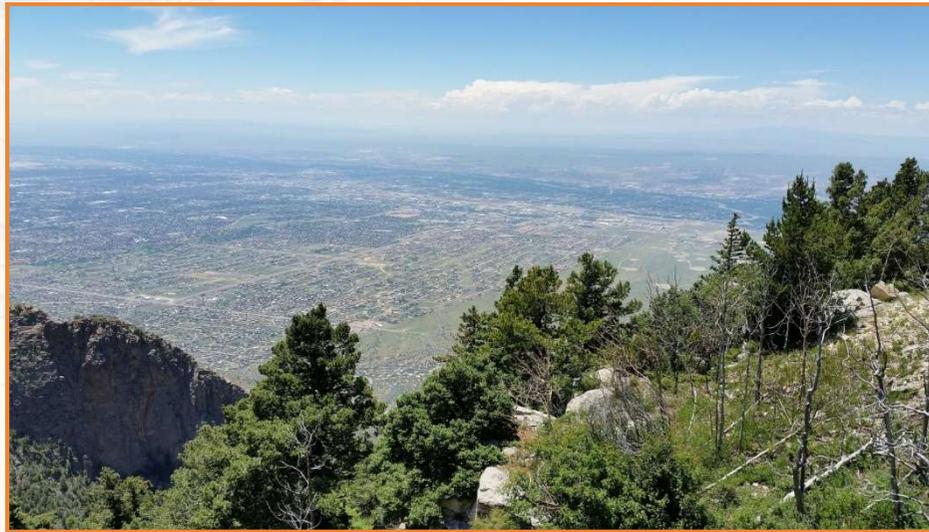


Mule Deer

It has large ears like a mule and can be up to 1m tall to its shoulders.

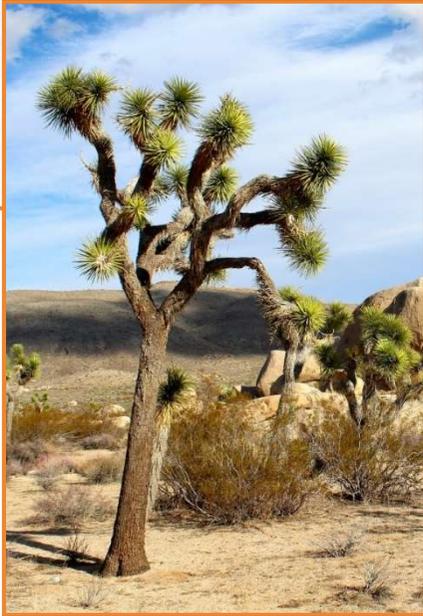
Do People Live There?

Yes! The desert is home to 5 million people! There are inhabited towns and cities in the area, such as Chihuahua (say: “chi-wa-wa”), Ciudad Juárez and Torreón in the Mexican parts, Albuquerque, Roswell and Las Cruces in New Mexico, USA.



Albuquerque

What Grows There?



Joshua Tree

Its real name is *Yucca brevifolia* but was given this name by Mormon settlers thinking it looked like hands reaching to the sky.



Saguaro Cactus

Native to dry areas, this tall cactus can grow up to around 12m tall (the tallest ever recorded was over 23m high!).



Ocotillo

This grows to around 10m tall but is not a cactus. It sometimes has red flowers and its canes can be used for walking sticks.

What Grows There?



Prickly Pear

A type of cactus whose official name is *Opuntia*. Found only in the Americas and can grow 5–7m tall.



Yucca

It has long, sword-shaped leaves and is native to dry areas. It is pollinated by Yucca Moths!



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