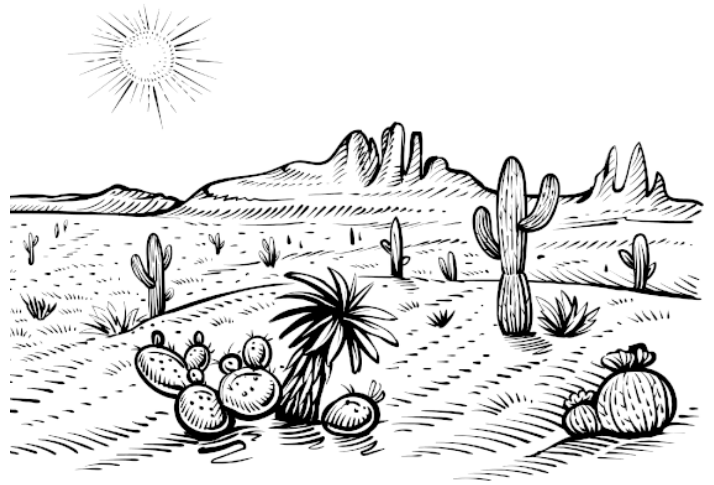


# Deserts

## What is a Desert?

Deserts are extremely dry regions. They have very little rainfall; usually less than 25cm a year. Many deserts are made up of sand and rock. Although deserts are very harsh environments, they are home to a number of plants, animals and people.



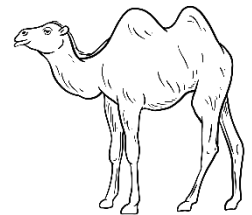
## Climate

Deserts are very hot during the day but often very cold at night. Deserts are generally very windy places. Sandstorms and dust storms are common due to the high winds. Deserts usually have very hot climates, however there are also cold deserts. Did you know that Antarctica is the largest desert in the world? Remember, deserts are simply places with very little rainfall!

## Fauna

Because deserts are so dry, not many plants and animals can survive. The plants and animals that do live in deserts have evolved to suit these harsh conditions.

Due to a lack of rainfall, most desert animals get their water from their food, whether it be seed, plant or another animal. Other animals, like camels, store fat in their bodies. This provides them with energy during periods they cannot find food. Many desert animals are small because small animals don't need as much water.



Camel

Some desert animals are nocturnal. This means that they are active during the night when temperatures are much cooler. These animals escape the high day time temperatures by sleeping in a spot of shade or in a burrow. This prevents animals losing as much water as they would if they were active during the heat of the day.

## Flora

Several desert plants store water in their leaves, stems and roots. Other plants have very long roots which allows them to access water from underground. Desert plants generally have very few or no leaves. This reduces water loss through transpiration (a process whereby water is carried out through leaves and into the atmosphere). Many desert plants have prickly spines to prevent hungry and thirsty animals eating them!



Cactus plant