Would you like to live in the desert? | Geography | Years 5 & 6 | Spring Term 2026-27

National Curriculum – Geography

Locational knowledge

- Locate the world's countries, using maps to focus on Europe (including the location of Russia) and North and South America, concentrating on their environmental regions, key physical and human characteristics, countries, and major cities.
- Identify the position and significance of latitude, longitude, Equator, Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere, the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, Arctic and Antarctic Circle, the Prime / Greenwich Meridian and time zones (including day and night).

Human and physical geography

- Describe and understand key aspects of:
  - physical geography, including: climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts, rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes, and the water cycle.
  - human geography, including: types of settlement and land use, economic activity including trade links, and the distribution of natural resources including energy, food, minerals and water.

Geographical skills and fieldwork

- Use maps, atlases, globes and digital / computer mapping to locate countries and describe features studied.

Lines of enquiry

What are the physical features of the Mojave desert?

How do people use the Mojave Desert?

- Protecting areas of natural beauty in national parks.
- Recreational purposes like hiking or quad biking.
- Ranching and farming.
- Military based and training.
- Mining precious resources.
- Generating renewable energy.
- Living in settlements.

What are some of the threats and dangers of a hot desert biome?

Vocabulary

Arid: very dry; too little rain to support lots of vegetation.
Barren: land that cannot grow vegetation.
Biome: an area of the world with similar climate and landscape, with a community of plants and animals with similar characteristics that are adapted to suit that environment.
Climate: the long-term weather conditions in a specific region.
Desert: any stretch of land with little or no rainfall and extremely sparse vegetation and wildlife.
Mining: digging underground for precious metals and stones.
Rainfall: the amount of rain falling in a place over a particular period of time.
Ranching: keeping animals on a large farm, particularly in the Americas.
Renewable energy: energy generated from a continuous source, such as wind, sun or water.
Physical feature: a landform that occurs naturally on Earth.
Human feature: a landmark that is built by humans.

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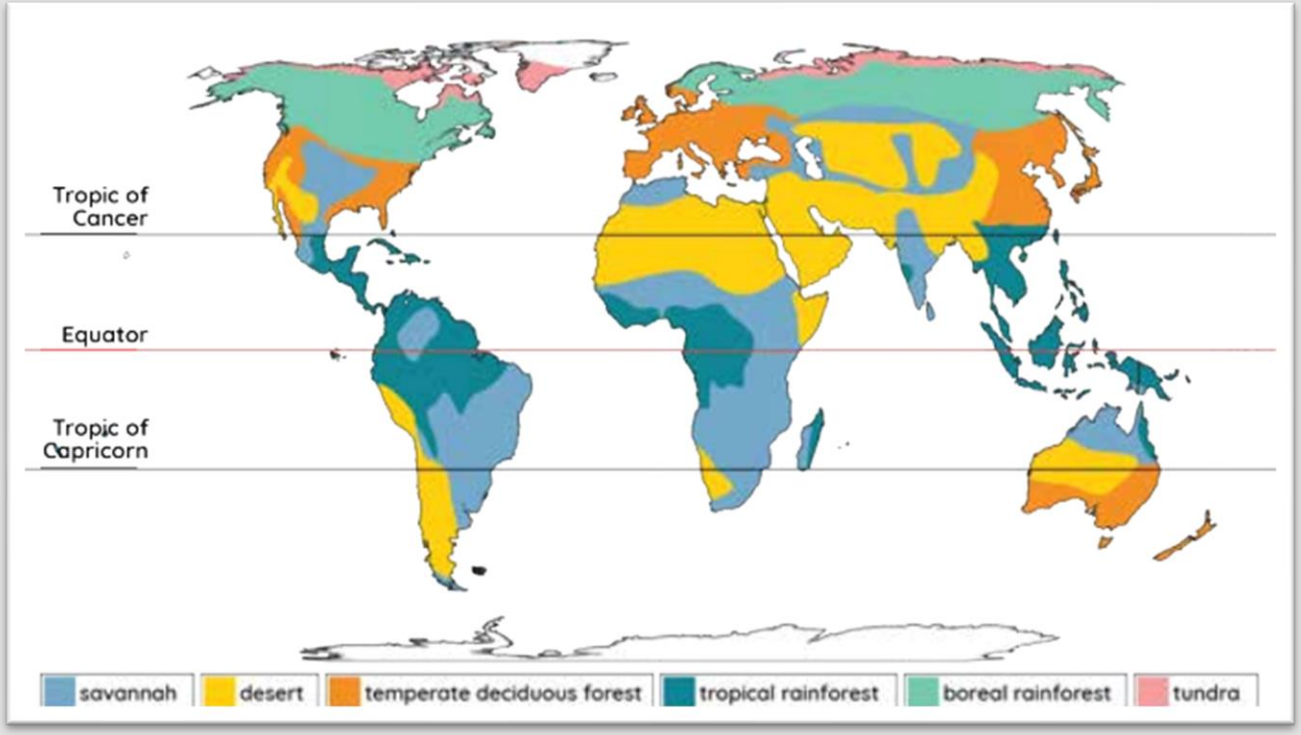
Geographical skills and knowledge

Where are hot desert biomes located?



What are hot desert biomes like?

A hot desert biome is hot, dry and arid, although temperatures can drop at night and occasional heavy downpours can occur.

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Key Learning: To understand and explain what a hot desert biome is like and why people might live there.

1	**What is a hot desert biome?** Recap biomes previously studied. Understand why some places on Earth are hot whilst others are cold. Clarify that desert are stretches of land with little or no rainfall and that they can be both 'hot' or 'cold'. Take part in a virtual field trip to the Mojave Desert. Summarise the characteristics of a desert biome including climate, weather, plants (flora) and animals (fauna).
2	**Where are deserts located?** Locate global deserts, identifying the largest desert in each continent and labelling this on a map. Recap the definition of human features and physical features. Use Google Maps to locate, identify and explore further features of the Mojave desert. Use data to compare the temperatures of two different desert cities (Mojave, in the Mojave Desert and Calama, Chile, in the Atacama Desert). Then compare these temperatures with those in London, identifying similarities and differences between the climates of the three locations.
3	**What physical features are found in a desert?** Understand how a desert is formed, and the physical features found there using a case study of Death Valley (a desert valley in the Mojave Desert). Conduct research to learn about different desert features, including how they are formed: sand dune, mushroom rock, mesa, natura arch and salt flat.
4	**How can people use deserts?** Recognise that different locations may be in different time zones and recall how land use can change over time. Explore how humans use the Mojave Desert, including: protected areas of nature; recreation and tourism; ranching and farming; military; mining; and renewable energy.
5	**What are the threats to deserts?** List some of the environmental threats to deserts and describe how human activity may negatively impact a desert environment. Weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of living in a desert biome, writing a letter to a family to give an opinion on whether the family should move to the Mojave Desert or not, providing examples and reasons to justify this viewpoint.
6	**Would you like to live in the desert?** Explore the similarities and differences between two different biomes (our local area and the Mojave Desert). Compare land use in these two different locations and justify why one place may be more hospitable than the other.