

Welcome to the Amazon



Image courtesy European Space Agency

Mini Fact:

This image was taken from the Sentinel-1 satellite and colored to highlight the Amazon and tributaries.

This week, The Mini Page goes on a virtual adventure to the Amazon River Basin in South America. ¡Vamos!

A vast river

The Amazon River begins high in the Andes Mountains and flows about 4,000 miles across the continent. Only the Nile River in Africa is longer.

The Amazon River has more than 1,100 **tributaries**. (A tributary is a stream or river that feeds a larger river or lake.) Seventeen of these are more than 900 miles long. The Amazon carries one-fifth of all the river water flowing into the oceans of the Earth. The mouth of the river is 200 miles wide where it enters into the Atlantic Ocean.

What is a basin?

We use **basins**, or sinks and bowls, to hold things, especially water. Our planet Earth has basins, too.

A **drainage basin** collects rainwater, which drains into a common outlet, like a river.

The Amazon River Basin covers more than 2.4 million square miles. This river system flows in seven countries, including about half of Brazil, and covers land in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela.

People along the Amazon

Each year, for a six-month period, the banks along the Amazon flood. People, plants and animals in the area adjust to these changes. Waters rise from 20 feet to 50 feet

and flood an area as far as 50 miles from the river. Many houses are built on **stilts**, or designed to float on the river.



photo by Anoldent

Most of the river basin is covered with **rainforests**, so this large area is home to a comparably small number of people, about 30 million. About 2.7 million of those are **Indigenous people**, or those whose ancestors first inhabited the area.

People living in the Amazon River Basin are farmers, growing soya beans, nuts, rice and corn. The river provides fish for food.

Who else lives there?

“Bio” means life, and “diversity” means variety. The biodiversity is probably greater in rainforest areas than anywhere else.

Hundreds of different species, including mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and insects, thrive in the warm, damp climate.

Some of the creatures who live there include:

- **Jaguars** are the largest cats in the Western Hemisphere.



photo by paVan

Emerald tree boa constrictors coil around prey and squeeze it to death.

Next Week: Poetry Month

- The **tapir** is related to the rhinoceros. It spends most of the time in the water.




photo by Valerie

The bright blue color of the poison dart frog is a warning to predators not to attack.

Living in layers

Animals in the rainforest live on different levels, from the ground up to the top of the trees. That is why so many of them can live in small areas.

Emergent layer: The tallest trees with thick leaves are homes to lightweight birds, bats and butterflies.

More animals live in the canopy than in any other layer. Many of the trees have tough and shiny leaves. Some animals never go down to the ground.




photo by Michael Schilling

Understory: Because of the thick leaves above, not much direct sunlight reaches this area. Many plants have huge leaves. Snakes might live here.

Floor: This layer is dark and quiet. Animals that hunt, such as jaguars, live here. Many insects crawl on the ground.

Resources



On the Web:


- bit.ly/MPAmazonRiver

At the library:

- “DK Eyewitness Books: The Amazon” by Tom Jackson

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the Amazon are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



AMAZON, ANDES, ANIMALS, BASIN, BIODIVERSITY, CANOPY, DRAINAGE, EMERGENT, FLOOD, FLOOR, INDIGENOUS, OCEAN, PACIFIC, RAINFOREST, RIVER, SOUTH AMERICA, STILTS, TRIBUTARY, UNDERSTORY.	A N D E S D O O L F L O O R R N I S A B S L A M I N A I B A E G A N I A R D O C E A N S I M A C I R E M A H T U O S T N E C U N P A C I F I C Q T L F R A Y R O T S R E D N U J I O G N O Z A M A P R I V E R T R E O R T R I B U T A R Y N S E N P S U O N E G I D N I J W S T Y Y T I S R E V I D O I B T
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Cook's Corner


Black Bean and Beef Stew

You'll need:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 celery stalk, chopped fine
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 onions, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped fine
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 1 (14 1/2-ounce) can stewed tomatoes
- 1 pound stew beef, cut into cubes
- 2 (16-ounce) cans black beans, drained

What to do:

1. Cook celery, carrots, onions, garlic and bell pepper in vegetable oil in a large pot over medium heat for 5 minutes. Stir often.
2. Add tomatoes and beef. Cover. Lower heat to simmer and cook for 30 minutes. Stir every 5 minutes.
3. Add beans. Stir and cook uncovered for 15 to 20 minutes. Serves 8 .




* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.


1. loud (5) _____
2. slow animal (5) _____
3. room with the refrigerator (7) _____
4. very tired (9) _____
5. freezing cold (6) _____
6. discover (4) _____
7. world's tallest mountain (7) _____



OTH	AUS	FI	SY
EV	CHEN	ST	ERE
ND	TED	NOI	FRI
SL	EXH	GID	KIT


Answers: noisy, sloth, kitchen, frigid, find, Everest.

Mini Jokes



Amy: What do you call a sleepy rainforest?
Amal: Pajamazon!

Eco Note



The Smithsonian Natural History Museum revealed in January that scientists had observed electric eels in the Amazon River hunting in groups. Eels are traditionally solitary animals, although mammals commonly hunt in groups. They were seen working together to push small tetra fish into tight shallows, where others would attack them and stun them. “By acting in groups, the eels have more chance of success,” said David de Santana, who led the research team.


adapted from CNN.com

For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about rainforests and other ecosystems in our world.

Teachers:

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