



## COPPER CANYON

Copper Canyon is situated in the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range in the Mexican State of Chihuahua in the north of the country. It is made up of a group of six smaller canyons, which were formed over a long time by rivers flowing along the bottom slopes of the mountains, and slowly eroding a path through them. Local legends say that the canyon was formed when a giant walked around and the ground cracked. The walls of the canyon are a greenish copper colour, hence the name.



The Copper Canyon



The Chepe railroad

There are many ways to explore the canyon – hiking, biking, driving and horse-riding for example, but the most popular way is by train. The Chihuahua al Pacifico (or Chepe) railroad is a total of 405 miles long and goes across 39 bridges and through 86 tunnels! The full journey can take 15 hours! Of course there are many stops along the way at the small villages and towns throughout the area. The local people, the Tarahumarans, often lay out food and handmade crafts for tourists to buy. Along the way is some stunning scenery, and if you are lucky, you may see some of the many and varied wildlife that live there, such as black bears, otters, mountain lions, wild boar, striped skunks, squirrels, raccoons, snakes, foxes, eagles, and white tail deer.



Valley of the Monks

The Valle de los Monjes (Valley of the Monks) can be found in the Copper Canyon. It is covered in strangely shaped rocks, which some say look like monks, hence the name. Over the years, the wind and rain have made the rocks slowly crumble to form these long, thin, pointed shapes. Local legends say that the rocks were carved 20 million years ago, just after the creation of the world, when the rock had not yet hardened and was still soft.



## LACANDON JUNGLE

The Lacandon Jungle is an area of rainforest which mainly covers part of the Mexican state of Chiapas, and the bordering country of Guatemala. A rainforest is a dense forest found in areas with a tropical climate, resulting in frequent, heavy rainfall and average yearly temperatures of 25°C. It covers an area of approximately 19,000km<sup>2</sup>.



A Jaguar, the national animal of Mexico

A number of historical Mayan civilisation sites are also located in the Lacandon Jungle, such as the Palenque ruins. This area was the location of an important Maya city in the 7th century. Some of the buildings that have been excavated and restored include the Temple of the Sun, as seen in the picture to the right. However, it is thought that only one tenth of the ancient city has been explored so far, and there are many more ancient monuments covered by the jungle, awaiting discovery.



The Lacandon Jungle

The jungle is home to 1,500 different species of tree, 33% of all of Mexico's bird species, 25% of all Mexico's animal species, 44% of all Mexico's butterfly species and 10% of all Mexico's fish species. Many endangered species also live here, including the scarlet macaw, the spider monkey, the howler monkey, the tapir and the swamp crocodile. The Lacandon Jungle is one of the last jungles in the continent of North America that are big enough to support jaguars, which are Mexico's national animal. Due to the continual heavy rainfall that the area receives, there are rivers and streams, as well as some beautiful waterfalls.



Ancient buildings from the Mayan civilisation



## SONORAN DESERT

The Sonoran Desert covers parts of the American states of Arizona and California, and the Mexican states of Sonora, Baja California, and Baja California Sur. It extends over an area of 260,000km<sup>2</sup>. It is the hottest desert in Mexico, with summer temperatures regularly exceeding 40°C. The monsoon season, which is characterised by strong winds and heavy rain, lasts between the months of July to September. Dust storms (where winds pick up and carry clouds of dust and sand) are also frequent during this time.



Thorny devil lizard

The conditions in the Sonoran Desert make it hard, but not impossible, for animals to live there. In fact, it contains the greatest range of plants and animals of any desert in the continent of North America. Mammals such as sand cats and coyotes, rodents like jerboas, reptiles such as Gila monsters and desert tortoises, arachnids like tarantulas and scorpions, and birds such as eagles and roadrunners, all make the desert their home. Many have special adaptations that help them to survive and thrive in the harsh desert conditions.

The Sonoran Desert is the only place in the world where the saguaro cactus grows in the wild. They, along with other cacti like the organ pipe cactus and the prickly pear cactus, provide food and shelter to many desert animals. Often, Gila woodpeckers and elf owls make a hole in a saguaro cactus and use it as a nest site!

Tourists who are travelling through the desert are advised to bring at least four litres of water per person per day, wear sunscreen, sun glasses, a hat and closed-toe shoes, as well as making themselves aware of the symptoms of heat exhaustion.



Saguaro cacti in the Sonoran desert



Cactus wren on a prickly pear cactus

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Look at the Mexican Wildlife Cards and read the descriptions of each animal's habitat. Based on this, decide if you think they live in the Copper Canyon, the Lacandon Jungle or the Sonoran Desert. Cut and stick the picture of each animal in the boxes below, then read the Information Sheets to see if your choices were correct! Using this information, now write your own description of each location.

Mexican Wildlife		Description of Location	
		Copper Canyon	
		Lacandon Jungle	
		Sonoran Desert	

## Mexico Today

## Mexican Wildlife Cards



Black bears typically live in mountainous areas which are rich in vegetation.



Jerboas shelter in burrows in the heat of the day. The colour of their fur matches their environment.



Tapirs prefer forest areas where they can shelter in the thick undergrowth.



Scarlet macaws typically live in hot, evergreen forests. They can often be seen flying through the canopy.



Jaguars prefer a dense forested habitat which is close to water.



Cougars, also called mountain lions, prefer a habitat with vegetation and steep slopes.



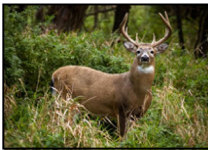
Spider monkeys like to live in the upper layers of tall trees in forests with frequent rain.



Gila monsters live in areas which provide rocky shelters. They spend much of their time underground.



Road runners live in dry, open areas containing shrub land.



White-tailed deer are found in river valley bottomlands and the foothills of mountains.



Sand cats inhabit sandy, stony areas. They have adapted to survive in extremely hot and cold conditions.



Striped skunks can be found in woodlands and rocky ravines.