

What is rainforest?

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A tropical rainforest has more kinds of trees and other plant life than any other area of the world. Most trees in the tropical rainforest are broad leaf trees that grow closely together. The tallest trees may grow as tall as 200 feet. The tops, called crowns, form a covering of leaves about 100-150 feet above the ground. This cover is called the upper canopy. The crowns of the smaller trees form one or two lower canopies. These canopies share the forest floor so that it receives less than one percent as much sunlight as does the upper canopy. As a result, only ferns and other plants requiring little sunlight grown on the forest floor. This makes it possible for a person to easily walk through most parts of a tropical rainforest. However, areas of dense growth occur where much sunlight reaches the ground. These areas are called jungles and grow in swamps, near broad rivers or in former clearings.



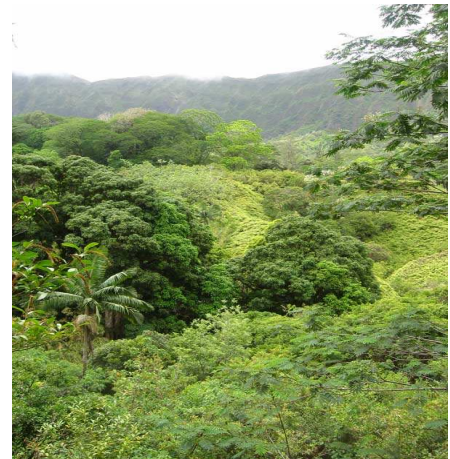
- The Amazon is the largest and densest rainforest on earth
- The Amazon covers 2.5 million miles, about the size of the USA west of the Mississippi
- If Amazonas were a country, it would be the 9th largest on earth
- Each minute the Amazon River discharges 3.4 million gallons of water into the Atlantic, 14 times the discharge of the Mississippi
- The Amazon runs 4007 miles from its origin in the Andes to the Atlantic, making it the second longest river on earth
- During its journey it touches and-or travels through 8 countries
- There are 200 major tributaries of which 17 are more than 1000 miles long and 10 of which discharge more water than the Mississippi
- Its vegetation represents about 1/3 of the remaining forest on earth and provides about 15% of the world's new oxygen
- Scientists have catalogued:
 - 2500 species of fish
 - 1500 species of birds
 - 1800 species of butterflies
 - 4 types of big cats
 - 200 species of mosquitos
 - 50,000 species of higher plants



The Wealth of the Rainforests

- The Amazon Rainforest covers over a billion acres, encompassing areas in Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia and the Eastern Andean region of Ecuador and Peru. If Amazonia were a country, it would be the ninth largest in the world.
- The Amazon Rainforest has been described as the "Lungs of our Planet" because it provides the essential environmental world service of continuously recycling carbon dioxide into oxygen. More than 20 percent of the world oxygen is produced in the Amazon Rainforest.
- More than half of the world's estimated 10 million species of plants, animals and insects live in the tropical rainforests. One-fifth of the world's fresh water is in the Amazon Basin.
- One hectare (2.47 acres) may contain over 750 types of trees and 1500 species of higher plants.

- At least 80% of the developed world's diet originated in the tropical rainforest. Its bountiful gifts to the world include fruits like avocados, coconuts, figs, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, bananas, guavas, pineapples, mangos and tomatoes; vegetables including corn, potatoes, rice, winter squash and yams; spices like black pepper, cayenne, chocolate, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, sugar cane, tumeric, coffee and vanilla and nuts including Brazil nuts and cashews.
- At least 3000 fruits are found in the rainforests; of these only 200 are now in use in the Western World. The Indians of the rainforest use over 2,000.
- Rainforest plants are rich in secondary metabolites, particularly alkaloids. Biochemists believe alkaloids protect plants from disease and insect attacks. Many alkaloids from higher plants have proven to be of medicinal value and benefit.
- Currently, 121 prescription drugs currently sold worldwide come from plant-derived sources. And while 25% of Western pharmaceuticals are derived from rainforest ingredients, less than 1% of these tropical trees and plants have been tested by scientists.
- The U.S. National Cancer Institute has identified 3000 plants that are active against cancer cells. 70% of these plants are found in the rainforest. Twenty-five percent of the active ingredients in today's cancer-fighting drugs come from organisms found only in the rainforest.
- Vincristine, extracted from the rainforest plant, is one of the world's most powerful anticancer drugs. It has dramatically increased the survival rate for acute childhood leukemia since its discovery.
- In 1983, there were no U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturers involved in research programs to discover new drugs or cures from plants. Today, over 100 pharmaceutical companies and several branches of the US government, including giants like Merck and The National Cancer Institute, are engaged in plant research projects for possible drugs and cures for viruses, infections, cancer, and even AIDS.



broad [bro:d] široký
grow [grəu] růst
closely [kləusli] blízko
tallest [to:li:t] nejvyšší
feet [fi:t] stopa (míra), 1 stopa = 30,5cm
covering [kavəriŋ] krytí
above [ə'baʊ] nad
upper [apə] horní
canopy [kænəpi] korunová klenba
lower [ləʊə] spodní
share [ʃeə] část
receive [ri'si:v] přijmout
less [les] méně
result [ri'zalt] výsledek
fern [fə:n] kapradina
requiring [ri'kwaɪəriŋ] požadovaný
grown [grəun] vzrostlý
possible [posəbl] možná
easily [i:zəli] snadno

however [hau'evə] nicméně
dense [dens] hustý
occur [ə'kə:] vyskytovat se
reache [ri:čiz] dosáhnout
swamp [swomp] močál, bažina
former [fo:mə] bývalý
largest [la:dʒist] největší
densest [denzist] nejhustší
discharge [disčə:dʒ] vypouštění
gallon [gælən] galon (míra), 1 galon = 4,5l
longest [lɒŋgɪst] nejdelší
during [dʒuəriŋ] během
mile [mail] míle (míra), 1 míle = 1 609m
tributary [tribjutəri] přítok
major [meidʒə] významější
represent [repri'zent] zastupovat
remaining [ri'meiniŋ] zbylý
provide [prə'vaɪd] poskytovat
catalogued [kætəlogd] zaznamenáno, poznáno