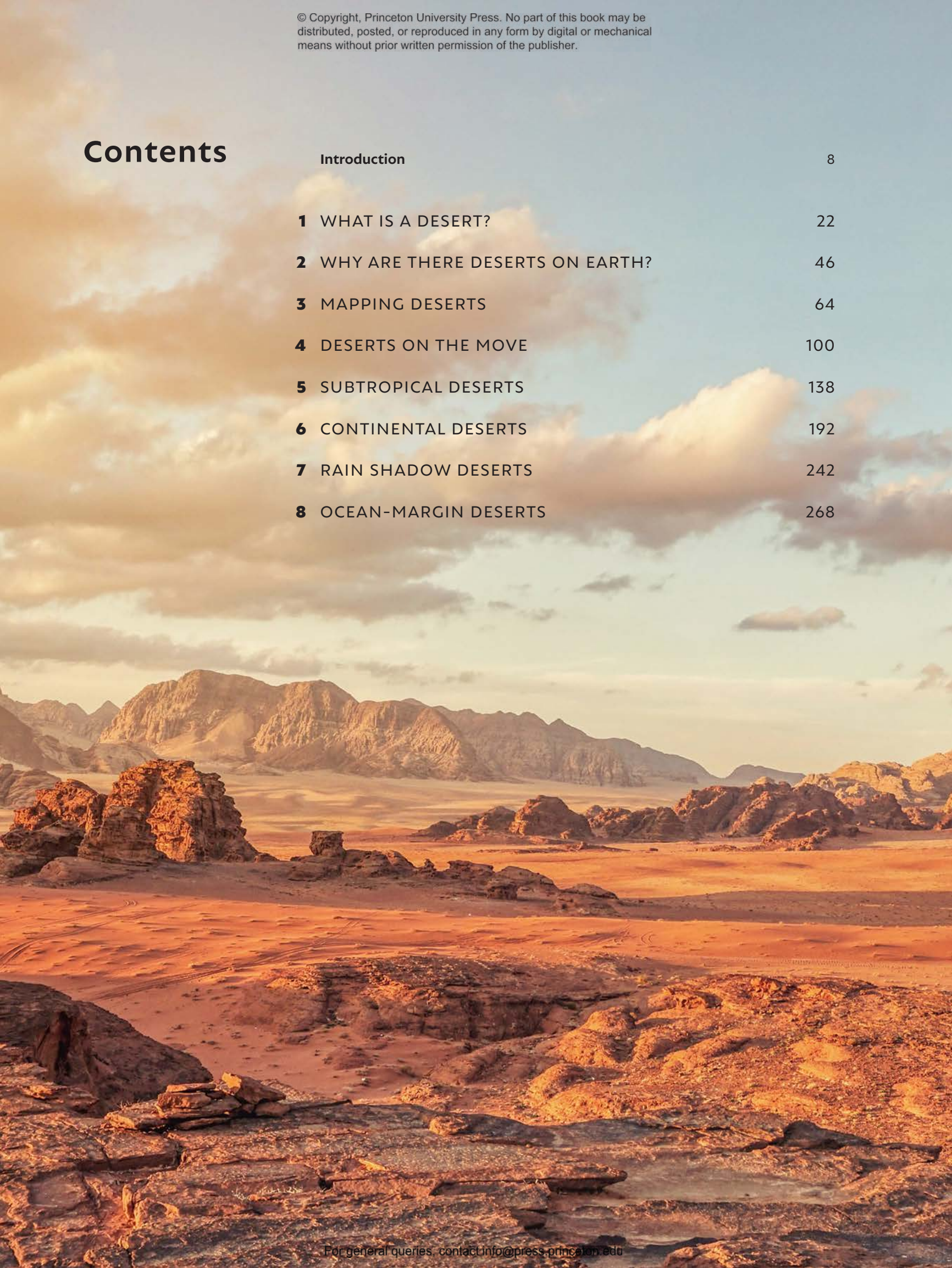


Contents

Introduction	8
1 WHAT IS A DESERT?	22
2 WHY ARE THERE DESERTS ON EARTH?	46
3 MAPPING DESERTS	64
4 DESERTS ON THE MOVE	100
5 SUBTROPICAL DESERTS	138
6 CONTINENTAL DESERTS	192
7 RAIN SHADOW DESERTS	242
8 OCEAN-MARGIN DESERTS	268



9	HUMAN INFLUENCE	302
10	GLOBAL WARMING AND DESERT FUTURES	356
	Appendices	384
	Glossary	386
	Resources	391
	Notes on Contributors	393
	Index	394
	Picture Credits	400



Fascinating succulents

The plant life found in the world's deserts includes a remarkable array of diverse species—including cacti, agaves, desert shrubs, and hardy grasses—that have evolved to flourish in extremely arid environments. These resilient plants often possess specialized adaptations, such as succulent foliage or extensive root systems.

▼ Desert icon

Standing tall amid Namibia's arid landscape, the iconic quiver tree is a good example of adaptation to the harsh desert environment.

The Succulent Karoo ecoregion, stretching from southwest Namibia down into South Africa, encompasses the arid region of Namaqualand, which is home to the world's most diverse desert flora. The distinctive characteristic of Namaqualand is the predominance of dwarf shrubs with succulent leaves. Typical species are members of the Aizoaceae family (the lithops and mesembs, or vygies), but *Crassula*, *Haworthia*, and other genera are also important. Some 1,700 species of leaf succulents grow in the Succulent Karoo, of which 700 are contracted, dwarf forms. Namaqualand has between four to six times the plant diversity of equivalent-sized areas found in other foggy, winter-rainfall deserts across the world, such as Mexico's northwestern Baja California, Chile's southern Atacama, and Morocco's southern coastline.

Lithops optica is one such succulent of the family Aizoaceae and these plants are often referred to as "living stones"; their scientific name is derived from the Greek *lithos*, meaning "stone," and *opsis*, meaning "appearance," due to their remarkable resemblance to the pebbles found throughout their natural environment. *L. optica* is endemic to the area around Lüderitz, in the southern Namib Desert, and found nowhere else on Earth. It thrives in its unique habitat, which primarily consists



PLANT POACHING

Plant poaching, driven by human greed and the desire to possess rare specimens, is becoming an increasingly alarming issue, and Namaqualand, with its rich biodiversity and endemic plants, has become a prime target. Operating under the guise of tourists, ruthless environmental criminals deplete the region's plant resources. The specimens they smuggle out of the region often perish during transportation, introduce plant pathogens, and disrupt the delicate ecological balance. Ultimately, poachers prioritize profit over environmental preservation, disregarding the well-being of the ecosystems they exploit.



of coastal plains with sandy terrain, and rainfall averaging between only 0.8-2 inches (20-50 mm) per year, with frequent fog. Among rocks and gravel, these plants can be challenging to detect, due to their exceptional camouflage. Their flowers open only in the late afternoon, closing again at dusk, and they can be pollinated by the bees, flies, wasps, gnats, and so on that are common in the area. *Lithops* are self-sterile, so cross-pollination is critical for survival.

Aloidendron dichotomum—previously *Aloe dichotoma*, and commonly known as the quiver tree—is a unique and iconic succulent plant found in Namaqualand and other arid regions of southern Africa. It possesses a distinctive appearance, featuring a thick trunk that branches out into multiple symmetrically oriented stems. Its branches are adorned with densely packed succulent leaves, creating a striking crownlike look. The quiver tree has evolved to thrive in harsh desert conditions, utilizing its succulent leaves to store water during prolonged droughts. Within the local ecosystem, where few other tree species exist, it serves a vital role by offering shelter to various desert-dwelling creatures. The San people have historically used different parts of the tree for practical purposes, notably hollowing out its branches to fashion quivers (arrow holders) for hunting—hence its common name. Today, the quiver tree is a symbol of strength and beauty in the arid landscapes of southern Africa.

▲ Camouflaged *Lithops*

(top) A *Lithops* species consists of a two-lobed fused and thickened pair of opposite leaves with a very smooth texture and a very short stem that is not visible.
(bottom) Succulent *Lithops* species are well adapted to survive in the desert and also difficult to spot by herbivores because they are camouflaged to resemble the pebbles of the environment.

Beyond Earth: deserts of the universe

If moisture deficits define aridity (on Earth), then the absence of moisture on other terrestrial bodies in our solar system suggests that desertlike conditions could, even should, be present in their landscapes. And to some degree this is the case, though marked differences compared to Earth in surface temperatures, and in atmospheric densities and compositions, make direct comparisons with our deserts—and expectations of what features might be found, or formative processes experienced—rather challenging.

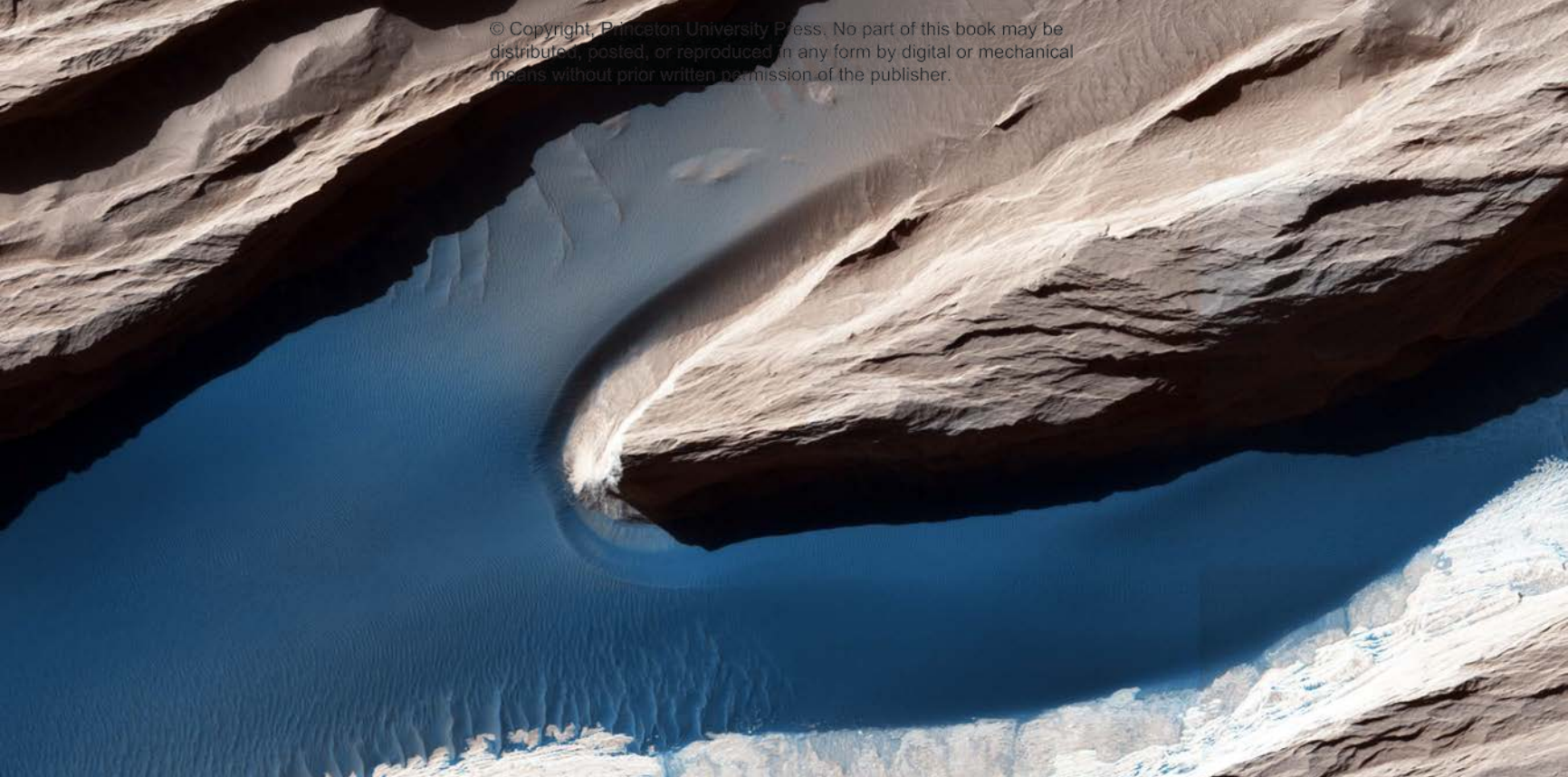
When the first astronaut set foot on our Moon in 1969, his footfall generated puffs of dust that indicated a surface that was not simply solid, but mantled by soft, mobile sediment. The growth of extraterrestrial exploration (via multiyear, even multidecadal, unmanned spacecraft missions that have reached, orbited, observed, and returned data from planetary bodies to Earth) is providing a wealth of data on other landscapes in our solar system. Dunes have been identified on three other planets (Mars, Venus, and, more recently, Pluto) and on one of Saturn's moons, Titan, while massive dust storms have been observed across the surface of Mars and Titan. Even alluvial fans are observed on Mars—evidence, along with possible channel systems, of the presence of water in the past. Remotely controlled rover vehicles have also been landed on the surfaces of both the Moon and Mars and successfully utilized in exploration, providing images akin to those we have of Earth's deserts, as well as carrying out simple experiments on the sediments and features they have encountered.

Planets and moons have to have atmospheres in order for sediment-moving winds to blow from high-pressure to low-pressure areas. For there to be sediment to move in the first place requires rock breakdown via weathering, which in turn calls for significant temperature differences or some form of salt crystallization to force

► **Red storm**

In June 2018, a dust storm developed on Mars that eventually engulfed the planet's entire surface. NASA's Curiosity Rover vehicle, which has operated continuously in Mars' Gale Crater since August 2012, recorded the early stages of the storm that lasted over three days.





particles apart. Planetary scientists tend therefore to consider “aridity” in the sense we understand it with reference to Earth to best apply to other bodies that first have a solid surface (thereby excluding gas bodies such as Jupiter) and second have atmospheres containing condensable gases (such as methane on Titan).

Mars, the cold red planet, 50 million miles (80 million km) farther away from the Sun than Earth, has experienced significant climate changes, including stages when liquid water was present—which may explain the presence of channel-like landforms in some regions. Today its thin carbon dioxide (CO₂)-dominated atmosphere is conducive to the movement of sediment by wind, the most prevalent environmental process affecting its surface. There are many spectacular dune fields, and other areas showing the efficacy of wind erosion, where moving dust and sand have sculpted large fluted hills and faceted the surfaces of exposed pebbles and rocks into ventifact forms.

Though a moon of Saturn, Titan is larger than the planet Mercury. It has a dense, extremely cold (average temperature -292 °F/ -180 °C) atmosphere of methane. This can condense into a liquid and fall as rain, explaining the occurrence of fluvial-like landforms and lakes on the moon’s surface. Strong winds also allow aeolian processes to operate, with multiple fly-pasts by the Saturn-exploring NASA *Cassini* spacecraft from 2004 to 2017 revealing fields of equatorial linear sand dunes comparable in morphology to those of the deserts of southern Africa and Australia.

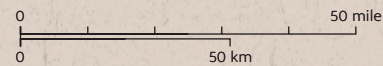
The most recent discovery of arid landscape features has been on the surface of small, distant Pluto, which, depending on orbital position, is between 2.66 and 4.67 billion miles (4.28-7.5 billion km) from Earth, and only a sixth its diameter. NASA’s New Horizons mission flew by Pluto in 2015, producing imagery that shows its thin, nitrogen-dominated atmosphere possesses winds that have formed the distinctive Sputnik Planitia dune field—made not of sand but of frozen methane particles deposited on the surface of one of the planet’s extensive ice plains.

▲ **Martian winds**

Wind is one of the most active forces shaping Mars’ surface in today’s climate. Wind-carved features such as these, called “yardangs,” are common on the Red Planet. Wind has also deposited fine sand on the floor of shallow channels between the yardangs. On the sand, the wind forms ripples and small dunes. In Mars’ thin atmosphere, light is not scattered much, so the shadows cast by the yardangs are sharp and dark.

PLANETARY DUNES

Dunes on other planets come in all sorts of patterns, forms, and materials. Many forms are similar to dunes on Earth: for example, in the Belet dune field on the equator of Saturn's moon Titan, linear dunes extend east–west over tens of miles, spaced about 1.2 miles (2 km) apart, captured here in a radar image from the *Cassini* spacecraft. On Mars, we have the benefit of dune images not only from space but captured on the surface by the Curiosity Rover. For example, “barchanlike” dunes have been recorded in high resolution from NASA's *Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter*, in this example (farthest right) in 2015, showing ripples on the dune's upwind side as the dune migrates over a fractured rocky surface (from the top-right corner of the image toward the bottom left). The amazing Curiosity image of another barchan form, the so-called Namib dune in the Bagnold dune field (named in honor of one of Earth's most spectacular dune fields and, in turn, one of dune science's earliest proponents, Ralph Bagnold), shows the downwind slip face of the dune, again in 2015. This is about 13 feet (4 m) high, and displays the typical patterns of sediment avalanches that form as a dune moves forward. Repeat analyses suggest that this dune is migrating at a rate of about 3 feet (1 m) per Earth year. The upwind, or lee, sides of the dunes are covered in ripples, shown in close up in another Curiosity image mosaic, from the Bagnold dune field. Elsewhere on Mars, dunes that do not have an earthly analogue are found.



▲ Titan dunes

The Belet dune field on Titan.

▶ Barchan

A classic barchan dune on Mars.

▼ Martian dune

Curiosity Rover image of the slip face of the “Namib dune” on Mars.







2

Why are there deserts on Earth?

What causes dryness, and where?

It is possible to break down the atmospheric and environmental factors that cause the moisture deficits around the globe into four broad influences: atmospheric stability; distance from the ocean (or “continentality”); topographic (“rain shadow”) effects; and the influence of cold ocean currents on neighboring coastal areas.

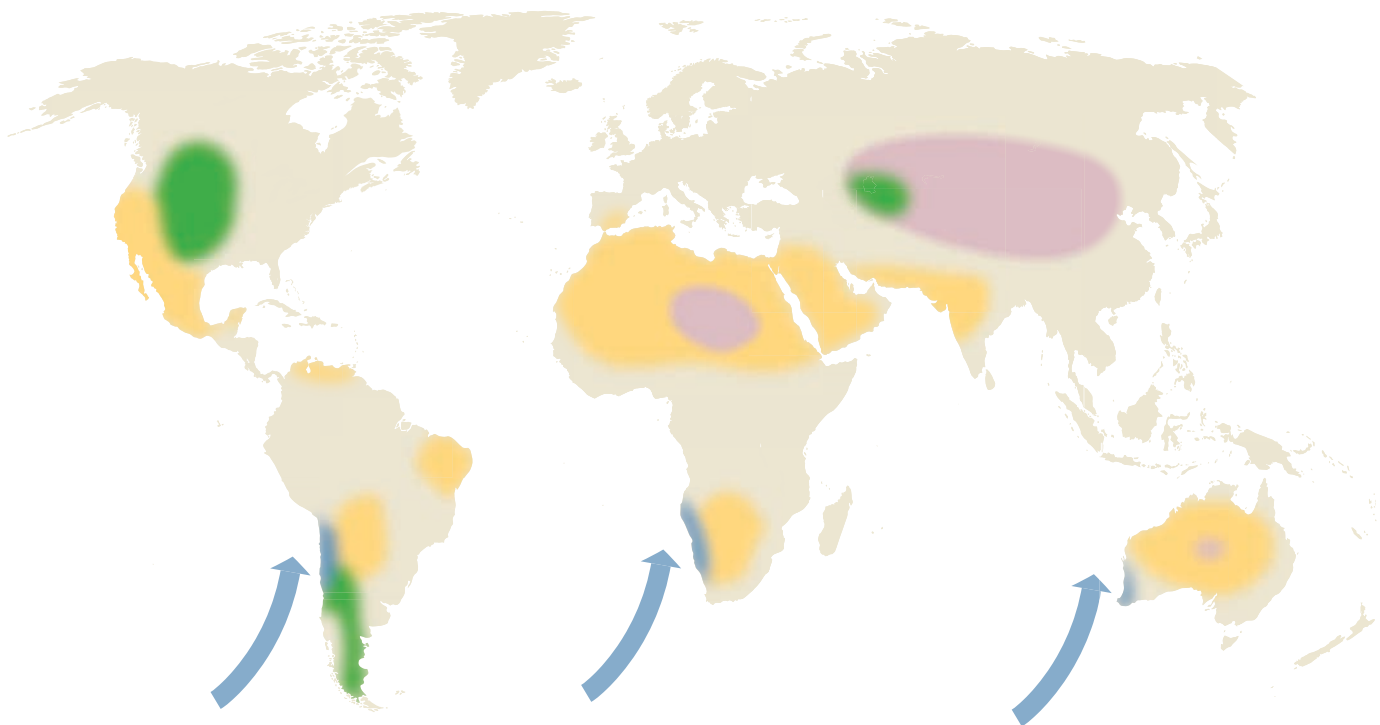
▼ Dryness drivers

The generalized main causes of aridity in the world's desert and dryland areas.

Every desert and dryland area on Earth is caused by at least one of these factors. The great belts of subtropical deserts, including the Sahara, Arabian, and Thar Deserts of the northern hemisphere, and the Kalahari and Australian Deserts of the southern, result from atmospheric stability that limits rainfall. The extensive deserts of central Asia and China are largely caused by their great distance from the oceans. Desert areas also occur on the lee (downwind) side of mountain barriers, creating dynamic deserts and drylands, particularly in North and South America. Finally, on a much smaller scale than any other mechanism, cold ocean currents cause dryness on the western Atlantic coast of southern Africa, parts of the Pacific coastlines of South and North America, and, to a lesser extent, the west coast of Australia. While the areas affected by this final influence are relatively small, the processes involved have contributed to the existence of two of the driest deserts on Earth: the Namib and Atacama.

Each of these mechanisms results in limited moisture in the atmosphere over the land, and therefore to little precipitation. To compound matters, some individual desert areas are influenced by more than one of these factors. For example, low precipitation in the heart of Australia is affected not only by its subtropical location,

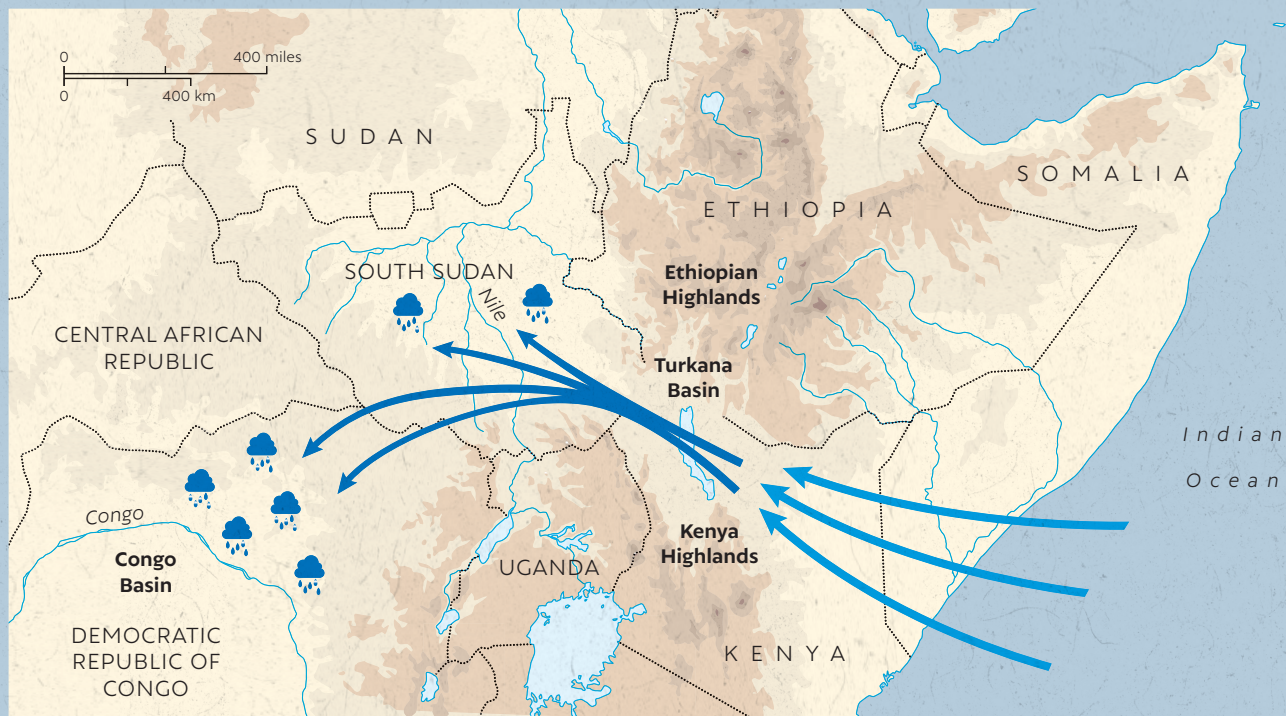
- Subtropical
- Continental
- Rain shadow
- Ocean current



RIVER IN THE SKY

Scientists have often wondered why tropical East Africa, spanning South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya, is dryland—its latitude means it ought to be a wetter region, like the Congo Basin to the west. Research in 2023 by Callum Munday and colleagues has shown that the answer seems to lie in the effect of the east–west Turkana Basin, a gap between the

Ethiopian and Kenya Highlands created by faulting in the East African Rift. This channels low-level winds from the Indian Ocean as the “Turkana Jet,” carrying water vapor away from eastern Africa toward the Congo, drying the former and making the latter even rainier than it would otherwise be.



but by distance from the ocean, while the eastern Australian interior is also impacted by the north–south Great Dividing Range inhibiting rain-bearing easterly trade winds reaching farther inland. Taken together, almost 75 percent of Australia is consequently either arid or semiarid.

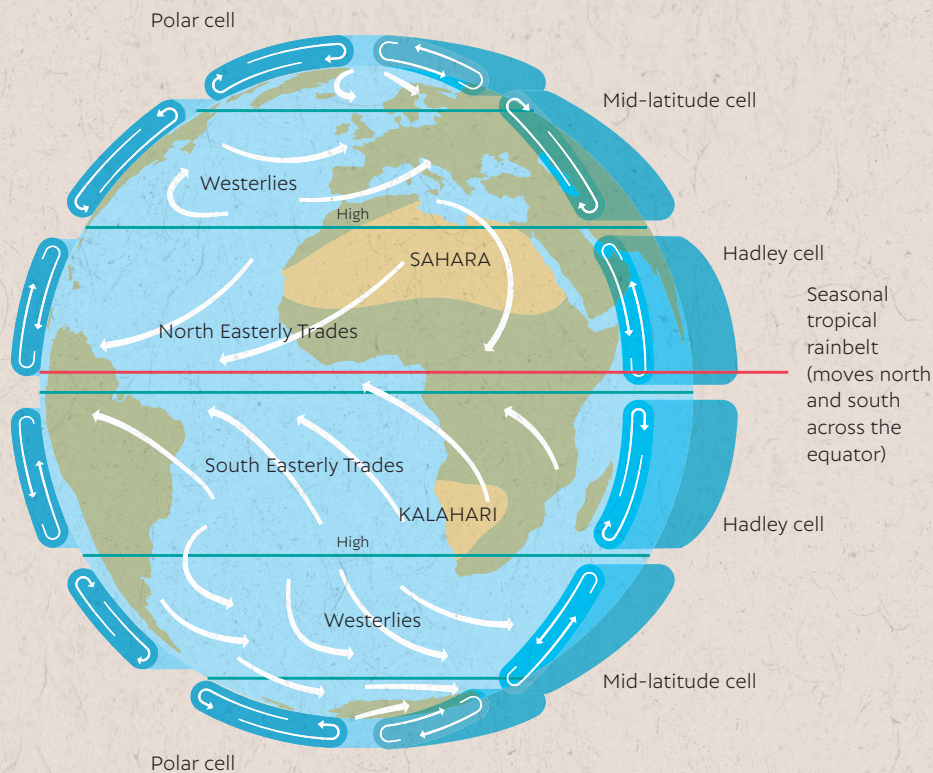
Land masses are not equally distributed over the Earth’s surface, with 68 percent found in the northern hemisphere. When combined with the occurrence of the atmospheric and environmental factors that cause deserts and drylands, the size of landmasses as well as their latitudinal distributions result in each of Africa and Asia possessing over 30 percent of global arid lands, with 12 percent in North America, around 5 percent in southern Europe, just 9 percent in South America, and 11 percent of the global total in Australia.

Atmospheric stability: subtropical deserts and savannas

The subtropics, centered on latitudes 30° North and 30° South, are the location of great atmospheric belts of moisture-limited stable air. Atmospheric stability tends to bring dryness, creating the major desert and dryland zones of Afro-Asia that include the Sahara, Arabian, Lut, and Thar Deserts; the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts of North America; and the large, dry expanses of the Kalahari and Australia in the southern hemisphere.

Dry descent

Many subtropical deserts and drylands, such as the Sahara and Kalahari in Africa, sit under the dry descending air of the atmospheric Hadley cells. The diagram below shows the general position of the Earth's circulation cells and the associated surface winds.



These stable air masses represent the descending limbs of large circulation cells that originate in the wet tropics (the Hadley cell) and the mid-latitudes. Descending air is generally moisture-depleted, creating stable conditions in the lower atmosphere, and surface trade winds that blow out of the driest areas, further limiting rainfall incursion and contributing to evaporative loss. The resulting dry conditions tend to comprise central arid regions, with surrounding semiarid and dry-subhumid areas that are affected seasonally by elements of the monsoon rains of the tropics or the westerly depressions of the mid-latitudes.

Given their subtropical location, many of these deserts and drylands are hot all year round (mean temperatures of the warmest months exceeding 86 °F [30 °C]), such as in the central Sahara and Arabia, or they have hot summers and mild winters (mean

▼ **Subtropical Arabia**

The desert dunes of the Arabian Peninsula, here in the United Arab Emirates, are influenced by the aridity caused by dry descending subtropical air.



► **Cerrado**

Located between the Amazon Basin and Pantanal wetlands, this extensive savanna area covers over 75 million square miles (2 million sq km) of Brazil.

▼ **Desert dates**

The oasis at Tafilalet, Morocco, sits on the northern margin of the subtropical Sahara Desert.

coolest month temperatures in the 50–85 °F [10–30 °C] range), for example in the southern Sahara, the Kalahari, and the deserts of Mexico. These expansive deserts include depositional sedimentary basins that have some of the most extensive areas of sand dunes on Earth.

The aridity gradient of subtropical drylands results in a transition from almost vegetation-free conditions to surrounding better-vegetated areas, sometimes called semideserts. These have a distinct climatic seasonality, expressed not so much in temperature variations as in the distinct timing of rainfall. On the equatorial side of subtropical drylands, vegetated areas comprise savanna grasslands and dry tropical woodlands, the result of a commonly short, hot, summer rainy season and dry winter months, which aggregate to give a net mean annual moisture deficit.

Some subtropical savanna areas occur without an associated desert core—notably the Cerrado (Portuguese for “savanna”) and neighboring Caatinga (dry, thorny shrubland) regions of central-eastern Brazil. Other subtropical drylands also have, on their temperate (mid-latitude-facing) margins, conditions with a reverse seasonality of wet winter months and hot, dry summers. These include so-called Mediterranean climates, among which are the semiarid to dry-subhumid drylands of the extreme north of Africa, the Levant, and southern Europe, as well as occurring in southeastern and southwestern Australia and South Africa’s Cape region.





Deserts and drylands of the continental interiors

Continentality, or distance from the ocean, is an important contributor to moisture deficits in the interior of the largest land masses. Continentality is responsible for the great desert areas of central Asia centered on latitude 45° North, and the dry regions of central North America, as well as acting as an additional contributor to aridity in the heart of the Sahara and Australia.

▼ **Gobi Bactrian**

This camel species native to the Gobi Desert, Mongolia, is well adapted to the continental desert climate.

Rain-bearing winds, such as the tropical monsoons and temperate-region westerly depressions, derive most of their moisture from the oceans. Precipitation on land generally therefore decreases in an inland direction from the coast.

Asia

The belt of mid- and higher-latitude drylands that stretches from the Caspian Sea in Turkmenistan in the east, to Mongolia and China in the west, is a function of continentality, with the Dzoosotoyn (Gurbantünggüt) Desert, in the China-Kazakhstan borderlands, up to 1,644 miles (2,645 km) from the nearest ocean, being the most continental place on Earth. Other major deserts of continental Asia include the Gobi (“waterless place”) in Mongolia and China, the Taklamakan Desert of China, and the Karakum Desert of Turkmenistan. The Taklamakan and Gobi Deserts also sit at relatively high altitudes, ranging 2,900–5,000 feet (900–1,500 m) above sea level, which, when combined with distance from the moderating effects of the ocean,





leads to seasonal temperature extremes. Mean monthly summer temperatures can readily exceed 86 °F (30 °C) in some places, while mean monthly winter temperatures can fail to reach 32 °F (0 °C). Plants and animals therefore have to display distinct adaptations to survive such extremes.

North America

Much of the western half of the North American interior is also dry due to distance from the ocean, the greatest distance being over 1,025 miles (1,650 km) near Kyle in South Dakota. The Great Plains grassland prairies of the United States and Canada are effectively drought-prone semiarid regions that also experience seasonal extremes of heat and cold: the northernmost latitude (up to around 53° North) of the Canadian Prairies makes them among the most northerly and coldest drylands on Earth. While the prairies are, in contrast to true deserts, agriculturally productive today, this is generally only achieved by using artificial means of irrigation on soils with poor moisture retention, with much of the region receiving less than 16 inches (400 mm) of mean annual rainfall. Natural grasslands and their extensive fauna have been dramatically altered over the past 200 years by human interventions—including arable cultivation and extensive stock rearing—so are now among the least “natural” drylands on Earth.

A notable feature of some Asian and North American continental deserts and drylands is that the very low temperatures result in snow cover being a major characteristic of long winter months.

▲ **Canadian Prairies**
Continentality and a higher latitude bring cold winter conditions to the plains of Saskatchewan.

Rain shadow deserts

Mountain ranges, especially those parallel to ocean margins, can block the passage of rain-bearing winds and cause rainfall on windward slopes, resulting in drier conditions on their lee (downwind) sides.

Mountain-building, or orogeny, has been particularly important for the development of the deserts and drylands of the western United States and throughout Asia. Mountains also contribute to dryness in parts of the eastern and western Sahara, Australia, and South America.

North and South America

In North America, mountain ranges that stretch from northern Mexico through California to southern Oregon, including the Sierra Madre, Sierra Nevada, and Cascade Range, provide an effective trap for moisture emanating from the eastern Pacific Ocean. This creates the Great Basin and Mojave Deserts in their lee, as well as contributing to the aridity of the subtropical Chihuahuan Desert. Farther east, the extensive Rocky Mountains, extending from Canada to New Mexico, cast a rain shadow on the interior plains and prairies. The geological faulting and rifting that created the region's mountains has formed a series of parallel ridges and troughs with abrupt altitude changes, giving rise to the name Basin and Range Province for the region as a whole.



The uplift of mountain-building has also meant that rivers such as the Colorado have cut deep canyons into the desert landscape. The 5,250 feet (1,600 m) mean elevation Colorado Plateau is also dryland affected by rain shadow factors from the mountains to the west. In South America, the largely semiarid Patagonian and Monte Deserts of Argentina similarly lie in the rain shadow of the Andes Mountains.

Asia

Several desert and dryland areas of Asia result from, or are enhanced by, rain shadow effects. East of the Caspian Sea, for example, the Caucasus Mountains and the Hindu Kush contribute to aridity in the Karakum and Kyzylkum Deserts, while the cold winter semiarid steppe lands of eastern Turkey and Syria are at least in part shadowed by the Taurus and Pontic Mountains. Iran's Lut Desert, which experiences some of the hottest summer temperatures on Earth, is located in an interior mountain-rimmed basin.

Typical landforms

Mountains often have a direct effect on the landforms of their shadow deserts, too. Mountain-sourced rivers, often with a spring peak flow from snow melt, and which may have been more active during past wetter climate conditions, have deposited sediments that form desert salt lakes or provide the material for sand dune formation. Another characteristic landform of many dynamic deserts, notably in North America and Iran, are extensive and distinctive alluvial fans that cover desert-facing mountain slopes.

▶ **Great Sand Dunes**

In Colorado, pockets of dunes have formed where rain shadow conditions and sediments from rivers provide the setting for dunes to develop in the lee of mountains.

▼ **Landlocked desert**

The Hindu Kush mountains provide a significant obstacle for rainfall penetration into the interior drylands of Tajikistan and Afghanistan.



Ocean-margin deserts

Narrow coastal deserts occur on the west coast of several landmasses, due to the impact of cold ocean water on the ability of rain clouds to form. The Namib and Atacama Deserts (see the map opposite) are among the driest places and oldest deserts on Earth.

▼ **Atacama**

Cold fogs called the Camanchaca can bring moisture from the cold ocean to the neighboring hyperarid desert landscape.

Where cold Southern (Antarctic) Ocean water currents upwell and reach the ocean surface in the subtropics in latitudes 15–34° South, they have the effect of cooling the lower atmosphere, enhancing the aridifying effects of descending stable subtropical air. The cold water both limits the ability of rain clouds to form over the ocean through convection, and creates fog through condensation as cold air has a lower capacity than warm air to store water vapor. These conditions then affect neighboring coastal areas, creating narrow deserts up to 1,200 miles (2,000 km) long and extending inland for up to 100 miles (160 km). The rotation of the Earth means that currents tend to flow along the west coast of landmasses.

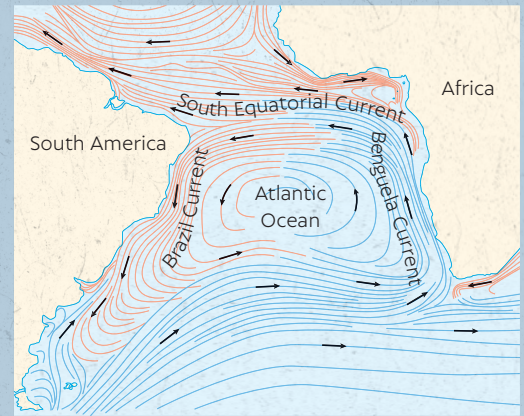
While the Namib (and its northern extensions) and Atacama Deserts are the most distinctive manifestation of the aridifying effects of cold southern-hemisphere ocean currents, the same processes occur to a lesser degree on the west coast of Australia. In the northern hemisphere, cold currents originating in the Arctic Ocean have a similar effect on the coast of the United States and Baja California in Mexico, enhancing dryness in the Sonoran Desert, as well as in the Canary Islands off the west coast of Africa's Sahara Desert.

In the most coastal parts of these deserts, fog can be the dominant source of moisture, amounting to only a few millimeters of precipitation each year. The Namib and Atacama are renowned for the specialist animal and plant adaptations to this unusual dominant moisture source. While some parts of these deserts are represented by rocky landscapes, the coastal locations can result in wave action bringing significant quantities of sediment to the dry coastline. Strong onshore winds transport this material inland, building in the Namib a distinctive “sand sea” that possesses some of the biggest dunes on Earth, up to 1,000 feet (300 m) high.



GLOBAL MAP OF COLD CURRENTS AND ASSOCIATED DESERTS

Cold-water currents contribute to aridity in west-coast deserts—notably the Namib, Atacama, and Sonoran Deserts, but also in western Australia and the Canary Islands off the Saharan coast. The inset shows how the Benguela Current, which cools the southern African west coast, forms part of a more extensive ocean-water circulation system called the South Atlantic Gyre. Warm surface water is shown in orange; cold surface water is blue.



Is Antarctica a desert?

As well as being extremely cold and windy, Antarctica receives the least precipitation of all the Earth's continents—conditions that together favor aridity. Extremely cold air simply cannot transfer sufficient water from surrounding oceans to generate much precipitation: what small amounts occur are almost exclusively in the form of snow. Technically, precipitation levels are well within the values that are usually considered to designate desert conditions. But is Antarctica really a desert?

McMurdo Station, a research facility on the coastal tip of Antarctica's Ross Island, receives on average 7.9 inches (200 mm) of precipitation a year. Another, the Amundsen–Scott South Pole Station—more than 740 miles (1,200 km) from the landmass margin—has recorded on average 2 inches (50 mm) of precipitation per year. At Vostok Station, which is located at the southern geomagnetic pole, less than 0.2 inches (5 mm) of annual precipitation is recorded, making it one of the very driest (and, with a mean temperature of -67°F [-55°C], coldest!) places on Earth.

Antarctica can also be very windy, and wind provides an important mechanism for the movement of sediment and loose material in dry environments that lack protective vegetation. The British Antarctic Survey runs six research stations on the continent. They report generally moderate wind-speed conditions year-round, with a mean speed of 6 meters (19.7 ft) per second (m/s), which is around the threshold speed at which loose particles start to be blown around. Also notable is that over 40 days a year are reported to experience gales, when wind speeds exceed 30 m/s (98 ft/s), and even hurricane-force gusts (over 55 m/s [180 ft/s]). One factor that makes Antarctica generally windy is its high plateau nature. Cold air flows off this surface toward lower coastal areas, in what are called katabatic winds, which can make the margins of the continent particularly windy places.

On precipitation criteria alone, Antarctica could therefore be regarded as a desert, while its windiness also favors some of the common attributes of desert environments. Why is it not therefore formally recognized as a desert by organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme?

To understand why, it is necessary to appreciate the scientific evolution of desert research during the twentieth century.

Land classifications

Following World War II, global concern rose regarding support for human populations living in drought-prone and dryland conditions. As a result, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commenced a program concerning global food production, out of which grew analyses of aridity and the classification of land areas. The early work of the American geographer Peveril Meigs was especially influential in this regard, and remains so today. In 1953 his aridity scheme, produced for UNESCO, classified deserts and drylands based not only on their effective precipitation amounts, but on temperatures being *sufficient for crop growth*. Thus Antarctica was, and continues to be, excluded from UN designations of desert areas.

That most of Antarctica is ice-covered—only 0.4 percent is not—also favors its exclusion from areas regarded as deserts, as most of its land surface is not exposed to the elements and therefore does not experience the direct impacts of atmospheric conditions and associated environmental processes. Contrastingly, seasonally very cold, and winter-snow covered, continental dry regions, such as the Gobi of Mongolia, are recognized as deserts because summer months are snow-free and warm enough for crop growth.

POLAR DESERT?

Data from the few weather stations in Antarctica show that this continent is, in fact, the Earth's driest.



▼ **Dry valley dunes**

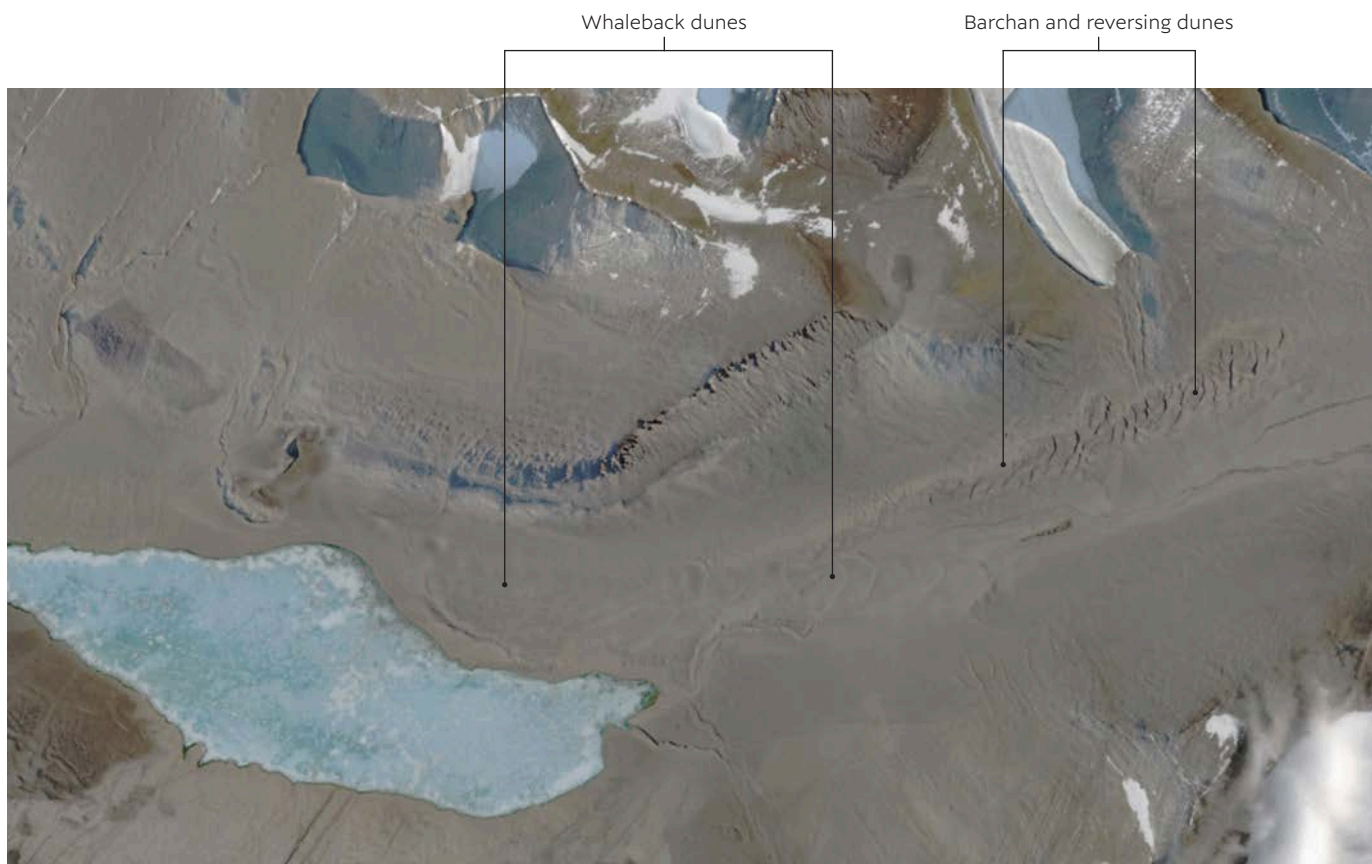
Dry valley dunes provide an unusual landscape feature in a unique ice-free part of Antarctica.

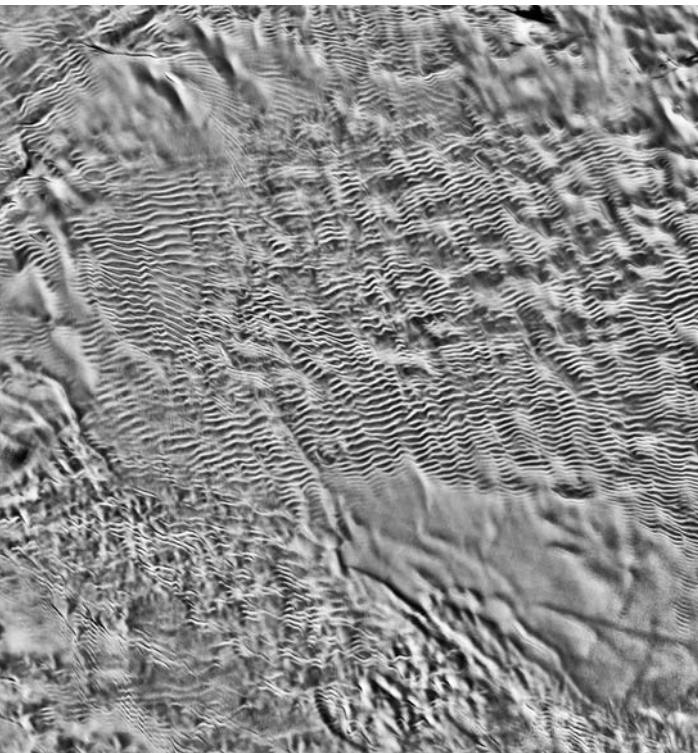
The dunes of Antarctica

Antarctica is not a place where you would generally expect to find sand dunes, but there are circumstances on the continent where environmental conditions align to make their formation possible. As conditions of very low temperatures, aridity, and windiness are common on other planetary bodies, where unmanned exploration has led to the identification of extensive dune fields, the Antarctic dunes may be important analogs for their interpretation.

The Victoria Valley of Ross Island is one of a series of “dry valleys” near the Antarctic coast that are glacier-free in their lower reaches. Fine sand-sized sediment on the valley floor has accumulated in a glacial-outwash sand sheet, from material eroded by the Victoria Glacier and sourced from frost-weathered rocks exposed in the steep valley sides. The valley’s aridity and its windiness, assisted by the funnelling effect of the valley itself, provide unique local conditions that have allowed aeolian sand dunes to form in this ice-free part of the continent. Initially scientifically investigated in the 1960s, the first data on these dunes appeared in the 1970s, including a detailed field analysis in 1974, as interest grew in their potential as analogs for Martian dunes. Subsequent research has applied advanced methods such as ground penetrating radar (GPR), to understand the dunes’ internal structures and luminescence dating, which measures when sand grains became buried and therefore when they were deposited or ceased to be moved by the wind, allowing their age and rate of movement to be established.

The main dune field occurs in a belt that is just 2.2 miles (3.5 km) long and 0.6 miles (1 km) wide. Dunes are formed of sand blown westward in “summer” months from the sand sheet, and are mostly barchan dune forms, mobile features with distinct slip faces on their downwind edges. Northwesternly katabatic winds, however, cause





some seasonal reversal in movement direction so that some of the features may be what are known as reversing dunes. Individual dunes are up to around 1,950 feet (600 m) from tip to tip and can be over 30 feet (10 m) high. Close to the sand sheet, another dune patch comprises features that are formed of coarser sand and have no slip faces and a generally rounded profile. These so-called “whaleback dunes” also have an active surface layer including a capping of gritty sediments, while their interiors are reported to be largely frozen.

GPR surveys of the barchan and reversing dunes have also revealed dune interiors that include distinct frozen snow layers within the stratified sand. Samples collected for luminescence dating show that the oldest dune sediments were deposited around 1,300 years ago. The dunes remained stable until around 300 years ago, when circulation strengthened; movement today, at a rate of around 5 feet (1.5 m) per year, may now be heightened in association with temperature rises due to anthropogenic global warming.

Satellite imagery has also revealed extensive dunelike patterns over large swathes of Antarctica’s interior plateau. These are snow forms upon the ice sheet surface, up to 26 feet (8 m) high, with wavelengths that can be as long as 3.7 miles (6 km). Relative to sand dunes, these generate low, undulating surfaces, but they undoubtedly owe their existence to the transportation of dry snow and ice particles by strong katabatic winds.

Whether these features and the mobile dunes of the dry valleys are sufficient evidence to warrant Antarctica being regarded as a true desert landscape is not clear; however, it is certainly one of the largest dry regions on Earth, and it possesses marked evidence of the wind being an important environmental agency in shaping the surface of its landscape.

► **Snow dunes**

High on Antarctica’s bleak interior, satellite images have revealed fields of dunelike features formed from snow.

▲ **Polar sand dunes**

The dry valley dunes in Antarctica are formed of more usual material: sands washed out from under the ice sheet.



3

Mapping deserts

Early maps

Mapping of deserts has occurred since prehistoric times, witnessed in rock art from the Sahara and Arabia. In this section we explore the history of desert mapping, from prehistory to the latest technological developments. The following pages draw extensively, but not exclusively, on the Sahara Desert and surrounding regions, where many mapping developments have played out and can be well illustrated.

The world's earliest maplike drawings come in fact from drylands. In the deserts of Saudi Arabia and Jordan there are remarkable 9,000-year-old plan-view rock etchings of gigantic stone structures known as kites, used to aid hunting of wild animals. Amazingly, the remains of these structures still exist today (see pages 188-189). Their makers had the uncanny ability to depict them accurately in their stone-engraved plans, despite not being able to see the kites from above. There is then little evidence of further developments in mapping from anywhere until about

- **Early surveyors**
A painting showing Egyptian surveyors using a knotted rope to measure property dimensions.



2,600 years ago, with conception of the first map of the world, the *Imago Mundi*. This is a clay tablet centered on ancient Babylon and surrounding desert regions in present-day Iraq, but it also depicts the rest of the known world of its maker, albeit in a stylized and schematic manner.

Early Egyptian art exhibits many aspects of mapping, at a similar time to the *Imago Mundi*. For example, the lid of a 2,400-year-old stone sarcophagus (coffin) bears a circular depiction of Egypt and the surrounding regions. An inner circle shows numerous standards associated with the ancient territorial divisions of Egypt, and an outer ring depicts its neighboring peoples. The goddesses of east and west are shown on the left and right of the outer ring respectively, thus allowing orientation of the inscription. By 1,150 years ago, Egyptian cartography had developed considerably, as evidenced by the Turin Papyrus, a map showing the location of a quarry deep in the desert that was to be reopened in order to acquire stone to build statues for the pharaoh Ramesses IV. This map is particularly important as it contains the earliest surviving depiction of topography.





Though the Turin Papyrus has no scale, it is clear that the Egyptians could measure distance accurately, as evidenced by archaeological finds of a surveying instrument known as a merchet, as well as sticks and ropes. The Egyptians also used a unit of measurement known as a cubit, derived from the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. Because a few plans of buildings have survived, we know that the cubit, and the instruments developed to measure it, were used to survey and map urban areas. Pictures of surveyors measuring fields have also been discovered, indicating that they were used to make larger-scale maps showing land ownership too. Maps were also perhaps used to show trade routes across the Sahara. We know that the latter existed in Egyptian times and their users would have benefited considerably from the knowledge used to prepare them. For example, there is a line



of archaeological sites known as the Abu Ballas Trail that stretches some 250 miles (400 km) from Dakhla Oasis to the Gilf Kebir in the central Sahara. The site of Abu Ballas itself, which means “Father of Jars,” is a large pottery depot—one of many used to store water for the people and donkeys that used the trail. The first map to include geographical details of the Sahara was made by the Egyptian Claudius Ptolemy. Born around 100 CE, Ptolemy lived on the coast at Alexandria, where he had access to what was at the time the world’s greatest library. He was an expert in mathematics, astronomy, astrology, geography, and music, and wrote numerous books on these subjects, including what is known as the *Geographia*. The *Geographia* explained how to draw maps using geographical coordinates based on a map projection. It then described how to use astronomical data to establish accurate locations, but also how to use less-precise travelers’ reports when these were not available. Ptolemy collated vast amounts of geographical information using these methods and employed it to construct a ground-breaking map of the known world at the time. Though the map did not have the specific aim of mapping deserts, it did so where they were known. However, even though Ptolemy lived on the edge of the Sahara, the map shows less detail here than it does elsewhere, suggesting a paucity of travelers’ reports from such a harsh environment.

Furthermore, we now know that Ptolemy’s world map contained many errors for the Sahara region, which, despite its proximity to Egypt, is not even portrayed as a desert. Instead, it incorrectly shows the north-central Sahara as being drained from east to west by a large river system feeding numerous lakes along the way and eventually debouching into the Atlantic Ocean. In contrast, the mapping of the River Nile has stood the test of time, being relatively accurate—presumably because it had been an important trade route for thousands of years. The lesson to be learned from this map is that relying solely on a small number of travelers’ reports, as Ptolemy appears to have done for the Sahara, can lead to erroneous results.

◀ Ptolemy world map

Produced in the Greco-Roman era, this map was later reproduced in an embellished form by Lord Nicolas the German in 1482. It shows a largely empty Sahara in its lower left-hand quadrant.

Mapping from exploration

The mapping techniques laid down by Ptolemy appear to have been lost during the Dark Ages that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire, but a renaissance in desert mapping seems to have begun in the twelfth century CE.

No maps of the Sahara that we have evidence of today appear to have been produced for around a thousand years after Ptolemy's time. A renaissance in Saharan mapping started with Muhammad al-Idrisi (1100–65), who spent his early life travelling in North Africa, then moved to Europe, where he continued his travels while also embarking on a career in geography and cartography. He is best known for the *Tabula Rogeriana*, a map of the known world that included a remarkable amount of detail on the location of settlements, mountain ranges, and rivers. For the Sahara, the map was a significant development. It contains much more detail than Ptolemy's map, showing numerous previously unrecorded settlements. However, there is one obvious similarity—it indicates the erroneous east-west river crossing the Sahara that Ptolemy's map introduced.



Index

A

Aboriginal Australians 308
 spinifex resin 174
Abu Ballas Trail 69
Acacia 350, 351
 A. mellifera 319
adaptation, desert 11
 adaptation to the cold 232–41
 animal and plant adaptation
 36–7, 38–9, 39, 176–83, 232–5, 237
 coping with changing deserts
 376–83
 human adaptation to cold 238–41
Adjumani 325
Afar Depression 26, 210
Afghan-Tajik Depression 229
Afghanistan, dryness in 57, 57
Africa
 African rainbelt 124, 124, 125
 coastal deserts of southwestern
 Africa 274–7
 dust-source regions 86, 86–7
 see also East Africa; North
 Africa; South Africa and
 individual countries and
 locations
African Humid Periods (AHPs)
 112, 115
African Journal of Ecology 38
Africanus, Leo 71–2
agave 173, 255, 382
agriculture
 in Australia 315
 C4 and CAM plants 171, 173, 382
 changing the balance of deserts
 308, 309, 309
 cotton 312
 drought adaptations 382–3
 Dust Bowl 334, 336–7
 effect of *dzud* on 224–6, 224, 227
 effects of global warming on 361,
 376
 extreme events and 228
 Harappan civilization 311
 in India 311, 313
 irrigation systems 318, 319
 pastoralism 231
 ranching cattle 266–7
 Virgin Land scheme 326–7
Ahnet-Mouydir Megalake 93, 93
AHPs (African Humid Periods) 112
air 168
 air temperature 24–5, 26–7, 32
 dry descending air 50, 51, 51
 mapping deserts from the air
 78–81
Air Mountains 140, 145
air temperature
 and evaporation 32
 highest recorded 24–5, 26–7
Aizoaceae family 40
Alberta 129
Alexander the Great 197, 320
Algeria
 Chotts Megalake 93
 early exploration of 72, 73
 Hoggar 140
 Opuntia cultivation 382
 Sahara Desert 141
 Saharan Atlas 28
alluvial fans 29, 57, 128, 254, 260–1
 Death Valley 263
 dust sources 136
 Okavango Delta 116
 on Mars 42
 Sarir Dalmah 99
Aloe 281
Aloidendron dichotomum 41, 41
Altai Mountains 210, 211
Altiplano Desert 214, 270–3
 salt lakes 272, 272, 273
altitude, effect on temperature
 35, 36
ammonium 166
Amu Darya River 197, 201, 326, 327
Amundsen-Scott South Pole
 Station, Antarctica 60, 61
ana tree 38

Andes Mountains 57, 244, 245, 246,
 279, 355
animals
 adaptations to life in the desert
 38, 176–83
 climate change and 377
 cold adaptations 232–5, 237
 dryland adaptation 36–7
 migration 150–3, 189, 225, 227, 237,
 240–1, 309
 pastoralism 230–1
 see also individual species
Antarctica 25, 60–3, 279
 dunes of 62–3
 precipitation in 60, 61
 temperatures in 35, 61
 winds 60, 62–3
antelope
 adaptation to life in the desert
 176
 Euphorbia and 373
 and lichens 290–1
 migration 189, 237
Anti-Desertification Research
 Center 337
ants 298
Aouzou 24
Aphricae Tabula IIII 71
aqueducts 326
aquifers 337
 artesian aquifers 314–15, 314
 Great Artesian Basin 315, 315
 Ogallala Aquifer 265, 318
Arabana people 120
Arabia 50–1
 diversity of 31
 dust-source regions 86, 86–7
 human occupation 308
 natural resources 219
Arabian Desert
 causes of dryness in 48, 50
 diversity of 31
 human occupation 184, 185,
 186–7
 paleolakes 90
 rock art 66
 temperatures in 51–2
Arabian Gulf 324–5
Arabian horned viper 180
Arabian oryx 178–9
Arabidopsis thaliana 164
Aral Sea 199, 210, 326–9
Aralkum Desert 195, 328
Arches National Park 216–17
areic areas 32
areoles 164
argali sheep 226, 237
aridity 34, 51, 128
 aridity index (AI) 32, 34, 34, 364,
 365, 368, 369
 causes of 48–9
 driest places on Earth 24–5
 mapping 34–5
 Sahel 142
Aristotle 233
arroyos 129
Artemisia 236
artesian aquifers 314–15, 314
Asia
 animal migration 237
 causes of dryness in 48, 56, 57
 Central Asian desert landscapes
 198–9
 climate extremes 200–1
 continentality and 54–5
 dust-source regions 86, 86–7
 earthquakes 229
 great deserts of 194–201
 natural resources 219
 rain-shadow deserts 57
 temperatures in 29, 223
 see also individual countries and
 deserts
Aswan High Dam 79, 332
Atacama Desert 270–3
 age 278, 278, 279
 archaeological sites 285
 causes of dryness in 48, 58, 58, 59
 fog in 58
 human occupation of 284–5, 825
 hyperaridity 284–5
 natural resources 219, 284, 284
 plant diversity 40

 precipitation in 25, 26, 132–3, 134,
 135
 salt lakes 272, 272, 273
Atlas Mountains 73, 381
atmosphere
 atmospheric stability 48, 50–3
 Earth-atmosphere system 365
Atriplex 236
Atyrau Desert 195
Aubréville, André 338
Australia
 agricultural expansion 10
 billabongs 128
 causes of dryness in 48–9, 50, 56,
 58, 59
 channel beds 134
 continentality and 54
 diversity in 29
 dust-source regions 86, 86–7
 floods 135
 Great Artesian Basin 315, 315
 human occupation 308
 mineral dust 136
 natural resources 219, 221
 spinifex grass 174–5, 299, 299
 Trans-Australia railway 9
 wildfires 158, 159, 160–1
Australian Flying Corps 78, 78

B

baboons 176
Babylon 67
Bacillus 168
bacteria, beneficial soil 166, 168
Bactrian camels 54, 231, 232–4, 233
Badain Jaran Desert 195, 195, 337
badlands 129
Badwater Basin 262, 262, 263, 263
Bagnold, Ralph 44, 76, 77
Bagnold dune field, Mars 44, 44–5
Baikal, Lake 333
Baja California
 causes of dryness in 58
 plant diversity 40
Bakalahari Schwelle 150, 150
Balkhash, Lake 199, 199
Ball, John 76
barchan dunes
 Antarctica 62, 63
 Bodélé Depression 85
 Mars 44, 45, 62
 Namib Sand Sea 276
 Nosy Ve-Androka beach 84, 84
 Sanlongsha 84, 84
 Tunisian Sahara 17
 Valley of the Lakes 212
Barth, Heinrich 72
bears 235
Bedouin 308
 camels 75
beetles 289
Belet dune field, Titan 44, 44
Benguela Current 59, 59, 274, 276,
 279
Bidibidi 325
Bigelow's monkey flower 164
billabongs 128
biological soil crusts (BSCs) 167, 167
birds 38, 212, 283
 impact of temperature increases
 on 370–1
Biskra 24
bison 264, 265, 266, 267
black rhinos 176, 176
blowout penstemon 267
blowouts 266, 266
blue agave 382
blue wildebeest 37
Bodélé Depression 84, 85
 dust-source regions 86, 86–7, 87
 dust storms 136
Bonneville, Lake 256, 256, 257
Bonneville Salt Flats 256, 256
borehole water 319
Boteti River 152, 152–3
Botswana 191, 219, 319
Botucatu Desert 104–5, 104, 105
boundary layer 180
Brandberg 296, 373, 375
Brandt's vole 235
Brasiliichnium elusivum 105
Breed, Carol 82
British Antarctic Survey 60

British Army 76, 78
Bromus rubens 160
BSCs (biological soil crusts) 167, 167
Buckland, Catherine 382
buffalo 336
buffelgrass 160
Burchell's zebra 153
Burt, William 75
bushman grass 172
Bushmen 191

C

C4 photosynthesis 170–3, 175, 382
Caatinga 52
cacti 162, 163–4, 382, 383, 383
cactus wren 371
Calanscio Sand Sea 99
Calendulula erythroclamyis 283
CAM (Crassulacean acid
 metabolism) 170–3, 382
Camanchaca 58–9
camels 74, 230, 241
 Bactrian camels 54, 231, 232–4, 233
 Bedouin camel trains 75
 caravans 75, 144, 145, 145, 202, 202,
 203
 cold adaptations 232–4
 drought adaptation 178
 Gobi Desert 211
 wild camels 237
Campbell, Sir Malcolm 256, 256
Camponotus detritus 283
Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus
 371
Canada
 Dust Bowl 334
 Prairies 55, 55, 252
canals 326, 382
Canary Islands, causes of dryness
 in 58, 59
Canning, Alfred 10
Canyonlands National Park 167
canyons, slot 128
Caprivi Strip 116
carbon dioxide
 atmospheric 358, 361, 368
 photosynthesis 170, 172, 173, 286
Cascade Mountains 56, 252
Caspian Sea 199, 221
Cassidy, Butch 251, 251
Cassini spacecraft 43, 44
cattle 230, 233, 235, 241, 266, 267
Caucasus Mountains 57
Cenchrus ciliaris 160
Central Arizona Project 333
Central Asia 48, 188, 195, 197
 Aral Sea 326–9
 Central Asian desert landscapes
 198–9
 Central Asian Internal Drainage
 Basin 210
 continentality and 54
 dzud 201, 224
 earthquakes 229
 natural resources 219
 Silk Road 203
 wildlife 237
 see also individual countries and
 deserts
Central Kalahari Game Reserve
 150, 150
Cerastes gasperettii 180
Cerrado 52, 53
Chad 141
Chad Basin 81, 91, 99
 Bodélé Depression 84, 85, 86,
 86–7, 87, 136
Changtang 196
Channel Country, Australia 126, 135
channels 127–8, 130, 134
Chasmistes cujus 259
Chicama 24
Chihuahuan Desert 252
 causes of dryness in 50, 56
 climate 255
 diversity of 31
 natural resources 219
China
 agriculture 201
 causes of dryness in 48
 desertification in 337, 346–7
 fastest-moving dunes 84, 84

- Great Green Wall scheme 348-9, 348
natural resources 219
Silk Road 202, 203, 204
wind-eroded forms 131
see also individual deserts
- Chinchorro culture 285, 285
chlorophyll 373
Chobe River 148, 151, 152
Chotts Megalake 93, 93, 94
chromatogram fingerprints 374, 375
- Chuquicamata copper mine 284, 284
- cities 320-5, 326
Citrullus colocynthis 179
Clapperton, Hugh 72
clean energy 376-9
Clifton, Lake 156-7
- climate
animal and plant adaptation 36-7
desert climate extremes 24-7
variety of dryland climates 36-7
climate change 356-83
CAM and C4 adaptations 170, 170
coping with changing deserts 376-81
declining *Euphorbia* populations 372-5
expanding and shrinking deserts 347, 364-7
extreme events and 133
fog-dependent habitats 289
measuring future dryland ecological change 368-71
predicting and modelling desert and dryland futures 358-63
salt lake levels 258
temperature increases 159, 227
- cold, adaptation to the 232-41
color composite technique 87-8, 89, 90, 95, 96
- Colorado Plateau 57, 110, 252, 254
Colorado River 57, 321, 322-3, 330, 331, 333
- Commiphora* 38, 39
compasses, solar 75, 75
Congo Basin 49
Connochaetes taurinus 37
- continental deserts 192-241
adaptations to the cold 232-41
desert weathering 214-17
extreme events 222-9
great deserts of Asia 194-201
human occupation 238-41
Mongolian landscapes 208-13
natural resources 218-21
pastoralism 230-1
the Silk Road 202-7
- continentality 50, 54-5
Cooper Creek 126, 135
Copernicus Sentinel-2 satellite 300-1
- cormorant, great 212
cotton 312, 326
Crassula 40
Crassulacean acid metabolism (CAM) 170-3, 382
creosote bush 159
Cresques, Abraham, *Catalan Atlas* 202
crocodiles, giant 121
cubits 68
cui-ui 259
Curiosity Rover 42, 44, 45, 107, 109, 109
- currents, ocean
Benguela Current 59, 59, 274, 279
cold-water currents 48, 50, 58, 59, 59, 196
- cyanobacteria 167, 168-9, 290, 291, 354-5
- D**
Dadaab 325
Dallol, Danakil Desert 26
Damara milk-bush 176, 177, 177
Damaraland 176
Danakil Desert 26
Dapper, Olbert 71
Barbaria Biledulgerid o: Libye et pars Nigritarum Terra 72
Darfur Megalake 92, 93
Darvaza Crater 197, 197
Darwin, Charles 103
Dasht-e Kavir 29
Daurian pika 235
Davis, W. M. 126
Dead Sea 332
Death Valley 210, 254, 262-3
air temperatures in 26, 26
Devil's Golf Course 261
lowest temperatures in 27
deel 241
DEMs (digital elevation models) 85, 91, 92, 94, 96-7, 99
Denham, Dixon 72
desert kites 66, 188-9
Desert Sunlight Solar Farm 378
Desert Survey Department 76
Desertec 376
desertification 9, 338-51, 376, 382
in China 337
tackling 348-51
Desertification Control Bulletin 339
- deserts
boundaries 18-19, 20, 340
classification of 60
continental deserts 192-241
as dead habitats 38-9
definition of 18-21, 22-45
desert land-shaping 126-31
deserts on the move 100-37
expanding and shrinking 364-7
mapping 64-99
predicting and modelling future of 358-63
rain shadow deserts 242-67
reasons for them being on Earth 46-63
subtropical deserts 138-91
see also individual deserts
- diagonal arreica* 244, 244
Diamantina 135
digital elevation models (DEMs) 85, 91, 92, 94, 96-7, 99
- dinosaurs 213
Dipodomys 121
Djibouti 27
dormancy 36
drainage, desert 96-7, 99, 116
drainage lines 300
endorheic drainage basins 199, 210
Drosanthemum 162-3
D. hispidum 163
- drought 25-6, 37, 226-7
agricultural adaptations 382-3
desert fires and 159
desertification 340, 342-3
drought-adapted oryx 178-9
Dust Bowl 267, 334-7, 382
dust storm frequency 136
Great Basin's salt lakes 258
multiyear 132
rising temperatures and 359
Sahara Desert 124-5, 125, 132, 142
Sahel 124, 125, 132, 340
species adaptation to 377
- Drought Relief Service 337
dry subhumid 34, 35, 51, 52
- drylands
animal and plant adaptation 36-7
aridity index (AI) 34, 34, 35
classification of 60
definition of 34
desertification 338-51
diversity of 28
drought 227
expansion and shrinkage of 364-7
extreme events 132-7
land-use practices 37
measuring future dryland ecological change 368-71
of North America 252-5
predicting and modelling future of 358-63
subtropical 52
variety of climates 36-7
see also individual locations
- dryness
atmospheric stability and 48, 50-3
causes of 48-59
continentality 54-5
driest places on Earth 24-5
mapping 32-5
measuring 32
ocean-margin deserts 48, 50, 58-9
rain shadow deserts 56-7
see also aridity
- du Toit, Alexander 80
Dubai 8, 8, 324
dune grass 169
dunes 20
Antarctica 62-3
barchan 17, 44, 45, 62, 63, 84, 84, 85, 212, 276
circular 109, 109
complex 85
crescentic 85
dune activity 81, 81
dune fields 29, 264-7
fastest-moving on Earth 84, 85
formation of 57, 130-1
fossilized 102-5, 106, 116, 118
largest dune field 264-7
linear 84, 85, 104, 116, 277
mapping and monitoring 82-5
Martian dunes 42, 43, 43, 44, 44-5, 62, 106-7, 107, 108, 109, 109
most extensive on Earth 52
Namib sand sea 58
nebkha dunes 131
parabolic 85, 131
planetary dunes 42, 43, 44-5
reversing dunes 63
shape and pattern of 131
size of 131
star 85, 108, 109, 130, 255, 276
whaleback 63, 131
- Dunhuang 131
dust 130-1
dust-source regions 86-7, 86-7
dust storms 87, 88, 88-9, 132, 136-7, 228-9, 335
mapping and monitoring 86-9
Dust Bowl 9, 10, 266, 267, 318, 334-7, 382
dynamic deserts 21, 48, 57, 118, 124-5
Dzoosotoyn (Gurbantünggüt) Desert 54
dzud 222, 224-6, 226, 227, 241
Dzungar (Junggar) Desert 195
Dzungarian hamster 235
- E**
Earth-atmosphere system 365
Earth Summit 32, 344, 347
earthquakes 229
East Africa
dryness of 49
human occupation in 308
ecohydrological index (EI) 368-9, 368
ecological change, measuring future 368-71
- Egypt
ancient Egyptians 66-7, 67-8, 69, 311
mapping deserts from motor vehicles 74, 75, 76-7
Qattara Depression 75, 76, 140, 142
Sahara 144, 304
Sahara-Sahel region 141
Toshka 332, 332, 333
- Eifler, Douglas 181
Eifler, Maria A. 181
El Djem 24
El Niño 118, 121, 132-3, 135
El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) 121
electromagnetic radiation 85
elephants, desert-adapted 38-9, 39
Emi Koussi 140
Emirates Mars Mission, *Hope* spacecraft 106
emu 121
endemism, Namib Desert 280-3
endorheic drainage basins 32, 199, 210
energy, clean 376-9
The English Patient 17
Ennedi Mountains 87
- Eragrostis lehmanniana* 160
Erg Chebbi 130
ergs 131, 142, 143, 143
Eritrea 141, 142
erosion
water erosion 126-31, 127, 214, 216, 338
wind erosion 43, 43, 95, 214, 216-17, 247, 300, 338
- Ethiopia 26, 141, 142, 143
drought 124
dryness of 49
refugees from 325
- Euphorbia* 177, 179, 296-8
E. damarana 176, 176, 177, 177, 372-5
E. gregaria 176
E. gummiifera 176
Evans, J. Sunny 181
evaporation 32, 155, 256, 263, 338-9
expansion, desert 364-7
exploration, mapping deserts from 70-3
extinctions, megafaunal 120-3
extremes
continental deserts 222-9
desert climate extremes 24-7, 200-1
extreme events 132-7, 222-9
- Eyre, Edward John 120
Eyre, Lake 118-19, 120, 122-3, 126, 128
- F**
Faidherbia albida 38
fairy circles 292-8, 374, 375
famine 124
fencing 309, 309
films, images of deserts in 12-17
fires, desert 158-61, 266, 358, 359
Flaming Cliffs of Bayanzag 213
flamingos 354-5, 355
floods 132, 134-7, 214, 270, 359
fluvial fans 93, 97
fog 286-9
Camanchaca 58-9
as form of hydration 25, 182, 290
Namib Desert 41, 179, 274, 274, 276
ocean-margin deserts 58, 270
fog-basking beetle 289, 289
footprints, human 95, 95
fossil fuels 358, 361, 376, 379
fossils
fossil dunes 116, 118
fossilized deserts 102-5, 106
fossilized microbes 156-7
Gobi Desert 210, 213
- Fryberger, Steve 84
Furnace Creek, air temperatures in 26, 263
- future of deserts
coping with changing deserts 376-81
declining *Euphorbia* populations 372-5
expanding and shrinking deserts 364-7
measuring future dryland ecological change 368-71
predicting and modelling desert and dryland futures 358-63
- G**
Ganga Canal 313
Gariep 27
gas 219, 221, 324, 376
Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) 374, 375
gazelles 213, 237
geckos 182, 377
Gehyra variegata 377
gemsbok 179, 373
Genghis Khan 197, 203, 213
Genyornis newtoni 121, 121
Geographical Journal 80
gerbils 235
gers (yurts) 224, 225, 229, 230-1, 238-9, 240
glaciers 223, 223, 246, 246-7
Global Assessment of Soil Degradation (GLASOD) 347
global warming 133, 258, 356-83

- coping with changing deserts 376–81
 declining *Euphorbia* populations 372–5
 expanding and shrinking deserts 364–7
 measuring future dryland ecological change 368–71
 predicting and modelling desert and dryland futures 358–63
 goats 230, 235
 Gobi bear 235
 Gobi Desert 61, 195, 208–13
 altitude 54
 causes of dryness 54
 climate in 200, 201, 209–10
 drought 226
 early map of 18
 frost-free days 196
 Great Green Wall 349
 human occupation of 212
 lowest temperatures 27
 natural resources 201, 221
 Ordos 324
 temperatures in 27, 29, 55, 200, 209
 weathering residuals and eroded bedrock 198
 wildlife in 54, 213, 233, 233, 235
 Yolyn Am 223, 223
 Gold trade 284
 Botswana 219
 Death Valley 263
 Gobi Desert 201, 220–1, 221
 Oyu Tolgoi 220–1
 Sahara Desert 144, 144, 145
 Gondwana 104, 117
 Google Earth 85
 Goudie, Andrew 300
 Govi-Altai Mountains 212, 212
 Gran Desierto de Altar 255, 255
 Grand Canyon 254, 254–5
 grasses 38
 spinifex grass 160, 174–5, 299, 299
 grassification 160
 grasslands 21
 graylag goose 212
 Great American Desert 336
 Great Artesian Basin 315, 315
 Great Basin Desert 252, 254
 alluvial fans 261
 causes of dryness in 56
 climate 255
 diversity of 31
 salt lakes 256, 257, 258
 temperatures in 29
 great cormorant 212
 Great Dividing Range 49
 Great Escarpment 277, 278, 281, 281, 282
 Great Green Wall scheme 348–9, 348
 Great Kyz Kala Palace 205
 Great Man-Made River 333
 Great Plains 55, 252, 318
 Dust Bowl 334, 336, 337
 Sandhills 255, 264–7, 318
 Great Salt Lake 258
 Great Sand Dunes 56, 255
 Great Sand Sea 76
 Great Sandy Desert, diversity in 29, 30–1
 greenhouse gases 358, 361
 groundwater 382
 use and impact of 314–19
 Grove, Alfred Thomas (“Dick”) 80–1, 80
 Guanaco 249
 gullies 129
 Gutenberg, Johannes 71
 Guthrie, Woodie 337
H
 Hadley Cell 50, 50, 51
 Hakskeen Pan 256
 halophytes 236
 halos, grass 294–5
 hamada 142
 Harappan civilization 311, 311, 313
 hartebeest 150
 Harvard University 368
 Hassanein, Ahmed 73
Haworthia 40
 heat, CAM and C4 adaptations to 170–3
 heliostats 380
 Herodotus 230
 heuweltjies 298, 298
 hibernation 36
 Himalayan mountains 310, 311
 Himba people 38, 39, 39
 Hindu Kush Mountains 57, 57, 229
 Hoggar Mountains 140
 Holdridge, Leslie 35, 36, 38
 hoodoos 129
 Hoover Dam 321, 322–3
Hope spacecraft 106
 Hornemann, Friedrich 72
 horses 230, 235
 Huang, Jianping 364, 366
 humans
 Aboriginal Australians 174, 308
 adaptations to cold 238–41
 Arabana people 120
 city building 320–5
 desert kites 188–9
 desertification 338–51
 early humans 184–7, 212, 304
 effects of global warming on 361
 Harappan civilization 311, 311, 313
 Himba people 38, 39, 39
 human influence 302–55
 Ju/’hoansi 161, 191
 living in continental deserts 238–41
 living in hyperarid deserts 284–5
 living in sub-tropical deserts 184–91
 Martu people 160
 Masai people 308
 mobility and sedentarization 308–9, 376
 Native Americans 308
 Navajo Nation 12
 San people 134, 190, 191, 308
 Tehuelche 248–51
 Timbisha Shoshone Native Americans 263
 water sourcing 304–19, 320, 321
 humid desert 34
 Hutton, James 102
hxaro 191
 hyperarid deserts 34, 35, 280, 347
 fog 286–9
 living in 284–5
I
 Ibn Battuta 203
 ice 200, 214, 246, 359
 ichnofossils 105
 al-Idrisi, Muhammad 70–1, 70
 Ifrane, Morocco 27
 images
 image classification 90
 in the popular media 12–17
 Imago Mundi 67
 Inca Empire 284
 India
 solar energy in 379
 Thar Desert 310–13
 Indira Gandhi Canal 313
 Indus River 128
 infrared light 89, 90, 373
 insects 38, 283, 289
 inselbergs 281, 288, 289
 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 359, 361
 International Center on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures 307
 International Institute for Environment and Development 339
 Iran 195, 197
 Lut Desert 26–7, 27, 50, 57, 131, 215
 qanats 305, 307
 Iraq 67
 irrigation
 Canadian Prairies 55
 center-pivot systems 318
 Great Plains 337
 groundwater resources 105, 314, 382
 irrigation canals 305, 312, 313
 qanats 305, 307
 Virgin Land Scheme 326
 Wadi ad-Dawasir 316, 316, 317
 isolation, Namib Desert 280–3
J
 jerboas 235
 Jordan, desert kites 66, 189
 Joshua tree 10–11, 255
Journal of Arid Environments 314
 Ju/’hoansi 161, 191
K
 Kakuma 325
 Kalahari Basin 29, 116, 117, 118, 146–9
 Kalahari Desert 116–19, 146, 274, 300–1
 agriculture 309
 borehole water 319, 319
 causes of dryness in 48, 50
 channel beds 134
 diversity of 29
 endemism in 282
 fairy circles 292
 Great Escarpment 281, 281
 human occupation 185, 186, 187, 190, 191, 308
 Khi Solar One (KSO) 380, 380–1
 mapping 80, 81
 rainfall 116, 118
 salt pans 29, 118, 154–5, 154, 155, 156, 256
 temperatures in 52, 360
 wildfires 160, 161, 161
 zebras 152–3, 152–3
 Kalahari Scheme 148
 Kaokoveld, Damaraland 38, 39, 39
 Karakorum Mountains 229
 Karakum Canal 326
 Karakum Desert 54, 57, 197, 197, 198, 326
 Karoo Desert 27
 katabatic winds 60, 62–3
 Kati Thanda 118–19, 126, 128
 disappearance of 120–3
 Kazakhstan 195, 197
 Aral Sea 326, 328
 cold temperatures in 200
 Kashagan oil field 221
 see also individual deserts
 Kelso Dunes 181
 Kennedy-Shaw, Bill 77
 Kenya, dryness of 49
 Khangai Mountains 210, 211, 212, 213
 Khentii Mountains 210, 211, 213, 213
 Khi Solar One (KSO) 380, 380–1
 Khrushchev, Nikita 326
 Kinahan, John 285, 304
 Kitchen, Thomas, map of northeast Asia 18
 kites, desert 66, 188–9
 Kizilgaha 204
 klipspringers 176
 Koutroulis, Aristeidis 366
 Kublai Khan 203
 kudu 176, 373
 Kufra river system 73, 99, 99
 Kuiseb Canyon 16
 Kumtag Desert 130–1, 131
 Kuwait 137
 Kyzylkum Desert 195, 197, 326
 causes of dryness in 57
 frost-free days 196
 temperatures in 200
L
 La Niña 135, 137
 Laguna Mountains 252
 Laguna Verde 273
 Lahontan, Lake 257
 Lake Eyre Yacht Club 121
 lakes, mapping 90–5
 L’Amour, Louis 8
 Lamprey, Hugh 340
 land
 desertification 9, 337, 338–51, 376, 382
 land classifications 60–1
 land-use practices 37
 see also agriculture
 Landsat 1 MSS imagery 82, 82, 83, 83, 85, 99
 Landsat Thematic Mapper (TM) imagery 90, 92, 93, 95, 95, 96–7, 98
 landscapes
 complexity and diversity 28–31
 weathering of 214–17
 Langbein, Walter 127, 127
 Langbein and Schumm (1958) annual sedimentary yield curve 127
 Las Vegas 8, 320–1
Lasiurus scindicus 178
 latitude, effect on temperature 35, 36
 Lawrence, T. E. 14
Lawrence of Arabia (film) 14
 Laycock, Dallin 84
 Lehman’s lovegrass 160
 Libya 74, 77, 141
 lichens 290–1, 349
 life zones, global 35, 36, 38
 Light Car Patrols (LCPs) 74–6, 74, 75
 Lima, rainfall 24, 26, 134, 135, 135
 lithification 104
 Lithium Triangle 219, 352–5
Lithops 40, 41
 L. optica 40–1
 Little Sandy Desert 299
 livestock 308, 314, 315, 319
 effect of *dzud* on 224–6, 224, 227
 lizards 160, 161, 180, 181, 181, 182
 loess 246
 Loess Plateau 129, 198–9, 198
 Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) 76, 77, 77
 Longabaugh, Harry 251, 251
 longhorn cattle 266
 Lüderitz, Namib Desert 40
 Lut Desert 215
 causes of dryness in 50, 57
 temperatures in 26–7, 27, 57
 yardang fields 131
 Lyell, Charles 102, 103
M
 Mabbutt, Jack 339
 McAuliffe, Joseph 298
 McKee, Edwin 82
 Mackinder, Halford 195
 McMurdo Station, Antarctica 60, 61
 Madagascar 84, 84
 Madrean Sky Islands 111, 111
 Mahazat as-Sayd Protected Area 178
 Makgadikgadi 146, 147, 147, 148
 human occupation in 185, 186, 187
 salt flats 31, 118, 148, 149, 149
 zebra in 151, 152, 153
 Mali 141, 144, 144
 mallard 212
 mallow 132–3
 mammals 38
 mapping deserts 64–99
 desert river systems 96–7
 early maps 66–9
 from the air 78–81
 from exploration 70–3
 from motor vehicles 74–7
 from space 82–5
 lakes and megalakes 90–5
 mapping dust 86–9
 mapping dryness 32–5
 subsurface remote sensing 98–9
 marmots 226, 235
 Mars
 alluvial fans 42
 Bagnold dune field 44, 44–5
 desert rocks on 106–9
 dunes on 42, 43, 43, 44, 44–5, 62, 106–7, 107, 108, 109, 109
 Namib Dune 109
 red storm 42
 Stimson formation 106–7, 107
 Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) 44, 109
 Martin, Henno 16
 Martu people 160
 Masai Mara Desert 37
 Masai people 308

- Mauritania 141, 144
 Mazaalai 235
 Mazzoni, Annamaria 316
 media, desert images in popular 12-17
 Mediterranean climates 52
 Mega-Chad, Lake 81, 87, 90, 91, 91, 93, 94, 94, 95, 96
 megafaunal extinctions 120-3
 Megafazzan, Lake 93, 93
 megalakes 121, 146
 Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre 118-19, 120-3, 126, 128
 Lake Mega-Chad 81, 87, 90, 91, 91, 93, 94, 94, 95, 96
 mapping 90-5
 Sahara megalakes 91, 92-5
 Meigs, Peveril 60
Merops anchietae 181
 M. cuneirostris 182
 mesembis 40
 Mexico
 Dust Bowl 334
 temperatures in 52
 microbialites 156-7
Microhodotermes viator 298
 Middleton, Nick 347
 migration 150-3, 240-1, 309, 376
 animal 189, 225, 227, 230, 237
 human 184, 185
 milk-bush 176, 177, 177
 declining populations 372-5
 and fairy circles 296-8
Mimulus bigelovei 164
 M. mohavensis 164
 mineral dust 136, 136
 mineral resources 218-21, 284-5, 308, 324
 lithium 352-5
 mining 221, 228, 314
 coal 324
 controversy and impact of 227, 231
 copper 284
 Death Valley 263
 gold 144, 144, 145, 201, 219, 220-1, 221, 263, 284
 lithium 219, 353, 354-5
 mobility 308-9, 376
 Moçamedes Desert 274
 modelling, desert and dryland futures 358-63
 Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectrometer 88-9
 Mojave Desert 10-11, 159-60, 252
 alluvial fans 261
 causes of dryness in 56
 Death Valley 26, 26, 27, 210, 254, 261, 262-3
 diversity of 31
 Las Vegas 320-1
 rainfall 255
 salt lakes 256
 solar and wind energy 378, 378-9
 Mojave fringe-toed lizard 181
 Mojave monkey flower 164
 mole rats 298
 Molopo River 154
 Mongolia 208-13
 camels 234, 241
 climate 222
 cold adaptations 238-40
 daily temperature ranges 200
 desertification 348, 349
 drought 227
 dust storms 228-9, 228

 dzud 201, 224-6, 224, 227, 241
 earthquakes 229
 extreme events 222
 gers 238-9, 240
 horses 235
 livestock and herding 224-6, 227, 240-1
 natural resources 219, 220-1, 221, 227
 pastoralism 231, 241
 temperatures in 227, 232, 238-9
 wildlife 237
 wind energy 221
 monkey flower
 Bigelow's monkey flower 164
 Mojave monkey flower 164
 monitoring deserts
 from space 82-5
 monitoring dust 86-9
 monkey orange trees 161
 Mono Lake 259
 monsoons 54, 310, 361
 West African monsoon 113-14
 Monte Desert 244-7
 causes of dryness in 57
 temperatures in 245
 Monument Valley 12, 13
 the Moon, deserts on 42
 Moremi Game Reserve 152
 Morocco 141
 natural resources 219
 plant diversity 40
 solar power 381
 morphometric analysis 82, 84
 motor vehicles, mapping deserts from 74-7
 mountains
 effect on landforms 57
 and rain shadow deserts 56-7
 Mu Us Desert 195
 Multispectral Scanner (MSS) 82, 82, 83, 83, 85, 99
 Münster, Sebastian 71
 Muyunkum Desert 195

N
 Nachtigal, Gustav 73
 Namaqualand
 plant poaching 41
 plantlife in 40, 41
 Namib Desert 17, 19, 274-7
 age of 278
 archaeological sites 11, 285
 bushman grass 172
 causes of dryness in 48, 58, 59
 fairy circles 292-8
 fog in 58, 274, 274, 276, 286-9, 290
 Great Escarpment 281, 281
 human occupation of 284-5
 hyperaridity 284-5
 isolation and endemism in 280-3
 Kuiseb Canyon 16
 Namib Sand Sea 58, 82, 179, 276, 276, 277, 279, 279, 285, 287, 304
 natural resources 284
 plants in 40, 281, 282, 286, 288-9, 373, 375
 precipitation in 25
 temperatures 276
 wildlife in 176, 176, 179, 181, 181, 289, 290-1
 Namib dune, Mars 44, 44-5, 109
 Namib-Naukluft National Park 375
 Namib sand gecko 182
 Namibia 104, 191, 274, 369
 endemism in 280-3
 salt pans 157
 tiger bush 301
 wildlife in 38, 280-3
 see also Namib Desert
 Namibian dune ant 283
 Namibian dune lark 283
 Namibian oryx 179
 nanofibers 175
 NASA
 Cassini spacecraft 43, 44
 Curiosity Rover 42, 44, 45, 107, 109, 109
 Landsat TM 90, 92, 93, 95, 95, 96-7, 98
 Landsat 1 MSS imagery 82, 82, 83, 83, 85, 99
 Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) 44, 109
 New Horizons mission 43
 Opportunity rover 108
 Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) 85
 Native Americans 308
 Timbisha Shoshone Native Americans 263
 natural resources 218-21, 227, 308, 324
 gold 144, 144, 145, 201, 219, 220-1, 263, 284
 lithium 219, 352-5
Nature Climate Change 364
Nature Communications 370
 Naukluft Mountains 274, 276
 Navajo Nation 12
 nebkha dunes 131
 Nebraska Sandhills 255, 264-7, 318
 Nefud Desert, paleolakes 95, 95
 Negev Desert 129, 332
 Nevada 8, 256
 Las Vegas 8, 320-1
 New Horizons mission 43
 Newton's thunder bird 121, 121
 Nicholas IV, Pope 203
 Nicolas the German, Lord 68-9
 Niger 141
 Niger River 143, 145
 Nigeria, dunes in 80, 81
 Nile, River 115, 115, 141, 142-3
 Niobrara Valley Preserve 264
 nitrogen 166, 168
 nomads 230-1, 240-1
 Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) 124, 124
 North Africa 25, 28, 115, 185
 climate 113, 114
 early maps 70-1
 megalakes 93, 93
 qanats 305
 trade in 145
 see also individual countries and deserts
 North America
 continentality and 54, 55
 drylands of 252-5
 Dust Bowl 9, 10, 266, 267, 318, 334-7, 382
 dust-source regions 86, 86-7
 human occupation 308
 indigenous peoples 10
 rain shadow deserts 56-7
 temperatures 29
 see also individual locations and deserts
 Nosy Ve-Androka 84, 84
 Novoiy region, Uzbekistan 37
 Nullabor Plain 9, 29
 Nxai Pan National Park 152

O
 oases 145, 314
 ocean currents 48, 50, 58, 59, 196
 ocean-margin deserts 48, 50, 58-9, 268-301
 antelope and lichens 290-1
 Atacama and the Altiplano-Puna 270-3
 coastal deserts of southwestern Africa 274-7
 fog 286-9
 hyperaridity 284-9
 isolation and endemism in the Namib Desert 280-3
 patterns in the desert 292-301
 world's oldest deserts 278-9
 Ogallala Aquifer 265, 318, 318
 oil 219, 221, 316, 324, 376
 Okavango Delta 116, 118, 146, 149, 151
 Okavango River 146, 148, 149, 152
 olivine 107
 Ondaatje, Michael 17
127 Hours 16
Onymacris unguicularis 289, 289
 Opportunity rover 108
Opuntia ficus-indica 382, 383, 383
 Orange River 31, 128, 150, 154, 276, 380
 Ordos Desert 195, 324
 orogeny 56
 oryx 176, 290, 373
 drought-adapted oryx 178-9
Oryx dammah 179
 O. gazella 179
 O. leucoryx 178-9
otjize 39
 Oudney, Walter 72
Outback 16
 Owen, Lewis 248
 Owens Lake 258-9, 258-9

P
Pachydactylus rangei 182
 Pakistan
 Thal Desert 310, 311
 Thar Desert 310, 313
 palaeodunes 104
 Paleodeserts Project 95
 paleolakes 90-1, 93, 95
 Palestine 74, 78, 78, 308, 332
Pallimnarchus pollens 121
 PALSAR (Phased Array L-band Synthetic Aperture Radar) 99, 99
 Pamir Mountains 196, 229, 326
 Pan-African Great Green Wall 350
Panicum turgidum 178
 Parker, Robert LeRoy 251, 251
 particulate matter (PM) 228
 pastoralism 230-1, 241, 348, 349
 Patagonia 244-7
 rainfall 245
 Tehuelche and Y Wladfa 248-51
 Patagonian Desert, causes of dryness in 57
 pathogens 168
 patterns, desert 292-301
 Penman-Monteith method 32
Penstemon haydenii 267
 peripheral belts 294-5
 permafrost 227
 PET (potential evapotranspiration) 32, 34, 35, 36
 Petraglia, Michael 95
 petroleum 219
 PGPR (plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria) 166, 168
 Phased Array L-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (PALSAR) 99, 99
 photosynthesis
 CAM and C4 photosynthesis 170-3, 175, 382
 lichens 290, 291
 piosphere effects 319, 319
 Plains of Saskatchewan 55
 planets
 deserts on 42-5
 planetary dunes 43, 44-5
 plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) 166, 168
 plants
 CAM and C4 adaptations 170-3, 175, 382
 chromatogram fingerprints 374, 375
 cold adaptations 236-7
 dryland adaptation 36-7
 effect of higher levels of atmospheric CO₂ 368, 368, 369, 369
 monitoring climate change 373, 373, 375
 Namib Desert 280, 281, 282, 283
 poaching 41
 rhizosphere formation 166-9
 succulents 38, 40-1, 162-4, 165, 165, 172, 288, 382, 383, 383
 survival in subtropical deserts 162-5
 transpiration 32, 163, 286
 water loss and retention 162-3, 165, 168
 see also individual species
 playas 29
 Pluto, dunes on 42, 43
 poaching, plants 41
 Polo, Marco 194, 203
 Pontic Mountains 57
 popular media, desert images in 12-17
 porcupines 176
Portulacaria afra 170
 potential evapotranspiration (PET) 32, 34, 35, 36
 precipitation 26, 34
 in Antarctica 60
 Asian deserts 201
 driest places on Earth 24-5
 drought and 226
 effect of climate change on 361-3, 362
 interannual precipitation variability 36, 37
 on land 54
 low levels as cause of dryness 48-9
 mean precipitation 24
 measuring 32
 monsoons 54, 310, 361

- seasonal variation 124, 124
see also rainfall
- prickly pear 162, 382, 383, 383
- pristine desert 8
- Ptolemy, Claudius 203
world map 68-9, 69, 70, 71
- pulsating deserts 112-15
- Puna 270
- Punta Piccolo 115
- Pyramid Lake 259
- Q**
- Qaidam Basin 27
- qanats 304-7, 308
- Qatar 2022 World Cup 325, 325
- Qattara Depression 75, 76, 140, 142
- quiver tree 40, 41
- R**
- radar interferometry 85
- radiation 113, 114
- railways 9
- rain shadow deserts 56-7, 242-67, 270
alluvial fans 260-1
Death Valley 262-3
drylands of North America 252-5
largest dune field 264-7
Patagonia and the Monte 244-7
salt lakes 256-9
the Tehuelche and Y Wladfa 248-51
- rain shadow effect 50, 196
- rainfall 26, 150, 162, 382
in Antarctica 60
badlands 129
on desert margins 124
driest places on Earth 24-5
effect of climate change on 361-3, 362
extreme desert rainfall events 24, 159
floods and flooding 132, 134-7, 214, 270, 359
interannual precipitation variability 36, 37
Kalahari Desert 116, 118
and land-shaping 127-8
mean precipitation 24
monsoons 54, 310, 361
and rain shadow deserts 56
Sahara Desert 124, 124, 125
seasonal variation 124, 124
Sonoran Desert 110
Thar Desert 310
West African monsoon 113-14
- rainforests 136
deserts beneath 104-5
- Ralsen, Aron 16
- Ramesses IV 67
- Ramsar Sites 212
- red brome 160
- Red Sea 99, 141, 332
- refugee camps 325
- reg 142
- remote sensing, satellite 82-5, 86, 300
desert river systems 96-7
electromagnetic radiation 98-9
mapping lakes and megalakes 90-5
mapping and monitoring dust 86-9
monitoring climate change 373, 373, 375
paleolakes 90
- reptiles 38, 180-3
- reversing dunes 63
- rhinos, black 176, 176
- Rhizobium* 166, 168
- rhizosphere formation 166-9
- Richthofen, Ferdinand von 203
- rivers 33, 128
areic areas 32
desert river systems 96-7, 98, 99, 99
endorheic areas 32
Kalahari Basin 146, 147, 148, 149
mountain-sourced 57
Sahara Desert 142-3
see also individual rivers
- rock pools 29
- Rocky Mountains 56, 252, 255, 264
- rodents 235
- Rohlf, Friedrich 73
- Rub' Al Khali (Empty Quarter) 178, 316, 316, 317
dune sand sea 31
- Ruschia 162-3
- S**
- sacrifice zone 319, 319
- saguaro 110, 159, 255
- Sahara Desert 35, 52-3
anatomy of 140-3
barrier vs opportunity 144-5
causes of dryness in 48, 50, 56
continentality and 54
desertification 340-1, 341
diversity of 28-9
droughts in 124-5, 125, 132, 142
dunes 20
dust-source regions 86, 86-7, 87-8, 88-9
dust storms 136
Great Man-Made River 333
human occupation 184, 184
lowest temperatures in 27
mapping 66-77, 80-1, 81
megalakes 91, 92-5
mountains in 28
natural resources 219
Pan-African Great Green Wall 350
pulsating nature of 112-15, 112, 114
rainfall 25, 124, 124, 125, 361, 362
rock art 66
Sahara-Sahel region 141, 142
sand seas 142, 143, 143
Selima Sand Sheet 98-9, 98, 99
solar power 221, 381
temperatures in 51-2, 360
trade routes 68, 71, 144-5
West African monsoon 113-14
- Sahel 124-5, 376
desertification 350
ergs 143
drought 124, 125, 132, 340
rainfall 361
Sahara-Sahel region 141, 142
wildlife in 179
- Saiga antelope 237
- Salar de Uyuni 29, 272, 272, 273, 353
- Salsola* 236
- salt 236
salt trade 144, 144, 145
salt lakes/flats and pans 29, 57, 256-9
Altiplano-Puna 272, 272, 273
Atacama Desert 272, 272, 273
Kalahari Desert 118, 154-7
Great Basin 256-9
Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre 120
lithium supply 219, 352-5, 352, 353
Makgadikgadi 31, 118, 148, 149, 149
Mojave Desert 356-9
- Salton Sea 330-1
- Salton Sink 330
- San people 134, 190, 191, 308
quiver tree 41
- sand dunes 20
Antarctica 62-3
barchan 17, 44, 45, 62, 63, 84, 84, 85, 212, 276
circular 109, 109
complex 85
crescentic 85
dune activity 81, 81
dune fields 29, 264-7
fastest-moving on Earth 84, 85
formation of 57, 130-1
fossilized 102-5, 106, 116, 118
largest dune field 264-7
linear 84, 85, 104, 116, 277
mapping and monitoring 82-5
Martian dunes 42, 43, 43, 44, 44-5, 62, 106-7, 107, 108, 109, 109
most extensive on Earth 52
Namib sand sea 58
nebkha dunes 131
parabolic 85, 131
planetary dunes 42, 43, 44-5
reversing dunes 63
shape and pattern of 131
- size of 131
star 85, 108, 109, 130, 255, 276
whaleback 63, 131
- sand monitor lizards 160
- sand seas 131, 142, 143, 143
- Sandhills 255, 264-7, 318
- Sanlongsha dune field 84
- sapropels 115
- Sarir Dalmah 99
- satellite imagery 82-5, 86, 300
desert river systems 96-7
electromagnetic radiation 98-9
mapping lakes and megalakes 90-5
mapping and monitoring dust 86-9
monitoring climate change 373, 373, 375
- Satluj River 313
- Saudi Arabia
desert kites 66
irrigation systems 316
paleolakes 97
- savannas, sub-tropical 50-3
- saxaul trees 236, 237
- Schumm, Stanley 127, 127
- Schutte, Christiaan 292, 293
- Schwarz, Ernest Hubert 148
- scimitar oryx 179
- Scotland, deserts in 102-3
- seasonal variation 124, 124
- sedentarization 308-9, 376
- sediment 42, 57
alluvial fans 260-1, 260
Loess Plateau 198, 198
mapping 91
movement of by water 127, 127, 128
movement of by wind 58, 60, 95
ocean 114, 114, 115
sand dune formation 130-1
whaleback dunes 63
- Selima Sand Sheet 98-9, 98, 99
- semiarid deserts 34, 51, 52, 127, 142
- semideserts 52
- Senegalia senegal* 350, 351
- Senussi 74
- Serengeti, diversity of 29
- serir 142
- Shantz, Homer 37
- sheep 230, 233, 235
argali sheep 226, 237
- The Sheltering Desert* 16
- shovel-snouted lizards 181, 181, 182-3
- shrinkage, desert 364-7
- shrubs 38
plastic shrubs 337
- Shuttle Imaging Radar-A (SIR-A)
project 98-9, 98
- Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) 85
- Siccar Point, Scotland 102-3, 102, 103
- Side Looking Synthetic Aperture Radar 98
- Sierra Madre 56, 252
- Sierra Nevada 56, 110, 252
- Sikkim 206-7
- Silk Road 202-7
- Simpson Desert
expeditions in 121
temperatures in 159
wildfires 159
- Sinatra, Frank 330
- sip well method 134
- SIR-A (Shuttle Imaging Radar-A)
project 98-9, 98
- Siwa Oasis 76, 77
- Skeleton Coast 38, 39, 276
- slopes 127-8
- slot canyons 128
- Smith, Jonathan 84
- snakes 180, 180, 182, 265
- snow 37, 224, 228, 238, 240
Antarctica 60, 63, 63
continental deserts 55
Gobi Desert 61, 200
as water resource 233
- snow leopards 237, 237
- soil, desert 167
soil erosion 9, 160, 376
soil moisture 361, 363, 365
- solar compasses 75, 75
- solar power 376, 378-81, 378-9
Khi Solar One (KSO) 380, 380-1
ten largest power plants 379
- solar radiation 196
and evaporation 32
- Son, Paul van 376
- Sonoran Desert 110-11, 159-60, 252
bushfires 158
causes of dryness in 50, 58, 59
diversity of 31
natural resources 219
plant and animal species 110, 111, 255
rainfall 110
temperatures in 27
- South Africa 191
Khi Solar One (KSO) 380, 380-1
- South America
climate of arid zones 271, 271
dust-source regions 86, 86-7, 88
fossilized deserts 104
ocean-margin deserts 270-3, 274
Patagonia and the Monte 244-7
rain shadow deserts 56-7
see also individual locations
- South Atlantic Gyre 59
- South Dakota 129
- space, mapping and monitoring deserts from 82-5
- Spain 342-3
- spekboom 170
- spinifex grass 160, 174-5, 299, 299
spinifex grass resin 174-5, 175
- springbok 150, 176, 176, 290, 373
- springs 29, 145
- Sputnik Planitia dune field, Pluto 43
- Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* 17
- Steinbeck, John 337
- Stimson formation, Mars 106-7, 107
- Stipa* 236
- Stipagrostis* 172, 178
- stomata 165, 165, 172, 173, 286
- storms 228
dust storms 87, 88, 88-9, 132, 136-7, 228-9, 335
- stripes, desert 300-1, 300-1
- stromatolites 156
- Strychnos spinosa* 161
- Strzelecki Desert 121
- "A Study of Global Sand Seas" (1979) 82, 83, 83
- Stülpnagel, Johann Friedrich von 73
- Sturt, Charles 121
- subsurface remote sensing 98-9
- subtropical deserts 50-3, 138-91
anatomy of 140-3
animal adaptations 176-83
Australian spinifex grasses 174-5
CAM and C4 adaptations to heat and water stress 170-3
delta in the desert 146-9
desert fires 158-61
desert kites 188-9
drought-adapted oryx 178-9
early humans 184-7
human occupation 184-91
migrations 150-3
plant survival in 162-5
reptiles 180-3
rhizosphere formation 166-9
Sahara 140-5
salt pans 154-7
temperatures 51-2
what causes dryness in 48
see also individual deserts
- Succulent Karoo ecoregion 40, 298, 298
- succulents 38, 40-1, 162-4, 288
cultivation of 382, 383, 383
water retention 162-3, 165, 165, 172
see also individual species
- Sudan 141
dryness of 49
Sahara 141
Sahel region 179
Tokar Delta 136
- Sundance Kid 251, 251
- Sutlej River 312

- Synthetic Aperture Radar sensors 99
 Syr Darya River 201
 Syria, causes of dryness in 57
- T**
 Tabula Rogeriana 70, 70-1
 TADS (Trans-African Drainage System) 99
 Tafilalt, Morocco 52
 Tajikistan 197
 dryness in 57, 57
 Taklamakan Desert 195, 196
 altitude 54
 ancient settlements in 320
 sand seas 198
 temperatures in 55
 Tarim Depression 229
 Taurus Mountains 57
 tectonics 126
 Tehuelche 248-51
 temperature
 adaptations to the cold 232-41
 Asian deserts 200
 effect of climate change on
 global 359-61, 359, 360
 effect of latitude and altitude on 35, 36
 highest recorded 24-5, 26-7
 impact of increased
 temperatures on birds 370-1
 large day-night contrasts 24
 lowest recorded 27
 measuring 26
 and rock weathering 214-15, 214
 see also *individual locations*
 Tengger Desert 195
 desertification 337, 349
 solar energy 379
 tequila 173, 382
 termites 298
 Terra nullius 10, 10-11
 Thal Desert 310
 Thar Desert 310-13
 causes of dryness in 48, 50
 thermal dances 182, 182-3
 theropods 105
 Thomas, David 347
 Thornthwaite method 32
 thrombolites 156, 156-7
 Tian Shan Mountains 196, 196, 197, 201, 229, 326
 Tibesti Mountains 87, 99, 99, 140, 140
 Tibetan Plateau 196, 198, 208
 Timbisha Shoshone Native Americans 263
 Timbuktu, Megalake 92, 92, 93
 Timur 203
 Titan 43
 Belet dune field 44, 44
 dunes on 42, 43
 Tokar Delta 136
 Tolbo 212
 TOMS sensor 86-7, 86-7
 topographic effect 50
 Torres del Paine National Park 249
 Toshka 332, 332, 333
 Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer (TOMS) 86-7, 86-7
 Toulmin, Camilla 339
 trace fossils 105
 Trans-African Drainage System (TADS) 99
 Trans-Australian Railway 9
 transpiration 32, 163, 286
 tree dtella 377
 trees
 ana tree 38
 drought-resistant 38
 Joshua tree 10-11, 255
 monkey orange tree 161
 quiver tree 40, 41
 saxaul tree 236, 237
Triodia 174, 175, 299, 299
 T. irritans 175
 T. pungens 175
 Tsagaan Suvarga 209
 Tsauchab valley 277
 Tsondab Sandstone Formation 279, 279
 Tuareg 145
 Tunisia 141, 358
 Tunisian Sahara 17, 314
 Turin Papyrus 67-8
 Turkana Basin 49
 Turkana Jet 49
 Turkey, causes of dryness in 57
 Turpan Depression 196
 Tushka Megalake 93
 Twyfelfontein 292, 292
 Tynan, Aidan 18
- U**
 UK Directorate of Overseas Surveys 80
 Ulaantaiga Bio Reserve 201
 Uluru 16, 16
Uma scoparia 181
 UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) 60
 Bukara 203
 Flaming Cliffs of Bayanzag 213
 Namib Sand Sea 285
 Silk Road 203, 205
 Wadi Rum 14
 uniformitarianism 102-3
 Union Defense Airforce 80
 United Nations 201
 Aral Sea 329
 aridity index (AI) 32, 35
 dzud 224
 Environment Programme 60
 International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralism 231
 United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) 340, 347
 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 344, 347, 348
 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 143
 wildfires 158
 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization see UNESCO
 United States of America (USA)
 causes of dryness in 58
 Dust Bowl 9, 10, 266, 267, 318, 334-7, 382
 rain shadow deserts 56
 see also *individual locations*
 the universe, deserts of the 42-5
 Urwi Pan 156
 U.S. Geological Survey 82, 98
 Utah, Arches National Park 216-17
 Uzbekistan
 Aral Sea 326
 Navoly region 37
 Silk Road 203
 see also *individual deserts*
- V**
Vachellia seyal 350
 Valley of the Lakes 212
 Venus, dunes on 42
 Victoria Valley, Ross Island 62
 Vicuna 270
 Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer 89
 volcanoes 140, 140
 Vostock Station, Antarctica 60, 61
 Vozrozhdeniya Island 328-9
 vulcanism 126
 vygies 40, 162-3, 163
- W**
 Wadi ad-Dawasir 316, 316, 317
 Wadi Howar 96, 96
 Wadi Rum 14, 14-15
 wartime, mapping in 74-7, 78
 Warren, Andrew 81
 water
 Aral Sea 326-9
 borehole water 319
 CAM and C4 adaptations to 170-3
 Central Arizona Project 333
 desalination 324
 drought-adapted wildlife 178-9
 effects of global warming on 361
 erosion 126-31, 127, 214, 216, 338
 evaporation 32, 155, 338-9
 Great Man-Made River 333
 irrigation 55, 105, 307, 312, 313, 314, 316, 316, 317, 318, 326, 337, 382
 plants and water loss and retention 162-3, 165, 168
 qanats 304-7, 308
 Salton Sea 330-1
 sourcing 304-19, 320, 321, 326-33
 surface water 59, 116, 150, 151, 153, 162, 210, 265
 Toshka 332, 332, 333
 use and impact of groundwater in deserts and drylands 314-19
 water loss 32
 waterholes 128
 Wayne, John 12, 12
 weathering, desert 214-17
 wedge-snouted lizard 182
 Welland, Michael 18, 19
 Welwitschia mirabilis 280, 281, 282, 283, 286, 287, 288
 Western Desert, Egypt 76, 77
 whaleback dunes 63, 131
 White Nile 143
 White Nile Megalake 92, 93
 Wilber, Charles Dana 336
 wild melon 179
 wildebeest 150, 150
 wildfires 158-61, 358, 359
 Williams, Claud 75
 Wilson, Ian 143
 wind
 on Antarctica 60
 dune formation 126, 130-1
 and dune movement 104
 evaporation and windspeed 32
 Patagonia and the Monte 246-7, 247
 surface winds 50, 50, 51
 wind energy 378-9
 wind erosion 43, 43, 95, 131, 214, 216-17, 247, 300, 338
 yardangs 130-1, 131
 wombats, giant 121
World Atlas of Desertification 344-7
 World Climate Research Programme 364
 World War I (1914-18) 74
 Wright brothers 78
- X**
 xerophytes 236
 Xi Jinping, President 324
- Y**
 Y Wladfa 248-51
 yaks 231, 232, 232, 234, 234
 yardangs 43, 130-1, 131, 214
 Yellow (Huang) River 196, 198, 199, 201, 213
 Yolyn Am 223, 223
Yukka 255
 yurts (*ger*) 224, 225, 229, 230-1, 238-9, 240
- Z**
 Za'atari 325
 Zambezi River 149
 zebras 151, 152-3, 152-3
 Burchell's zebra 153
 Zerzura Club 76-7