

# The Amazon Rainforest

## Where is It?

The Amazon rainforest is located in South America and covers 5.5 million square kilometres of land across nine countries. Brazil has 60%, Peru has 13%, and Colombia has 10%, while other countries have very small parts of the rainforest within their borders.

The Amazon River flows through the Amazon rainforest.

## How Old Is It?

The Amazon rainforest has existed for at least 55 million years.

## Why is it Important?

The Amazon rainforest is home to lots of plants and animals, many of which are not found elsewhere in the world. There are over 40 000 different plant species and approximately 2.5 million insect species in the Amazon rainforest. The Amazon rainforest is also referred to as the 'Lungs of the Planet' because it produces more than 20% of the world's oxygen. There are approximately 3000 fruits that grow in the rainforest that are edible.

Many plants around the world have medicinal qualities. Of the plants known to have anti-cancer properties, 70% are found in the rainforest. Amazon natives use rainforest plants regularly but 90% of the ones they use have not been studied by modern science.

## Who Lives There?

In the year 1500 there were between 6 and 9 million Amazon natives. Today there are only an estimated 250 000 left. There are approximately 170 different languages spoken by the Amazon natives.

It is believed that there may still be as many as 50 Amazon native tribes living in the rainforest that have never been in contact with the rest of the world.

# Sherwood Forest

## Where is It?

Sherwood Forest is a former royal hunting forest in Nottinghamshire, UK. Today it covers around 4 square kilometres. It used to be much bigger – it covered parts of Derbyshire according to the Domesday Book of 1086.

The Rivers Idle, Maun, Meden and Poulter flow through Sherwood Forest before joining the River Trent.

## How Old Is It?

Sherwood Forest has existed for at least 12 000 years ago.

## Why is it Important?

Sherwood Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a National Nature Reserve and a Special Area of Conservation. It is made up of areas of old woodland pasture and heathland, with native trees such as oak, silver birch, rowan, holly and hawthorn. It is a very important site for ancient oaks, invertebrates and fungi, as well as being linked to the legends of Robin Hood.

There are over 1000 oak trees in the forest and most are over 500 years old. Most famous is The Major Oak, which, according to local folklore, was Robin Hood's hideout. This oak tree is between 800 and 1000 years old. Over 1000 spider and beetle species call Sherwood Forest home, and over 200 types of fungi have been recorded. Many species of bats and birds have been spotted in the area, and the heathland provides important breeding ground for lots of birds.

In 2008, local archaeologists found evidence of a 'thyng site' - an important Danelaw meeting place where people came to resolve disputes and settle issues. Experts believe it could hold some clues as to the boundary of the ancient Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria.

## Who Lives There?

In 1086, there were a few thousand people living in the forest area, mostly in small villages.

Today, the forest is much smaller, and only a few villages are still considered to be in the forest. However, around 500 000 people visit Sherwood Forest every year for the day or to stay in one of the holiday resorts in the forest area.