

Gobi Desert

When you hear the word desert, do you picture a vast area of sand dunes? Although that is the most popular image of a desert, in reality, a desert is any place that gets less than 25cm of precipitation (rain, snow, sleet or hail) a year. Some deserts are huge areas of sand or flat, stony ground but others are mountainous.



The Gobi desert is in Central Asia and most of it is bare rock. It stretches across large parts of Mongolia and China.

Its climate is extreme, reaching very cold temperatures in the winter and very high temperatures in the summer.

Area: 1,295,000km²

Temperatures: Up to 45°C on a summer's day and as cold as -40°C on a winter's night.



Wildlife

Mammals	Birds	Reptiles
snow leopard	golden eagle	Gobi viper
black-tailed gazelle	Henderson's ground jay	European adder
Gobi bear	desert wheatear	Steppes rat snake
jerboa		
Gobi ibex		
wild Bactrian camel		



The Wild Bactrian camel

The wild Bactrian camel lives in the Gobi desert and is listed as a critically endangered species. It has two humps rather than the single hump of their Arabian relatives. It is the only truly wild camel that still exists.

Did You Know...?

The word gobi means 'waterless place' in Mongolian.

Plants

In order to survive in the Gobi desert, the plants that live there have to be adapted to extreme conditions and very little water. One of these plants is the saxaul tree, which has a spongy bark that easily absorbs and retains water. Another is the saltwort, a weed-like plant that grows in salty soils where other plants cannot survive.



Inhabitants

The population of the Gobi desert is mostly Mongols and Han Chinese. People keep their homes close to a water source. They live in a type of nomadic dwelling called yurts. These are circular tents that are covered with animal skins or felt.