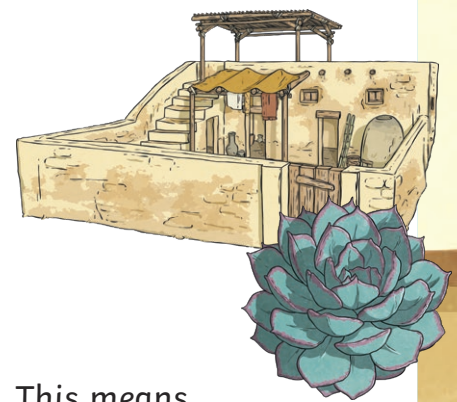


Living in the Desert

While the desert may seem uninhabitable, it might surprise you to hear that over and above the plants and animals that call the desert their home, people have lived in desert regions for centuries.

Some groups of people in the desert set up permanent structures and buildings with thick walls and small windows. This design keeps houses cool in the day but warm at night. The houses are built from bricks made of straw, clay, sand and water. The bricks are shaped and left to dry in the sun.

Most houses that you have seen in your area will have sloped roofs to allow rain to fall off the sides. Houses in the desert have flat roofs because they don't have to be concerned about rain. Formal settlements would be built near large oases – these are areas in the desert where underground water flows to the surface, providing a fertile patch of ground where drinking water as well as fruit and palm trees can be found.



Other groups of people living in the desert are nomadic. This means that they do not build permanent structures, but rather, they travel across the desert. One such group is the Bedouin people who live in the Sahara Desert.

They cross the deserts with their tents on pack animals like donkeys or camels, and herd domesticated animals like goats and sheep. These animals provide them with resources like milk, meat, wool, skins and leather.



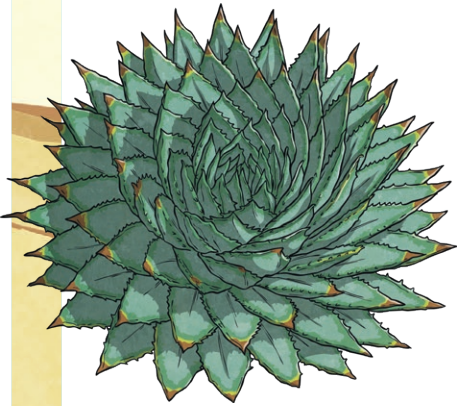
Living in the Desert

As they travel, they may stop at an oasis in the desert to rest and get fresh water. The landscape of the desert changes constantly as winds shift the sands, therefore these people are experts at mapping out the stars to navigate their way through the desert.

In particular they will find ways to mark off the location of smaller oases in the desert and make sure that their travel routes take them through these areas where they can stop to get fresh food and water.

Like most desert inhabitants, Bedouin people wear loose clothing to stay cool. They also prefer fabrics that are lighter in colour as these reflect heat instead of absorbing it. They keep most of their bodies covered to protect them from sunburn and from the stinging sand. They generally avoid the midday heat and are active in the early mornings and evenings.

As night falls, the Bedouin people take shelter in tents as the desert temperatures drop drastically at night. This is a result of the lack of cloud cover in the desert. All the heat that was absorbed during the day escapes back into the atmosphere during the night.



Questions

1. How are permanent structures in the desert designed to keep them cool?

2. What is the difference between the roofs you may see around you and the roofs of desert structures?

3. Why does this difference occur?

4. Where does an oasis get its water from?

5. How do desert people use the oasis?

6. Explain the term nomadic in your own words.

7. List three ways that the Bedouin people protect themselves from the heat.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

8. Match the columns to indicate how the Bedouin people make use of the animals that they herd.

camels

sheep

goats

donkeys

milk

wool

carrying goods

carrying people

9. How do the Bedouin people navigate their way through the desert?

10. Explain why the desert is hot during the day, but cold at night.

Answers

1. How are permanent structures in the desert designed to keep them cool?

They have small windows and thick walls.

2. What is the difference between the roofs you may see around you and the roofs of desert structures?

The roofs we see around us are mostly sloped while desert roofs are flat.

3. Why does this difference occur?

Our roofs are designed to allow the rain to fall off.

4. Where does an oasis get its water from?

The water comes from underground rivers flowing to the surface.

5. How do desert people use the oasis?

They collect fresh water as well as fruits from the oasis. It can also be used as a rest spot while travelling.

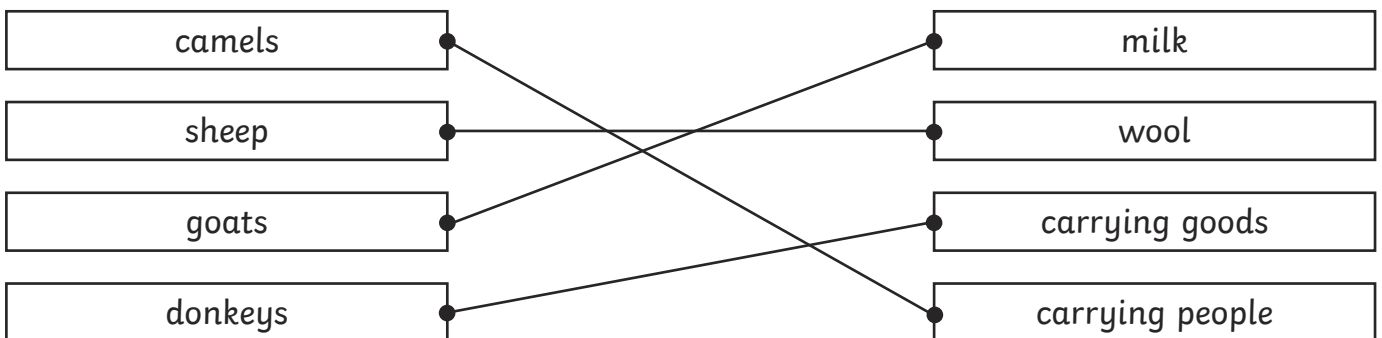
6. Explain the term nomadic in your own words.

Nomadic means you do not set up permanent structures but rather move around the land.

7. List three ways that the Bedouin people protect themselves from the heat.

1. **They wear loose, light clothing.**
2. **The clothing covers most of their bodies.**
3. **They travel during the cool morning and evening hours.**

8. Match the columns to indicate how the Bedouin people make use of the animals that they herd.



9. How do the Bedouin people navigate their way through the desert?

They navigate by using the stars.

10. Explain why the desert is hot during the day, but cold at night.

The lack of cloud cover causes all the hot air to escape back into the atmosphere during the night.