

The Desert

Most people believe that the desert is an endless stretch of land. They think that it is dry, hot, waterless and without shelter. The specialists, however, see the desert as a beautiful place. For them a desert is the home of a variety of people, animals and plants.

True, that it does not always have a cover of grass. The rain is rare. But when it does, the desert becomes as beautiful as any tropical garden.

A desert may sometimes have mountains and hills. It may have an oasis also. A desert can be hot like the Thar or cold like Ladakh. In general, when a place has little or no water and vegetation, people call it a desert. Sand dunes are found in those deserts which are almost totally without water. These dunes keep on shifting across the desert.

All creatures need water. The animals and plants of the desert are able to survive on less water. A camel can do without water for days together. The reason is that a camel can drink a lot of water at one time. Now camels do not sweat, so they retain the water they drink for a long time.

Smaller desert animals get their water from the moisture in the things they eat. So some of them get the water they need from the animals they eat. Those who don't eat meat, eat plants and seeds. Thus they get the needed water from plant juices.

In our cities and villages, the climate is humid. The moisture in the air acts like a blanket. It protects the earth from the hot rays of the sun. So the earth is not very hot during the day. The same cover doesn't let the heat go out during the night. So the earth is not very cold during the night. Thus the variation in temperature during the 24 hours is not much. Since there is no such cover in the desert, there is much variation between the day and night temperature there. The temperature rises much during the day. In the same way, it falls much during the night.