



EXPLORERS IN THE RAINFOREST

FROM TUDOR TIMES TO MODERN DAY

Ancient Exploration

Great rivers deserve great stories, and the Amazon, greatest of all rivers, has many amazing stories to tell. This is a very brief introduction to just a few of them!

Unlike most other major rivers of the world, the Amazon was first navigated by Europeans from its' headwaters (where a river begins)to the mouth of the river (where a river meets the sea/ocean).

In fact, the Europeans who first encountered the upper reaches of the Amazon had no idea where the other end of the river might be. This may be, in part, because the mouth of the Amazon is so huge (over 200 miles across) that early explorers recognized the Atlantic coastline of South America as a river!



A modern recreation of Tudor travel in the rainforest.

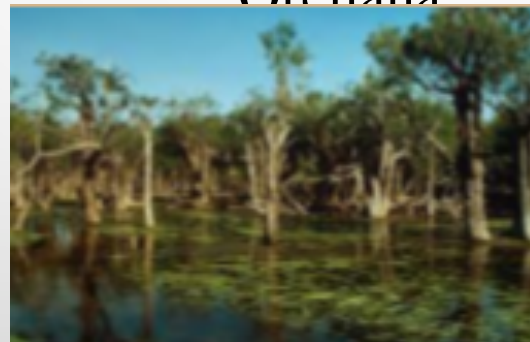




Despite the fact that indigenous people had been living in the Amazon for at least 10,000 years, the Amazon River itself was "discovered" by a Spanish explorer and conquistador. Don Francisco de Orellana



Don Francisco's expedition was searching for spices and gold. Instead they found "the greatest river on earth" He named it – "Rio de Orellana"



Further explorers came looking for gold, silver and expensive spices, Travellers in these groups wrote quite accurate descriptions of the flooded forest areas along the Amazon, the farming systems and crops of the Indians, and the aquatic fa rivers.



They greatly admired the abundance and diversity of fish in the river, the huge numbers of turtles, and were very impressed by the 'manati' (Amazonian manatee). They were very perplexed (confused and worried) by the electric eel. There were many things they had



MODERN EXPLORATION

Modern Amazon exploration became more about science than gold and silver.

One such explorer was the Englishman Henry William Bates, who spent 11 years (1848-1859) in the interior of Amazonia, and who amassed (gathered) the single largest collection of insects ever made by one individual in the region.



Explorations are still being made, looking for medicinal ingredients from plants in the rainforest.

Every expedition makes new finds of unknown plants and/or animals and insects.



Wierd and wonderful. Huge to tiny...
the Amazon has it all!

Many foods we eat come from the rainforest
too...



FOOD IN THE AMAZON
RAINFOREST



Pineapple

PINEAPPLES GROW ON BUSHES.



They are farmed for export around the world.

Pineapple *fruits* are actually composed of 100-200 fused berry-like *fruits*.

Pineapple plants grow up to 3m tall.

Pineapples are a short-stemmed terrestrial bromeliad, up to 3m tall in flower.



Chocolate



EACH BEAN POD CONTAINS 20 TO 60 REDDISH-BROWN COCOA BEANS UP TO AN INCH LONG, COCOA BEANS MAKE CHOCOLATE.

THEY GROW BEST IN HUMID CONDITIONS WITH REGULAR RAIN, AWAY FROM WIND.



Coffee



TWO SMALL COFFEE BEANS ARE FOUND IN EACH BERRY.
COFFEE PLANTS CAN LIVE UP TO 100 YEARS OLD. THIS
PLANT GROWS BEST IN THE SHADE AND WITH REGULAR
RAINFALL.



Bananas



BANANAS ARE ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FRUITS IN THE WORLD. OVER 55 MILLION TONS OF BANANAS ARE EATEN EACH YEAR!

BANANA PLANTS GROW IN HIGH TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL. THERE CAN BE UP TO 240 BANANAS ON EACH PLANT!



Brazil nuts

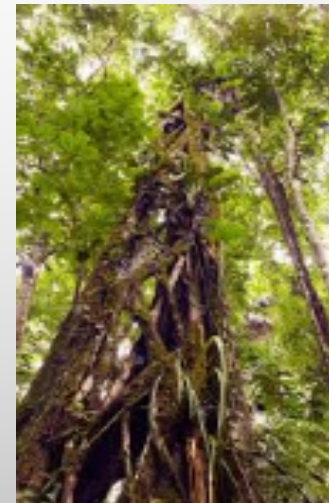


THE BRAZIL NUT TREE IS ONE OF THE TALLEST TREES IN THE RAINFOREST. DURING JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, ITS FRUIT WHICH IS THE SIZE OF A BASEBALL, RIPENS AND FALLS TO THE GROUND REACHING A SPEED OF 50MPH! INSIDE THERE ARE UP TO 21 NUTS.



Figs

FIGS GROW ON A VINE.
IN THE RAINFOREST THE VINE USES OTHER
PLANTS TO SUPPORT IT. SOMETIMES THE
FIG PLANT KILLS THE HOST TREE BECAUSE
IT IS WRAPPED SO TIGHTLY AROUND IT.





Sugar



SUGARCANE NEEDS LOTS OF HEAT AND WATER TO GROW. SUGARCANE PLANTS CAN GROW UP TO 13 FEET TALL!

THE JUICE FROM THE SUGARCANE PLANT IS TAKEN OUT WHICH IS THEN TURNED INTO SUGAR.



Mango



MANGO TREES CAN GROW UP TO 100 FEET TALL! THESE TREES GROW BEST WITH LOTS OF SUNLIGHT. THE FRUIT TAKES UP TO 6 MONTHS TO RIPEN.

OTHER THINGS WHICH GROW IN THE AMAZON RAINFOREST...

Rubber, made from the sap of Rubber trees, can be used for tyres, wellies, hot water bottles and many other things.



Bamboo

Fibres from the bamboo plant are used to make eco friendly clothing, wipes and other things.



Scientists and Explorers are still finding new plants and animals in the rainforest.

Lots of the spices we use for flavouring, such as vanilla and cinnamon come from plants in the rainforest.

Spices



Many other plants which are used as medicines.



How many different things in your house do you think might have been discovered in the rainforest ?



WRITE/DRAW A LIST OF THE DIFFERENT THINGS IN
YOUR HOUSE THAT YOU THINK MIGHT HAVE BEEN
DISCOVERED IN THE RAINFOREST