

# Sonoran Desert

Sprawling across southwestern Arizona, parts of California, portions of northern Mexico, and much of Baja California, the Sonoran Desert is a massive desert region covering a considerable amount of area in North America. Though the desert might at first appear desolate, the area actually gets up to sixteen inches of rain each year, which helps to support a large and diverse ecosystem teeming with plants and animals.

The desert's rainy season occurs in the winter and the summer, when it is said that the rains are always followed by a beautiful rainbow. It may seem surprising that temperatures range only from 52 F in the winter to 86 F in the summer through most areas of the desert, but do not let this fool you; depending on the seasons, temperatures in the Mexican portion of the desert can reach an astonishing high of 134 F!

The summer and winter rains of the Sonoran Desert support an astonishing 60 mammal species, 350 different species of birds, 1000 native bee species, and more than 2000 types of native plants! If you have ever wanted to see a jaguar, but have not made time to leave the country, you might want to take a detour from your next train trip through the desert and visit southeastern Arizona where the only population of jaguars are found in the United States.

The abundance of plants in this desert not only survive the desert conditions but actually thrive with the winter and summer rainy seasons. The bi-seasonal rainfall in the Sonoran Desert supports the survival of more plant species than in any other North American desert. Plants found in the desert include agave, palm, cacti, legumes, and many others that can easily be seen dotting the desert landscape. The largest and most conspicuous plant in the desert is the saguaro cactus. These famous cacti are often placed in desert scenes in movies and on postcards from the Southwest. The desert is the only place in the world where the famous saguaro cactus grows in

the wild. The cacti here provide food and homes for many desert mammals and birds. Depending on the seasonal temperatures from March through June, this desert comes alive with showy flowers growing in vibrant reds, yellows, pinks and whites. The saguaro cacti and jaguars are not the only famous inhabitants of the Sonoran desert. Mexican jumping beans are actually fruits of a shrub found in the desert. Due to the moth larva found in the bean, they actually move and jump!

The Sonoran Desert is home to a variety of plants and animals, which draw nature enthusiasts to this beautiful desert region. The rolling sand dunes make for an amazing playground for adventure seekers, who can ride their sand-buggies and off-road vehicles through the seemingly endless desert. Over the past decades the largest city to inhabit the desert, Phoenix, Arizona, with its growing urban sprawl is covering the desert with concrete at a rate of almost one acre per hour!

## Source(s):

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[www.desertusa.com](http://www.desertusa.com)

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