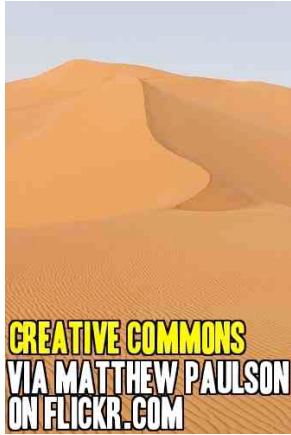


## Sahara desert twice as old as we thought

22nd September, 2014



Scientists believe the Sahara desert is twice as old as we previously thought. Science books generally say the Sahara is around three million years old. However, a new study from a centre for climate research in Norway says it could be around seven million years old. Researchers used computers to try and calculate when large parts

of North Africa became desert. Their tests showed that global warming seven million years ago dried a lot of the land in what is today the African nation of Chad. A sea called the Tethys Sea started shrinking. This made the African summer monsoons less frequent, which helped form sand dunes in Chad. The scientists say this is how the Sahara first started.

The Sahara is one of the world's best-known and largest deserts. It covers about 10 per cent of the whole African continent and forms large parts of Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Sudan and other nations. The sands stretch from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Red Sea in the east. Not everyone agrees that the Sahara is as old as the Norway research says it is. Stefan Kröpelin, a geologist in Germany, says real geological evidence is needed to be sure. He said the Norway research is based on numbers and not evidence, saying: "Nothing you can find in the Sahara is older than 500,000 years old". He added that our knowledge of the Saharan climate is only from 10,000 years ago and that our knowledge is "full of gaps".

Sources: *Daily Mail / Nature / Reporting Climate Science*

### Writing

Which are better, deserts or jungles? Give three reasons for each.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*old / science books / climate / research / calculate / global warming / sand dunes / continent / sands / Atlantic Ocean / geologist / numbers / evidence / knowledge*

### True / False

- Science books usually say the Sahara is about 3 million years old. T / F
- The article mentions a new study on the Sahara from Mali. T / F
- Researchers used traditional methods to find the age of the Sahara. T / F
- Researchers say the Sahara's first sand dunes appeared in Chad. T / F
- The Sahara covers around 10% of the whole continent of Africa. T / F
- The Sahara stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Blue Sea. T / F
- A German geologist said he agreed with the research. T / F
- The geologist said nothing in the Sahara is older than 500,000 years. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1. believe    | a. extends over  |
| 2. previously | b. understanding |
| 3. study      | c. earlier       |
| 4. calculate  | d. often         |
| 5. frequent   | e. think         |
| 6. covers     | f. proof         |
| 7. evidence   | g. spaces        |
| 8. sure       | h. report        |
| 9. knowledge  | i. certain       |
| 10. gaps      | j. work out      |

### Discussion – Student A

- What do you know about the Sahara desert?
- Is it important if a desert is 3 million or 7 million years old?
- How do scientists calculate the age of a desert?
- Would you like to be a scientist and research deserts?
- What makes deserts so beautiful?
- What will happen if deserts get bigger and bigger?
- What do you think the world was like seven million years ago?
- Is it interesting to know how deserts started?

## Phrase Match

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. a new study from a centre for climate | a. warming                  |
| 2. global                                | b. dunes                    |
| 3. summer                                | c. from the Atlantic Ocean  |
| 4. sand                                  | d. whole African continent  |
| 5. scientists say this is how            | e. research                 |
| 6. It covers about 10 per cent of the    | f. not evidence             |
| 7. The sands stretch                     | g. needed to be sure        |
| 8. real geological evidence is           | h. monsoons                 |
| 9. based on numbers and                  | i. gaps                     |
| 10. our knowledge is full of             | j. the Sahara first started |

## Discussion – Student B

- What things in the article surprised you?
- What things in the article were most interesting?
- What would you do in the Sahara if you went there?
- Why can't scientists agree on things?
- What dangers are there in the desert?
- What would it be like to live in the desert?
- Are you a desert person or a jungle person? Why?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Spelling

- twice as old as we ipureoslyv thought
- a centre for ciltmea research
- around seven nliliom years old.
- try and culaaclte when
- the Tethys Sea started ikinsnhrg
- summer monsoons less funreteq
- the whole African cnotintne
- Egypt, Sudan and other iatnsno
- The sands trsecth from the Atlantic Ocean
- Not everyone eagrse
- real geological edcneive is needed
- our ewkenldgo is full of gaps

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. c	3. h	4. j	5. d
6. a	7. f	8. i	9. b	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Sahara desert

You think the Sahara desert is the best place in the world. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their places. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): Mount Everest, the Great Wall of China or the Great Barrier Reef.

### Role B – Mount Everest

You think Mount Everest is the best place in the world. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their places. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): the Sahara desert, the Great Wall of China or the Great Barrier Reef.

### Role C – Great Wall of China

You think the Great Wall of China is the best place in the world. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their places. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): Mount Everest, the Sahara desert or the Great Barrier Reef.

### Role D – Great Barrier Reef

You think the Great Barrier Reef is the best place in the world. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their places. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): Mount Everest, the Great Wall of China or the Sahara desert.

## Speaking – Famous places

Rank these with your partner. Put your favourite places at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| • Sahara desert       | • Niagara Falls |
| • Great Barrier Reef  | • Mount Everest |
| • Machu Picchu        | • Eiffel Tower  |
| • Great Wall of China | • Taj Mahal     |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.