

## Sahara

The Sahara (*sub HAIR uh*) is the world's largest desert. It covers about 3 ½ million square miles (9 million square kilometers) of Africa, as much land as the United States. The Sahara is in northern Africa. Most of it is made up of mountains, bare, rocky plains, and high flatlands called plateaus (*plah TOHS*). The rest is a huge sea of sand. In some places, sand piles up in hills called dunes. The desert is hot and dry, but it turns cool at night. It gets less than 4 inches (10 centimeters) of rain each year.

About 2 million people live in the Sahara. Many people are nomads (*NOH madz*). Nomads are people who travel from place to place to find food and water for their herds of sheep, goats, camels, or cattle. Some people live in oases (*oh AY seez*), places where water comes

from wells or springs. They grow crops there.

A few plants can live in the desert. Some kinds live only a few weeks, but their seeds lie in the ground until it rains again. Other plants have deep roots or take in moisture through their leaves.

White gazelles, antelope called addax, and small foxes called fennecs live in the dunes. So do snakes, lizards, and gerbils.

Barbary sheep live on the plateaus.

Over 10,000 years ago, the Sahara had lakes and streams. Then, about 6,000 years ago, the region began to turn into a desert. Since that time, the Sahara has been slowly growing larger.

Sahara desert



Sahara

## Sailing

Sailing is a water sport that many people enjoy. Some sailboats are very small. Others are large boats called yachts (*yahts*). Many people enjoy racing their sailboats.

For hundreds of years, boatbuilders made sailboats of wood planks fastened to a wood frame. Today, most boats are made of steel, fiberglass, and aluminum.

### Parts of a sailboat

Sailboats have a hull, or body. The front of the hull is the bow, and the back is the stern. Most sailboats have a keel or a centerboard. It sticks down from the hull and keeps the boat from moving sideways. Sailboats also have a rudder for steering.

Tall poles called masts hold the sails upright. The booms are poles that stick out from the masts to hold the bottom of the sails straight out.

The sails are fastened to the masts. The biggest sail is the mainsail. Often there is a small sail called a jib in front of it.

### Kinds of sailboats

Sailboats are grouped by their size and the way their sails are rigged, or arranged. Catboats have one mast in the bow. Sloops have one mast toward the middle. They have a mainsail and a jib.

Ketches, yawls, and schooners (*SKOON uhrz*) are larger boats. Ketches and yawls have a small mizzenmast behind the



The America's Cup is the world's most famous sailboat competition.

### Types of sailboats

