What are mountains?

Mountains are areas of land that are much higher than the land surrounding them. They are higher and usually steeper than a **hill** and are generally over 600 metres high. They are often found together in a group called a **mountain range**.

Some well-known mountain ranges in the four countries that make up the UK include:

- the Cairngorms in Scotland
- the Pennines in England
- the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland
- Snowdonia in Wales

Sue Venir is climbing to the top of Mount Elbert, the tallest of all the Rocky Mountains. The Rocky Mountains is a mountain range that stretches all the way from the USA into Canada. Watch this short animation to find out more about mountains.

How are mountains formed?

The highest mountain ranges are created by **tectonic plates** pushing together and forcing the ground up where they meet. This is how the mountains of the Himalayas in Asia were formed.

Tectonic plates are also at work under the Atlantic Ocean, but instead of forcing the ground up, the two plates in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean are actually moving apart in opposite directions. This causes **lava** to **erupt** out of the gap that is left. As it cools down, the lava creates a long line of mountains - the longest mountain range on Earth.

Other mountains - usually those that stand on their own - are created by **ancient volcanoes**. Ben Nevis in Scotland was once a very large **active volcano**. It last erupted millions of years ago and the eruption was so violent that it caved in on itself.

The highest mountains in the UK are:

- Ben Nevis in Scotland (also the highest in the UK)
- Scafell Pike in England
- Slieve Donard in Northern Ireland
- Snowdon in Wales



The German Alps

Inzell lies in the Chiemgau region of Bavaria in the German Alps.

Josephine, 11, who lives in the area, likes to ski in winter and wave-board with her friends in summer.

In this short film she shows us the mountain ranges and the traditional Bavarian farms with their cows that graze the Alpine meadows in the summer and come into the stalls for the long harsh winters.



Practise

There are lots of fun things to do to help you remember what you've learnt about mountains.

Here are a few you could try.

Activity 1

Quiz

How much have you learnt about mountains?

Have a go at this five question multiple choice quiz to find out



Question 1 of 5

Where are mountain ranges formed?

- Only in the ocean
- Only on land
- Both land and ocean



Question 2 of 5

Which of these mountain ranges is found in the ocean?

- Mid-Atlantic Ridge
- Alps
- Andes



Question 3 of 5

How are most mountain ranges formed?

- Tectonic plates moving
- Tectonic plates disappearing
- Volcanoes



Question 4 of 5

Why can tall mountains sometimes be dangerous to climb?

- All mountains are volcanoes
- There is less oxygen at the…
- It's very hot at the top



Question 5 of 5

On which continent are the Rocky Mountains located?

- Africa
- Oceania
- North America