

Lost tribes

1. When we think of people living in huts and hunting with spears, we think of groups who lived long ago. But in some parts of the world, people still live this way today. Some of these groups, sometimes called tribes, have little or no contact with the rest of the world. They are often called 'lost', 'uncontacted' or 'isolated' peoples.
2. There are isolated groups in India, Papua New Guinea and many South American countries; including Brazil, which has the largest number of isolated groups.
3. The Amazon rainforest, most of which is in Brazil, is so large, wild and hard to get to that few people from the 'outside world' go there. Many small tribes have lived and stayed there, separated from the rest of the world and maintaining a similar way of life for thousands of years. In May 2008, when planes took photos of an isolated group in Brazil, the people were painted red or black and were aiming bows and arrows at the plane from outside their huts.
4. How do people survive in such hard-to-get-to places, without cars, electricity and shops? Isolated groups live mainly in jungles or areas where there is plenty of water, animals and plants for food and shelter. They do not have contact with many of the sicknesses found in the rest of the world and so are often very healthy. Some isolated peoples farm small areas of plants for food. They have everything they need to survive.
5. It is thought some isolated groups know about the 'outside world', but choose not to be a part of it. They might know that contact with 'outsiders' could mean they would get diseases, like measles and the flu, which would kill them. Outside people often want to take their land, cut down their forests for wood, and dig up their land to find gold or oil. Some isolated groups fight to keep outsiders away. A group called the Sentinelese, living on North Sentinel Island (off the coast of India), attack outsiders who come near them. In 2006, they killed two fishermen who came to their island. When a helicopter came to try and get the bodies of the men, the Sentinelese shot at it with bows and arrows.
6. In the past, governments tried to contact, find out about and help these groups. Now many think they can help and protect them best by making sure they are left alone.

