

Magical MOUNTAINS

NG Kids heads into the wild and discovers a mountain range full of colourful secrets...



Hills of history

Formed 200 million years ago, the Blue Ridge Mountains are part of the Appalachians, a chain of peaks stretching 3,000km down the eastern edge of North America. Believed to be the oldest range on the planet, the Blue Ridge Mountains, at the southern end of the Appalachians, were once as high as the Himalayas. But wind and rain have worn them down over millions of years.



An icy wind whistles past your nose and your skin tightens in the cold. Peering through the thick white fog, you can just make out a narrow footbridge, creaking eerily as it swings from side to side, 1,800m up in the sky. The fog begins to clear and you catch a flash out of the corner of your eye – a peregrine falcon swoops majestically down through the thinning

mist to catch its prey. Then, in an instant, the falcon – and the fog – are gone. You see nothing but trees for miles. Welcome to the wild, mysterious world of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the US state of North Carolina...



Bursting with colour

From the dense fog that clings to the top of Grandfather Mountain, to the hazy blue mist that hovers over the trees and gives the peaks their name, the Blue Ridge Mountains are alive with colour. Over 120 species of tree grow here – three times the number of native trees in the British Isles – and each autumn they burst into an explosion of orange, red and gold.

From wild bobcats...



Wild gathering

By day, squirrels and chipmunks chatter among the trees. At night, opossums (the only animal with a pouch living in North America), raccoons and coyotes (a fox-like animal) roam through the woods. They're joined by the marmoset bobcats (a type of wild cat), which make their homes in tree hollows and caves, while black bears, deer and wild turkey appear in the early morning or evening.

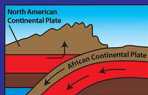


How mountains are made

Not all mountains are formed in exactly the same way, but most are created by gigantic movements of the Earth's crust (the outer layer of the planet).

The Appalachians were formed when the African and North American continents collided more than 200 million years ago. As the continents smashed into each other, the Earth's crust buckled and folded – a bit like when you push two pieces of paper together – and created the mountains.

Today, Mount Mitchell – the highest peak in the Blue Ridge and in eastern USA – is a whopping 2,037m high!



Did you know...?

Five million Fraser fir trees are harvested in North Carolina every year and sold as Christmas trees. The US President often gets his tree from here.

Dare you cross the 'Mile High Swinging Bridge at Grandfather Mountain'?

The Blue Ridge Parkway comes alive with colour during Autumn