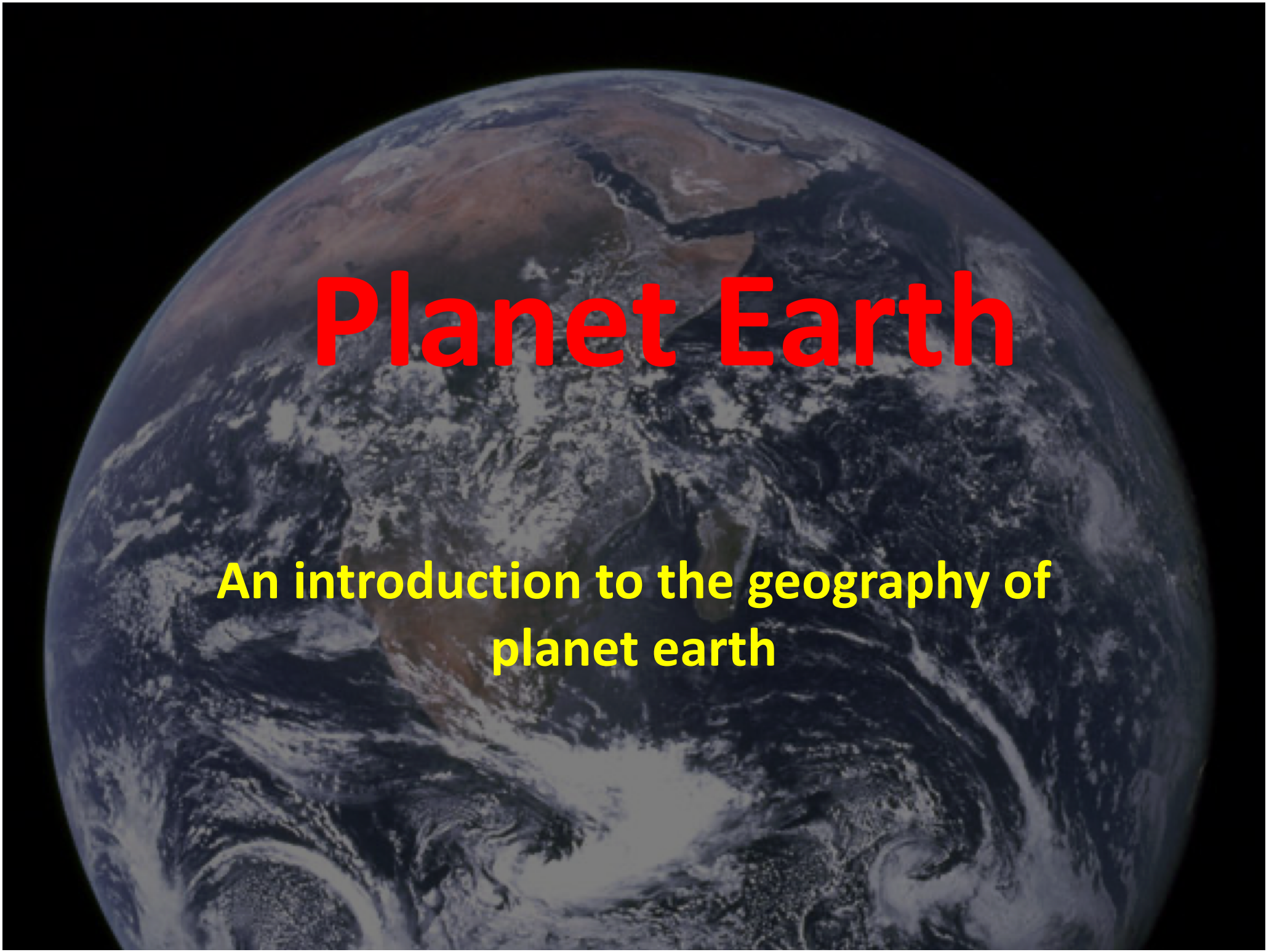
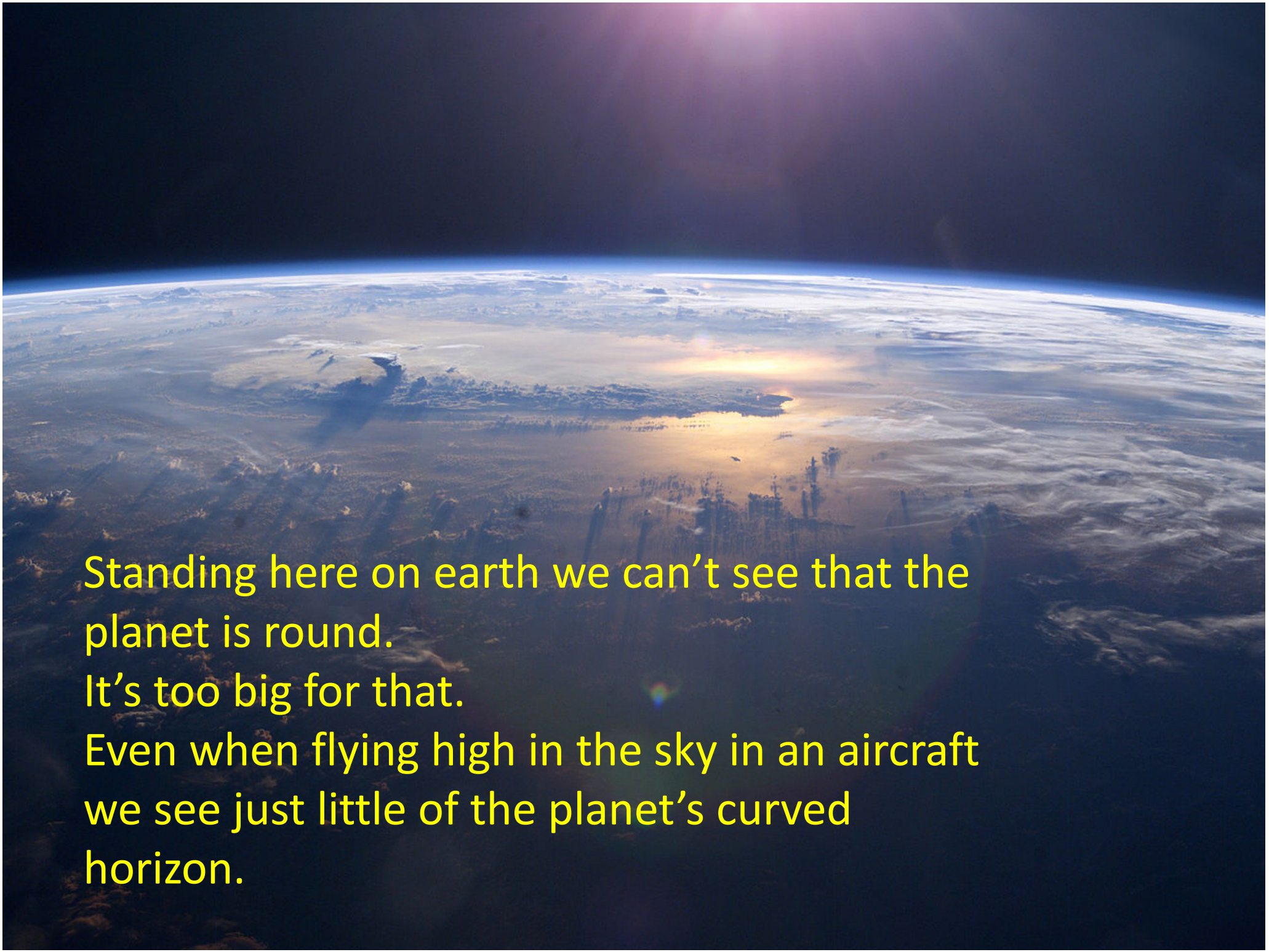

Planet Earth
An introduction to the geography of planet earth

Our earth is round, like a huge ball.

It travels through space in an orbit that takes it around the sun, which is very much bigger than earth. The earth is so big that 1,300,000 earths would fit inside the sun if it were hollow.

The earth's journey around the sun takes a whole year to complete.


Standing here on earth we can’t see that the planet is round.
It’s too big for that.
Even when flying high in the sky in an aircraft we see just little of the planet’s curved horizon.

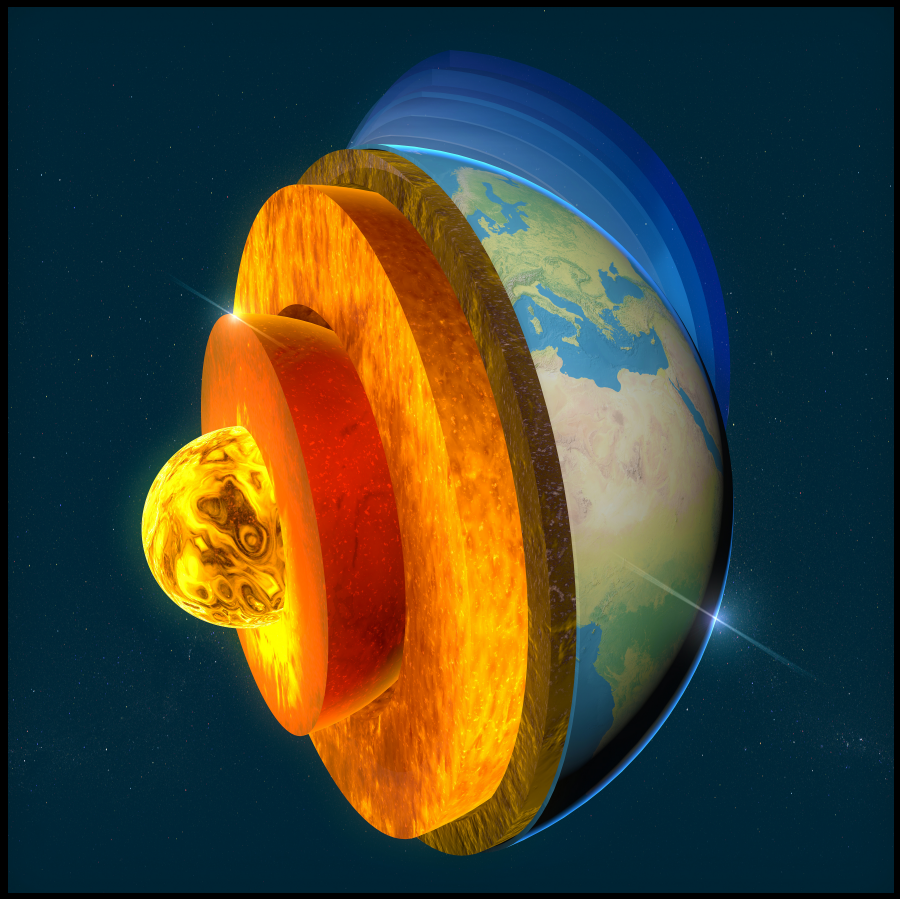
Only from space can we see that the earth is round.
It also looks like a blue ball covered in white swirls.
It looks blue because more than seven-tenths of the earth's surface is covered by water.
The white swirls are cloud.

The earth is wrapped in a thin blanket of air.
We call this the atmosphere.
The atmosphere makes our planet liveable. Without it, the earth would be too cold to support life.

Deep beneath the earth's solid outer crust lie a hot molten layer and a solid inner core.

The crust is broken into large sections that we call plates. The plates are moving very slowly, driven by the movement of the molten material found below. As the plates crash into each other great mountain ranges are pushed up. Where they move apart, deep ocean trenches form.

Volcanoes and earthquakes occur along the edges of these plates.



Standing on earth there is still much that we can see.

We can see great mountains with jagged peaks.

Some are so tall their tops are always covered in snow.

Some of the mountains have rivers of ice called glaciers, moving slowly down their slopes.

When the ice reaches lower, warmer elevations, it melts forming streams.

Sometimes the glaciers reach the sea.

Here big chunks of ice break off and fall into the water. They are called icebergs.

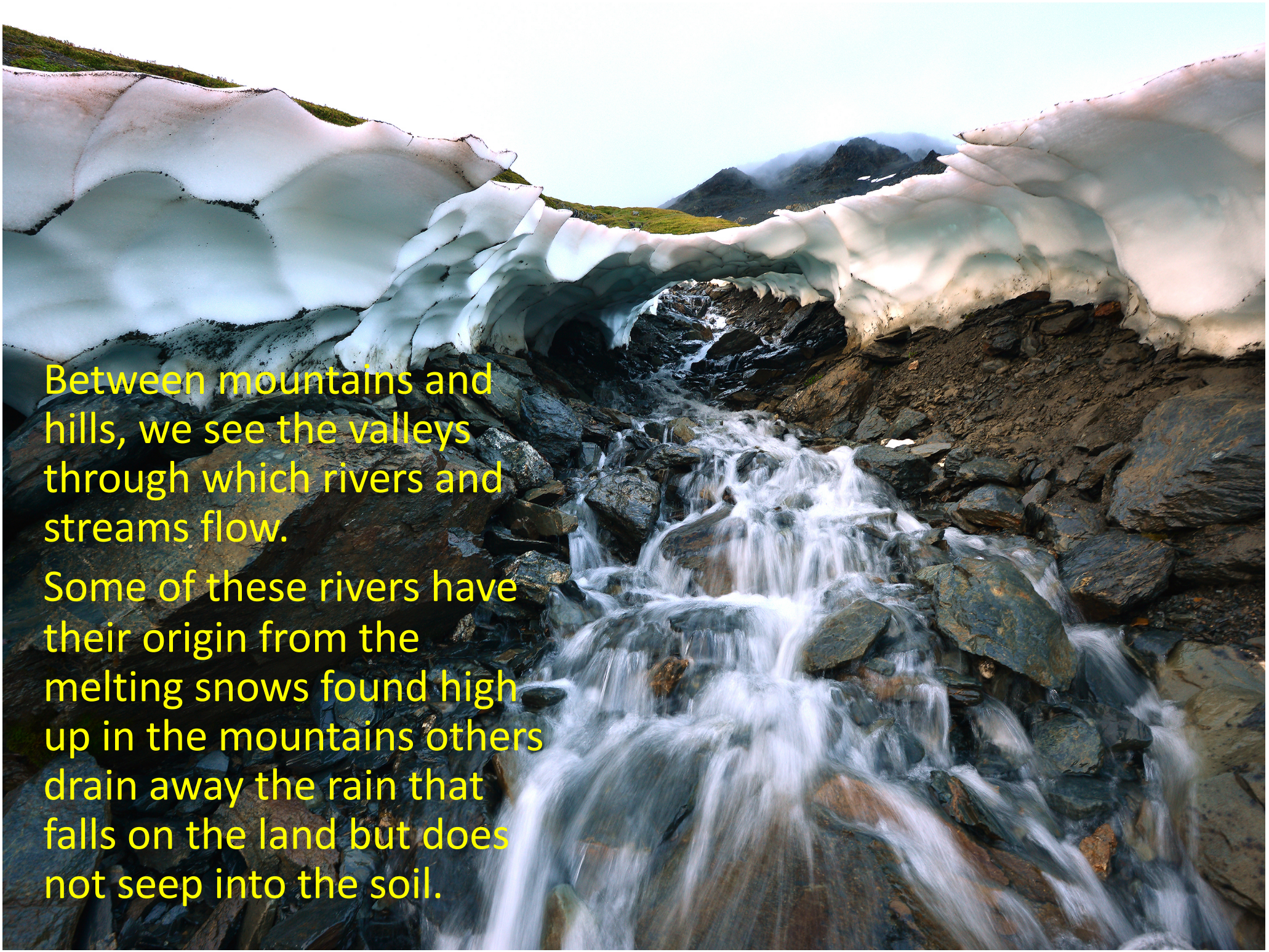
Some mountains spu out smoke, ash and molten rock called lava.

The lava comes up deep within the earth through cracks in the earth's crust.

These mountains are called volcanoes.

In some places, the mountains form long lines. We call these mountain ranges.

Elsewhere we can see smaller rounded hills.

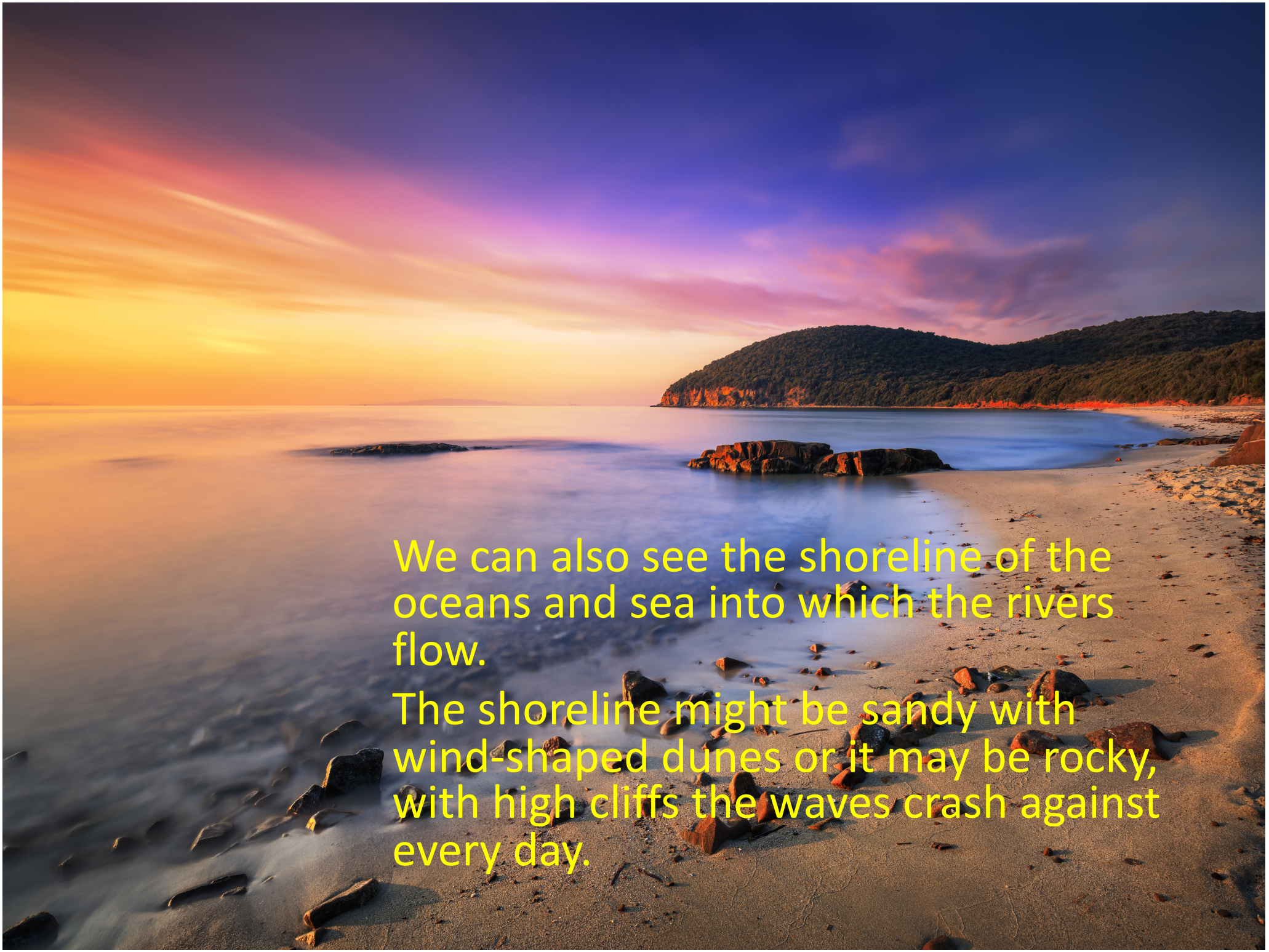

Between mountains and hills, we see the valleys through which rivers and streams flow.
Some of these rivers have their origin from the melting snows found high up in the mountains others drain away the rain that falls on the land but does not seep into the soil.

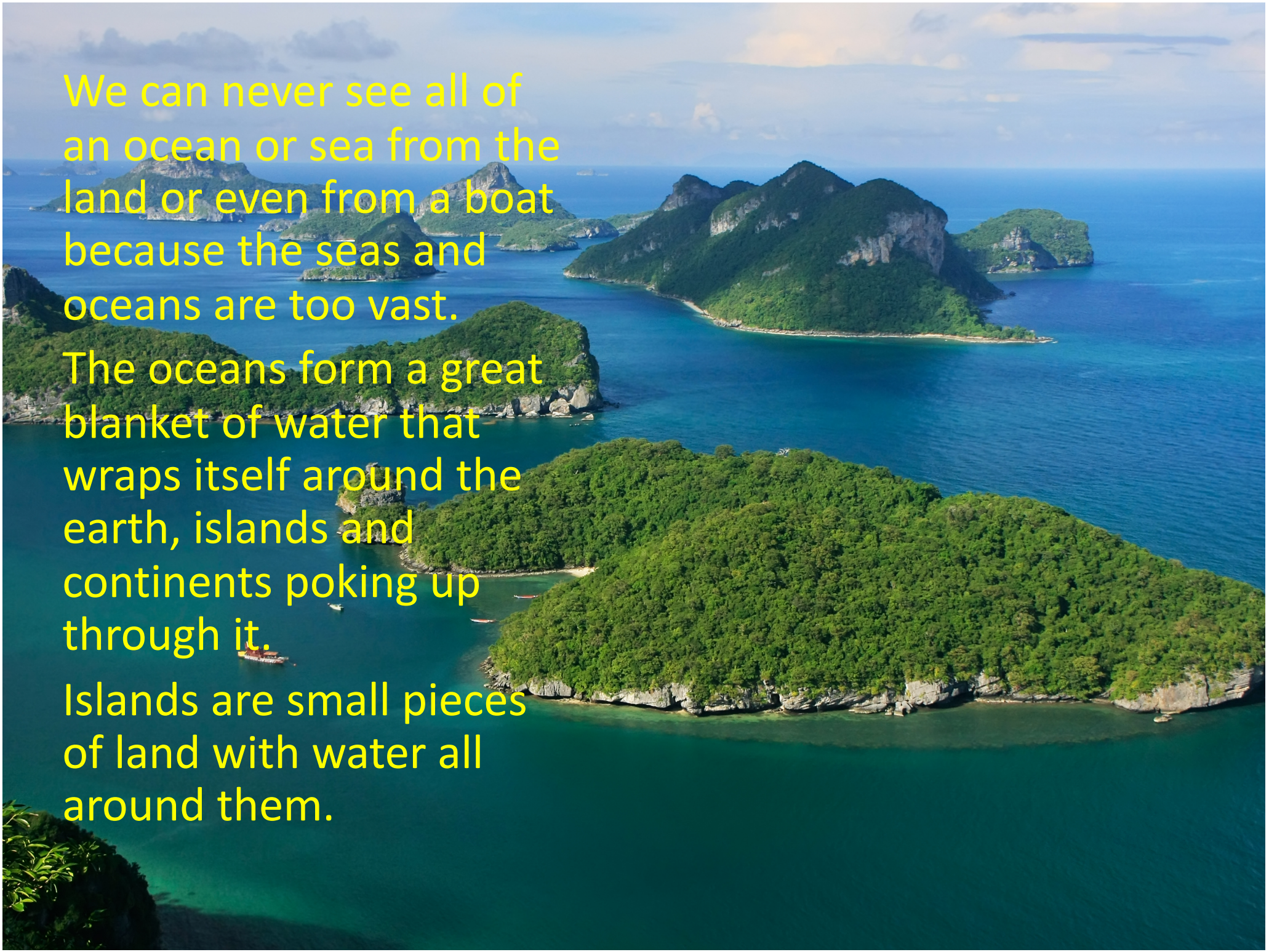
The rivers run downhill joining other rivers and growing ever larger.

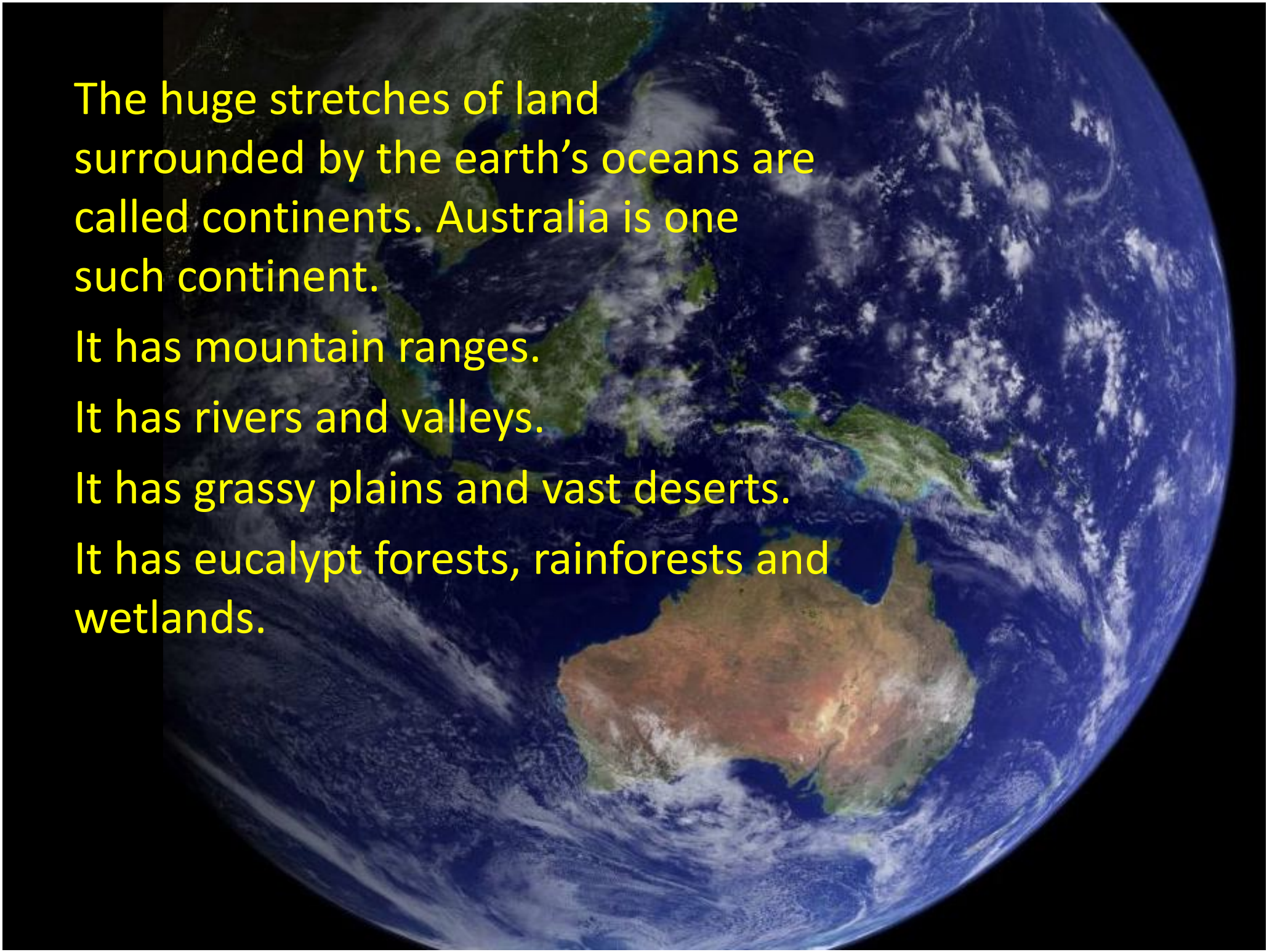
They move always towards and ocean or sea.

As they do, the rivers slow and flow through wide, shallow valleys.

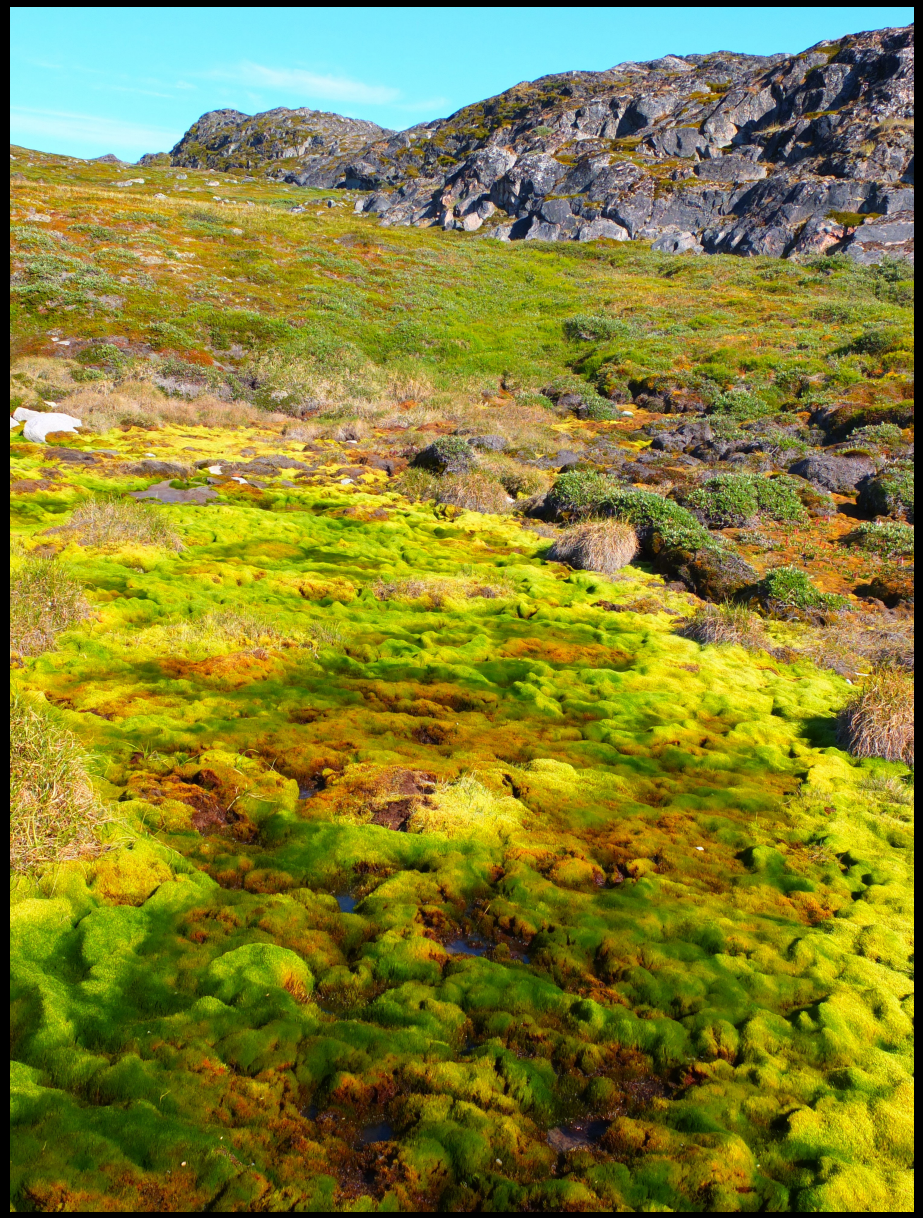
Back in the mountains, the rivers have cut down through layers of rock and now run along the bottom of the steep-sided canyons.


We can also see the shoreline of the oceans and sea into which the rivers flow.
The shoreline might be sandy with wind-shaped dunes or it may be rocky, with high cliffs the waves crash against every day.


We can never see all of an ocean or sea from the land or even from a boat because the seas and oceans are too vast.
The oceans form a great blanket of water that wraps itself around the earth, islands and continents poking up through it.
Islands are small pieces of land with water all around them.

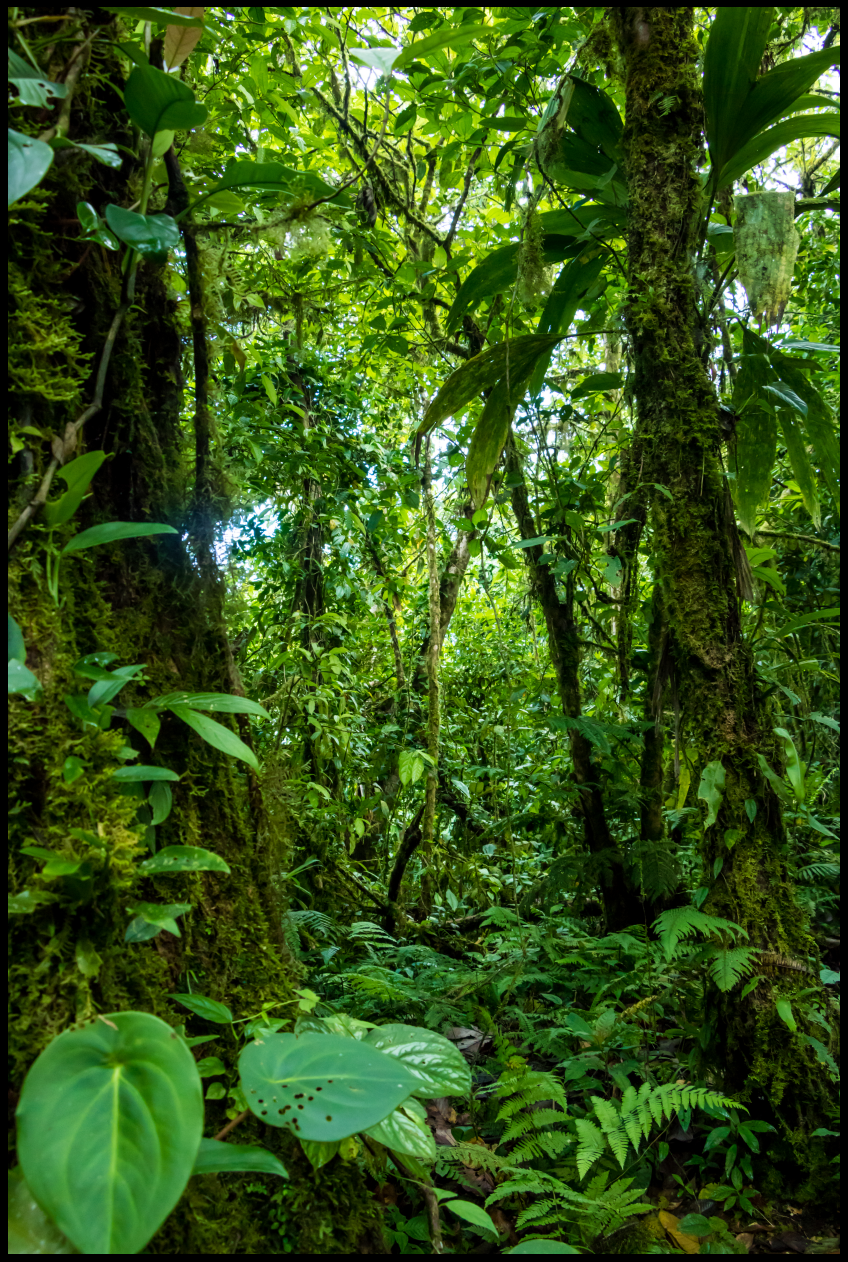

The huge stretches of land surrounded by the earth's oceans are called continents. Australia is one such continent.
It has mountain ranges.
It has rivers and valleys.
It has grassy plains and vast deserts.
It has eucalypt forests, rainforests and wetlands.

Where the earth is too cold for trees to grow vast frozen plains called tundra are found.



Where it is hot, and rains almost every day there are rainforests.

The trees and vines grow so thick that they almost block out the sky.



Some other places it seldom rains.

Here we find deserts.

The earth is dry and often sandy.

The winds sweep up the sand forming huge dunes.

The wind-blown sands polish rocks.

Over tens of thousands of years, wind-blown sand, with the help of the occasional flood, wares away the rock forming arches and spires, mesas and buttes.

There are so many different kinds of places to see on this wonderful planet of ours.
And we can explore and visit them all.