

# Where on Earth?

## Tropic's Landscape Today

**W**hen Tropic's settlers journeyed into this valley, they encountered a landscape much like the one that surrounds you today. Their wagons pitched and swayed over a land of forested plateaus, colorful cliffs, canyons, mesas, hoodoos, and slickrock, as far as the eye could see.

Here in Tropic, you're on the Colorado Plateau, a 130,000-square-mile (~340,000 sq. km.) area, roughly the size of Germany. The world-famous rock formations that surround you here result from the plateau's unique geologic history. More than ten million years ago, the plateau region began uplifting. Since then it has risen about 3000 feet above the surrounding landscape, like a slice of layer cake that's been pushed up above the rest of the cake, exposing the cake's layers. Weathering and erosion by wind, water, and ice have deeply sculpted this uplifted land, further revealing its rock strata.

### Life in the High Desert

Ecologists call this bioregion the high desert, a reference to both its elevation and its scant rainfall. Though Tropic lies in a valley, this valley rests more than a mile above sea level. About 12 inches (30.5cm) of precipitation fall here each year. Late-summer monsoons can interrupt long dry spells and trigger raging flash floods that carry off loose, sandy soils.



### Tropic by the Numbers

- **Elevation:**  
6,309 feet (1,923 meters)
- **Average annual precipitation:**  
12 inches (30.5 cm)
- **Average annual snowfall:**  
31 inches (79 cm)
- **Average low temperature (January):**  
15°F (-9°C)
- **Average high temperature (July):**  
85°F (29°C)

### Relatively Tropical

Though the average winter low temperature in Tropic is 15°F (-9°C), the temperature has been known to dip below -20°F (-29°C). Although that may not sound tropical, put yourself in the boots of Andrew (A.J.) Hansen, who suggested Tropic's name, and other early settlers. Many had come to this valley from Panguitch, Pine Valley, and other such cold spots, where the climate is even chillier in winter. By comparison, Tropic was, indeed, tropical.

