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PHILIPPINES AND PACIFIC ISLANDS G38

The Pacific Ocean is a vast expanse of water that has between 20,000 and 30,000 islands. There are so many that we are still not sure of the exact number!



The Philippines is a country made up of lots of islands. This is called an archipelago.



The Pacific Islands are a group of thousands of small islands near Australia. These comprise of countries such as Samoa, Fiji and Tonga.

In this box are objects that show the similar materials but also their different uses on the islands.

Durian



This durian is a fruit found in the Philippines with a prickly skin. You can see the edges where a knife has cut these away. Inside there are some seeds. If you shake the durian it makes a rattling noise, like a maraca!





Have you taken fruit to a hospital? Many hospitals in the Philippines won't allow this fruit in because it is very smelly!

Grass mat



This mat has been woven from grass fibres. It is used for someone to sit down on. They are called banig in the Philippines. This is a very simple one - usually they are wonderful bright colours.



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Slippers

These slippers are made from abaca. It is a leaf taken from around the trunk of a banana tree that is native to the Philippines. The fibres of the plant are used to make lightweight, strong fabrics, mainly used locally for garments, hats and shoes. The pictures show the fibres being dried and sewed.







Shell

This pretty piece is a turban shell. The largest ever found was measured at 20cm (8 inches). It was given the name because its coiled shape reminded people of a turban worn around the head. It would have been the home of a snail. In some Pacific island countries the snail is considered a delicacy.





Maoris once made fish hooks called a matau from turban shells.

Necklaces

These necklaces have been made with local shell and seeds, instead of using precious metals or stones. The shells all have their own natural decoration, adding colour. Tiny holes have been drilled in all of them. Imagine planning and threading all the seeds to make such lovely patterns.





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Coconut pot



The Philippines are famous for their coconuts. They are one of the world's leading producers, making tender coconut water and coconut oil. It is so important that they call the coconut tree 'the tree of life'.



The shell is often turned into household objects. This looks as though it was meant to be a bird feeder or a small plant pot. It would be hung outside the house or on a nearby tree.

Tapa cloth



Can you guess what material tapa is made from? It is from the bark of a tree! When the tree is still very young they are cut and the dark, hard bark is removed. The outer bark is stripped away leaving a fibre that is then placed on a wooden anvil. Women beat the material with a wooden hammer, making it thinner and wider. They often do this in groups and make a musical accompaniment out of the hammering. If you look closely at the back of the tapa cloth you can see where the two pieces of tapa have been joined.



The tapa cloth is painted in geometrical patterns with traditional colours such as black and rusty-brown favoured. These dyes are made from mangrove sap, terracotta clay and specially prepared soot.



Most people in Fiji wear western style clothing daily but tapa cloth is actually used to make the national dress. The tapa cloth is mainly worn on special occasions such as a wedding day. The problem with tapa clothes is that if they get wet they turn to a pulpy mush, a bit like paper.

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Basket



Basket weaving was traditionally a man's activity in the Philippines. They were used for storage, transporting goods and serving food. Most baskets are undecorated and valued for their shape.

Galtang has been used to make the basket. It grows extensively in the Philippines. In addition to it's use in basket weaving, galtang is used to make rope for tying animals and hauling heavy objects.



