The real 
TREASURE 
ISLAND

Hundreds of kilometres from the coast of Costa Rica lies Cocos Island, the tip of an extinct volcano. Cocos Island has steep cliffs, slopes and waterfalls, as well as many caves. It's the perfect place for a pirate to hide his treasure!

Legends say that Cocos Island is the hiding place for a fortune in pirate gold. During the 1600s, ships would call there to collect fresh water and firewood. Many of the ships belonged to pirates. Rather than carry their treasure around with them, some pirates hid it on the island.

The writer Robert Louis Stevenson is said to have had Cocos Island in mind when he wrote the adventure story Treasure Island. Cocos Island also inspired the story Jurassic Park.

Although it is just 25 square kilometres in size, Cocos Island's highest point is over 600 metres. For hundreds of years the island was a meeting place for all kinds of ships - including pirate ships.
Piracy was a risky business - pirates might be captured or killed, or their ship could be wrecked. Some hid their treasure in the hope that even if they were captured or sunk, they would be able to come back and reclaim it.

FACT FILE

Hidden gold

Cocos Island is supposed to hide the unclaimed treasure of at least three notorious pirates:

- In about 1818 a renegade British naval captain called Captain Graham is said to have buried over 300 tonnes of gold on Cocos Island.

- Also in about 1818, 'Bloody Sword' Bonito began to stash his treasure on Cocos Island. Bonito's treasure is said to be twice as much as Captain Graham's.

- In 1820, the governor of Lima stored his treasure on a ship called the Mary Dear. The governor was worried revolutionaries would steal it. Instead, the crew of Mary Dear cut the throats of the guards and stole the treasure, before burying it on Cocos Island. They were captured before they could go back for the gold.

GLOSSARY WORDS

renegade
deserter or traitor

revolutionaries
people aiming to overthrow the government