Emberá Basket

Emberá baskets are some of the finest in the world. They are handmade by the *Emberá Indians* who live in the *Darién Rainforest* of *Panamá* in central America.

Emberá baskets are woven from the leaf fibre from the *Chunga palm*. The centre of the Chunga palm leaf is dried and split, then bleached with a type of plant that is found in the forest. The other colours all come from natural plant dyes - from seeds, roots, cocobolo wood shavings, black earth, fruits, flowers and leaves. Another, stiffer type of palm called Naguala, is used for the frame of the basket which is then woven around to give the basket its strength and form.

Traditionally the Emberá Indians made their baskets in black and white with geometrical designs. However, with the tourist trade, they now make very colourful designs of animals and plants.

Small baskets can take 5-10 days to weave. Others can take weeks or even months which is why they are so expensive to buy.