**Geography of Mesopotamia**


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Mesopotamia was located in what is now the country of Iraq in the Middle East. More than 5,000 years ago, the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians lived in the large fertile plain located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In Greek *Mesopotamia* means “land between rivers.” It was rich land in the shape of a new moon. The area is often referred to as the Fertile Crescent.

**The Fertile Crescent**

Mesopotamia was approximately 300 miles (483 kilometers) long and 150 miles (241 kilometers) wide. In the north there were hills and fertile plains. In the south there were marshes and wide, barren plains. The region experienced moderate rainfall.

Temperatures during the hot season could reach 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius). In the southern region, storms blew in from the Persian Gulf, bringing cooler temperatures. The highest point in Mesopotamia was a mountain now called Haji Ibrahim. It is 11,847 feet (3,611 meters) high. The lowest point was the Persian Gulf at sea level.

**The Cradle of Civilization**
Mesopotamia is often called the cradle of civilization. Many of the first-known cities of the world were built there, including Ur, Uruk, and Babylon. Ur, one of the seven cities of ancient Sumer, covered 150 acres (61 hectares) and had 24,000 residents. Uruk, another Sumerian city, was 6 miles (10 kilometers) long with over 900 city towers.

Babylon was located on the Euphrates River, an ideal place for trade. There was not a lot of rainfall, so farmers had to irrigate the farmland along the banks of the rivers in order for their crops to grow. Because the rivers were higher than the surrounding plain, the water for irrigation flowed down into the fields. The silt left over from the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers made the soil fertile.

The Taurus and Zagros mountains were located to the north and east of Assyria. The Arbel and Nineveh plains were rich and fertile. This rich land allowed Assyria to feed a large population and to expand its civilization.

In Mesopotamia, there was lots of clay, which people baked into bricks to build houses. This helped the development of towns and cities in the region. Many people became craftsmen, builders, merchants, and government officials in the city-states. However, the geography of the land made Mesopotamians vulnerable to military attacks from their enemies and invading tribes from other lands. As trade was threatened and neglected irrigation systems lead to crop failure, the Mesopotamian civilizations eventually collapsed. However, today this region is still an important agricultural area.

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