

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. The Eastern Mediterranean's physical features include the Bosphorus, the Dead Sea, rivers, mountains, deserts, and plains.
2. The region's climate is mostly dry with little vegetation.
3. Important natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean include valuable minerals and the availability of water.

The Big Idea

The Eastern Mediterranean, a region with a dry climate and valuable resources, sits in the middle of three continents.

Key Terms and Places

Dardanelles, *p. 196*

Bosphorus, *p. 196*

Jordan River, *p. 197*

Dead Sea, *p. 197*

Syrian Desert, *p. 198*

TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes on the physical features, climate and vegetation, and natural resources of the region.

| Physical Features | Climate and Vegetation | Natural Resources |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| | | |

Physical Geography

If YOU lived there...

You live in Izmir, Turkey, on the Aegean Sea, but are traveling into the far eastern part of the country called eastern Anatolia. At home you are used to a warm, dry Mediterranean climate. You are surprised by the colder and wetter climate you're experiencing. Two mountain ranges come together here, and you notice that the peaks are covered with snow.

How does geography affect climate in these two places?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The Eastern Mediterranean region lies at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia. In ancient times, Greek colonists settled here, and it was later part of the Roman Empire. Geographically, however, it is almost entirely in Southwest Asia.

The countries of the Eastern Mediterranean make up part of a larger region called Southwest Asia. This region is sometimes referred to as the Middle East. Europeans first called the region the Middle East to distinguish it from the Far East, which included China and Japan.

Physical Features

As you can see on the physical map on the next page, a narrow waterway separates Europe from Asia. This waterway is made up of the **Dardanelles** (dahrd-uhn-ELZ), the **Bosphorus** (BAHS-puh-ruhs), and the **Sea of Marmara** (MAHR-muh-ruh). Large ships travel through the waterway, which connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. The Bosphorus also splits the country of Turkey into two parts, a small part lies in Europe and the rest in Asia. The Asian part of Turkey includes the large peninsula called Anatolia (a-nuh-TOH-lee-uh).



Interactive Map

The Eastern Mediterranean: Physical



Geography Skills

Place Turkey's elevation is higher than the rest of the region.

1. **Locate** Where is the Dead Sea located?
2. **Draw Conclusions** Notice the physical features in Jordan and Israel. What do you think the climate is like here?

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Mount Ararat's snowcapped peak rises about 17,000 feet (5,180 m) in eastern Turkey.

Rivers and Lakes

The **Jordan River** begins in Syria and flows south through Israel and Jordan. The river finally empties into a large lake called the **Dead Sea**. As its name suggests, the Dead Sea contains little life. Only bacteria lives in the lake's extremely salty water. The world's saltiest lake, its surface is 1,312 feet (400 m) below sea level—the lowest point on any continent.

Mountains and Plains

As you can see on the map, two mountain systems stretch across Turkey. The Pontic Mountains run east–west along the northern edge. The Taurus Mountains run east–west along the southern edge.

Heading south from Turkey and into Syria lies a narrow plain. The Euphrates River flows southeast from Turkey through the plains to Syria and beyond.

Dead Sea

Because of its high salt content, swimmers do not sink in the Dead Sea.

ANALYZING VISUALS

What appears on the shore of the Dead Sea?



FOCUS ON READING

Set a purpose for reading the paragraphs under Climate and Vegetation.

Farther inland lies plateaus, hills, and valleys. A rift valley that begins in Africa extends northward into Syria. Hills rise on both sides of the rift. Two main mountain ridges run north–south. One runs from southwestern Syria through western Jordan. The other, closer to the coast, runs through Lebanon and Israel.

READING CHECK Summarizing What are the region's main physical features?

Satellite View



The Bosphorus is a strait that divides the city of Istanbul, Turkey.

Istanbul and the Bosphorus

Throughout history, geography has almost always determined the location of a city. Istanbul, Turkey, which sits between Europe and Asia, is no exception. In this satellite image the city of Istanbul appears light brown and white. The body of water that cuts through the city is a strait called the Bosphorus. It separates the Sea of Marmara in the south with the Black Sea in the north. Historically, the Bosphorus has served as a prized area for empires that have controlled the city. Today, the strait is a major shipping route.

Drawing Conclusions Why do you think the Bosphorus was seen as a strategic location?

Climate and Vegetation

The Eastern Mediterranean is a mostly dry region. However, there are important variations. As you can see on the map on the next page, Turkey's Black Sea coast and the Mediterranean coast all the way to northern Israel have a Mediterranean climate. Much of interior Turkey experiences a steppe climate. Central Syria and lands farther south have a desert climate. A small area of northeastern Turkey has a humid subtropical climate.

The region's driest areas are its deserts. Much of Syria and Jordan is covered by the **Syrian Desert**. This desert of rock and gravel usually receives less than five inches (12.7 cm) of rainfall a year. Another desert, the Negev (NE-gev), lies in southern Israel. Here the temperatures can reach as high as 114°F (46°C), and annual rainfall totals barely two inches.

In such dry conditions, only shrubs grow scattered throughout the region's deserts. However, in other areas vegetation is plentiful. In Israel, more than 2,800 species of plants thrive throughout the country's various environments.

READING CHECK Generalizing What are climates like in the Eastern Mediterranean?

Natural Resources

Because the Eastern Mediterranean is so dry, water is a valuable resource. The people of this region are mostly farmers. The region lacks oil resources, but does have valuable minerals.

Land and Water

In this dry region the limited availability of water limits how land is used. Commercial farms can only grow crops where rain or irrigation provides enough water.



Interactive Map

The Eastern Mediterranean: Climate



Geography Skills

Place The region has mostly desert, Mediterranean, and steppe climates.

1. **Locate** What countries experience a desert climate?
2. **Contrast** How does Turkey's climate differ from the rest of the region?

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Climate Types

- Desert
- Steppe
- Mediterranean
- Humid subtropical

0 150 300 Miles
0 150 300 Kilometers

Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal-Area

In drier areas, subsistence farming and livestock herding are common. In the desert areas, available water supports a few nomadic herders, but no farming.

Mineral Resources

The region's resources include many minerals, including sulfur, mercury, and copper. Syria, Jordan, and Israel all produce phosphates—mineral salts that contain the element phosphorus. Phosphates are used to make fertilizers. This region also produces asphalt—the dark tarlike material used to pave streets.

READING CHECK **Drawing Conclusions** How do people use the region's mineral resources?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW In this section you learned about the physical geography of the Eastern Mediterranean. Next, you will learn about Turkey.

Section 1 Assessment

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Online Quiz

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Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

1. **a. Describe** What makes the **Dead Sea** unusual?
b. Explain What physical features separate Europe and Asia?
2. **a. Recall** What desert covers much of Syria and Jordan?
b. Make Generalizations What is the climate of the Eastern Mediterranean like?
3. **a. Identify** What mineral resource is produced by Syria, Jordan, and Israel?
b. Draw Conclusions Why must farmers in the region rely on irrigation?

Critical Thinking

4. **Summarizing** Using your notes, summarize the physical geography of Israel and Turkey. Use this chart to organize your notes.

| Physical Features | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Turkey | Israel |
| | |

FOCUS ON WRITING

5. **Describing the Physical Geography** What physical features would you include in your description? How would you describe the climate? Note your ideas.