



Explore some of the world's oldest and most intriguing countries and cities

Views of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand





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Explore some of the world's oldest and most
intriguing countries and cities



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Views of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand

I N T R O D U C T I O N

What is the largest continent? Who built the Taj Mahal?

What city is holy to three major religions? Where is the Great Barrier Reef?

In *Views of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand*, you'll discover answers to these questions and many more. Through pictures, articles, and fun facts, you'll learn about the people, traditions, landscapes, and history that make up many of the countries and cities of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand.

To help you on your journey, we've provided the following guideposts in *Views of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand*:

- **Subject Tabs**—The colored box in the upper corner of each right-hand page will quickly tell you the article subject.
- **Search Lights**—Try these mini-quizzes before and after you read the article and see how much—and how quickly—you can learn. You can even make this a game with a reading partner. (Answers are upside down at the bottom of one of the pages.)
- **Did You Know?**—Check out these fun facts about the article subject. With these surprising “factoids,” you can entertain your friends, impress your teachers, and amaze your parents.
- **Picture Captions**—Read the captions that go with the photos. They provide useful information about the article subject.
- **Vocabulary**—New or difficult words are in **bold type**. You'll find them explained in the Glossary at the end of the book.
- **Learn More!**—Follow these pointers to related articles in the book. These articles are listed in the Table of Contents and appear on the Subject Tabs.
- **Maps**—You'll find lots of information in this book's many maps.
 - The **Country Maps** point out national capitals. **Globes** beside Subject Tabs show where countries are located in the world.
 - The **Continent Maps** have a number key showing the location of all countries.
- The **Icons** on the maps highlight major geographic features and climate. Here's a key to what the map icons mean:



Deserts and Other Dry Areas



Polar Regions and Other Frozen Areas



Mountains



Rainforests



General Forests



Rice is one of the most important crops grown in China. Farmers use terraced fields such as these to grow rice on hillsides.

© Keren Su/Corbis

Views of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand

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Have a great trip!



True or false?
The highest point on Earth is in Asia.



Statue of Buddha in Si Satchanalai, Thailand.
© Royalty-Free/Corbis

DID YOU KNOW?
Asia is the birthplace of all the major religions of the world.



The Largest Continent

Asia is the world's largest continent. It covers about one-third of the Earth's land and has about three-fifths of the world's population. Japan, China, and India are some of the most familiar of Asia's nearly 50 countries. In fact, Asia is so big that it's often easier to talk about the **regions** rather than the countries of Asia. The region names commonly used are North Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Southwest Asia (the last one is usually called the Middle East).

Most of the continent is made up of mountains and **tablelands**. The Himalayan mountain chain in South Asia includes the highest point on Earth, Mount Everest. The Earth's lowest point, the Dead Sea, is in Asia too.

Asia is home to many kinds of animals. Reindeer, Arctic foxes and hares, seals, walruses, and lemmings can be found in the far north. Elk, brown bears, and sables live in the cool forests. Antelope, wild sheep, and goats are found in the **steppes** and deserts. Black bears, pandas, tigers, and monkeys can be found in southern and eastern Asia. Southern Asia is also noted for elephants, leopards, crocodiles, cobras, and peacocks.

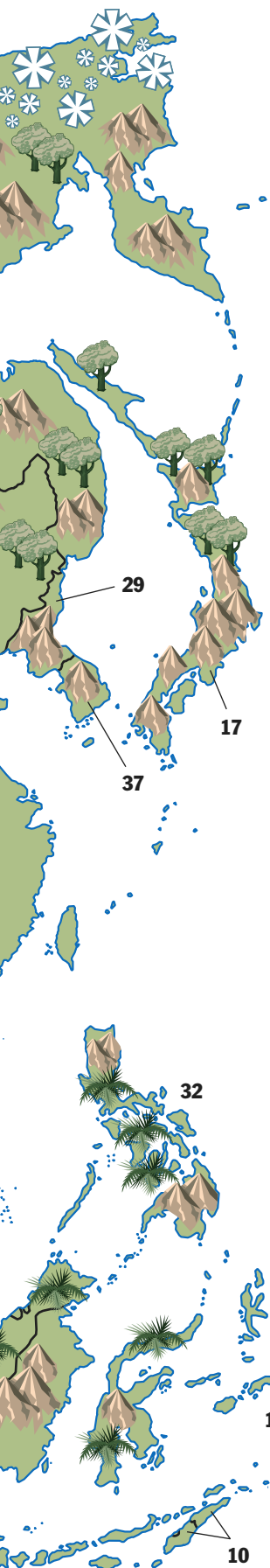
Northern Asia has very cold winters and cool summers. It is covered by tundra—vast treeless plains common in cold regions. Central Asia has cold winters and hot summers with little rainfall. Southern Asia has a warm climate all year, with a lot of rain. There are rainforests all across southern Asia. And nearly all Asian countries share one very important food plant: rice.

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...

CHINA • INDIA • JAPAN

COUNTRIES OF ASIA

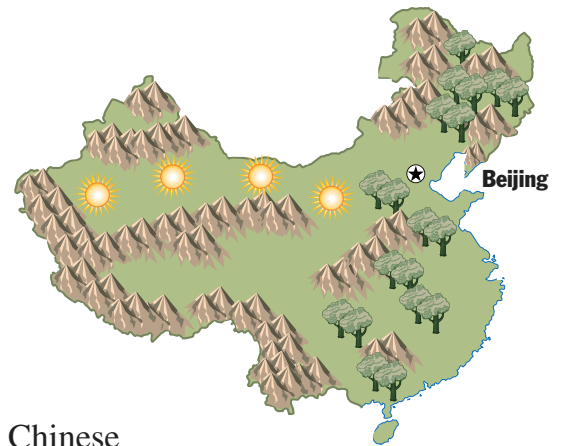
1. Afghanistan
2. Armenia
3. Azerbaijan
4. Bahrain
5. Bangladesh
6. Bhutan
7. Brunei
8. Cambodia
9. China
10. East Timor
11. Georgia
12. India
13. Indonesia
14. Iran
15. Iraq
16. Israel
17. Japan
18. Jordan
19. Kazakhstan
20. Kuwait
21. Kyrgyzstan
22. Laos
23. Lebanon
24. Malaysia
25. Maldives
26. Mongolia
27. Myanmar
28. Nepal
29. North Korea
30. Oman
31. Pakistan
32. Philippines
33. Qatar
34. Russia (part)
35. Saudi Arabia
36. Singapore
37. South Korea
38. Sri Lanka
39. Syria
40. Tajikistan
41. Thailand
42. Turkey
43. Turkmenistan
44. United Arab Emirates
45. Uzbekistan
46. Vietnam
47. Yemen



Asia's Largest Country



The People's Republic of China is Asia's largest country and has more people than any other country in the world—more than a billion and a quarter! The capital city is Beijing. Han (or Mandarin) is the most widely spoken language of China's several dozen languages. The Chinese civilization is one of the world's oldest and has produced such famous thinkers as Confucius.



Parts of China are very mountainous, as is the **Plateau** of Tibet in southwest China. One part of the plateau is called “the Roof of the World.” China is so big that some parts are scorching hot deserts while it rains almost every day in some southeastern regions. Many boats and ships carry people and goods on China's major rivers—the Huang He, Yangtze, and Xi. China also has many railroads as well as three of the world's longest highways.

China's enormous and varied land area supports many plants and animals. Some Chinese animals have become **extinct** in the rest of the world, including the giant salamander, the giant panda, and the great paddlefish. Many of China's trees provide useful substances. The tung tree and the camphor tree produce valuable oils. The lacquer (or varnish) tree produces substances used in making wooden objects. And from the star anise tree comes a food flavoring. In addition, Chinese farmers produce more rice than does any other country.

People around the world enjoy eating Chinese food. But China has many more traditional and **regional** dishes than most non-Chinese know about. In addition to rice and noodles, Chinese dishes include delicacies such as steamed chicken feet and hundred-year-old eggs.



Find and correct the error in the following sentence:
The People's Republic of China is the largest country in Asia and has the most people: more than a million and a quarter.

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...
THE GREAT WALL • JAPAN • KOREAN PENINSULA



DID YOU KNOW?

You may think of pasta as an Italian dish, but actually it was created in China. So were fireworks, compasses, silk, chopsticks, crossbows, paper, and paper money.

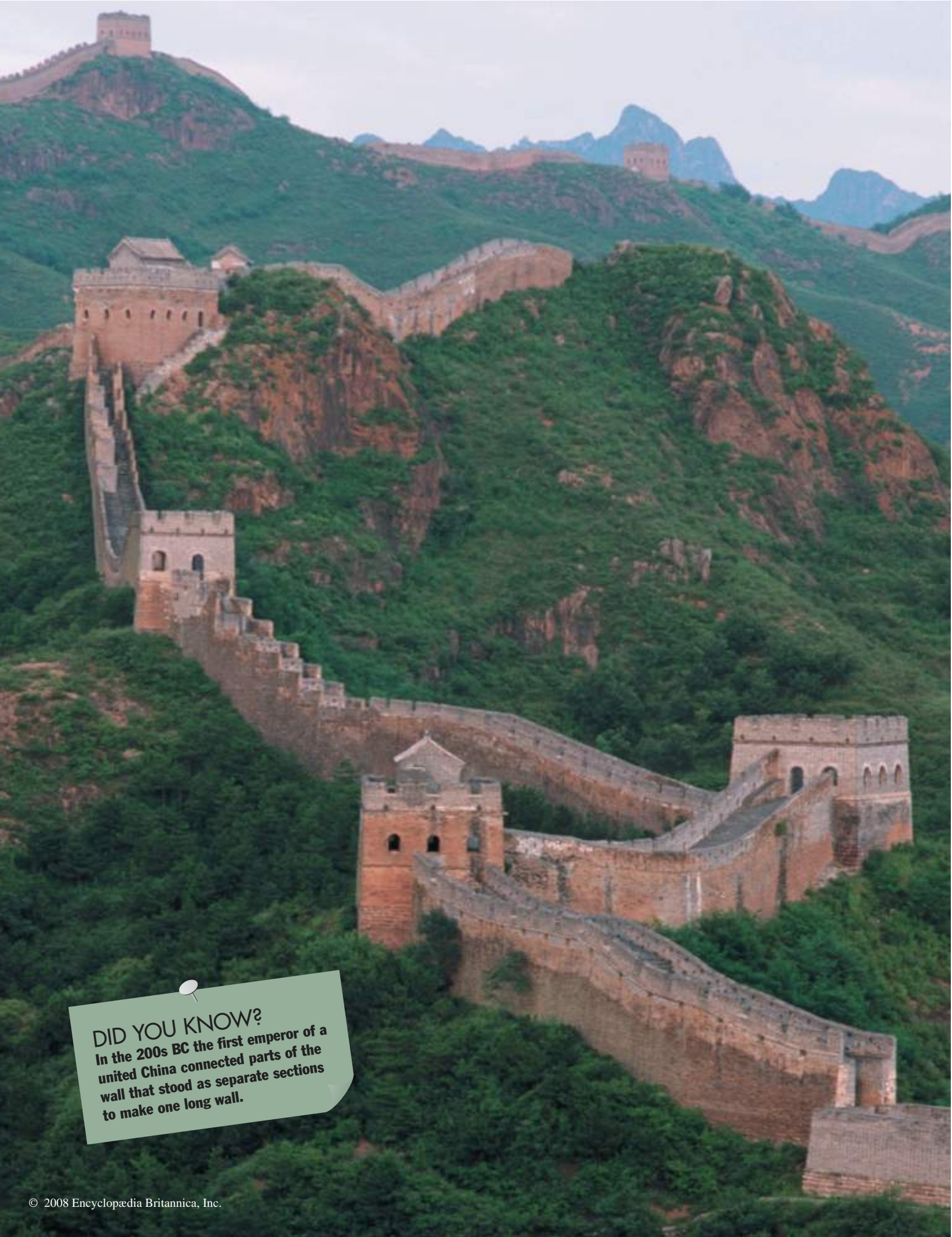


Rice is one of the most important crops grown in China. Farmers use terraced fields such as these to grow rice on hillsides.

© Keren Su/Corbis

Answer: The People's Republic of China is the largest country in Asia and has the most people in the world: more than a billion and a quarter.



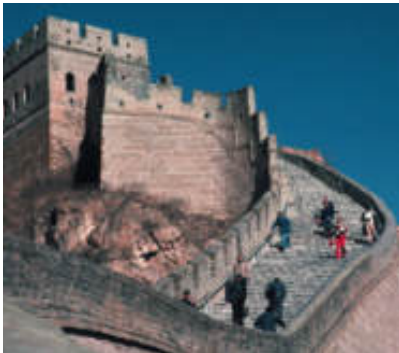


DID YOU KNOW?

In the 200s BC the first emperor of a united China connected parts of the wall that stood as separate sections to make one long wall.

Ancient China's Giant Guardian

The Great Wall of China is the largest structure humans have ever built. Chinese **emperors** had the wall built to guard the country from raids or invasions. It runs from east to west for more than 4,000 miles as it stretches across the mountains and valleys of northern China. It is about 20 feet thick at its base and as tall as a house. The entire wall is made of earth and stones. The wall also had watchtowers placed along its length.



Tourists visiting the Great Wall of China.
© Dean Conger/Corbis

Different parts of the wall were built at different times, but all of it was finished long before there were machines to help with the building. Thousands of men worked to build the wall. Many of them died while working on it.

After the Great Wall was built, the people of China felt safer. If an enemy approached the wall, smoke signals would be passed from watchtower to watchtower. A signal fire would be lighted if an attack came at night. An alarm would be sounded, and the emperor's army would rush to defend the wall.

But the Great Wall didn't always provide protection. Because the wall was so long, some parts of it were guarded better than others. Sometimes enemies broke through. Finally, the Chinese stopped depending on their wall.

Today the Great Wall is a great attraction for visitors to China. In 1987, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) named the Great Wall a World Heritage site.

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...
ANGKOR WAT • CHINA • TAJ MAHAL

The Great Wall of China is one of the most remarkable structures on Earth. It is more than 4,000 miles long and is one of the largest construction projects ever carried out. Work on parts of the wall began more than 2,500 years ago.

© Keren Su/Corbis

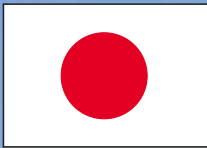


Why did the Chinese emperors have the Great Wall built?

Answer: The emperors had the wall built to keep out the people who were raiding northern China.



Volcanoes, Earthquakes, and Plum Rains



Japan is made up of a string of islands that stretches for nearly 1,500 miles along the coast of northeastern Asia in the Pacific Ocean. The four main islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku. The largest of them is Honshu.

Most of the islands are covered with hills and mountains. Many of the mountains are volcanoes. Some of them are active, and some are “asleep.” Mount Fuji is an active volcano, though it hasn’t erupted since 1707. It is Japan’s highest mountain, reaching a height of 12,388 feet. Rivers flowing past the volcanoes get so much **acid** in them that they can’t be used to water crops.

There are many lush forests in Japan. Japanese cherry trees, famous for their spring blossoms, are planted throughout the country. The forests stay beautifully green because it rains and snows so much in Japan. Most parts of the country get more than 40 inches of rain each year. The summer rains are called *baiu*, which means “plum rain.” They are called that because they begin at the time when the plums ripen. Some parts of Japan get many feet of snow each winter.

Many kinds of wild animals can be found in Japan’s forests. They include bears, badgers, otters, mink, deer, and foxes.



DID YOU KNOW?

Mount Fuji may not seem so high compared with some of the world’s other mountains. But it’s high enough that during the summer the temperature at the top is 40° F cooler than it is at the bottom.



Mount Fuji is considered the sacred symbol of Japan. It's actually a volcano, but it hasn't erupted since 1707. At right is a pagoda, a kind of tower with curving roofs at each story.

© Jose Fuste Raga/Corbis

Japan has many **wildlife sanctuaries** to protect all these wonderful creatures.

Did you know that there are about 1,000 earth tremors in Japan every year? Fortunately, most are not very strong, but violent earthquakes do occur sometimes. When that happens there is a danger of tsunamis, giant tidal waves along the coasts.

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...

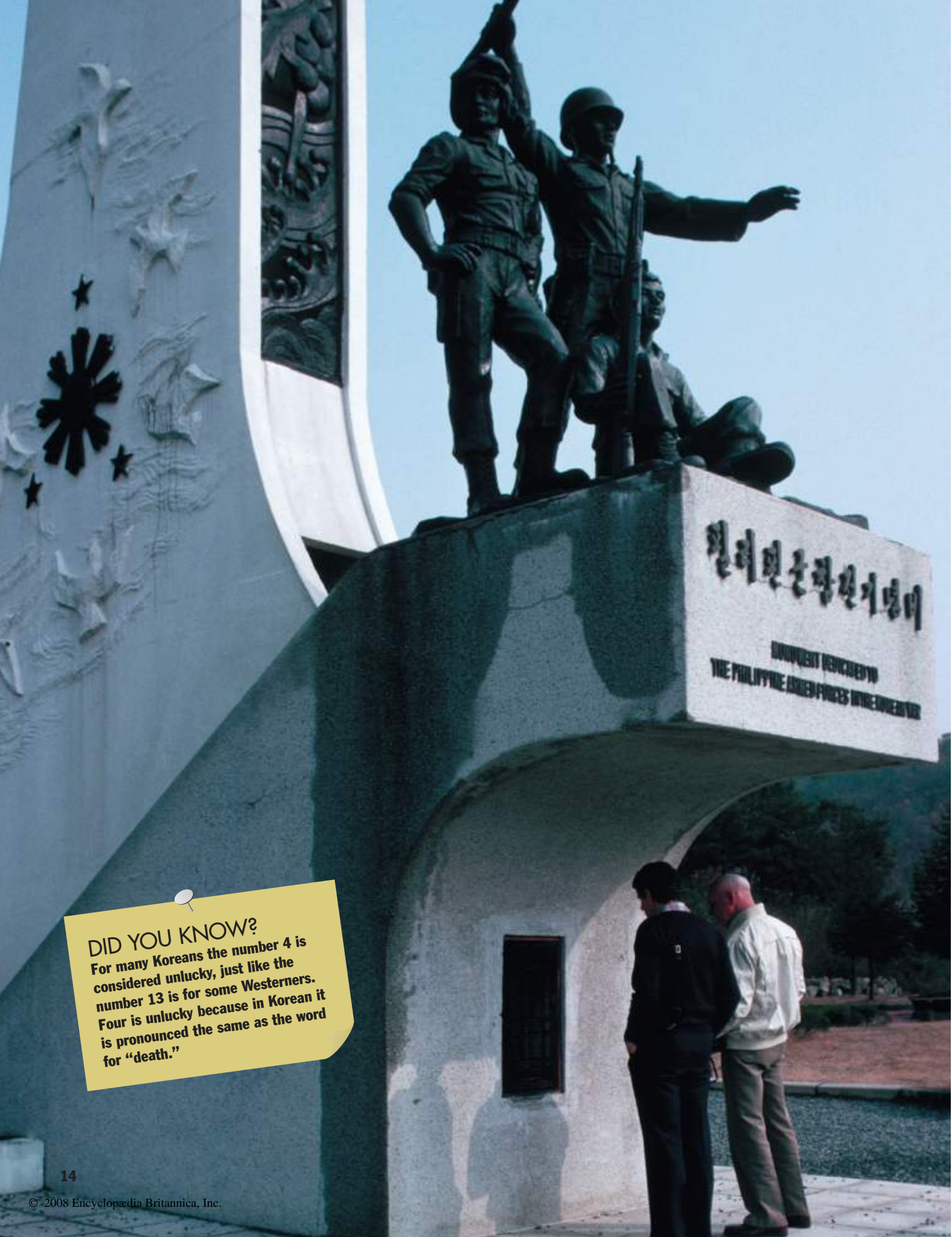
ASIA • CHINA • KOREAN PENINSULA



The largest island in Japan is
 a) Honshu.
 b) Kyushu.
 c) Hokkaido.

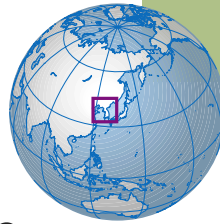


Answer: a) Honshu.



DID YOU KNOW?

For many Koreans the number 4 is considered unlucky, just like the number 13 is for some Westerners. Four is unlucky because in Korean it is pronounced the same as the word for "death."



An Asian Land Divided



North Korea



South Korea

The Korean **peninsula** is a land of beautiful mountains. For a long time it was a single country. Today it is divided into two countries—North Korea and South Korea.

But though they are separate, they share a border and a common history that stretches back thousands of years.

Korea has a rich culture that was influenced by China, especially in early times. The Buddhist and Confucian religions came to Korea from China.

Over the years, however, Korea developed a culture that is very much its own. For example, even though it once used the Chinese system of writing, the Korean language isn't closely related to any other language. And Korean music sounds quite different from other East Asian music. In the folk music called *p'ansori*, a singer-storyteller performs with a drummer. In dance and other music, the *kayagum*, a stringed instrument, is an original Korean favorite. Many people around the world love to eat Korean food—especially tasty barbecued meat and a spicy cabbage dish called *kimchee*.

In 1948, after World War II, the Korean peninsula was officially divided into North Korea and South Korea. North Korea became a **communist** country, but South Korea did not. In 1950 a war broke out between the two. This was the Korean War, which ended in 1953 with the two Koreas remaining separate.

Both North and South Korea have been rebuilt since the war. In 2000 the two countries held talks about joining together again. People were finally allowed to cross between them and meet family members they had not seen since the war, almost 50 years before.



True or false?
The Korean peninsula became a communist country in 1948.

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CHINA • JAPAN • VIETNAM

This monument honors soldiers who fought in the Korean War. The memorial stands near the village of Panmunjom. It lies within a neutral zone established between North and South Korea after the war.

© Robert Holmes/Corbis

Answer: FALSE. The Korean peninsula was divided into two countries in 1948. North Korea became communist, but South Korea did not.



The City of Lady Penh



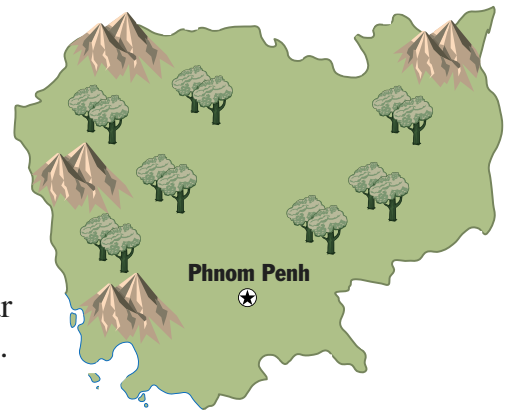
Phnom Penh is the capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Southeast Asia. It is located at the meeting point of three rivers: the Basak, the Sab, and the Mekong.

Phnom Penh is more than 500 years old. According to legend, a woman named Lady Penh was walking on a hill and found a bronze statue of the Buddha, the founder of the Buddhist religion. There she started the town of Phnom Penh, whose name means “Penh Hill.” Her ashes, it is said, were kept in a **pagoda** at the top of the hill.

Phnom Penh was built around the Preah Morokot pagoda. Its floor is paved with tiles of solid silver. The pagoda is built like a tower, with several stories. At the edge of every story, the roof curves upward. It and other stately buildings are near the Royal Palace, where the king and his family live.

There are many museums in Phnom Penh. The National Museum has a fine collection of art by the Khmer people, who make up more than 85 percent of the population of Cambodia. The Tuol Sleng Museum is devoted to the memory of the many Cambodians who were killed in the 1970s by Cambodia’s communist government. This was a terrible time in the history of the city and country.

The Royal Ballet of Phnom Penh is known the world over. Its ballets deal with ancient Buddhist and Hindu legends. There was a time when the dancers performed only for the Cambodian royal family. Now everyone can enjoy them.



What kind of government does Cambodia have? (Hint: Think of the country’s full name.)

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...

ANGKOR WAT • BANGKOK, THAILAND • VIETNAM



DID YOU KNOW?

In the 1970s Phnom Penh nearly became a ghost town when Cambodia's rulers forced almost everyone out of the city to work in farm fields.



The Royal Palace in Phnom Penh is home to Cambodia's king and his family.

© Nevada Wier/Corbis

Answer: Cambodia is a kingdom, so it's supposedly ruled by a king or a queen. However, in modern times most monarchs have government officials and lawmakers to help run the country.



Cambodia's Treasured Temple

Angkor Wat is a **temple** in the Southeast Asian country of Cambodia. The word *angkor* means “capital,” and *wat* means “**monastery**.” Angkor Wat is more than 800 years old. It is the world’s largest religious structure.

The Khmer people are native to Cambodia, and the city of Angkor was once the capital of the Khmer Empire. King Suryavarman II built Angkor Wat. He dedicated the temple to the three Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. It was not just a temple but also the government center of Suryavarman II’s empire.

The temple walls are covered with sculptures of Hindu gods. They also show scenes from ancient Khmer history. In addition, there are hundreds of carved statues of *apsaras*, or “heavenly dancers.” They are seen wearing beautiful costumes, jewelry, and crowns.

About 20 years after the complex was built, a foreign army attacked the Khmers and **looted** the city. King Jayavarman VII, who was ruling the Khmer, felt that the gods had failed him. He became a Buddhist and built a new capital nearby called Angkor Thom. Angkor Wat then became a Buddhist **shrine**. Many of the statues and carvings were replaced by Buddhist art.

After many years, however, the forest grew and covered Angkor Wat. Most people forgot all about it. A French explorer named Henri Mouhot rediscovered the city while traveling on the Mekong River in 1858. In 1992 UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) named the entire Angkor area a World Heritage site. Today Angkor Wat is one of the main attractions for visitors to Cambodia.



**Fill in
the blanks:
Angkor Wat is
more than _____
years old and is the
world's _____
religious structure.**

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...

BANGKOK, THAILAND • PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA • TAJ MAHAL

**Tree roots growing on the Ta Prohm temple,
part of the temple center at Angkor, Cambodia.**

© Royalty-Free/Corbis

DID YOU KNOW?

When UNESCO named Angkor Wat a World Heritage site, it meant that the place has major importance for the entire world. Being a World Heritage site makes it easier for countries to cooperate to protect a cultural or natural treasure.

Answer: Angkor Wat is more than 800 years old and is the world's largest religious structure.



DID YOU KNOW?

Indonesia has more than 200 active volcanoes. Among them is the famous Krakatoa. When it erupted more than a hundred years ago the explosions were heard thousands of miles away.



Indonesians use a process called batik to dye fabrics. The results can be quite colorful.

© Wolfgang Kaehler/Corbis



Fill in
the blank:
Indonesia is
a country made up
of about 13,670
_____.

Island Nation of Southeast Asia



The Republic of Indonesia consists of a group of islands lying between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Its capital is Jakarta on the island of Java.

Indonesia is made up of about 13,670 islands, though some are shared with other countries. The largest island is New Guinea, which Indonesia shares with Papua New Guinea. Parts of Borneo, the second largest island in the group, belong to Malaysia and Brunei. Sumatra, Java, and Celebes are the other major islands of Indonesia. Most of Indonesia's people live on these five islands.

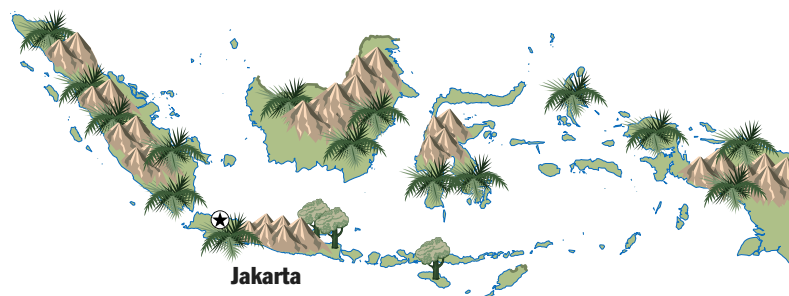
Most of the islands are mountainous. Only about one-tenth of the land is used for growing crops, but many of the people make their living from farming. Rice is the main crop grown there. Other crops include coffee, tea, tobacco, and spices. There are also many palm and rubber trees in Indonesia. The country produces many things made of palm oil and is a major supplier of natural rubber.

The **climate** in Indonesia is hot and **humid**. Rain falls heavily throughout the year. Because of that, much of Indonesia is covered with rainforests. Mangrove tree swamps are common along the coasts.

Indonesia is known for more than its **natural resources**, though. The people of Indonesia practice special decorative arts throughout the islands. Perhaps the most popular art with tourists is batik, a special way of dyeing fabric. Indonesians are also known for their traditional dance and puppet performances. Puppetry is one of the favorite arts of the islanders themselves.

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ASIA • SINGAPORE • SRI LANKA





Singapore has four official languages—Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil (an Indian language), and English. Most countries have one or two. Why do you think Singapore has so many?

The Lion City



The Republic of Singapore is a small island nation in Southeast Asia. Singapore is also the name of the country's main island and of its capital city. Legend says that a prince named the island Singapura, meaning "lion city," because he thought he saw a lion there.

Singapore Island and about 60 little nearby islands make up the country. All these islands lie off the southern tip of the Malay **Peninsula**. Singapore Island is shaped like a diamond. It is linked to the country of Malaysia on the Malay Peninsula by a road and railway that cross the water of the Johor **Strait**.

As of 1995, almost 3 million people lived in this small island nation. That makes Singapore one of the most crowded countries in the world. But Singapore is also one of the most well-to-do Asian nations because it has been a busy world shipping port for a long time. People have moved there from all parts of Asia, giving Singapore a rich and varied cultural **heritage**. Most people speak the Malay language, but Mandarin Chinese, Tamil (an Indian language), and English are also official languages.



Singapore's weather is hot and very rainy—a typical **monsoon** climate. The lowlands often flood when it rains hard, but the rainy weather is good for plants. While only a few of Singapore's native plants remain, patches of original **mangrove** forests still survive. There are some original mangrove forests on the main island's northwestern side. And people often call Singapore city the "Garden City" because of its many parks, gardens, and tree-lined streets.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you want to give a gift to someone from Singapore, you shouldn't give a clock or a handkerchief. These objects are linked with death or funerals. Umbrellas are not good gifts either—they are associated with accidents.

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...
BANGKOK, THAILAND • INDONESIA • SRI LANKA

Singapore is sometimes known as the "Lion City." Its symbol is a merlion, a creature that is half lion and half fish.

© Earl & Nazima Kowall/Corbis

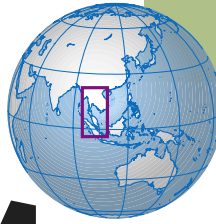
Answer: Singapore's four official languages reflect the fact that people from many different cultures have moved there. Also, being a busy and successful world port means that people from all over the world live, work, and pass through Singapore.



A photograph of a Thai temple courtyard. In the center is a large, multi-tiered golden stupa. To the right is a traditional Thai building with a dark, ornate roof. In the foreground, a white fence with arched openings runs across the frame. Two monks in bright orange robes are walking towards the camera. The sky is overcast.

DID YOU KNOW?

The full official Thai name for Bangkok has more than 160 letters. According to some sources, it is the longest name of any place in the world.

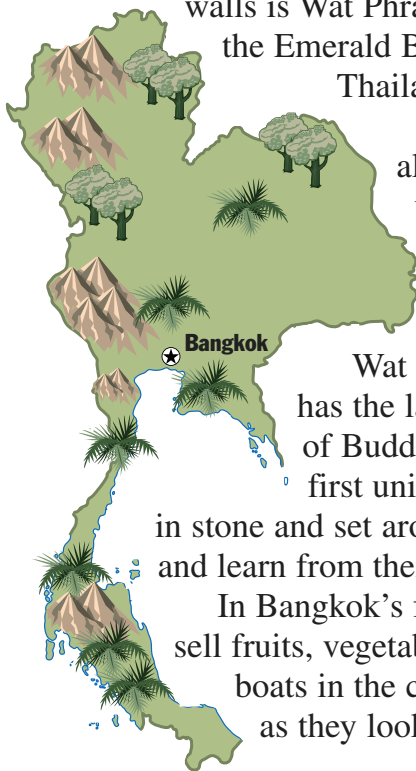


City of Angels



Bangkok is the capital of Thailand and the country's largest and most important port. The Thai people call the city Krung Thep, which means "city of angels." Bangkok spreads across both sides of the Chao Phraya River. From the river a network of **canals** spreads through the city.

The Grand Palace, where the kings of Thailand once lived, stands on the river's east bank. The palace is surrounded by walls. Also within these walls is Wat Phra Kaeo, a temple full of Thai art treasures. It holds the Emerald Buddha, the holiest statue of the Buddha in all of Thailand.



There are many other Buddhist temples, or *wats*, along the banks of the Chao Phraya River. A *wat* usually has living quarters for monks, **shrines** for **meditation**, towers, and a meeting place. Some of the *wats* are decorated with beautiful carvings. The Temple of Dawn, or Wat Arun, is one of these.

Wat Pho is the oldest and largest *wat* in Bangkok. It has the largest reclining Buddha and the largest collection of Buddha images in Thailand. People call Wat Pho the first university in Thailand. An early king had **texts** carved in stone and set around the temple so that people could read and learn from them.

In Bangkok's famous floating markets, merchants sell fruits, vegetables, flowers, and other items from boats in the canals. Shoppers step from boat to boat as they look at all the things to buy.

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PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA • SINGAPORE • VIETNAM

These Buddhist monks walk on the grounds of one of Bangkok's famous temples, the Wat Phra Kaeo. Inside the temple is a sacred image called the Emerald Buddha. Buddhism is the city's main religion.

© Paul Almasy/Corbis



The name Krung Thep means

- a) "grand palace."
- b) "city of angels."
- c) "emerald Buddha."



North and South



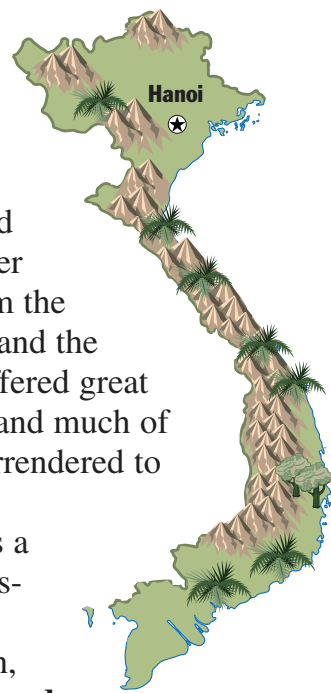
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is located in Southeast Asia, near China, Laos, and Cambodia. It is made up of what for many years were two countries: North Vietnam (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and South Vietnam (the Republic of Vietnam). After a long war, the two countries were reunited in 1976. The capital of Vietnam is Hanoi.

Most people know of Vietnam because of its wars. The one that led to the reunification of North and South Vietnam began in the 1950s. The **communists** who ruled North Vietnam wanted to bring the two countries together under their leadership. South Vietnam, with support from the United States, tried to stop them. During the late 1960s and the early 1970s, both the Vietnamese and the Americans suffered great losses. Many people were killed, and Vietnamese cities and much of the countryside were badly damaged. South Vietnam surrendered to North Vietnam in 1975.

In spite of the troubles Vietnam has faced, it still has a number of interesting places to visit. Hanoi has centuries-old temples as well as modern art and history museums.

Bustling Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon, capital of South Vietnam) has Buddhist **pagodas** and a **cathedral** among its attractions.

Most of Vietnam's people are farmers. Much of the farmland is used for growing rice. There are also farms that grow coffee, tea, rubber, sugarcane, soybeans, and coconuts. The people often eat meals of rice with fish.



Fill in the blanks:
Present-day Vietnam is the result of joining and _____ Vietnam in the 1970s.

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BANGKOK, THAILAND • CHINA • PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA



DID YOU KNOW?

French is one of the languages spoken in Vietnam, and French cooking is part of Vietnam's cuisine. Sound odd? France once ruled the country as a colony, until the Vietnamese gained their independence in the 1950s.

Farmers work in a rice paddy in central Vietnam.



Answer: Present-day Vietnam is the result of joining North and South Vietnam in the 1970s.



SEARCH LIGHT

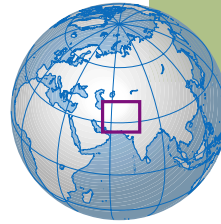


Unscramble these words connected with Afghanistan:

- blaKu
- niHud shuK
- tinamouns

DID YOU KNOW?

Conflict is not new to Afghanistan. During the 1800s, Russia and England supported different tribal groups in Afghanistan. This led to many battles and wars in the region. The Europeans called this contest the "Great Game."



Mountain Country



Afghanistan is a dry country in southern Central Asia. Kabul is Afghanistan's capital city. Mountains cover a large part of the country. The Pamir Mountains rise in the northeast, and the giant Hindu Kush range spreads across the country from northeast to southwest. Many of Afghanistan's rivers get their water from the melting snow and **glaciers** in the mountains. The Kabul River provides water for the fertile valleys and **basins** around the cities of Kabul and Jalalabad.

Not much of Afghanistan's land can be used for farming, though. It's either too rocky or too dry. Only farmers who live in the river valleys where water is available are able to grow crops. They mostly grow wheat, corn, grapes, and rice. Instead of farming, many people raise herds of sheep, goats, cattle, or camels.

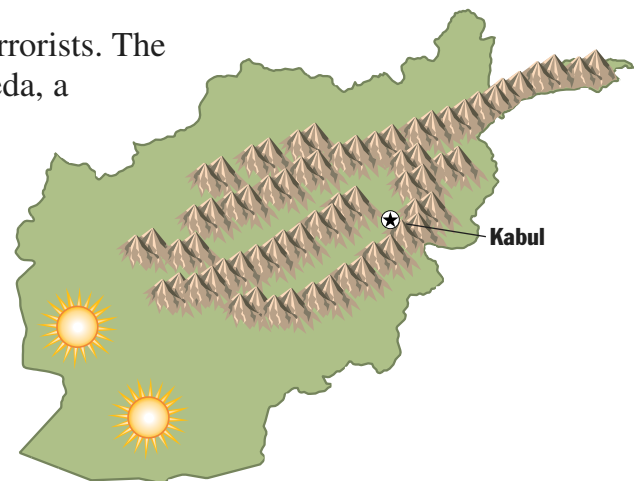
For centuries Afghanistan was ruled by a king. It suffered a long civil war in the 1980s when the Soviet Union supported Afghanistan's **communist** government. In the 1990s a Muslim group overthrew the government and then fought among themselves. Finally one group, called the Taliban, took control. They made many strict laws and took away a lot of the Afghan people's rights. Many people around the world were upset by this.

In 2001 the United States was attacked by terrorists. The U.S. government blamed the terrorism on al-Qaeda, a Muslim group supported by the Taliban. A few weeks later the United States, Britain, and other allies attacked Afghanistan and forced the Taliban from power. The new government restored many of the rights of the Afghan people that the Taliban had taken away.

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BAGHDAD, IRAQ • PAKISTAN

YEREVAN, ARMENIA




Complex designs cover a wall of a mosque in the city of Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan. Many Muslims believe that inside the mosque is the tomb of Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic religion.

© Charles & Josette Lenars/Corbis

Answer: - blaku = Kabul
- nihud shuk = Hindu Kush
- tinamoun = mountains





DID YOU KNOW?
One of the most popular sports in this land of tigers and jute is kite flying.

This young woman is picking tea leaves in a field in Bangladesh. Tea is one of the country's major crops.

© Roger Wood/Corbis



Land of the Bengalis



Bangladesh is a small, densely populated country in South Asia. It's also a young country, born only in 1971. Before that it was called East Pakistan. But the area it lies in is traditionally known as Bengal.

East Pakistan was part of the country of Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan wanted their freedom, and they won it after fighting a war with the help of the neighboring country of India. Today Bangladesh shares a language (Bengali) and culture with the Indian state of West Bengal. Most of the people are of the Islamic faith, though a number are Hindu.

Bangladesh is generally hot and **humid**. Two major rivers—the Ganges (Ganga) and the Brahmaputra—come together there as the Padma River. Summer brings heavy rains. Every two or three years the Brahmaputra River floods the countryside, killing many people and damaging crops and houses.

Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, is divided into Old and New Dhaka. In Old Dhaka you can see many styles of buildings, most notably Mughal (Islamic) monuments, gardens, and mosques. In the maze of crowded narrow lanes, bazaars sell everything from bracelets to silk to books.

In the **fertile** central region of Bangladesh, many crops are grown. These include rice and jute, a fiber often used to make sacks and mats. Jute is sold to other countries. Parts of Bangladesh are covered with forests—bamboo trees in the east and mangrove swamps along the coast. Elephants, bears, deer, and monkeys live in the forests and grasslands. But the country's best-known animal is the Bengal tiger—larger than all the big cats except the Siberian tiger.



LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...

INDIA • PAKISTAN • THIMPHU, BHUTAN



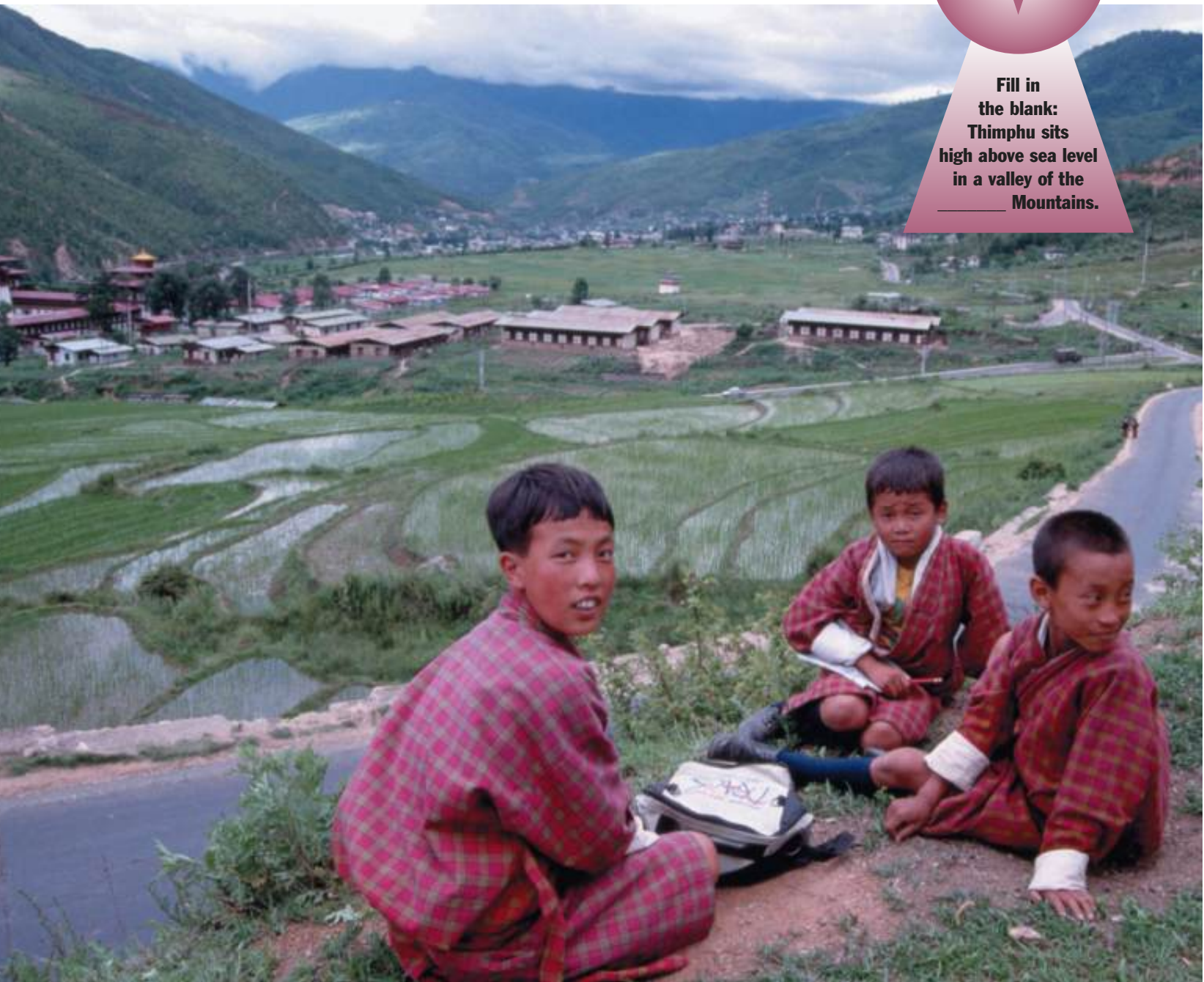
People are trying to save the Bengal tiger by saving its habitat. Why would that help? (Hint: What does the forest do for the tiger?)

Answer: Without forests in which to hide and hunt for food, tigers would die. So by saving the place where the Bengal tiger lives and gets its prey, we have a better chance of saving the animal as well.





Fill in
the blank:
Thimphu sits
high above sea level
in a valley of the
_____ Mountains.

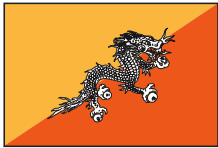


Schoolchildren sit on a hill above Thimphu. Before the 1960s the city had no formal schools except ones that taught religion. But since then great progress has been made in non-religious education.

© Karan Kapoor/Corbis



City in the Heart of the Himalayas



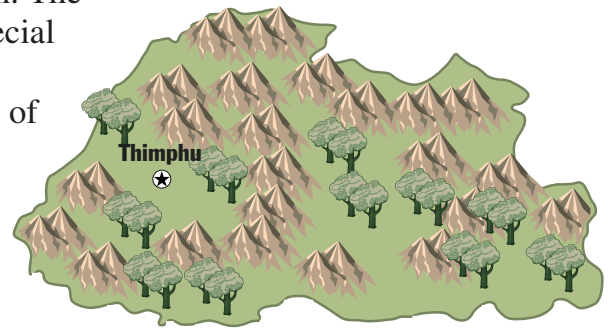
Thimphu is the capital of Bhutan, a small country in South Asia. It is a small city located in a valley in the heart of the Himalaya Mountains.

The people of Thimphu are not allowed to build houses in just any way they choose. There are strict rules for how all buildings must look. Buildings must be a certain height, and they have to follow the traditional building style of Bhutan. The similar-looking buildings give Thimphu a special look.

The Tashi Chho *dzong* is a good example of the Bhutanese style of building. Styled like a fortress, the *dzong* was originally a **monastery**. It's been remodeled and now also houses the offices of the royal government.

Farming is very important to the people of Thimphu. All **fertile** soil is used for growing crops—even the land around the royal palace. The main crops are rice, corn, and wheat.

Tourists usually like to visit the vegetable market in Thimphu. At one end of the market, you'll find people selling **handicrafts** and other locally made items. These include Buddhist prayer wheels and flags, baskets, handwoven and hand-knitted clothes, and many different kinds of hats. Another interesting place is the memorial *chorten*, or small **shrine**, at the temple called Changangkha Lhakhang. And you should make time to go up the hill known as Sangay Gang. From there you'll get a spectacular view of Thimphu.



DID YOU KNOW?
The government of Bhutan limits the number of tourists who can enter the country. One result is that Thimphu is a quiet city with little of the crowding common in other capitals.

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AFGHANISTAN • CHINA • INDIA



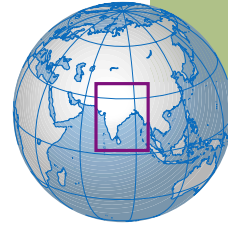
DID YOU KNOW?

In India's capital, New Delhi, is a slender five-story-tall tower called the Qutub Minar. The tower was built by early Muslim kings. It is part of a group of buildings that also includes a mosque made from pieces of Hindu and Jain temples.



True
or false?
A *chaitya*
is a place
where Hindus pray.

Land of Temples and Shrines



India is a country of more than a billion people. The people speak dozens of languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, and Tamil. Many also speak English. The country is the birthplace of two major religions: Hinduism and Buddhism. Both were founded in ancient times, but many people in India still practice them, especially Hinduism. Other religions in India include Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism. The country's capital is New Delhi.

People from all over the world travel to India to see its many beautiful and historic buildings. Long ago, for instance, Buddhists built dome-shaped **shrines** called *stupas*. These were built in places where the founder of the religion, the Buddha, lived, visited, or preached. Some of the most famous *stupas* are at Sanchi and Sarnath. A *chaitya* is a Buddhist temple, or place where people pray together. There are some beautiful *chaityas* among a group of caves carved out of cliffs at Ajanta. The Ajanta caves are also known for their paintings. Though the paintings are about 2,000 years old, they still look bright and beautiful.

India also has several Hindu rock temples. The Kailash Temple at Ellora is carved out of solid rock. So are the sculptured temples of Khajuraho. The stone *rathas*, or shrines, in Mahabalipuram are also remarkable.

Many tourists like to see India's grand **mausoleums**, where important people are buried. The Taj Mahal, one of the most beautiful sites in the world, is the mausoleum complex Emperor Shah Jahan built for his queen in the 1600s.

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BANGLADESH • PAKISTAN • TAJ MAHAL



The Buddhist religion began in India many years ago. These caves in western India were used as temples and monasteries by early followers of the religion. The walls of the caves are covered with religious paintings.

© David Gurr—Eye Ubiquitous/Corbis



Wonder of the World

Several hundred years ago most of India was conquered and ruled by the Mughals, who followed the religion of Islam. When the emperor Jahangir ruled over northern India, his son, Prince Khurram, married Arjumand Banu Baygam. Prince Khurram called his wife Mumtaz Mahal, meaning “chosen one of the palace.” The two were almost always together, and together they had 14 children.

Prince Khurram became emperor in 1628 and was called Emperor Shah Jahan. But three years later Mumtaz Mahal died while having a baby. Shah Jahan was heartbroken. He decided to build the most beautiful monument to his wife. He had the best **architects** design it in a perfect blend of Indian, Persian, and Islamic styles. Beginning in about 1632, over 20,000 workers labored for 22 years to create what was to become one of the wonders of the world.

The great monument was called the Taj Mahal (a form of Mumtaz Mahal’s name). It was built in the city of Agra, India, the capital of Shah Jahan’s empire. Its several buildings sit in a large garden on the south bank of the Yamuna River. From the garden’s south gateway you can see the front of the white marble **mausoleum**. It contains the tombs of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan. The mausoleum stands on a high marble platform surrounded by four minarets, or towers. Many of its walls and pillars shimmer with **inlaid** gemstones, including lapis lazuli, jade, crystal, turquoise, and amethyst. And verses from the Koran (the Muslim holy book) appear on many parts of the Taj.

Many visitors still come to the Taj Mahal. To help protect and care for it for many years to come, the Taj was made a World Heritage site in 1983.

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ANGKOR WAT • ASIA • INDIA



Find and correct the error in the following sentence:
The Taj Mahal was built as a palace for Shah Jahan’s wife.

DID YOU KNOW?

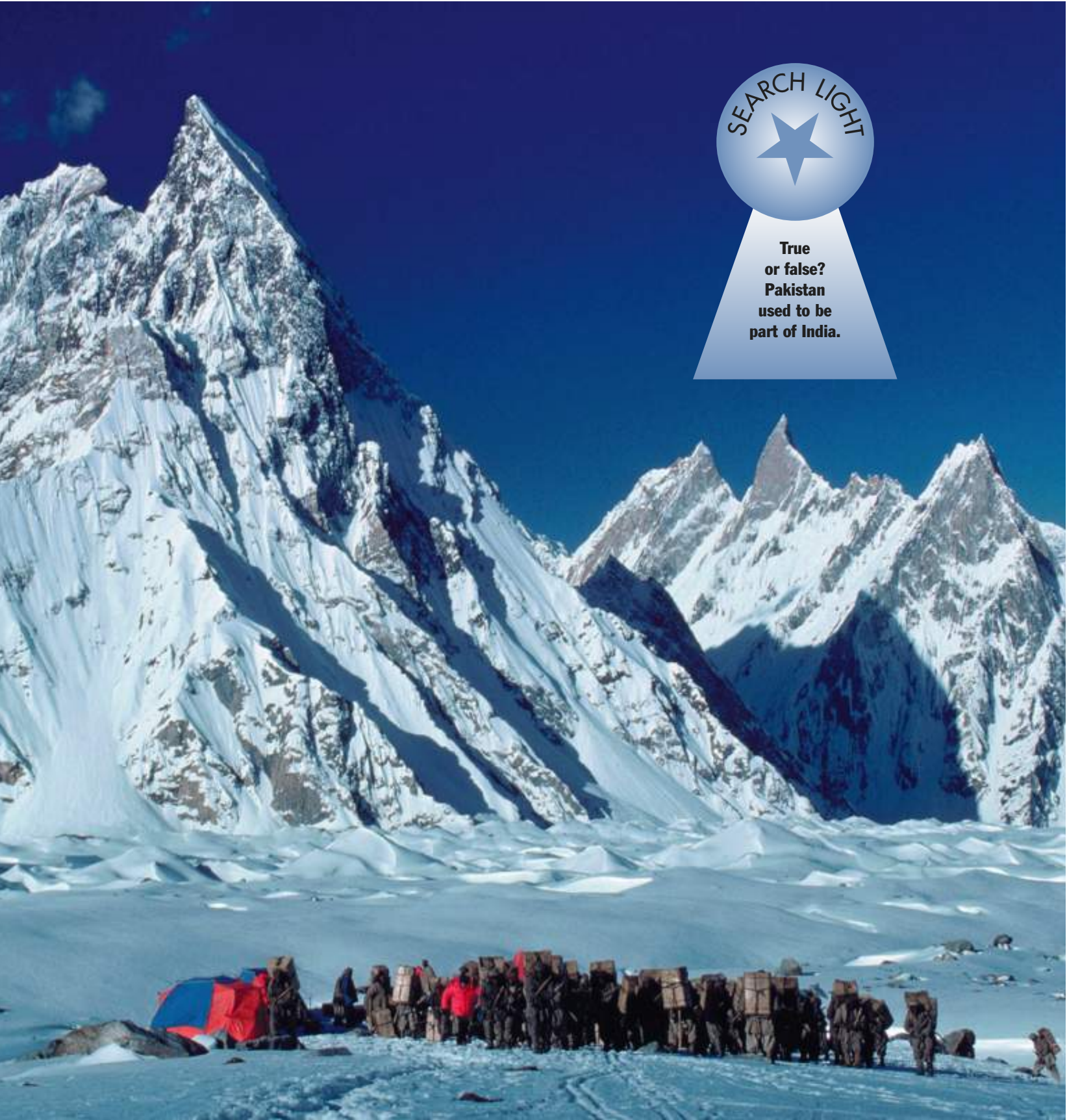
According to tradition, Shah Jahan planned to have a tomb built for himself across the river from the Taj Mahal, with a bridge connecting the two. But he was removed from power and imprisoned by his son before his plan could be carried out.



Visitors flock to see the breathtaking Taj Mahal in Agra, India. Many people in the city claim to be descendants of the 20,000 workers who built the structure.

© Vince Streano/Corbis

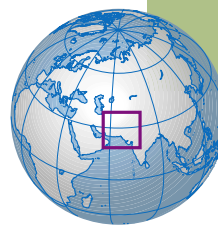




**True
or false?
Pakistan
used to be
part of India.**

A group sets up camp in the Karakoram Range in Pakistan.
© Galen Rowell/Corbis

A Young Country with an Ancient History



Pakistan is a country in South Asia. Its neighbor to the east is India. For many years Pakistan and India were a single country known as British India. Pakistan was created to provide a homeland for India's Muslims. It became an independent country in 1947. Its capital is Islamabad.

Pakistan was established in two sections, East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Later, in 1971, East Pakistan became a separate country called Bangladesh.

Although Pakistan is a young country, it has a rich history. It was the site of the ancient Indus civilization. This was one of the largest of the early city-based civilizations. Pakistan is also home to many historic **mosques**, tombs, and **shrines**. Some of these are hundreds of years old.

Pakistan is a rugged place. In the north are the mountains of the Karakoram Range and the Himalayas. Some of the world's tallest mountains are part of these ranges. Huge **glaciers** and roaring rivers cross this landscape. Other parts of the country are very dry. Pakistan's natural plant life is mainly grass and bushes. But on the slopes of the Himalayas, oak, cherry, cedar, and pine trees grow. Brown bears, black Himalayan bears, leopards, and wild sheep are found in the northern mountains. The rare snow leopard is found there too.

Most of Pakistan's people speak Urdu. But Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi are also spoken. Many people can also speak English.

Many Pakistanis are farmers. They grow rice and cotton. Some people make a living from logging and fishing. Others make beautiful carpets and do fine embroidery.

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AFGHANISTAN • BANGLADESH • INDIA



DID YOU KNOW?
The official emblem, or symbol, of Pakistan features the crescent-and-star symbol of the national religion, Islam. The emblem also displays what were originally Pakistan's four main crops: cotton, tea, wheat, and jute.



Island Nation of Natural Riches



The cloth of your shirt or the lead in your pencil may be from Sri Lanka! Tea is another famous **export** of this island nation.

Sri Lanka lies just south of India in the Indian Ocean. For hundreds of years it was called Ceylon. In 1972 its name was changed to Sri Lanka. Colombo is Sri Lanka's capital, but the country's **legislature** and law courts are based in the city of Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte.

Most Sri Lankans are farmers. Because the country has a tropical **climate**, with high **humidity** and plenty of rainfall, it is easy to grow rice, tea, sugarcane, rubber trees, and coconut palms. Sri Lankans mine precious gems such as sapphires and rubies. They also produce graphite, the material used to make pencil leads and other products.

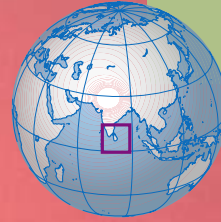
Sri Lanka was ruled by different countries for hundreds of years. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to conquer the island, arriving in 1505. Then the Dutch gained control by promising to help drive the Portuguese away. Finally, in 1802 the British took over the island. They ruled for almost 150 years. Each of these countries wanted to **colonize** the island so they could make money trading its natural goods.

Despite long years of foreign rule, the Sri Lankan people have preserved their traditional sculpture, painting, and **architecture**. The ancient religions of Buddhism and Hinduism have strongly influenced the arts in Sri Lanka. The country's many Buddhist and Hindu temples, with their dramatic ceremonies, are a focus of the island's cultural life.

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BANGLADESH • INDIA • INDONESIA

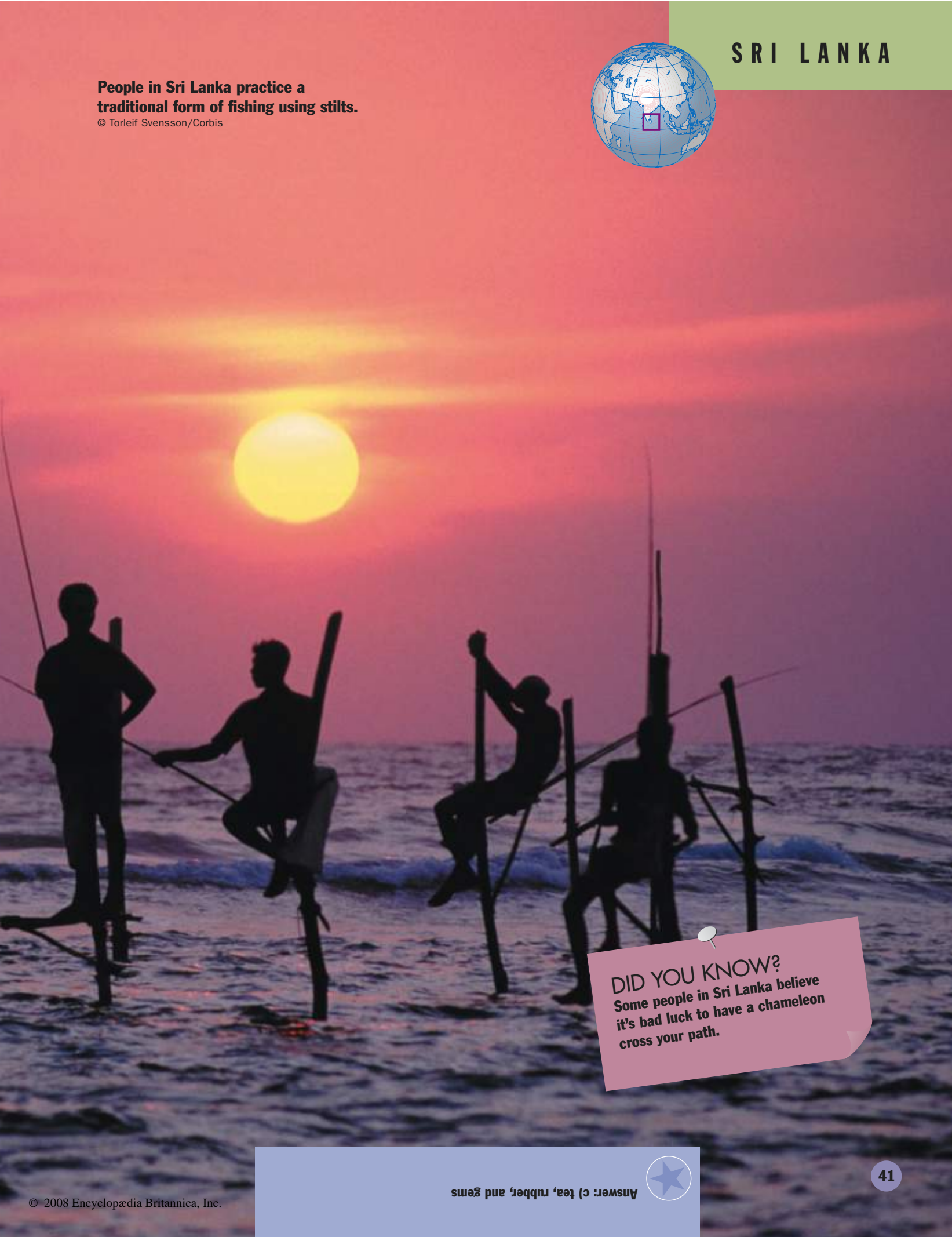


Which of these products does Sri Lanka sell to other countries?
a) tea, tobacco, and coconuts
b) tea, coconuts, and gold
c) tea, rubber, and gems




People in Sri Lanka practice a traditional form of fishing using stilts.

© Torleif Svensson/Corbis



DID YOU KNOW?
Some people in Sri Lanka believe it's bad luck to have a chameleon cross your path.



An aerial photograph of Yerevan, Armenia, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous multi-story buildings. In the background, the snow-capped peak of Mount Ararat is visible against a clear blue sky. The city is surrounded by greenery, and the overall scene is captured from an elevated perspective.

Yerevan is an attractive city in a fine natural setting framed by “dead” volcanoes, including the snow-capped peaks of Mount Ararat. Many of the city’s buildings were made using local stone of various colors, especially pink.

© Dean Conger/Corbis

SEARCH LIGHT



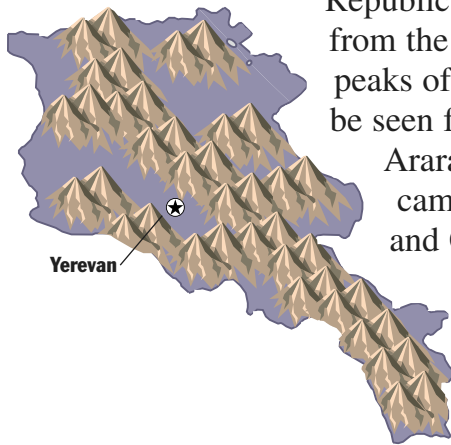
**Find and correct the error in the following sentence:
Yerevan is famous for being one of the world’s largest cities.**



City of Cafés



Yerevan is one of the world's oldest cities. A fortress was built there in 783 BC. Yerevan is the capital of Armenia, a country at the northwestern edge of Asia. The Hrazdan River divides the city. In early times the city became an important stop for traders. In modern times dams have been built on the river to supply electric power for the city's many **industries**.



Republic Square lies at the center of the city. Yerevan spreads out from the riverbank to the slopes of the surrounding hills. The peaks of Mount Aragats, Mount Azhdak, and Mount Ararat can be seen from the city. All three are “dead” volcanoes. Mount Ararat is traditionally considered the place where Noah's ark came to a rest at the end of the flood described in the Jewish and Christian Bible. Most of the houses in the city are pink because they are made with pink “tuff” stones from the volcanoes.

Yerevan's many museums include the National Art Gallery and the Children's Art Gallery. There is also a painters' **bazaar** during weekends where paintings are sold at reasonable prices. The Matenadaran archives houses books that were written long ago. It has a wonderful collection of old illustrated **manuscripts**. The Erebuni Museum contains many historical objects, including coins and ancient tools.

One of the most unforgettable things about Yerevan is its many cafés. In summer there are so many sidewalk cafés that it's often hard to tell where one ends and the next one begins!

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ASIA • DAMASCUS, SYRIA • ISTANBUL, TURKEY

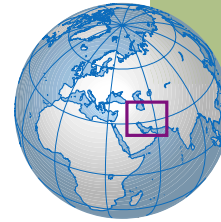
DID YOU KNOW?

Many Armenians hold Mount Ararat sacred. They believe their ancestors were the first people to appear in the world—and therefore on the mountain—after the great flood described in the Bible.





**Find
and correct
the error in the
following sentence:
Iran was once the
center of the mighty
Ottoman Empire.**



Modern Persia



The country of Iran, in southwestern Asia, was the center of a mighty empire in ancient times. Today it is a strict Islamic **republic**, meaning that its laws are based on the religion of Islam. Many people in the countries around Iran also follow Islam. However, most Iranians follow Shi'ah Islam, a form that is less common elsewhere. The country's capital is the ancient city of Tehran.



The people of the region always called the land Iran, but outsiders gave it the name Persia. The name came from the province of

Pars, or Persis, where some of the early kings of the region had their capital. In about 550 BC one of those kings, Cyrus the Great, expanded his kingdom and created the Persian Empire. The empire lasted for more than 200 years until the Macedonian empire-builder Alexander the Great defeated the last Persian ruler.

After that the region changed hands many times.

All the different groups that ruled Iran through the centuries contributed to its rich culture. One of Iran's best-known poets was Omar Khayyam. He wrote beautiful poems that are still read today. Iran is also famous for its miniature paintings, silver work, and Persian rugs. Iran continues to produce these traditional crafts, but it has worked to develop modern **industries** as well.

Iran relies on selling its oil and natural gas for much of its income. The country also produces chemicals from those two substances. Iran borders the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, and fisheries there provide jobs for some Iranians.

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AMMAN, JORDAN • BAGHDAD, IRAQ • MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA

DID YOU KNOW?

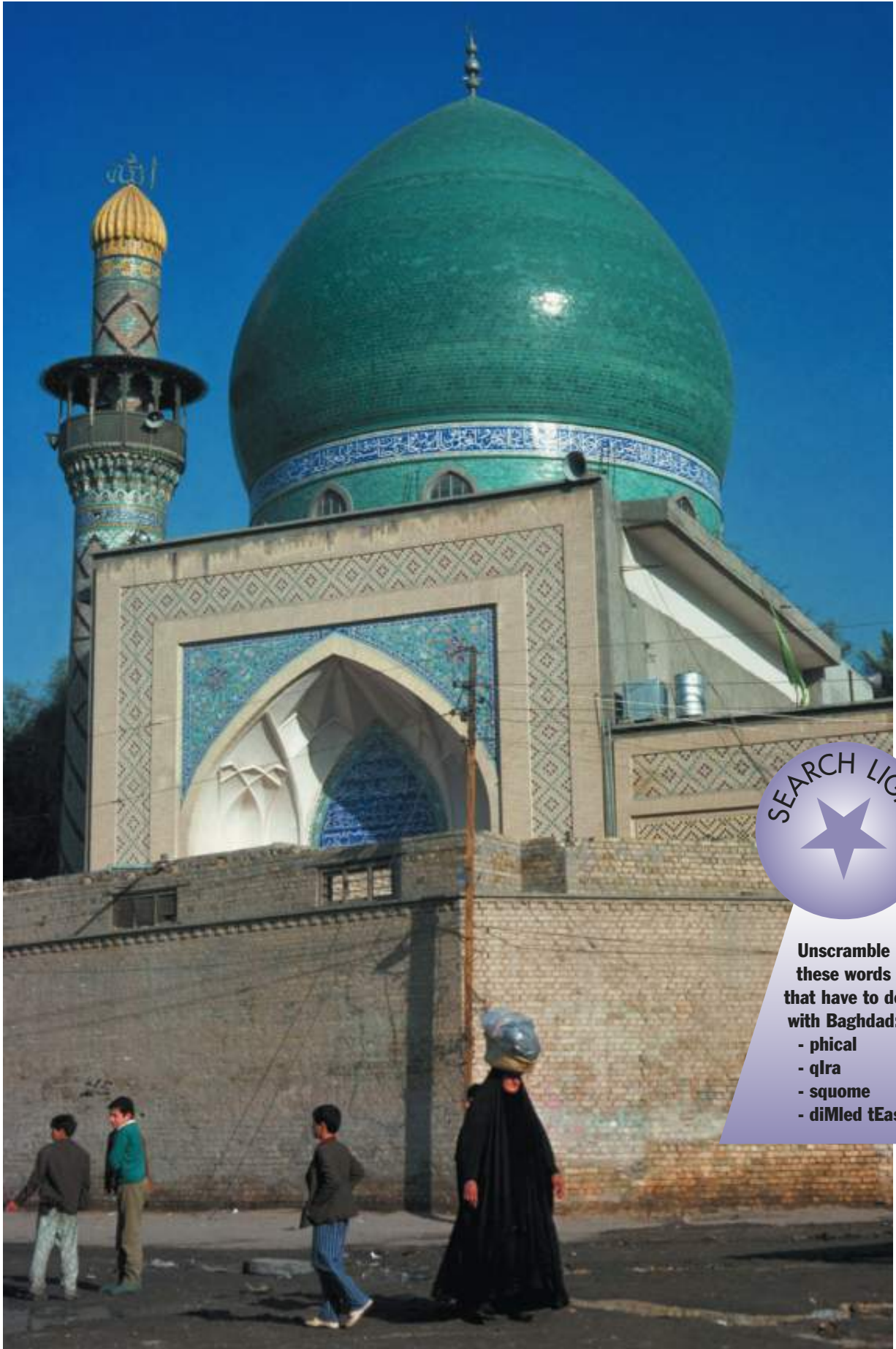
The religion of Zoroastrianism was founded in Iran by a man named Zoroaster, or Zarathushtra, more than 2,500 years ago.

Shop windows in Tehran, Iran, display jewelry and other goods.

© Shepard Sherbell/Corbis

Answer: Iran was once the center of the mighty Persian Empire.





**Unscramble
these words
that have to do
with Baghdad:**

- phical
- qlra
- squome
- diMled tEas

City of Arabian Nights



Have you heard the stories of *The Arabian Nights*? Did you know that most of the stories are set in Baghdad? Baghdad is the capital of Iraq. It lies on the banks of the Tigris River.

People have lived in the area where Baghdad now stands for about 4,000 years. The city itself, however, did not develop until many years later. About 1,200 years ago a Muslim caliph (leader) named al-Mansur chose a village called Baghdad for his capital. The new city was built within rounded walls. At the center stood the caliph's palace and a grand **mosque**. People called Baghdad the City of Peace or the Round City. During the reign of a later caliph named Harun al-Rashid, Baghdad was said to be the richest and most beautiful city in the world. The stories in *The Arabian Nights* tell about the glory of Baghdad during this period.

Today Baghdad is one of the largest cities in the Middle East. It is also a center of the art and culture of the religion of Islam. It has many mosques, museums, and libraries. People go to the Awqaf Library to study Arabic history and literature. The Iraqi National Museum has a famous collection of items from the country's early history.

Despite its many advantages, Baghdad has faced many problems in recent times. After Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the United States and other countries bombed Baghdad and other parts of Iraq. Parts of the city were destroyed. Baghdad was damaged again in 2003, during another war with the United States. Once again the people of Baghdad had to work to rebuild their city.

LEARN MORE! READ THESE ARTICLES...
DAMASCUS, SYRIA • IRAN • MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA



DID YOU KNOW?
The caliphs of Baghdad in the 800s and 900s AD were great supporters of the game of chess. The city was home to some of the world's best players.

Most of the people of Baghdad follow the religion of Islam. The city has many mosques, or houses of worship for Muslims.

© Charles & Josette Lenars/Corbis

Answer: - phical = caliph
- squome = mosque
- qira = Iraq
- diMed tCas = Middle East



Several cities were located on the shores of Lake Tiberias in northern Israel in ancient times. The lake is called the Sea of Galilee in the Bible.

© David G. Houser/Corbis



Fill in the blank:
Israel's founding as a Jewish state caused problems for the _____, the Arab people already living in the same area.

The Jewish State



Although Israel did not become a country until 1948, the region where it is located, formerly called Palestine, has a rich history. It was the ancient home of the Jewish people, and for many hundreds of years it has been home to Arabs. The region, especially the city of Jerusalem, is important to people of the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faiths.

Much of Israel is a desert. But there are also well-watered areas where crops can grow. Israel's major crops are citrus fruits, flowers, and vegetables. An important feature of Israel is the Jordan River. It rises in the north and flows south into Lake Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee) and then into the Dead Sea, a large salt lake.

Israel was created as a country where Jews could rule themselves and live without fear of **persecution**. But this caused problems for the Arabs already living on the land. These people, called Palestinians, felt that the land was being taken away from them. The neighboring Arab countries also objected to a Jewish state in Palestine and tried to overrun the country just after it was founded.

Israel won that war as well as several others. During one war Israel took control of areas called the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Palestinians there want to form their own state. They also want control of part of Jerusalem, which Israel claims as its capital. The Israelis and the Palestinians have tried to settle their differences peacefully, but conflicts between the two groups continued into the 21st century.

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AMMAN, JORDAN • ASIA • JERUSALEM

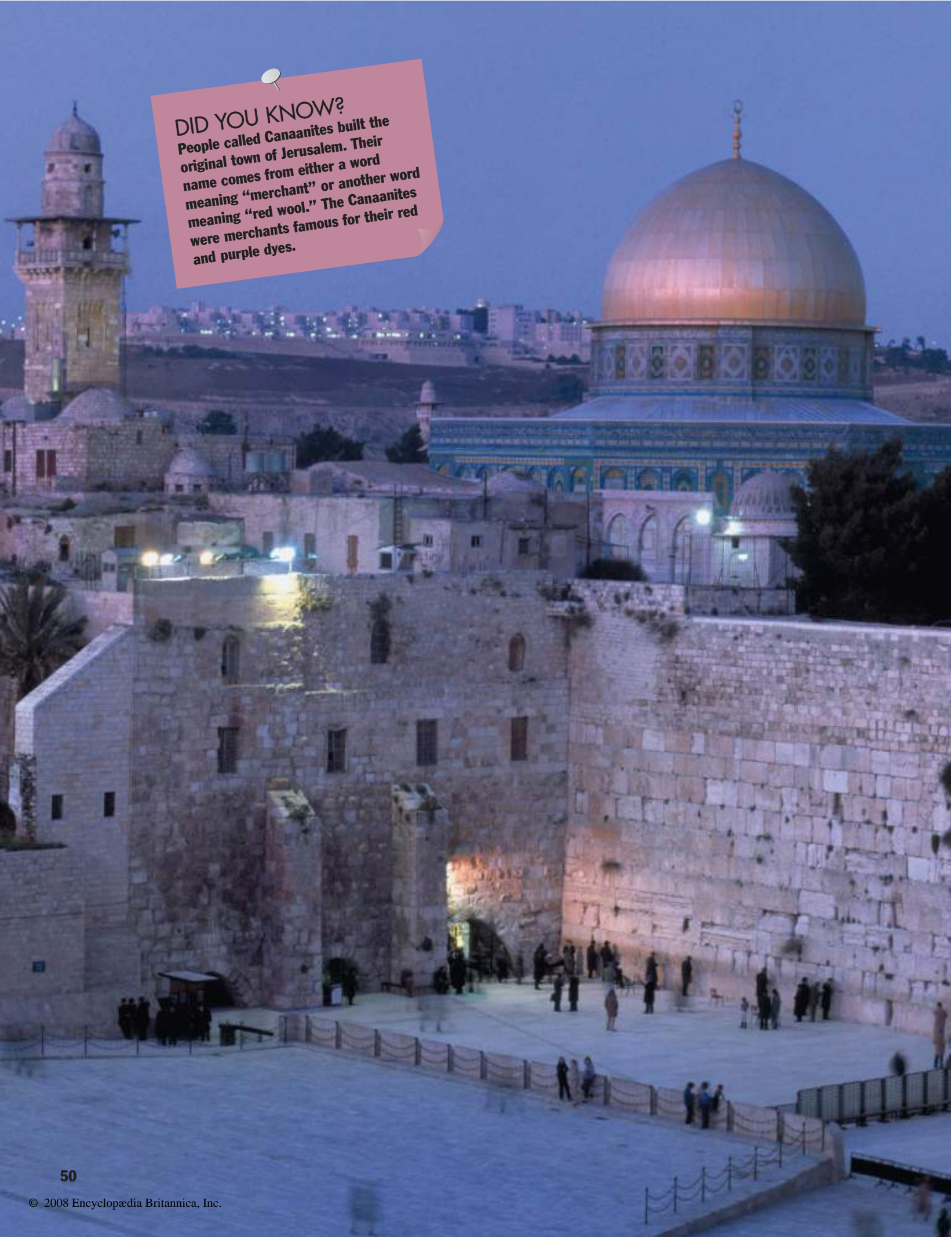


DID YOU KNOW?
Salt water is buoyant—that is, it makes things float. The Dead Sea is so salty that when you swim in it, you float even if you don't want to.

Answer: Israel's founding as a Jewish state caused problems for the Palestinians, the Arab people already living in the same area.



DID YOU KNOW?
People called Canaanites built the original town of Jerusalem. Their name comes from either a word meaning "merchant" or another word meaning "red wool." The Canaanites were merchants famous for their red and purple dyes.



Holy City

Jerusalem is a very holy city for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The section of Jerusalem called the Old City is full of churches, **mosques**, and **synagogues**. People have lived in the Old City for nearly 5,000 years.

There are many sounds in the Old City. You can hear the ringing of church bells and the Muslim call to prayer from the **minarets**. You can also hear the sound of chanting at the



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
© Michael Nicholson/Corbis

Western Wall. The wall is the only remaining part of an ancient Jewish temple.

Because of the sound of the prayers offered there, the wall is often called the Wailing Wall. Above it is the Temple Mount, which is sacred to Muslims. It is the site of the beautiful gold-capped **shrine** called the Dome of the Rock. It is said that Muhammad, the founder of Islam, made his journey to heaven from this site.

To the north of the Temple Mount lies Via Dolorosa, or Street of Sorrows. This is believed to be the path Jesus walked while carrying the cross. It ends at the Church of the Holy **Sepulchre**. This church is the most important shrine for Christians. It is said to have been built over the place where Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead.

Because of Jerusalem's religious importance, control of the city has long been disputed. Israel claims Jerusalem as its capital, but some people disagree with this claim. Among them is a group called the Palestinians, who live in East Jerusalem and nearby territories. Some of them want a separate state created for Palestinians, and they want part of Jerusalem to be its capital.

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Jews pray at the Western Wall. The Dome of the Rock is in the background.

© Richard T. Nowitz/Corbis

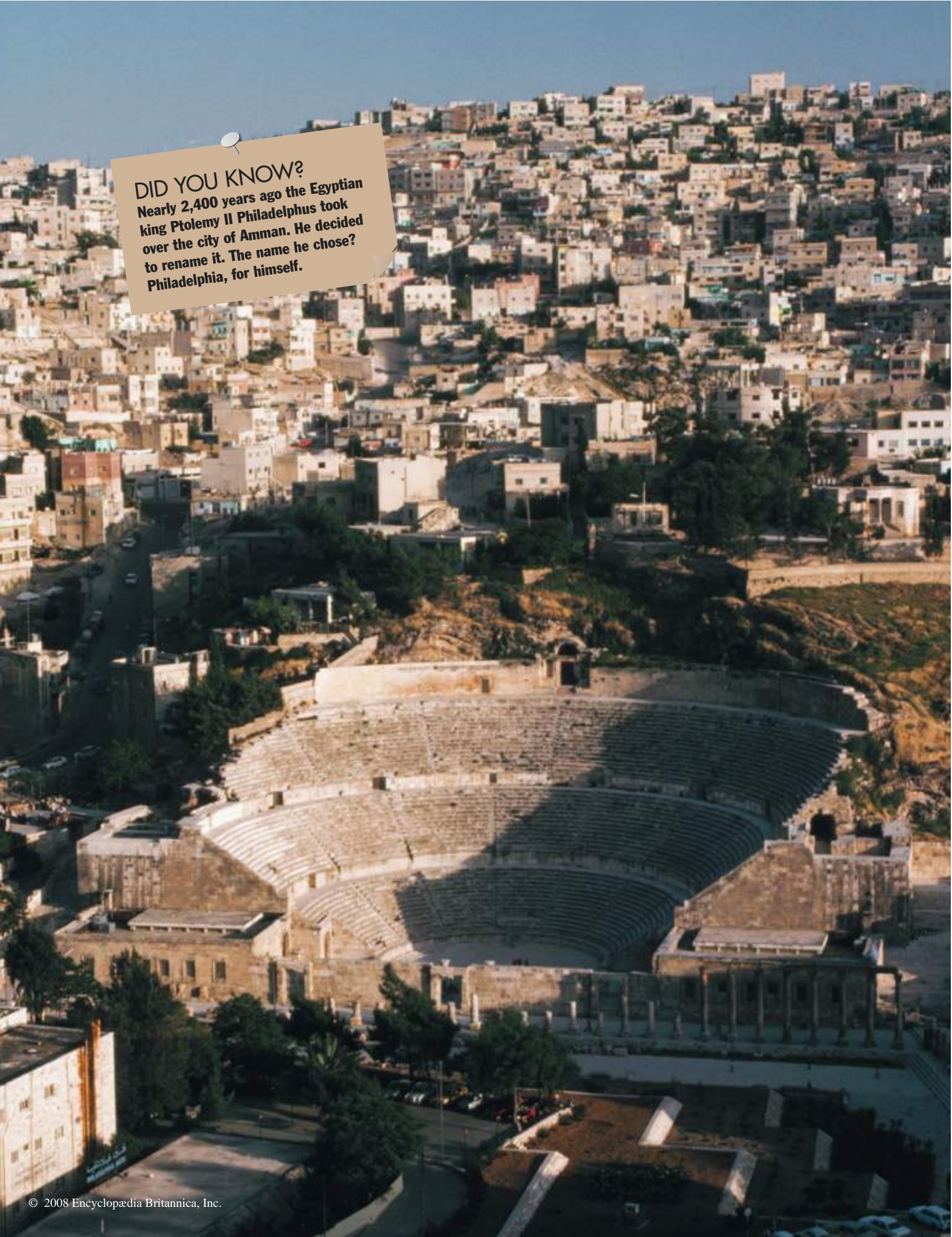


Jerusalem is holy to which three religions?

- a) Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism
- b) Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism
- c) Islam, Christianity, and Judaism

Answer: c) Islam, Christianity, and Judaism



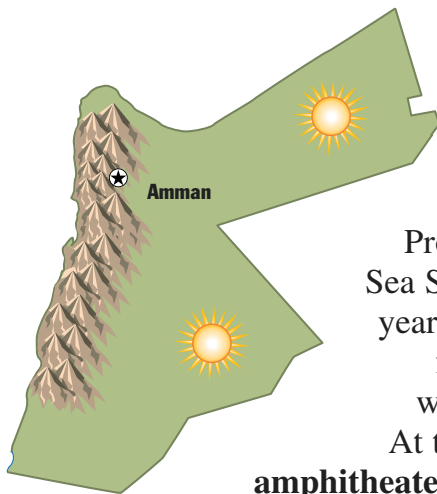


DID YOU KNOW?
Nearly 2,400 years ago the Egyptian king Ptolemy II Philadelphus took over the city of Amman. He decided to rename it. The name he chose? Philadelphia, for himself.

City on Seven Hills



Amman is the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. “Hashemite” means that the ruling family is **descended** from the Prophet Muhammad. The city is spread over seven hills, called *jabals* in the Arabic language. Most of Amman’s historical sites are clustered in the downtown area, at the bottom of the *jabals*.



An ancient **citadel** towers over the city of Amman. It is at the top of Al-Qala Hill. Al-Qasr is the most imposing building of the citadel. Al-Qasr means “the palace.” Nearby is the Jordan Archaeological Museum. It has many exhibits from the **prehistoric** age up to recent times.

Probably its most famous possessions are the Dead Sea Scrolls. These ancient **manuscripts** are about 2,000 years old, and they include parts of the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) and other writings.

At the bottom of Al-Qala Hill is a Roman **amphitheater**. The theater was cut into the northern side of a hill and can seat 6,000 people. It is still used to stage shows, and it has two museums. The Jordan Folklore Museum has many things that tell us how the people of Jordan used to live. The Museum of Popular Traditions has traditional costumes and antique jewelry. Many of the costumes feature beautiful **embroidery**. The odeum is another theater, nearly as old as the Roman one. It seats just 500 people. Romans used it as a concert hall, and it’s still used for concerts.

Visitors to Amman enjoy the city’s many bazaars (markets) called *souks*. Each *souk* sells different things. The gold *souk* is greatly admired.



In the Arabic language, *jabal* means
a) hill.
b) bazaar.
c) theater.

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DAMASCUS, SYRIA • JERUSALEM • MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA

Houses in Amman, Jordan, cover a hill above an ancient Roman amphitheater. This huge outdoor theater was built more than 1,800 years ago and is remarkably well preserved.

© Adam Woolfitt/Corbis

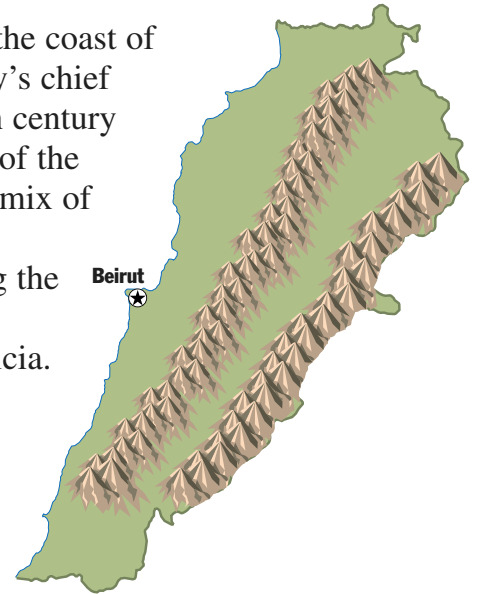


The City of Wells



Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, lies on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is the country's chief port and largest city. Until the late 20th century Beirut was a social and cultural center of the Middle East. In many ways, the city was a complicated mix of peoples and ideas. People from all over the world have attended its schools, colleges, and universities, including the American University of Beirut.

Long ago the city was part of a region called Phoenicia. The Phoenicians called the city Be'erot, which means "wells," because of its underground supply of water. It was one of the most attractive cities in the Middle East. And it was the most important port in the eastern Mediterranean for a long time. Its location made it a natural **crossroads** between Asia and Europe.



But Lebanon has been torn apart by many wars and conflicts. Much of Beirut was destroyed in a **civil war** that lasted from 1975 to 1991.

Some parts of the city have been rebuilt now. Traditional two-story houses with red-tiled roofs sit side by side with fashionable new houses. Many houses and buildings, though, are still in bad shape and need to be repaired.

Despite the destruction, there are many things to see in Beirut. The American University of Beirut Museum, the Nicolas Sursock Museum, and the National Museum are some of them. At the National Museum you can see objects that are thousands of years old. The city also has many shopping centers and a large number of cafés where you can relax and enjoy Lebanese food, such as *baba ganouj* (eggplant dip) or *tabbouleh* (cracked-wheat salad).



What event led to the destruction of large parts of the city of Beirut in the late 20th century?

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AMMAN, JORDAN • DAMASCUS, SYRIA • JERUSALEM

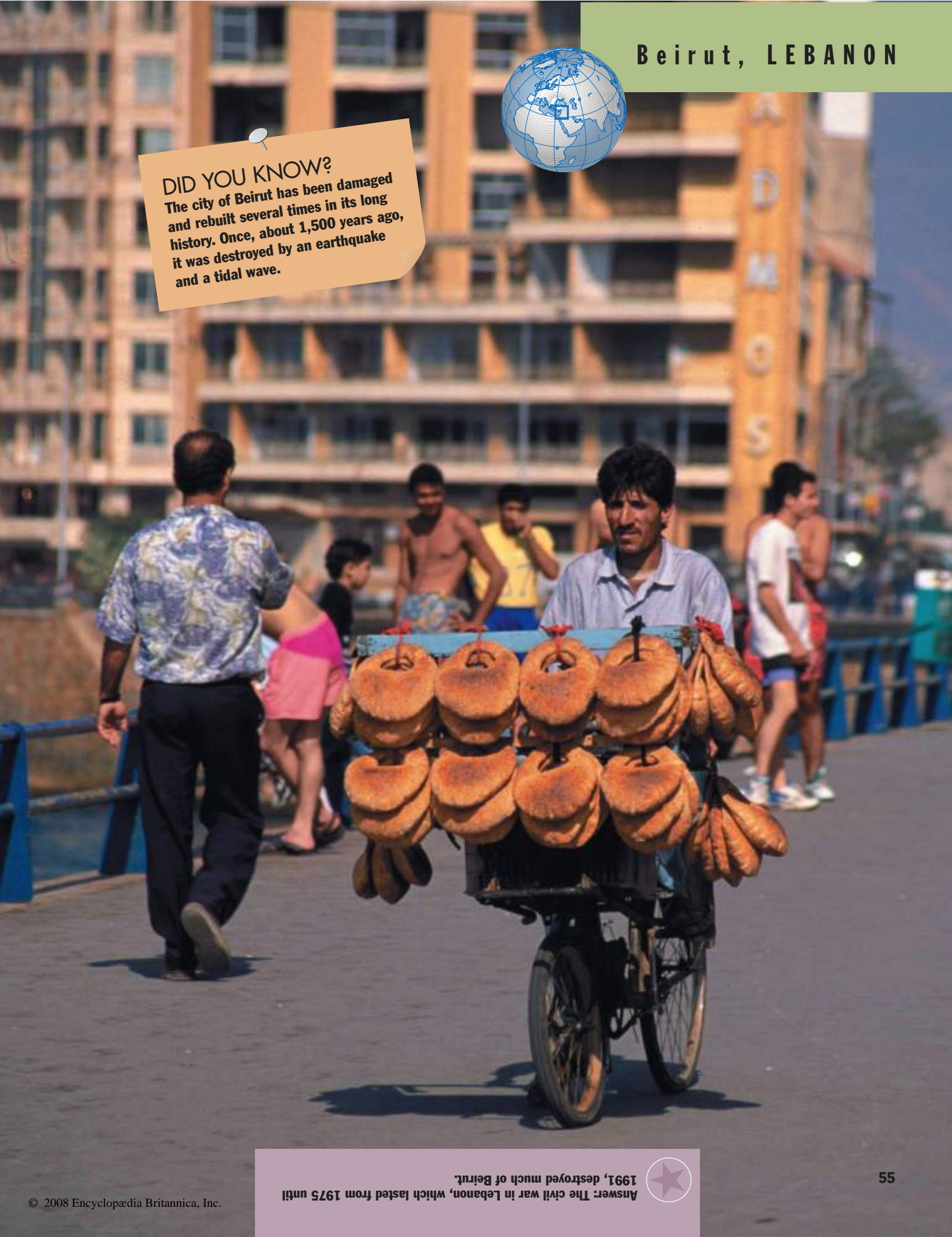
A street vendor carries his goods on a bicycle through the streets of Beirut.

D. Mace/Robert Harding Picture Library



DID YOU KNOW?

The city of Beirut has been damaged and rebuilt several times in its long history. Once, about 1,500 years ago, it was destroyed by an earthquake and a tidal wave.



Answer: The civil war in Lebanon, which lasted from 1975 until 1991, destroyed much of Beirut.



Holiest City of Islam



Mecca is the holiest city for followers of the religion of Islam. The city, located in Saudi Arabia, is the birthplace of the **Prophet Muhammad**, the founder of Islam.

Muslims all over the world face in the direction of Mecca five times each day to pray.

The Haram, or Great Mosque, and the Kaaba are the most important places in Mecca. The **mosque** can hold a million worshippers. The Kaaba lies in the central courtyard of the mosque. It is a cube-shaped **shrine** made of black stone and wood. This is the holiest shrine of Islam. It is the object toward which Muslims pray when facing Mecca, and it is the most important site for Muslim **pilgrims** to visit when they go to the city. Muslims call the pilgrimage, or journey, to Mecca the *hajj*. All adult Muslims are supposed to try to make the trip at least once.

There are numerous sites from Islamic history in Mecca. Mount Hira, in the northeastern part of the city, has a cave where Muhammad went to **meditate** in private before he became a prophet. Muslims believe he received the first verse of the Koran, the holy book of Islam, in this cave.

Mecca changed greatly in the 20th century. The areas surrounding the Great Mosque were cleared. New houses were built. The streets were made wider, and new tunnels were built to handle more traffic. Like Riyadh (the nation's capital), Mecca is now one of the largest and most modern cities in Saudi Arabia.

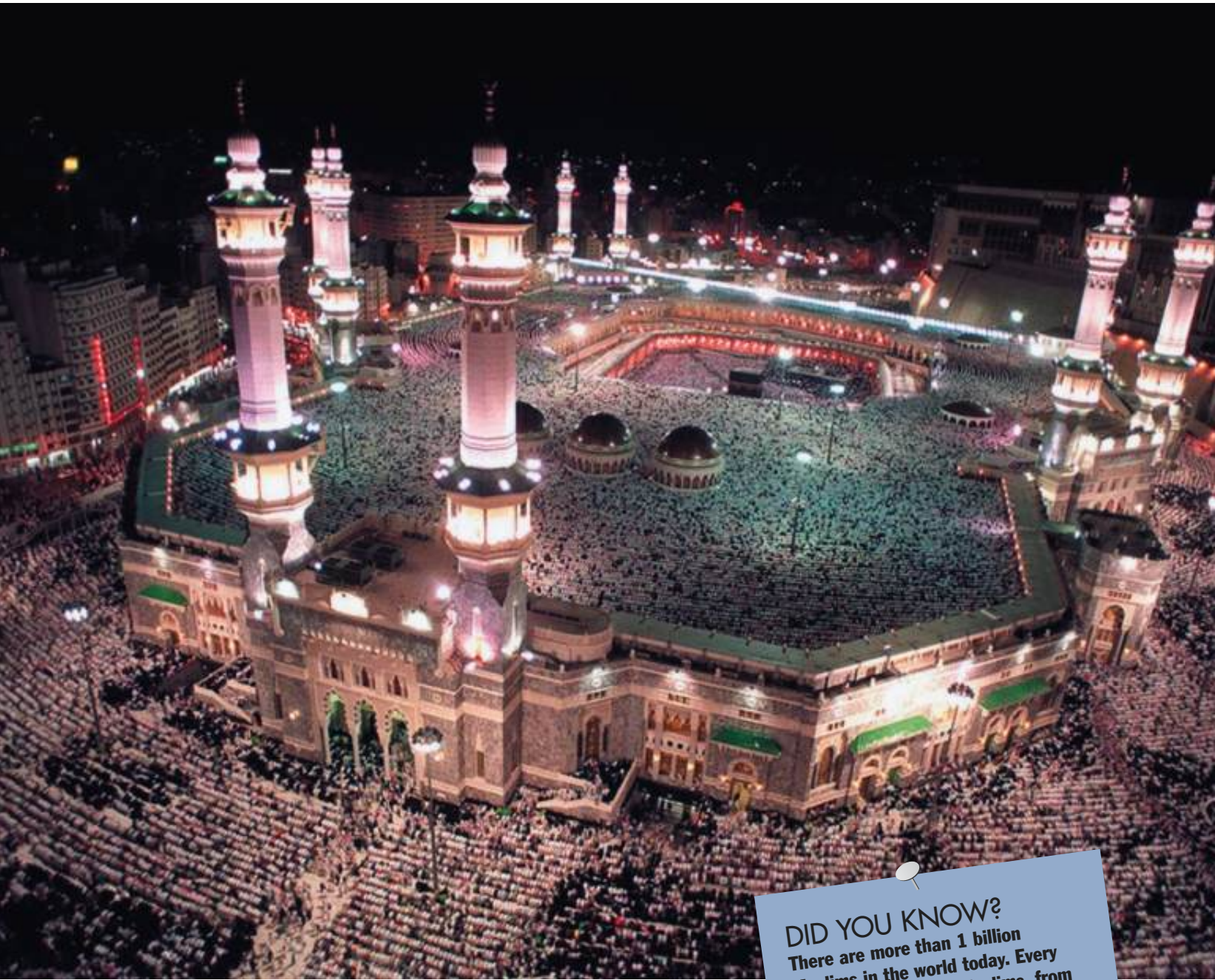


Fill in the blanks:
Muslims go to Mecca to see the birthplace of the

_____.




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AMMAN, JORDAN • BAGHDAD, IRAQ • DAMASCUS, SYRIA



Hundreds of thousands of people gather at the Great Mosque in Mecca on the 27th night of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad first received the Koran on that night many years ago.
© AFP/Corbis

DID YOU KNOW?
There are more than 1 billion Muslims in the world today. Every year about 2 million Muslims, from nearly every country of the world, make the pilgrimage to Mecca.





DID YOU KNOW?
Damascus is believed to be the world's oldest continuously inhabited city. People have apparently lived there since about 2500 BC.



Pearl of the East



Damascus is the capital of Syria and one of the oldest cities in the world. Travelers who visited Damascus in the past wrote about its many trees, its olive groves, and its streams and fountains. Some of these parks and gardens still exist.

And for this reason people still call Damascus the “Pearl of the East.”

In the old part of Damascus many people live very much as people did hundreds of years ago. Most of them still live in small single-story houses built close together. Rising above them are the graceful minarets (towers) and domes of the city’s many **mosques**, where believers in the religion of

Islam worship. The Great Mosque of Damascus is the oldest surviving stone mosque in the world.

One of the most colorful areas of Damascus is the region of the *khans* and **bazaars**. Long ago *khans* were trade, storage, and resting places for camel **caravans**. The Khan Asa’ad Pasha is a beautiful building. It has a striking gate and a black-and-white marble top supported by marble

pillars. It is still a center of trade. The bazaars are lined with shops, stalls, and cafés. They’re filled with the noise of people bargaining for the best deal.

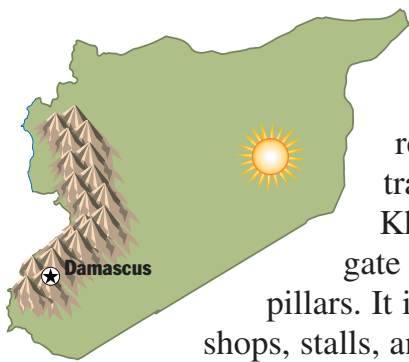
Many streets in the bazaar were once devoted to particular trades. You could find the Street of the Saddlers, Street of the Slipper Merchants, and Street of the Water-Pipe Makers. You could also find the Street of the Spice Men, Street of the Dyers, and many others. The longest and busiest of them all was the famous Street Called Straight. It is mentioned in the Bible.

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AMMAN, JORDAN • BAGHDAD, IRAQ • MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA

The minarets, or towers, of the Ommayed Mosque rise above the surrounding buildings in Damascus, Syria.

© Charles & Josette Lenars/Corbis



Why would the streets in the Damascus bazaars have names like the Street of the Spice Men?

Answer: Having the streets named after what was sold there made it easier for shoppers to find what they were looking for.





Istanbul was formerly known as

- a) Constantinople and Ottoman.
- b) Byzantium and Constantinople.
- c) Bosphorus and Byzantium.

City on Two Continents

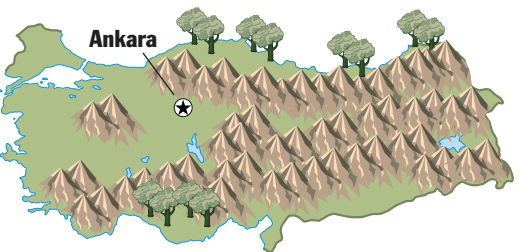


Istanbul is the only city in the world that sits on two continents. It is divided by the Bosphorus Strait—a narrow stretch of water that separates Europe from Asia. So part of Istanbul lies in Asia and part in Europe. The city has been a gateway between Asia and Europe for centuries. Today it is the largest city in Turkey and its most important port.

Istanbul has a long history. In the 7th century BC the Greeks built a **colony** on the site and called it Byzantium. For more than 1,000 years, beginning in the 4th century AD, the city was the capital of the Byzantine Empire. It became known as Constantinople during this period. In 1453 the Turks of the Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople and made it their capital. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey became a **republic** in 1923. The capital was then moved to Ankara. Istanbul took its current name in 1930.

Fires, earthquakes, and invasions have greatly damaged Istanbul over the years, but the old part of the city still has many historic sights. One of these is Topkapi Palace, where the Ottoman **sultans** lived. Another landmark is the Hagia Sophia, which was built as a church almost 1,500 years ago. It later became a **mosque** and is now a museum.

Of the many mosques built by the Ottomans, the Blue Mosque is the most famous. Another interesting place to visit is the Grand **Bazaar**. It has shops selling gold, carpets, **ceramics**, copper, brass, and hundreds of other items.



DID YOU KNOW?

Two bridges spanning the Bosphorus Strait connect Istanbul's European and Asian sides. So you can actually walk from one continent to another!

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BAGHDAD, IRAQ • DAMASCUS, SYRIA • JERUSALEM

The Hagia Sophia, in the background, and the Blue Mosque are two of the best-known sights in Istanbul.

© Danny Lehman/Corbis

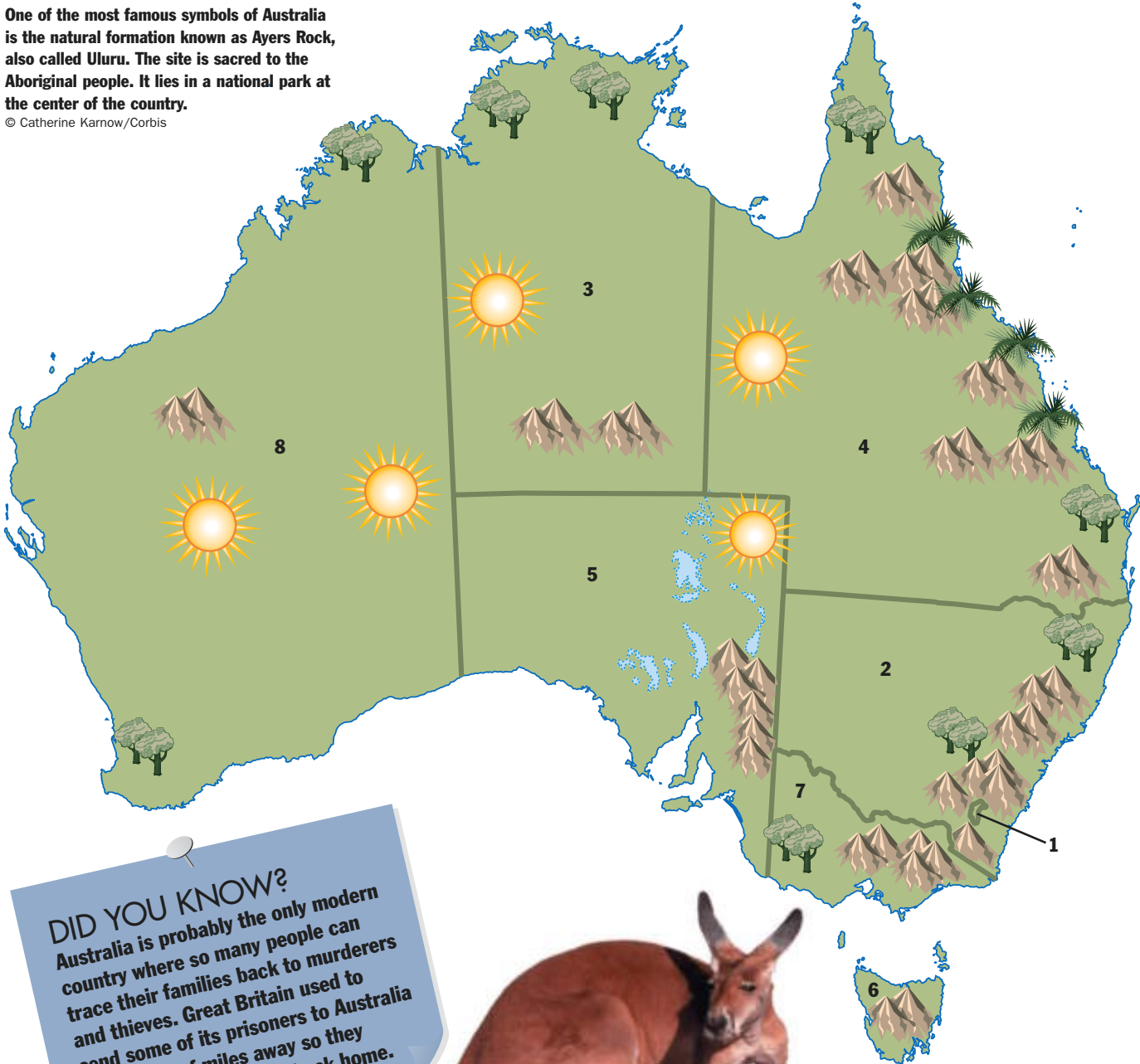




One of the most famous symbols of Australia is the natural formation known as Ayers Rock, also called Uluru. The site is sacred to the Aboriginal people. It lies in a national park at the center of the country.

© Catherine Karnow/Corbis

STATES OF AUSTRALIA	
1.	Australian Capital Territory
2.	New South Wales
3.	Northern Territory
4.	Queensland
5.	South Australia
6.	Tasmania
7.	Victoria
8.	Western Australia



DID YOU KNOW?
 Australia is probably the only modern country where so many people can trace their families back to murderers and thieves. Great Britain used to send some of its prisoners to Australia thousands of miles away so they wouldn't be able to get back home.



Male Red Kangaroo at Alice Springs.
 © Eric and David Hosking/Corbis



Island Continent



The island continent of Australia lies between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Australia is the smallest, flattest, and driest continent. And it has fewer people than other **inhabited** continents.

Australia is both a continent and a country, and the map shows you the country's states.

Australia can be divided into three major parts. The Western **Plateau** covers most of the continent. It gets little rainfall except in its southwest corner. But great forests do grow there. Elsewhere on the plateau, wells are the only way to get water. The Eastern Uplands run along the east coast. And the Interior Lowlands lie in between. There you'll find the colorful 1,100-foot-tall Ayers Rock, also called by its Aboriginal name, Uluru.

More than half of the country has been turned into pastures for animals, mostly sheep. Australia has the largest number of sheep in the world and produces more wool than any other country. Australia also has many animals not found anywhere else in the world. Two well-known ones are the koala and the kangaroo. The duck-billed platypus and echidna are two unusual egg-laying mammals.

Many visitors go diving along Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the largest coral **reef** in the world. It stretches for miles and has an amazing display of fish. However, scientists are worried that the reef may be damaged if world climate changes cause the ocean's temperature to rise.

Australians are often called "Aussies," and most are of European **heritage**. But there is also a large native Aboriginal population. Most Aboriginals live outside the cities, in the inner part of the country called the Outback. Today the Aboriginals make boomerangs to sell to tourists, although they originally used them for hunting.

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INDONESIA • NEW ZEALAND • SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



Find and correct the error in the following sentence:
Australia has many animals that are not found anywhere else in the world. Two well-known ones are the buffalo and the spider.

Answer: Australia has many animals that are not found anywhere else in the world. Two well-known ones are the koala and the kangaroo.



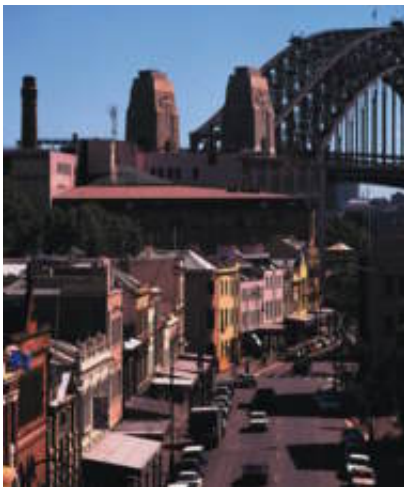
A Magnificent Harbor City



Sydney is Australia's largest city and one of the most important ports in the South Pacific Ocean. It's also the capital of the state of New South Wales. Sydney is built on low hills surrounding a wonderful harbor on Australia's southeastern coast. Its beaches are very popular, especially for surfing. And in 2000 the city hosted the Summer Olympic Games.

Sydney is
a) the capital of New South Wales and Australia's largest city.
b) the capital and largest city of Australia.
c) the oldest port in the South Pacific.

Sydney Cove is the small sheltered inlet where Australia's first permanent European settlement began. It used to be Sydney's shipping center, and its old landing place (or quay) is now a tourist center called



Sydney Harbour Bridge and The Rocks, a historic district in Sydney.

© Royalty-Free/Corbis

Circular Quay. The quay has many walkways, cafés, parks, and docks for the ferries that crisscross the harbor. The nearby Sydney Opera House has a glittering white roof that looks like seashells. Besides opera, the Opera House presents plays, classical music concerts, ballets, and films. Darling Harbour just west of downtown has an aquarium, museums, and gardens.

The oldest part of Sydney is called The Rocks. This historic district has **cobbled** streets lined with houses built by the first British settlers. The Rocks draws crowds of shoppers during the weekend market and has many galleries selling arts and crafts. Here you'll also find the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Macquarie Street is known for its early public buildings. The street is named for the governor who had them built. Landmarks include the **Parliament** House, Sydney Hospital, the Mint Building (which used to produce money), and the beautiful Hyde Park Barracks (which used to house soldiers). Nearby, the large grassy field called the Domain, which was once set aside for public ceremonies, today provides a place for lunchtime sports and candlelight Christmas caroling.

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AUSTRALIA • SINGAPORE • WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND



Boats zoom past the Sydney Opera House, a major center for performing arts of all kinds in Sydney. Its white curved roof looks like seashells or the sails of yachts.

© Paul A. Souders/Corbis

DID YOU KNOW?

Central Sydney is known as "Eora Country." The area's Aboriginal people used the word *eora*, meaning "from this place," to tell the first British settlers where they came from. Today, many Aboriginal people in Sydney call themselves Eora.

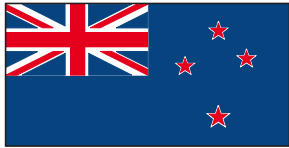
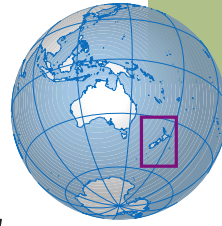




**Who
were the
first people
to live in
New Zealand?**



Land of the Long White Cloud



New Zealand is an island country in the South Pacific Ocean. Though it looks close to Australia on maps, the two countries are actually more than 1,000 miles apart. New Zealand has two main islands, called North and South Island. Cook **Strait**, a narrow stretch of sea, separates the two. Wellington, the capital city, is on North Island. It lies farther south than any other national capital in the world. New Zealand's largest city, Auckland, is also on North Island.

Both islands have mountains and hills. The Southern Alps are a long chain of mountains on South Island. The mountains trap the moist ocean air, and they are often wrapped in clouds. The first people to live in New Zealand, the Maori, called the country Aotearoa, meaning "land of the long white cloud."

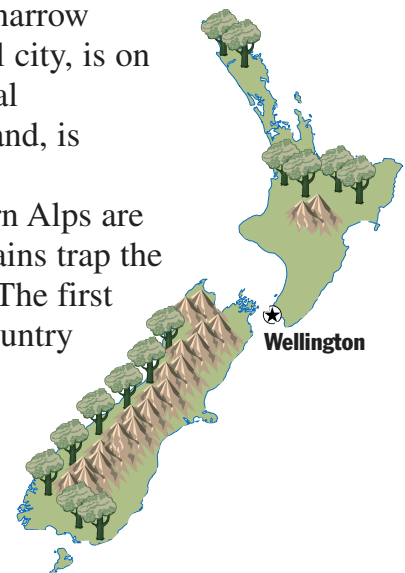
New Zealand is known for Merino sheep, which are famous for their wool. Huge sheep ranches are scattered among the hills on South Island. New Zealand also produces excellent butter, cheese, and meat.

New Zealand has unique wildlife. The long-beaked kiwi, a bird that cannot fly, is found only in New Zealand. The bird is one of the country's national symbols—and New Zealanders themselves are sometimes even called Kiwis.

Traditional Maori culture has survived, but now it's blended with the European culture of modern New Zealand. You can still hear traditional Maori music played on the flute and see traditional Maori dances. Wood carving, painting, and making things of woven **flax** are Maori crafts.

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AUSTRALIA • SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND



DID YOU KNOW?


New Zealand is home to a place with one of the longest names in the world, a hill called Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaturipukakapikimaungahoronukupokaiwhenuakitanatahu.

A gondola car rides high above the harbor at Queenstown, New Zealand.

© Royalty-Free/Corbis

Answer: Long before Europeans arrived in New Zealand, the islands were inhabited by the Maori. The Maori came to New Zealand from the group of islands called Polynesia.





DID YOU KNOW?
Wellington is a center of New Zealand's growing cinema industry. Many films are shot in and near the city.

**Green hills surround the city of Wellington.
Its harbor serves as a major port for New Zealand.**
© Dallas and John Heaton/Corbis

A Visit to New Zealand's Capital

Wellington is the capital of New Zealand, an island country near Australia. It lies on the shores and green hills surrounding a beautiful bay. The city's center is called Civic Square. It is made up of a group of buildings with an open **plaza** at the center. The buildings include the National Library, the City Gallery, and Capital Discovery Place, a science and **technology** museum for children.

From Civic Square, you can reach Lambton Harbour by going across the City-to-Sea Bridge. The bridge is decorated with carvings and lovely artwork, all of it created by Maori artists. The Maori are the original people of New Zealand. From the street named Lambton **Quay**, visitors often take a cable car to reach the **botanical** gardens located in the hills above Wellington. The cable car ride provides some of the best views of the city.

The botanical gardens have many trees and plants not seen elsewhere. They also have many varieties of roses on display. The Bolton Memorial Park, a burial site for some of Wellington's first settlers, is located within the gardens. Along a section of the city's shoreline is the Oriental Parade. It is a beautiful place that is often crowded with joggers, cyclists, sunbathers, and swimmers. Many people swim out to the large fountain anchored offshore.



Botanical gardens in Wellington, New Zealand.
© Paul A. Souders/Corbis

Wellington is home to the National Museum of New Zealand (Te Papa Tongarewa). Also popular is the Colonial Cottage Museum, the family home of Katherine Mansfield, one of New Zealand's most famous authors.

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AUSTRALIA • NEW ZEALAND • SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



Which of the following is not an attraction in Wellington?
a) the Colonial Cottage Museum
b) Capital Discovery Place
c) the Louvre
d) Bolton Memorial Park



G L O S S A R Y

acid a chemical substance that produces a burning effect when interacting with some materials

amphitheater building with seats rising in curved rows around an open space where events such as games and plays take place

architect person who designs buildings

architecture the art of designing and building structures, especially buildings that can be lived and worked in

basin in geography, the area of land drained by a river and its branches

bazaar marketplace where many kinds of goods are sold; *especially*, such a marketplace in Asia or Africa

botanical (noun: botany) having to do with plant life

canal artificial waterway for boats or for draining or supplying water to land

caravan group of pack animals or of vehicles traveling together one behind the other

cathedral large Christian church where a bishop is in charge

ceramics objects made out of clay baked at high temperatures

citadel castle or fortress that protects a city

civil war war between opposing groups of citizens of the same country

climate average weather in a particular area

cobbled made of rounded stones larger than a pebble and smaller than a boulder

colony (plural: colonies; adjective: colonial; verb: colonize) 1) in general, a settlement established in a distant territory and controlled by a more powerful and expanding nation; 2) in biology, a group of similar organisms that live together in a particular place

communism (adjective: communist) system of government in which all property is owned by the state or community and all citizens are supposed to have a share in the total wealth

crossroads place where roads cross; also, a central meeting place or a decision-making point

descended related through a long line of ancestors

embroidery needlework done to decorate cloth

emperor (feminine: empress) the ruler of an empire

export to carry or send abroad, especially for sale in another country

extinct no longer existing

fertile rich and productive; able to yield quality crops in large quantities

flax the fiber from which linen cloth is made

glacier large river-like body of ice moving slowly down a slope or spreading over a land surface

handicrafts articles, such as pottery, made by hand by an individual

heritage background or descent

humidity (adjective: humid) moisture or dampness; *especially*, the amount of moisture in the air

industry business and manufacturing

inhabited occupied; having residents

inlaid decorated with materials set into the surface

legislature organized government group with the power to make laws

loot to steal from a home or public place, especially during rioting or wartime

mangrove tropical tree or shrub that has partly exposed roots and grows thickly in areas of salty water

manuscript handwritten or typewritten document

mausoleum large or fancy tomb

meditation (verb: meditate) quiet, focused concentration, meant to calm and clear the mind; sometimes used to reach a spiritual awareness

minaret in Islamic architecture, the tall slender tower of a mosque, from which Muslims are called to prayer

monastery housing for people who have taken religious vows, especially for monks

monsoon regular period of heavy rainfall and wind, especially in southern Asia

mosque Muslim place of worship

natural resources the materials or qualities supplied by nature (such as minerals or waterpower) that make a place valuable to people, usually for industrial and manufacturing purposes

pagoda tower-like Asian temple or memorial building several stories tall, with

the edges of the roof at each level curving upward

parliament the lawmaking body of some governments

peninsula a finger of land with water on three sides

persecute (noun: persecution) to treat cruelly or harmfully for an extended period of time; *especially*, to make a person or group suffer because of their beliefs

pilgrim person who travels to a shrine or holy place to worship

plateau wide land area with a fairly level surface raised sharply above the land next to it on at least one side

plaza open place or area formed at the meeting of two or more streets

prehistoric having to do with times before written history

prophet a holy person who acts as a messenger between God and people; also, a gifted person with the ability to accurately predict future events

quay structure built along the bank of a waterway for use as a landing place

reef raised length of rocks, coral, or sand at or near the surface of water

region (adjective: regional) general area; also, a specific district

republic form of government in which citizens are allowed to vote for officials and representatives responsible for governing by law

sepulchre place of burial

shrine place where honor or worship is offered to a saint or deity

steppe land that is dry, usually rather level, and covered with grass

strait narrow channel connecting two large bodies of water

sultan king or ruler, especially of a Muslim state

synagogue Jewish house of worship

tableland broad flat area of high land

technology scientific ideas and knowledge put to actual use

temple building used for worship

text written work

wildlife sanctuary place of protection for animals and plants

I N D E X

- Afghanistan** (country) *page 29*
LEARN MORE *look under* Iran; Pakistan
- Amman** (city in Jordan) *page 53*
LEARN MORE *look under* Baghdad; Beirut; Damascus; Jerusalem; Mecca
- Angkor Wat** (temple in Cambodia) *page 18*
LEARN MORE *look under* Phnom Penh; temples
- Arabia** (peninsula and region in Asia): *look under* Arabs; Baghdad; Mecca
- Arabs** (people)
Israel *page 49*
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