



KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING THIS REGION

1 Countries and Cities (pp. 424–425)

Most of the countries in the region have governments based on Islamic law.

2 Physical Features (pp. 426–427)

The Arabian Peninsula lies between the giant landmass of Asia and the northeast corner of Africa.

3 People and Cultures (pp. 428–429)

Three of the world's major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—first developed in the region. Today, most people in the region practice the Islamic religion and many people speak Arabic. Conflict between Jews and Arabs has marked the region's history since 1948. Efforts to create lasting peace moved forward in the early 1990s.

4 Climate and Vegetation (pp. 430–431)

Much of the region is dry, hot, desert. Water is in short supply.

5 Economy and Resources (pp. 432–433)

Oil is the region's most valuable resource. Because the region supplies so much of the world's oil, political events here have important international significance.

VISUAL PREVIEW ACTIVITY

Each of the five keys above corresponds to a section of the Regional Atlas that follows. Number from 1 to 5 on a piece of paper. Use information from the maps, graphs, and photographs in the Regional Atlas to write one additional fact for each of the five keys above.

SOUTHWEST ASIA

Use the Map, Graph, and Photo Studies in the Regional Atlas to gain a better understanding of the region's physical and cultural geography.

ATLAS VOCABULARY

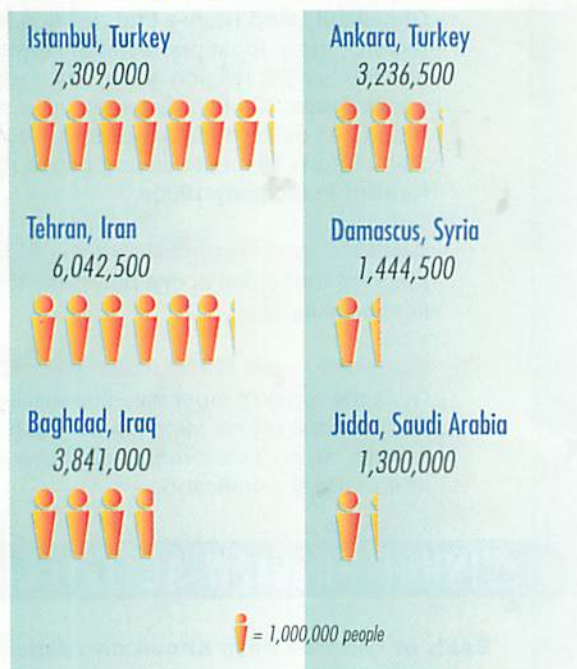
prophet
Hajj
monotheism

Muslim
mosque
muezzin

minaret
oasis
arable

1 COUNTRIES AND CITIES

LARGEST METROPOLITAN AREAS



Source: United Nations

MAP STUDY

Applying the Geographic Themes

- Location** Southwest Asia, often referred to as the Middle East, is located at the far western and southern edge of the Asian continent. *Which country in the region lies farthest to the north?*
- Location** The first letters of the four countries that lie on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea are in alphabetical order from south to north. *Name the four countries.*
- Place** Tehran, the capital of Iran, is the second largest city in the region. *What body of water is located just north of Tehran?*

GRAPH STUDY

- City Living** Some of the oldest cities in the world are located in Southwest Asia. Because farmland is scarce, urban populations are growing rapidly. *Name the three largest cities in this region.*

Southwest Asia: POLITICAL



KEY

- National boundary
- ⊙ National capital
- Other city
- ▨ Area occupied by Israel since 1967
- Palestinian self-rule

Lambert Conformal Conic Projection

learning LOCATIONS

Mapping Countries and Cities

Use the map on this page to draw a political map of Southwest Asia, or to fill in an outline map of the region. Include labels for each of the countries and major cities. Lightly shade each country in a different color.



2 PHYSICAL FEATURES



PHOTO STUDY

- The Tigris River in Iraq** Some of the world's first complex cultures and cities began along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. *Critical Thinking* Name five ways that people use rivers.

MAP STUDY

Applying the Geographic Themes

- Place** Much of the land of Southwest Asia is desert. Wind shapes the landscape into great expanses of sand dunes. *Use the map on page 427 and the natural vegetation map on page 431 to name the major desert located in southern Saudi Arabia.*
- Human-Environment Interaction** The Tigris, Euphrates, and Jordan rivers are important sources of water for many countries in the region. Rising populations, agriculture, and industry have increased demands on limited water supplies. Countries that share these rivers compete for their water. Dams built by one country can create political conflict. *Through which countries does the Euphrates River flow?*
- Cause and Effect: Elevation and Climate** Mountains in the region have an effect on climate. Compare the mountainous areas on the physical map to the same areas on the climate map on page 430. *What types of climate are found in these mountainous areas?*

Cross Section: Southwest Asia

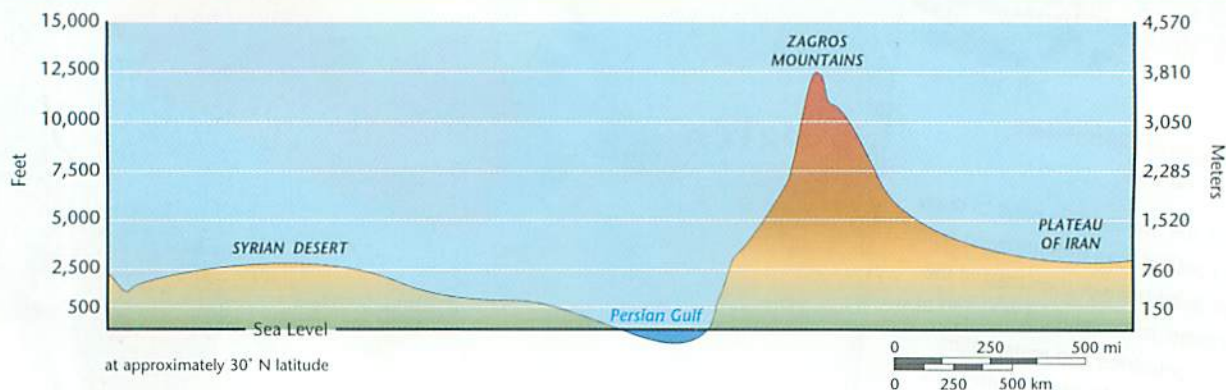


DIAGRAM STUDY

- Physical Profile** The highest elevations in the region are found in the Zagros Mountains of Iran. *How high are these mountains?*

Southwest Asia: PHYSICAL



3 PEOPLE AND CULTURES

THE BIRTHPLACE OF THREE MAJOR RELIGIONS

Judaism

- Judaism first developed around 1000 B.C. along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It was the religion of the Hebrews.



- Five holy books, together known as the Torah, record the early history of the Hebrews and their religion.
- A large temple located in the city of Jerusalem served as a religious center. The site of this temple is sacred to Jews.

Christianity

- Christianity first developed around A.D. 30 along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. It is based on the teachings of Jesus, who Christians believe to be the son of God. Jesus was tried and crucified—put to death on a cross—in Jerusalem.
- The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament (the Torah of Judaism) and the New Testament, which includes four gospels, or accounts, of Jesus' life.



Islam

- Islam first developed around A.D. 600 in Arabia. It is based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad. A prophet is a person whose teachings are believed to be revealed by God.
- The Five Pillars of Islam are described in the Koran, the Muslim holy book. The Five Pillars include stating a belief in one God, performing daily prayers, giving to charity, daytime fasting during the holy month of Ramadan (RAM uh dahn), and at least one pilgrimage to Mecca, known as the Hajj, during one's lifetime.



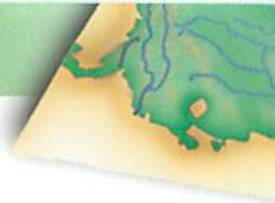
CHART STUDY

- Regions** Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are all monotheistic religions. **Monotheism** is a belief in one God. Most people in Southwest Asia today are **Muslims**—followers of Islam—and many speak Arabic. *In which part of the region did each religion develop?*

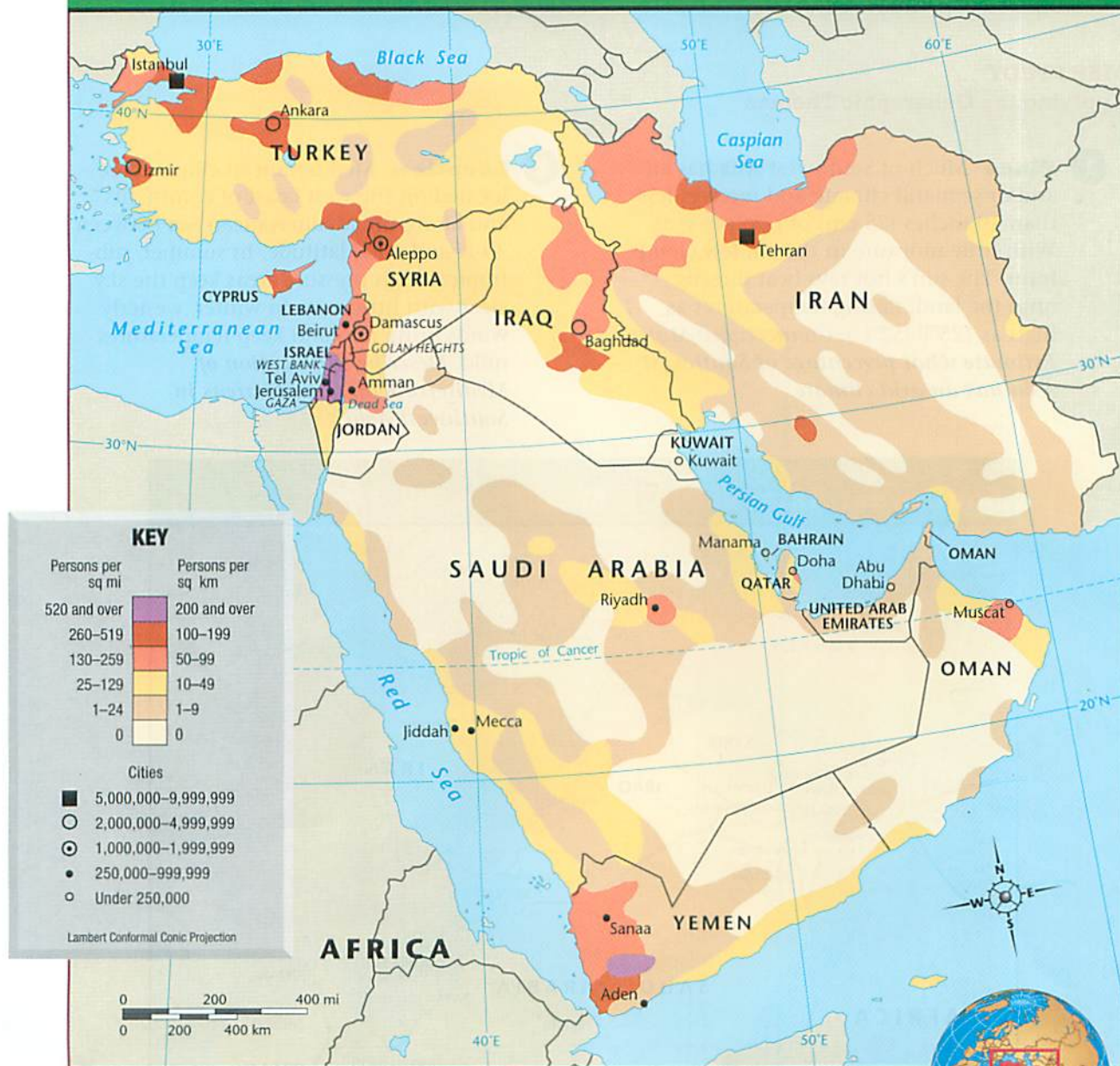
PHOTO STUDY

- Muslim Mosque** Some of the most visible signs of Islamic culture are the **mosques**—Islamic places of worship. Five times a day, a **muezzin** (MYU ez in), or crier, climbs the **minaret**, the tall, thin tower attached to the mosque, to call the people to prayer. **Connections:** *Art Think of three adjectives that describe the Islamic style of architecture pictured here.*





Southwest Asia: POPULATION DENSITY



MAP STUDY Applying the Geographic Themes

3 Regions Most of the people in Southwest Asia live near rivers, along coasts, in the mountains and plateaus, and at oases. *Which part of the region is largely uninhabited?*

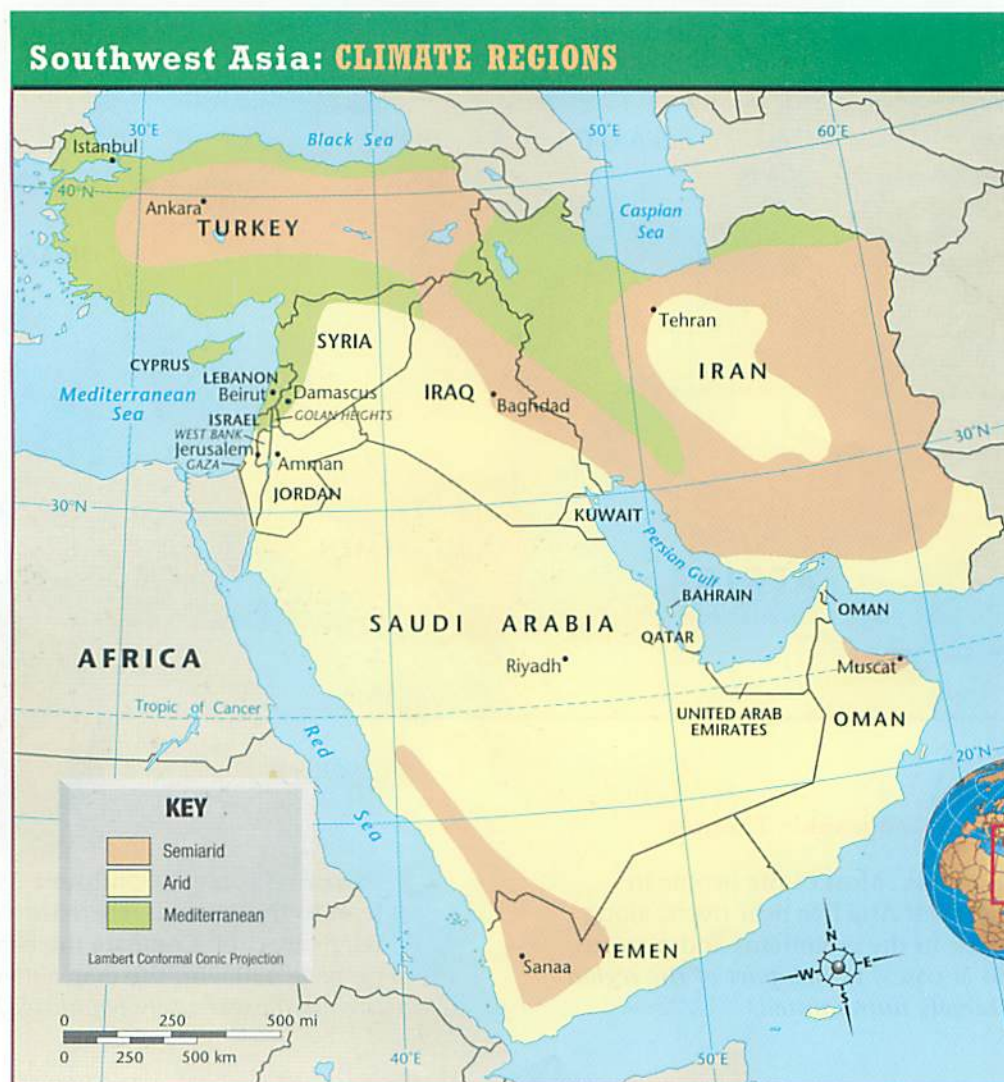
4 Place People in Southwest Asia also tend to live in areas where the climate is relatively cool. Compare the climate map on page 430 with the map above. *Which area is most densely populated?*

4 CLIMATE AND VEGETATION

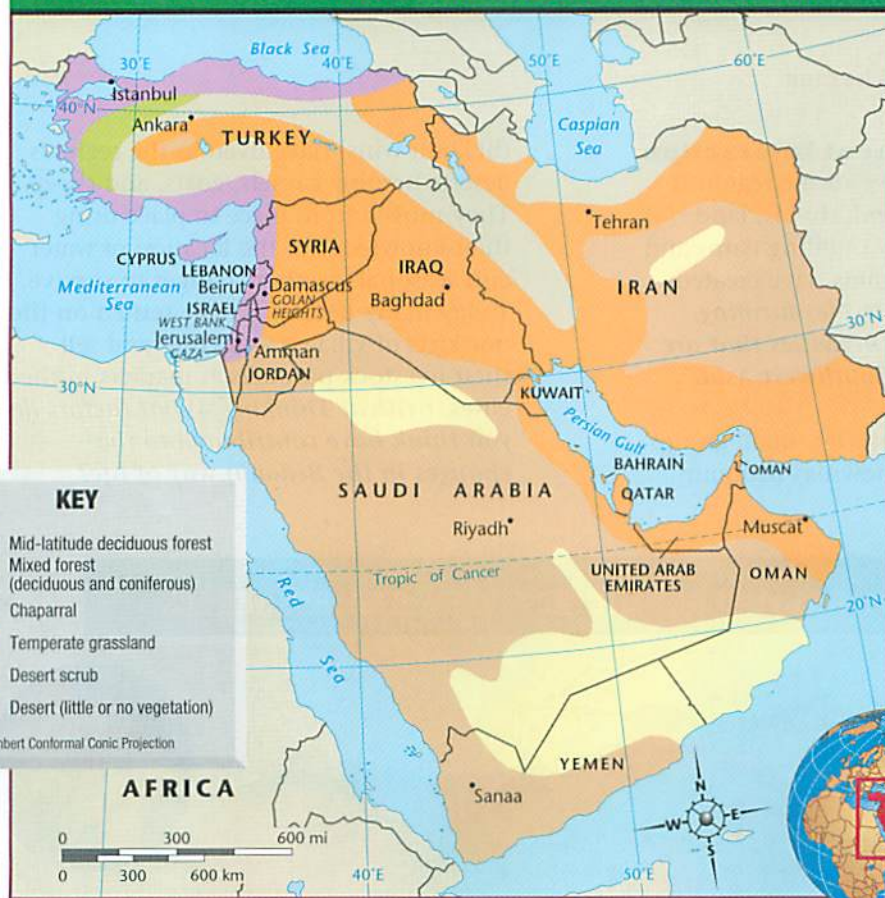
MAP STUDY

Applying the Geographic Themes

- Place** Much of Southwest Asia has an arid or semiarid climate and receives less than 10 inches (25 cm) of rain per year. With little moisture in the air, few clouds form. The sun's hot rays beat directly onto the land, raising temperatures as high as 125°F (52°C). *Connections: Math* Estimate what percentage of Southwest Asia has an arid climate.
- Location** Mediterranean climates are located on the west coast of continents and along the Mediterranean Sea between 30°N and 40°N latitude. In summer, subtropical high pressure areas keep the sky clear with little rain. In winter, westerly winds bring rain and keep temperatures mild. *Describe the location of Mediterranean climate areas in Southwest Asia.*



Southwest Asia: NATURAL VEGETATION REGIONS

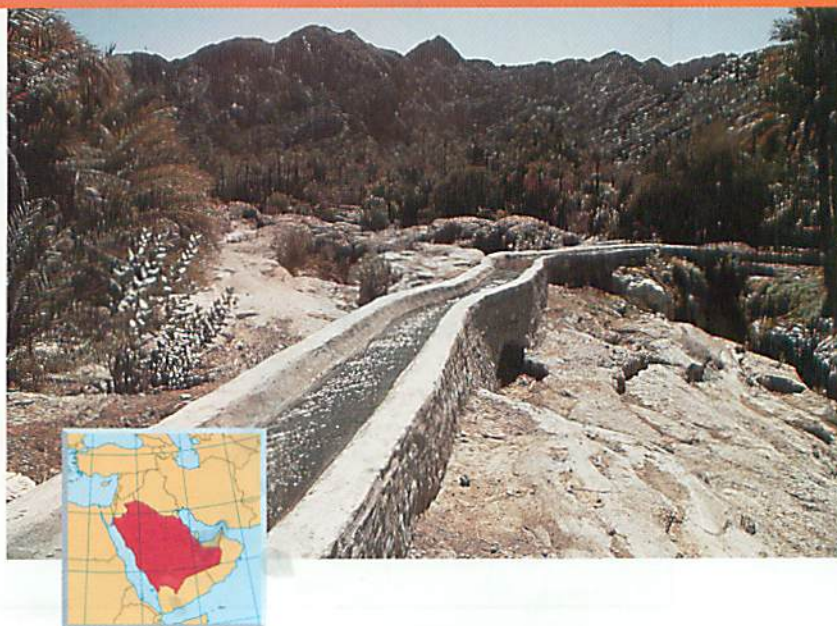


3 Regions This region is dominated by desert. Most of the land sustains only sparse vegetation. Which countries have large areas of desert and desert scrub vegetation?

4 Cause and Effect: Climate and Vegetation Limited precipitation and high temperatures make it difficult for plants to survive in much of this region. What is the predominant vegetation in arid and semiarid regions on the climate map?

PHOTO STUDY

5 A Desert Oasis in Saudi Arabia In a few places, deep underground springs force their way up to the surface creating **oases** or places where a supply of fresh water makes it possible to support life in a dry region. In some places, people have created their own oases by digging deep wells. **Critical Thinking** What do oases offer in addition to water?



APPEARED IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

5 ECONOMY AND RESOURCES

MAP STUDY

Applying the Geographic Themes

1 Human-Environment Interaction

Only a small percentage of the region is made up of **arable** land, that is, land that can be farmed. By building dams and irrigation systems, farmers have created additional farmland. *Besides farming, name three economic activities that are common throughout Southwest Asia.*

2 Movement

For centuries, small groups of nomadic herders known as Bedouins

(BED uh wins) have lived in the region's deserts herding camels, goats, and sheep. They moved from place to place using their knowledge of the location of water and seasonal weather changes to survive. Today many Bedouins have settled on the outskirts of villages and cities and sell their livestock products at markets in the cities. *Critical Thinking What factors do you think have contributed to the changes in the Bedouin way of life?*

Southwest Asia: ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND RESOURCES

