



The Euphrates River forms the western boundary of Mesopotamia, a part of the ancient world's "Fertile Crescent."

What are some key facts about the Euphrates?

- It's the longest in Western Asia—1,740 miles long.
- Its source is in Eastern Turkey and it flows to the Persian Gulf. On its way, it passes through Turkey, Syria and Iraq.
- Many civilizations have thrived along the banks of the Euphrates, including during ancient times. One of its most-notable civilizations was the Mesopotamian Empire.
- Ancient Mesopotamia, a part of what is often called the "Fertile Crescent," occupied the land between the Tigris and Euphrates River. Today that area of the world is situated in the country known as Iraq.
- The Euphrates' drainage basin covers around 193,000 square miles. Much of its water comes from melting snow and rainfall.
- Often used as a boundary, between various kingdoms, the Euphrates was the scene of battles during ancient times.
- The Syrian city of Aleppo—the country's largest, one of the oldest in the world and often in 21st-century news because of its misfortunes during the country's civil war—still depends on the Euphrates (and its nearby lakes) for some of its drinking water.
- The Euphrates was part of the "Silk Road," a trade route which passed through Central Asia and Mesopotamia. Aleppo was a key stop along the famous trade route.
- One of the ancient-world's most-important cities, Babylon, was built along the Euphrates. So, reportedly, was its Tower of Babel.
- More than fifty species of fish live in the Euphrates. Fishing is still important to many people who live along its banks.
- The Euphrates softshell turtle (*Rafetus euphraticus*)—a semi-aquatic species which prefers the relatively calm

tributaries of larger rivers—makes its home near the Euphrates (among other places). Today it is endangered because of river dams.

- During the past century, or so, several large dams have been built along the Euphrates. One—the Euphrates Dam—is more than 200 feet high and has a very large reservoir.
- Dams, along both the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers, have become weapons of war (and spoils of conquest) in the 21st century.

Although the Euphrates is still one of the world's most-important rivers, all of the dams and drainage projects (instituted by countries along its banks) have changed its character. Areas which were once incredibly lush and green, for example, are now often cracked and sun-baked.

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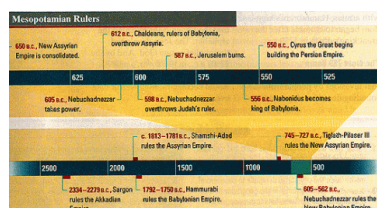


Chart of Mesopotamian Rulers

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Silk Road Trade Route

There was once a trade route, during ancient and not-so-ancient times, which we now call “The Silk Road.”

This route of travel allowed people in the Mediterranean World and people in China—together with places in between—to trade goods with each other.

Scholars believe that early users of this trade route likely lived during the first half of the first millennium B.C.

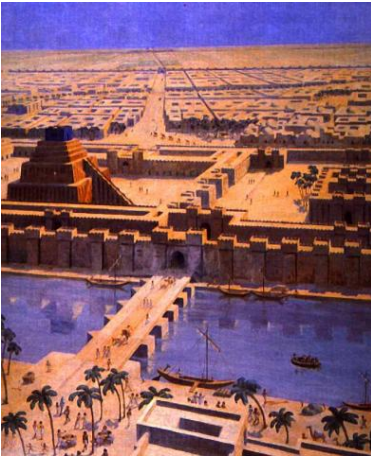
During the Middle Ages, a famous Venetian traveled the route to China. His name was Marco Polo, and he lived between 1254 and 1324.

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Reconstruction of the Ancient City of Babylon

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