

Geography of Ancient Egypt



The timeline of Ancient Egypt begins some 8,000 years ago around 6,000 BCE when early farmers discovered how fertile the soil around the Nile River was. These successful farming efforts eventually led to an amazing civilization that flourished for thousands of years. The Nile River is one of the major rivers of the world and is considered to be the longest river on earth. The Nile River flows through desert areas and since the river floods regularly, the silt it deposits makes fertile land along the river. Without the Nile River, the Ancient Egyptian civilization would not have been possible.

The Nile River is located in the northeastern corner of the continent of Africa and empties into the Mediterranean Sea. Near the Mediterranean Sea the Nile River splits into two branches and the Nile Delta is located between them. Besides the two major branches, the Nile Delta contains smaller outflows that flow into the Mediterranean Sea. The land between these rivers and streams is very fertile and helped the Ancient Egyptians to raise crops like wheat and flax. With a surplus of crops the Egyptians could trade with other areas and support cities, an army and powerful kings.

The Nile Delta was home to many Egyptian cities including Rosetta, Buto, Sais, and Heliopolis. When Alexander the Great of Macedonia in Ancient Greece conquered Egypt in 33 BCE he created Alexandria at the western edge of the Nile Delta to be the new capital of Egypt. The city was known as a trading port on the Mediterranean Sea and its library contained copies of the most important books ever written. Archaeologists are discovering important artifacts from ancient Alexandria in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of present-day Alexandria. They believe that parts of Alexandria might have sunk into the sea due to earthquake activity in ancient times.

The Great Pyramid at Giza is located slightly southwest of the Nile Delta. The Valley of the Kings, the Temple of Karnak and the city of Thebes (called Luxor today) are located in what was called Upper Egypt further south of the Mediterranean Sea along the Nile River. The Red Sea formed the eastern boundary of Ancient Egypt and the desert was the western boundary.