

# Ancient Egypt

## Geography and the Nile River

The Nile River played an important role in shaping the lives and society of Ancient Egypt. The Nile provided the Ancient Egyptians with food, [transportation](#), building materials, and more.

### **About the Nile River**

The Nile River is the longest [river](#) in the world. It is over 4,100 miles long! The Nile is located in northwest Africa and flows through many different African countries including [Egypt](#), Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Burundi. There are two major tributaries that feed the Nile, the White Nile and the Blue Nile.

### **Upper and Lower Egypt**

The Nile River flows north through Egypt and into the Mediterranean Sea. Ancient Egypt was divided into two regions, Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. This looks a bit confusing on a map because Upper Egypt is to the south and Lower Egypt is to the north. This is because the names come from the flow of the Nile River.

### **Fertile Land**

The most important thing the Nile provided to the Ancient Egyptians was fertile land. Most of Egypt is desert, but along the Nile River the soil is rich and good for growing crops. The three most important crops were wheat, flax, and papyrus.

- Wheat - Wheat was the main staple food of the Egyptians. They used it to make bread. They also sold a lot of their wheat throughout the Middle East helping the Egyptians to become rich.
- Flax - Flax was used to make linen cloth for clothing. This was the main type of cloth used by the Egyptians.
- Papyrus - Papyrus was a plant that grew along the shores of the Nile. The Ancient Egyptians found many uses for this plant including paper, baskets, rope, and sandals.

## **Flooding**

Around September of each year the Nile would overflow its banks and flood the surrounding area. This sounds bad at first, but it was one of the most important events in the life of the Ancient Egyptians. The flood brought rich black soil and renewed the farmlands.

## **Building Material**

The Nile River also provided a lot of building materials for the Ancient Egyptians. They used the mud from the riverbanks to make sundried bricks. These bricks were used in building homes, walls, and other buildings. The Egyptians also quarried limestone and sandstone from the hills along the side of the Nile.

## **Transportation**

Since most of the major cities of Ancient Egypt were built along the Nile River, the river could be used like a major highway throughout the Empire. Boats constantly traveled up and down the Nile carrying people and goods.

## **Seasons of the Nile**

The Egyptians even built their calendar around the Nile River. They divided their calendar up into three [seasons](#). Akhet, or inundation, was considered the first season and

was the time of the flooding of the Nile. The other two seasons were Peret, the growing season, and Shemu, the harvest season.

### **Fun Facts about the Nile River**

- The Ancient Egyptians called the rich black soil from the floods the "Gift of the Nile".
- Today, the Aswan Dam keeps the Nile from flooding modern cities.
- The Ancient Egyptians called the Nile the "Aur", which means "black" and comes from the black soil.
- The Egyptians measured the height of the annual flood using a Nilometer. This helped them to determine how good the crops would be that year.

The cause of the flood each year was heavy rains and melting snow to the south near the source of the Nile. The Ancient Egyptians believed that the flood was caused by the tears of the goddess Isis as she cried for her dead husband Osiris.