

MIDDLE EAST

SAUDI ARABIA



AREA 2,149,690 sq km
POPULATION 26,132,000
MONEY Saudi riyal

THE 'Middle East' is another name for 'south-west Asia'. It is the part of Asia which is closest to Europe and Africa. In fact, it is the only place where three continents meet. Turkey is partly in Europe and mostly in Asia. Of all the countries on this map, Turkey and Iran have the most people.

Most of the Middle East is semi-desert or desert. Yet many great civilizations have existed here, such as the Assyrian, the Babylonian and the Persian. Their monuments are found in the fertile valleys of the largest rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. During the fighting in Iraq, some historic buildings were destroyed and many people were killed.

Scarce water is used to irrigate crops in some places. In others, herds of sheep and goats are kept. Only camels can be kept in the driest desert areas. Dates from Iraq come from desert oases; oranges come from irrigated land in Israel. So much water is being taken from the River Jordan that the Dead Sea is getting smaller. Some countries make fresh water from salt water, but it is expensive.



▲ **Craft stall in Sana'a, Yemen.** These men are making decorative daggers which are worn by men and older boys in Yemen. This small workshop opens directly off one of the narrow streets in the old part of Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. Craft industries still thrive in towns and villages all over the Middle East.

JORDAN



AREA 89,342 sq km
POPULATION 6,508,000
MONEY Jordan dinar

IRAN



AREA 1,648,195 sq km
POPULATION 77,891,000
MONEY Iranian rial

IRAQ



AREA 438,317 sq km
POPULATION 30,400,000
MONEY New Iraqi dinar

CONSTRUCTION



▲ **Progress in Qatar:** is shown by the highways and high-rise office blocks being built with money from oil.



Jerusalem: a Jewish boy's Bar Mitzvah ceremony at the West Wall ('Wailing Wall'). The huge stones (in the background, on the right) are all that remains of the Jewish temple. Jerusalem is a holy city for Jews, Christians and Muslims. People of all three religions live here and many pilgrims and tourists visit the city.



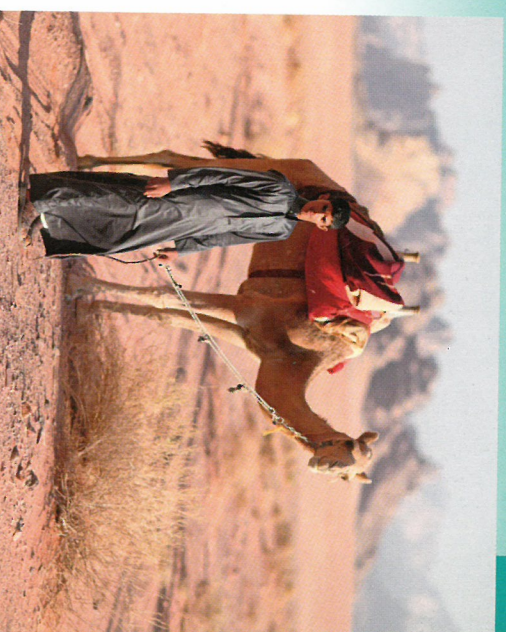
Mecca: crowds of pilgrims surround the Kaaba (the huge black stone, centre) inside the Great Mosque. Mecca is the holiest city of Islam as it is where the prophet Mohammed was born. Muslims try to come to worship here at least once in their lifetime. But wherever they are, they face towards Mecca when they pray.



▲ **Yemen:** this is an ancient multi-storey building made of mud bricks and built on top of a cliff.



▲ **Dubai in the United Arab Emirates** is a modern city in the desert by the Persian Gulf. It has some of the world's tallest buildings.



▲ **A camel in the desert of Jordan.** This boy is hoping tourists might want a ride in Wadi Rum, a dry valley in southern Jordan.

The Middle East has changed dramatically in the last 60 years. Oil was found beneath the Arabian desert and around the Persian Gulf. It is pumped out from below the desert and mountains and even from under the sea. The demand for oil has grown in Europe and all over the world. The sale of oil has made some countries very rich, especially **Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar.** Often the rulers have benefited most, but they have also used the money to build schools, hospitals, roads and office blocks. The 'oil boom' has meant that many foreign workers have come to these countries to construct modern buildings like the ones in the photo of Dubai.

