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Nile river valley geography

Most people will probably never venture down the Nile River. Instead, they choose to live vicariously through action movies and television shows. That's definitely the safest route, as the Nile came by its treacherous reputation honestly, thanks to rough rapids, rabid mosquitoes and some very unfriendly, yet beautiful, wildlife. Despite all of these factors, the Nile has given great opportunities to millions of people throughout history, and continues to do so to this day.The exact length of the Nile is difficult to come by, thanks to differing opinions on the river's source and its complex system of tributaries, creeks and streams. Located in Africa, the most recent and thorough expedition declared the Nile to be 4,175 miles (6,719 kilometers) in length [source: National Geographic]. This expedition, which took place in 2006, used high-tech mapping equipment. The explorers also determined that the true source of the Nile originates somewhere in the depths of the Nyungwe Forest in Rwanda, rather than Lake Victoria as the river's original explorer John Hanning Speke declared in 1858. However, Lake Victoria officially remains the principal source.It's doubtful that there will ever be a 100 percent consensus about where the river begins and what the exact length is (most sources say that it's just more than 4,000 miles long).What we do know for sure is that it runs south to north through nine African countries: Uganda, Sudan, Egypt, Zaire, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Burundi. Running south to north may seem backward to many people, but the flow of a body of water has nothing to do with geographical orientation. Rather, rivers simply run from high ground to lower ground. High ground in Africa just happens to be in the south, low ground in the north. The Amazon River runs neck-and-neck with the Nile in terms of length, trading the title of world's longest river. A 2007 study put the Amazon in first at 4,225 miles (6,800 kilometers), about 65 miles (105 kilometers) longer than the Nile [source: National Geographic].How has the geographical layout of the Nile affected the world around it? What creatures and critters call the river home? How did the Nile give rise to one of the world's most revered ancient civilizations, and how does it continue to impact the world today? Read on to find out. 1 30 Animals on the Brink of Extinction 2 Here's How a Genderless Virtual Assistant Is Undoing Gender Bias in Artificial Intelligence 3 The Symbolism and Spiritual Connection Behind White Feathers 4 Impact for Impact: Police and Philanthropy in Semi-Pro Football 5 What Is the Federal Minimum Wage? 1 How Many Chicken Wings Are in a Pound? 2 What Are Examples of Mineral Salts? 3 What Are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Nylon? 4 What Was the 1950s Era Called? 5 What Are Examples of Things That Come in Groups of Four? 1 All About BUN and Creatinine: What They Are and What a High Ratio Means 2 What Is the Trick to the Game Black Magic? 3 The World's Most Intelligent Animals 4 Why Do They Call It a Rubber Match? 5 What Is the Difference Between a Cast Fossil and a Mold Fossil? Agriculture The seasonal flooding of the Egyptian plains by the Nile River resulted in the deposition of fertile silt soil. This black soil contained vital nutrients that support agriculture. In addition, seasonal deposition of sediments resulted in a change of river course hence creating vast lands for agricultural use. Farming activities led to the development of settlements along the Nile River. Source of Food The Nile River is home to a variety of fish species and other marine wildlife. Ancient Egyptians used spears and nets to capture fish from the Nile River. In addition, low flying birds could be captured by nets. This supplied the much needed proteins to the Egyptian population. Source of Water Egypt lies in a desert-like environment with minimal rainfall, a limited number of water bodies and scarce vegetation. The Nile River provided water to ancient Egyptians for drinking and other domestic use. Furthermore, water from the Nile River was used for irrigation of lands. Egyptians often dug canals that link the river to their farmlands. Also, they created water storage reservoirs that were to be filled during the flooding of the Nile River. These reservoirs ensured constant supply of water to animals and farmlands.Supported Other Related Industries The Nile River supported various industries in the Egyptian society. The mud from the Nile was used as raw material for the well-established pottery industry. In addition, quarrying, mining, processing of stones, gems, metals and salt utilized materials sourced from the Nile River. The reeds and papyrus which grew along the Nile River provided raw materials for making paper, basket, ropes, and boats. Moreover, trees and twigs that grew along the river were important sources of firewood and building materials.Transport and Trade The Nile River provided a quicker transport route for the movement of goods from one settlement to another. This led to the development of the boat building industry and hence the growth of trade. Moreover, the development of settlements along the Nile River resulted in the growth of renowned ancient Egyptian towns. These towns attracted traders from neighboring regions of North Africa and the Middle East. Protection from External Attacks The magnificent nature of the Nile River acted as protection for Egyptian settlements against external attacks. This is because ancient Egyptian enemies sometimes lacked boats to cross the Nile River. With minimal disruption to the Egyptian society, the society thrived in agriculture and trade. Religious Symbol The Nile River was important to ancient Egyptians due to its religious significance. Ancient Egyptians believed that the flooding of the Nile River was caused by the Nile god Hapi. They honored Hapi for bringing fertility and prosperity to the Egyptian lands. In modern-day Egypt, the Nile River continues to be an important source of livelihood for the Egyptian society. It provides water for irrigation, is used for transportation of goods, is a source of fish and acts as a tourist attraction. Moreover, the construction of the Aswan Dam ensured controlled flooding and is also used for the generation of hydro-electric power. 1 Wild Wings: Everything You Need to Know About Deep Frying Chicken Wings 2 After COVID, Will We Ever Look for Deals on Gym Memberships Again? 3 How Many Miles Is It From Coast to Coast in the United States? 4 What Human Body Parts Start With the Letter "R"? 5 Read Up: The Benefits and Importance of Literature A river delta is a low-lying plain or landform that occurs at the mouth of a river near where it flows into an ocean or another larger body of water. Deltas' greatest importance to human activities, fish and wildlife lay in their characteristic highly fertile soil and dense, diverse vegetation. In order to fully appreciate the role deltas play in our larger ecosystem, it is first important to understand rivers. Rivers are defined as bodies of fresh water generally flowing from high elevations toward an ocean, a lake or another river; sometimes, even back into the ground. Most rivers begin at high elevations where snow, rain, and other precipitation run downhill into creeks and small streams. These small waterways flow ever farther downhill, eventually meeting to form rivers. Rivers flow toward oceans or other larger bodies of water, oftentimes combining with other rivers. Deltas exist as the lowest part of these rivers. It is in these deltas where a river's flow slows and spreads out to create sediment-rich dry areas and biodiverse wetlands. The formation of a river delta is a slow process. As rivers flow toward their outlets from higher elevations, they deposit mud, silt, sand, and gravel particles at the mouths where rivers and larger, more sedentary bodies of water meet. Over time these particles (called sediment or alluvium) build up at the mouth, extending into the ocean or lake. As these areas continue to grow the water becomes shallower and eventually, landforms begin to rise above the surface of the water, typically elevating to just above sea level. As rivers drop enough sediment to create these landforms or areas of raised elevation, the remaining flowing water with the most power sometimes cuts across the land, forming different branches called distributaries. Once formed, deltas are typically made up of three parts: the upper delta plain, the lower delta plain, and the subaqueous delta. The upper delta plain makes up the area nearest to land. It is usually the area with the least water and highest elevation. The lower delta plain is the middle of the delta. It is a transition zone between the dry upper delta and the wet subaqueous delta. The subaqueous delta is the portion of the delta closest to the sea or body of water into which the river flows. This area is usually past the shoreline and it is below water level. Despite the generally universal processes by which river deltas are formed and organized, it is important to note that the world's deltas vary dramatically in structure, composition, and size due to factors such as origin, climate, geology, and tidal processes. These external factors contribute to an impressive diversity of deltas around the world. A delta's characteristics are classified based upon the specific factors contributing to its river's deposition of sediment -- typically the river itself, waves or tides. The main types of deltas are wave-dominated deltas, tide-dominated deltas, Gilbert deltas, inland deltas, and estuaries. As its name would imply, a wave-dominated delta such as the Mississippi River Delta is created by wave erosion controlling where and how much river sediment remains in a delta once it has been dropped. These deltas are usually shaped like the Greek symbol, delta (Δ). Tide-dominated deltas such as the Ganges River Delta are formed by tides. Such deltas are characterized by a dendritic structure (branched, like a tree) due to newly-formed distributaries during times of high water. Gilbert deltas are steeper and formed by deposition of coarse material. While it is possible for them to form in ocean areas, their formations are more commonly seen in mountainous areas where mountain rivers deposit sediment into lakes. Inland deltas are deltas formed in inland areas or valleys where rivers may divide into many branches and rejoin farther downstream. Inland deltas, also called inverted river deltas, normally form on former lake beds. Finally, when a river is located near coasts characterized by large tidal variations, they do not always form a traditional delta. Tidal variation often results in estuaries or a river that meets the sea, such as Saint Lawrence River in Ontario, Quebec, and New York. River deltas have been important to humans for thousands of years because of their extremely fertile soils. Major ancient civilizations grew along deltas such as those of the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates rivers, with the inhabitants of these civilizations learning how to live with their natural flooding cycles. Many people believe that the ancient Greek historian Herodotus first coined the term delta nearly 2,500 years ago as many deltas are shaped like the Greek delta (Δ) symbol. Deltas remain important to humans even today as, among many other things, a source of sand and gravel. Used in highway, building and infrastructure construction, these highly valuable materials quite literally help our world. Delta land is also important in agricultural use. Witness the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in California. One of the most agriculturally diverse and productive areas in the state, the region successfully supports numerous crops from kiwi to alfalfa to tangerines. In addition to (or perhaps in defiance of) these human uses, river deltas boast some of the most biodiverse systems on the planet. As such, it is essential that these unique and beautiful havens of biodiversity remain as healthy habitat for the many species of plants, animals, insects, and fish -- some rare, threatened or endangered -- which call them home. In addition to their biodiversity, deltas and wetlands provide a buffer for hurricanes, as open land often tends to weaken the impact of storms as they travel toward larger, more populated areas. The Mississippi River Delta, for example, buffers the impact of potentially strong hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico. The Nile River in Egypt is among the longest rivers in the world, running for a length of 6,690 kilometers (4,150 miles), and it drains an area of roughly 2.9 million square kilometers, about 1.1 million square miles. No other region in our world is so dependent on a single water system, especially as it is located in one of our world's most extensive and severe deserts. More than 90% of the population of Egypt today lives adjacent to and relies directly on the Nile and its delta. Because of ancient Egypt's dependence on the Nile, the river's paleo-climatic history, particularly the changes in the hydro-climate, helped shape the growth of dynastic Egypt and led to the decline of numerous complex societies. There are three tributaries to the Nile, feeding into the main channel which flows generally northward to empty into the Mediterranean Sea. The Blue and the White Nile join together at Khartoum to create the main Nile channel, and the Atbara River joins the main Nile channel in northern Sudan. The Blue Nile's source is Lake Tana; the White Nile is sourced at equatorial Lake Victoria, famously confirmed in the 1870s by David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley. The Blue and Atbara rivers bring most of the sediment into the river channel and are fed by summer monsoon rains, while the White Nile drains the larger Central African Kenyan Plateau. The Nile Delta is roughly 500 km (310 mi) wide and 800 km (500 mi) long; the coastline as it meets the Mediterranean is 225 km (140 mi) long. The delta is made up mainly of alternating layers of silt and sand, laid down by the Nile over the past 10 thousand years or so. The elevation of the delta ranges from about 18 m (60 ft) above mean sea level at Cairo to around 1 m (3.3 ft) thick or less at the coast. The ancient Egyptians relied on the Nile as their source for reliable or at least predictable water supplies to allow their agricultural and then commercial settlements to develop. In ancient Egypt, the flooding of the Nile was predictable enough for the Egyptians to plan their yearly crops around it. The delta region flooded annually from June to September, as a result of monsoons in Ethiopia. A famine resulted when there was inadequate or surplus flooding. The ancient Egyptians learned partial control of the flood waters of the Nile by means of irrigation. They also wrote hymns to Hapy, the Nile flood god. In addition to being a source of water for their crops, the Nile River was a source of fish and waterfowl, and a major transportation artery linking all of the parts of Egypt, as well as linking Egypt to its neighbors. But the Nile does fluctuate from year to year. From one ancient period to the next, the course of the Nile, the amount of water in its channel, and the amount of silt deposited in the delta varied, bringing abundant harvest or devastating drought. This process continues. Egypt was first occupied by humans during the Paleolithic period, and they were undoubtedly affected by the Nile's fluctuations. The earliest evidence for technological adaptations of the Nile occurred in the delta region at the end of the Predynastic Period, between about 4000 and 3100 B.C.E., when farmers began building canals. Other innovations include: Predynastic (1st Dynasty 3000–2666 B.C.E.)— Sluice gate construction allowed deliberate flooding and draining of farm fields Old Kingdom (3rd Dynasty 2667–2648 B.C.E.)— 2/3 of the delta was affected by irrigation works Old Kingdom (3rd–8th Dynasties 2648–2160 B.C.E.)—Increasing aridification of the region leads to the progressively advanced technology including the building of artificial levees and enlarging and dredging of natural overflow channels Old Kingdom (6th–8th Dynasties)—Despite the new technologies developed during the Old Kingdom, aridification increased such that there was a 30 year period in which flooding of the delta did not occur, contributing to the end of the Old Kingdom. New Kingdom (18th dynasty, 1550–1292 B.C.E.)—Shadoof technology (so-called "Archimedes Screw" invented long before Archimedes) first introduced, allowing farmers to plant several crops a year Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.E.)—Agricultural intensification increased as population moved into the delta region Arab Conquest (1200–1203 C.E.)— Severe drought conditions led to famine and cannibalism as reported by the Arabic historian Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (1162–1231 C.E.) From Herodotus, Book II of The Histories: "[F]or it was evident to me that the space between the aforesaid mountain-ranges, which lie above the city of Memphis, once was a gulf of the sea... if it be permitted to compare small things with great; and small these are in comparison, for of the rivers which heaped up the soil in those regions none is worthy to be compared to volume with a single one of the mouths of the Nile, which has five mouths." Also from Herodotus, Book II: "If then the stream of the Nile should turn aside into this Arabian gulf, what would hinder that gulf from being filled up with silt as the river continued to flow, at all events within a period of twenty thousand years?" From Lucan's Pharsalia: "Egypt on the west Girt by the trackless Syrtes forces back By sevenfold stream the ocean; rich in glebe And gold and merchandise; and proud of Nile Asks for no rain from heaven." Castañeda IS, Schouten S, Pätzold J, Lucassen F, Kasemann S, Kuhlmann H, and Schefuß E. 2016. Hydroclimate variability in the Nile River Basin during the past 28,000 years. Earth and Planetary Science Letters 438:47-56. Krom MD, Stanley JD, Cliff RA, and Woodward JC. 2002. Nile River sediment fluctuations over the past 7000 yr and their key role in sapropel development. Geology 30(1):71-74. Santoro MM, Hassan FA, Wahab MA, Cerveny RS, and Robert C Balling J. 2015. 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