

Arabian Peninsula

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"*Arabia*" and "*Arabian*" redirect here. For other uses, see [Arabia \(disambiguation\)](#) and [Arabian \(disambiguation\)](#).

Arabian Peninsula



Area 3.2 million km² (1.25 million mi²)

Population 77,983,936

Demonym [Arabian](#)

Countries [Saudi Arabia](#)
[Yemen](#)
[Oman](#)
[United Arab Emirates](#)
[Kuwait](#)
[Qatar](#)
[Bahrain](#)

The **Arabian Peninsula**, or simply **Arabia**^[1] (/əˈreɪbiə/; **Arabic**: شِبْهُ الْجَزِيرَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّة *shibhu l-jazīrati l-ʿarabiyyah*, 'Arabian peninsula' or جَزِيرَةُ الْعَرَب *jazīratu l-ʿarab*, 'Island of the Arabs'),^[2] is a [peninsula](#) of [Western Asia](#) situated northeast of [Africa](#) on the [Arabian plate](#). From a geographical perspective, it is considered a [subcontinent](#) of [Asia](#).^[3]

It is the largest peninsula in the world, at 3,237,500 km² (1,250,000 sq mi).^{[4][5][6][7][8]} The peninsula consists of the countries [Yemen](#), [Oman](#), [Qatar](#), [Bahrain](#), [Kuwait](#), [Saudi Arabia](#) and the [United Arab Emirates](#).^[9] The peninsula formed as a result of the rifting of the [Red Sea](#) between 56 and

23 million years ago, and is bordered by the [Red Sea](#) to the west and southwest, the [Persian Gulf](#) to the northeast, the [Levant](#) to the north and the [Indian Ocean](#) to the southeast. The peninsula plays a critical [geopolitical](#) role in the [Arab world](#) due to its vast reserves of [oil](#) and [natural gas](#). The most populous cities on the Arabian Peninsula are [Riyadh](#), [Dubai](#), [Jeddah](#), [Abu Dhabi](#), [Doha](#), [Kuwait City](#), [Sana'a](#), and [Mecca](#).

Before the modern era, it was divided into four distinct regions: [Red Sea Coast](#) ([Tihamah](#)), [Central Plateau](#) ([Al-Yamama](#)), [Indian Ocean Coast](#) ([Hadhramaut](#)) and [Persian Gulf Coast](#) ([Al-Bahrain](#)). Hejaz and Najd make up most of Saudi Arabia. Southern Arabia consists of [Yemen](#) and some parts of Saudi Arabia ([Najran](#), [Jizan](#), [Asir](#)) and Oman ([Dhofar](#)). Eastern Arabia consists of the entire coastal strip of the Persian Gulf.



Geography^[edit]

See also: [Geography of Saudi Arabia](#)



Africa, Arabian subcontinent (Asia), and Eurasia

The Arabian Peninsula is located in the continent of Asia and bounded by (clockwise) the [Persian Gulf](#) on the northeast, the [Strait of Hormuz](#) and the [Gulf of Oman](#) on the east, the [Arabian Sea](#) on the southeast and south, the [Gulf of Aden](#) on the south, the [Bab-el-Mandeb Strait](#) on the southwest and the [Red Sea](#), which is located on the southwest and west.^[10] The northern portion of the peninsula merges with the [Syrian Desert](#) with no clear borderline, although the northern boundary of the peninsula is generally considered to be the northern borders of [Saudi Arabia](#) and [Kuwait](#).^[10]

The most prominent feature of the peninsula is [desert](#), but in the southwest, there are mountain ranges, which receive greater rainfall than the rest of the peninsula. [Harrat ash Shaam](#) is a large volcanic field that extends from northwestern Arabia into [Jordan](#) and southern [Syria](#).^[11]

Political boundaries^[edit]

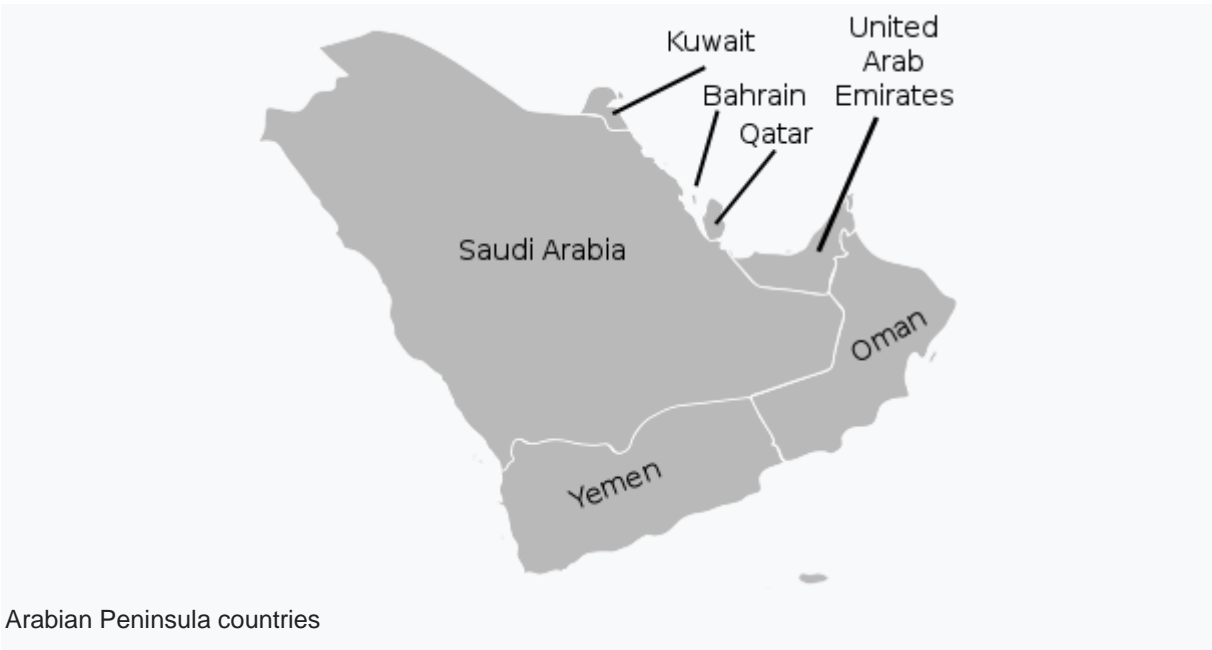


The Peninsula

The peninsula's constituent countries are (clockwise north to south) [Kuwait](#), [Bahrain](#), [Qatar](#), and the [United Arab Emirates](#) (UAE) on the east, [Oman](#) on the southeast, [Yemen](#) on the south

and [Saudi Arabia](#) at the center.^[10] The island nation of [Bahrain](#) lies off the east coast of the peninsula.

Six countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman) form the [Gulf Cooperation Council](#) (GCC).^[12]



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia covers the greater part of the peninsula. The majority of the population of the peninsula live in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The peninsula contains the world's largest reserves of oil. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are economically the wealthiest in the region. [Qatar](#), a small peninsula in the Persian Gulf on the larger peninsula, is home to the [Arabic-language](#) television station [Al Jazeera](#) and its English-language subsidiary [Al Jazeera English](#). [Kuwait](#), on the border with Iraq, is an important country strategically, forming one of the main staging grounds for coalition forces mounting the [United States](#)-led [2003 invasion of Iraq](#).

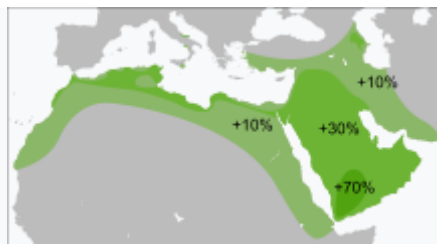
Population^{[[edit](#)]}

Historical population		
Year	Pop.	±%
1950	9,481,713	—
1960	11,788,232	+24.3%
1970	15,319,678	+30.0%
1980	23,286,256	+52.0%
1990	35,167,708	+51.0%
2000	47,466,523	+35.0%

2010	63,364,000	+33.5%
2014	77,584,000	+22.4%
Political Definition: Gulf Cooperation Council and Yemen Sources: 1950–2000 ^[13] 2000–2014 ^[14]		
Historical population		
Year	Pop.	±%
1950	356,235	—
1970	1,329,168	+273.1%
1990	4,896,491	+268.4%
2010	11,457,000	+134.0%
2014	17,086,000	+49.1%
4 smallest states (area) of the Gulf Cooperation Council with entire coastline in Persian Gulf: UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait Sources: 1950–2000 ^[15] 2000–2014 ^[14]		

Though historically lightly populated, political Arabia is noted for a high population growth rate – as the result of both very strong inflows of migrant labor as well as sustained high birth rates. The population tends to be relatively young and heavily skewed gender ratio dominated by males. In many states, the number of South Asians exceeds that of the local citizenry. The four smallest states (by area), which have their entire coastlines on the Persian Gulf, exhibit the world's most extreme population growth, roughly tripling every 20 years. In 2014, the estimated population of the Arabian Peninsula was 77,983,936 (including expatriates).^[16] The Arabian Peninsula is known for having one of the most uneven adult sex ratios in the world with females in some regions (especially the east) constituting only a quarter of vicenarians and tricenarians.^[17]

21-chromosome^[edit]



Distribution of J1 haplogroup

Listed here are the [human Y-chromosome DNA haplogroups](#) in Arabia (Yemen,^[18] Oman,^[19] Qatar,^[20] Kuwait,^[21] Saudi Arabia^[22] and the United Arab Emirates)^{[23][24][25]}

[Haplogroup J](#) is the most abundant component in the Arabian peninsula, embracing more than 50% of its Y-chromosomes.

Its two main subclades ([J1-M267](#) and [J2-M172](#)), show opposite latitudinal gradients in the Middle East.

J1-M267 is more abundant in the southern areas, reaching a frequency around 73% in Yemen, whereas J2-M172 is more common in the Levant.

J (L222.2) Accounts for the majority of (L147.1) in [Saudi Arabia](#). It seems to be an exclusively [Adnani](#) marker.^{[22][26][27]}

Haplogroup J 54.8%

[Haplogroup E](#) 17.5% R 11.6%

[Haplogroup T-M184](#) 5.1%

Landscape[\[edit\]](#)



A caravan crossing [Ad-Dahna Desert](#) in central Saudi Arabia



[Ras al-Jinz](#) in southeastern Arabia (Oman), also known as the 'Turtle Beach'



AR-Arabian Plate, velocities with respect to Africa in millimeters per year

Geologically, this region is perhaps more appropriately called the Arabian subcontinent because it lies on a [tectonic plate](#) of its own, the [Arabian Plate](#), which has been moving incrementally away from the rest of Africa (forming the Red Sea) and north, toward Asia, into the [Eurasian](#)

[Plate](#) (forming the [Zagros Mountains](#)). The rocks exposed vary systematically across Arabia, with the oldest rocks exposed in the [Arabian-Nubian Shield](#) near the Red Sea, overlain by earlier sediments that become younger towards the Persian Gulf. Perhaps the best-preserved [ophiolite](#) on Earth, the [Semail Ophiolite](#), lies exposed in the mountains of the UAE and northern Oman.

The peninsula consists of:

1. A central plateau, the [Najd](#), with fertile valleys and pastures used for the grazing of [sheep](#) and other livestock
2. A range of deserts: the [Nefud](#) in the north,^[28] which is stony; the [Rub' al Khali](#) or Great [Arabian Desert](#) in the south, with sand estimated to extend 600 ft (180 m) below the surface; between them, the [Dahna](#)
3. [Mountains](#)^{[29][30][31]}
4. Stretches of dry or marshy coastland with coral reefs on the [Red Sea](#) side ([Tihamah](#))
5. Oases and marshy coast-land in [Eastern Arabia](#) on the [Persian Gulf](#) side, the most important of which are those of [Al Ain](#) (in the UAE, on the border with Oman) and [Al-Hasa](#) (in Saudi Arabia), according to one author^[31]

Arabia has few lakes or permanent rivers. Most areas are drained by ephemeral watercourses called [wadis](#), which are dry except during the rainy season. Plentiful ancient [aquifers](#) exist beneath much of the peninsula, however, and where this water surfaces, [oases](#) form (e.g. Al-Hasa and [Qatif](#), two of the world's largest [oases](#)) and permit agriculture, especially [palm trees](#), which allowed the peninsula to produce more [dates](#) than any other region in the world. In general, the climate is extremely hot and [arid](#), although there are exceptions. Higher elevations are made temperate by their altitude, and the Arabian Sea coastline can receive surprisingly cool, humid breezes in summer due to cold upwelling offshore. The peninsula has no thick forests. Desert-adapted wildlife is present throughout the region.

According to NASA's [Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment](#) (GRACE) satellite data (2003–2013) analysed in a [University of California, Irvine \(UCI\)](#)-led study published in [Water Resources Research](#) on 16 June 2015, the most over-stressed aquifer system in the world is the [Arabian Aquifer System](#), upon which more than 60 million people depend for water.^[32] Twenty-one of the thirty seven largest aquifers "have exceeded sustainability tipping points and are being depleted" and thirteen of them are "considered significantly distressed."^[32]

A plateau more than 2,500 feet (760 m) high extends across much of the Arabian Peninsula. The plateau slopes eastwards from the massive, rifted escarpment along the coast of the Red Sea, to the shallow waters of the Persian Gulf. The interior is characterised by *cuestas* and valleys, drained by a system of *wadis*. A crescent of sand and [gravel](#) deserts lies to the east.

Mountains^[edit]



[Jebel Hafeet](#) on the border of [Oman](#) and the [UAE](#), near the city of [Al Ain](#). It can be considered an outlier of [Al Hajar Mountains](#).^[33]

There are mountains at the eastern, southern and northwestern borders of the peninsula. Broadly, the ranges can be grouped as follows:

- Northeast: [The Hajar range](#), shared by the UAE and northern Oman^[31]
- Southeast: The [Dhofar Mountains](#) of southern Oman,^[31] contiguous with the eastern Yemeni [Hadhramaut](#)^{[34][35]}
- West: Bordering the [eastern coast](#) of the [Red Sea](#) are the [Sarawat](#),^[29] which can be seen to include the [Haraz Mountains](#) of eastern Yemen,^[30] and the ['Asir](#)^[36] and [Hijaz Mountains](#) of western Saudi Arabia,^{[37][38]} the latter including the [Midian](#) in northwestern Saudi Arabia^[34]
- Northwest: Aside from the Sarawat, the northern portion of Saudi Arabia hosts the [Shammar Mountains](#), which include the Aja and [Salma](#) subranges^[31]
- Central: The Najd hosts the [Tuwaig](#) Escarpment^[34] or Tuwair range^[31]

From the [Hejaz](#) southwards, the mountains show a steady increase in altitude westward as they get nearer to Yemen, and the highest peaks and ranges are all located in Yemen. The highest, [Jabal An-Nabi Shu'ayb](#) of the Haraz subrange of the Sarawat range, is about 3,666 m (2.278 mi) high.^{[29][30]} By comparison, the [Tuwayr](#), Shammar and Dhofar generally do not exceed 1,000 m (0.62 mi) in height.^[31]

Not all mountains in the peninsula are visibly within ranges. [Jebel Hafeet](#) in particular, on the border of the UAE and Oman, measuring between 1,100 and 1,300 m (3,600 and 4,300 ft),^{[33][39]} is not within the Hajar range, *sensu stricto*, but may be considered an [outlier](#) of that range.



The northeastern Hajar Mountains, shared by Oman and the UAE, as seen from the desert of [Sharjah](#)



The Dhofar mountainous region in southeastern Oman, where the city of [Salalah](#) is located, is a tourist destination known for its annual [khareef](#) season



The Hadhramaut Mountains of eastern [Yemen](#), contiguous with the Omani Dhofar range, as seen from the city of Al-[Mukalla](#)



Terraced fields in the Haraz subrange of the Sarawat Mountains in western Yemen



[Jabal Sawdah](#) of the 'Asir range in southwestern [Saudi Arabia](#), near the border with Yemen



The Hijaz Mountains of western Saudi Arabia, as seen from the [Hejazi](#) city of [Makkah](#)



The Midian Mountains of [Tabuk Province](#), in northwestern Saudi Arabia, near the border with [Jordan](#)



The Aja subrange of the Shammar Mountains in the [region](#) of [Ha'il](#), northern Saudi Arabia



The Tuwaiq Escarpment or Tuwayr mountainous region in the [Najd](#), [southwest](#) of the Saudi capital city of [Riyadh](#)

show

Hills and [mountains in the Arabian Peninsula](#)

Land and sea[\[edit\]](#)



Coconut palms line corniches of Al-Hafa, Oman



[Red Sea](#) coral reefs

Most of the Arabian Peninsula is unsuited to agriculture, making irrigation and land reclamation projects essential. The narrow coastal plain and isolated oases, amounting to less than 1% of the land area, are used to cultivate grains, [coffee](#) and [tropical fruits](#). Goat, sheep, and [camel](#) husbandry is widespread elsewhere throughout the rest of the Peninsula. Some areas have a summer humid [tropical monsoon climate](#), in particular the [Dhofar](#) and [Al Mahrah](#) areas of Oman and Yemen. These areas allow for large scale coconut plantations. Much of Yemen has a tropical [monsoon](#) rain influenced mountain climate. The plains usually have either a tropical or subtropical arid [desert climate](#) or arid [steppe climate](#). The sea surrounding the Arabian Peninsula is generally [tropical sea](#) with a very rich tropical sea life and some of the world's largest, undestroyed and most pristine coral reefs. In addition, the organisms living in [symbiosis](#) with the Red Sea coral, the [protozoa](#) and [zooxanthellae](#), have a unique hot weather adaptation to sudden rise (and fall) in sea water temperature. Hence, these coral reefs are not affected by coral bleaching caused by rise in temperature as elsewhere in the [indopacific](#) coral sea. The reefs are also unaffected by mass tourism and diving or other large scale human interference. However, some reefs were destroyed in the [Persian Gulf](#), mostly caused by phosphate water [pollution](#) and resultant increase in algae growth as well as oil pollution from ships and pipeline leakage.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

The fertile soils of Yemen have encouraged settlement of almost all of the land from sea level up to the mountains at 10,000 feet (3,000 m). In the higher reaches, elaborate terraces have been constructed to facilitate grain, fruit, coffee, ginger and [khat](#) cultivation. The Arabian peninsula is known for its rich oil, i.e. petroleum production due to its geographical location.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Etymology^{[[edit](#)]}

Main article: [Arab \(etymology\)](#)

During the [Hellenistic](#) period, the area was known as *Arabia* or *Aravia* ([Greek](#): Αραβία). The [Romans](#) named three regions with the prefix "Arabia", encompassing a larger area than the current term "Arabian Peninsula":

- [Arabia Petraea](#): for the area that is today southern modern [Syria](#), [Jordan](#), the [Sinai Peninsula](#) and northwestern [Saudi Arabia](#). It was the only one that became a [province](#), with [Petra](#) as its capital.
- [Arabia Deserta](#) ("Desert Arabia"): signified the desert interior of the Arabian peninsula. As a name for the region, it remained popular into the 19th and 20th centuries, and was used in [Charles M. Doughty's](#) *[Travels in Arabia Deserta](#)* (1888).
- [Arabia Felix](#) ("Fortunate Arabia"): was used by geographers to describe what is now [Yemen](#), which enjoys more rainfall, is much greener than the rest of the peninsula and has long enjoyed much more productive fields.

The Arab inhabitants used a north-south division of Arabia: Al Sham-Al Yaman, or Arabia Deserta-Arabia Felix. Arabia Felix had originally been used for the whole peninsula, and at other times only for the southern region. Because its use became limited to the south, the whole

peninsula was simply called Arabia. Arabia Deserta was the entire desert region extending north from Arabia Felix to Palmyra and the Euphrates, including all the area between Pelusium on the Nile and Babylon. This area was also called Arabia and not sharply distinguished from the peninsula.^[40]

The Arabs and the Ottoman Empire considered the west of the Arabian Peninsula region where the Arabs lived 'the land of the Arabs' – Bilad al-Arab (Arabia), and its major divisions were the bilad al-Sham (Syria), bilad al-Yaman (the Land of the southern Peninsula), and Bilad al-Iraq and modern-day Kuwait (the Land of the River Banks).^[41] The Ottomans used the term Arabistan in a broad sense for the subcontinent itself starting from [Cilicia](#), where the Euphrates river makes its descent into [Syria](#), through [Palestine](#), and on through the remainder of the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas.^[42]

The provinces of Arabia were: Al Tih, the Sinai peninsula, Hedjaz, Asir, Yemen, Hadramaut, Mahra and Shilu, Oman, Hasa, Bahrain, Dahna, Nufud, the Hammad, which included the deserts of Syria, Mesopotamia and Babylonia.^{[43][44]}

History^[edit]



Ancient coins from [Failaka Island](#), [Kuwait](#)

The history of the Arabian Peninsula goes back to the beginnings of human habitation in Arabia up to 130,000 years ago.^[45] However, a homo sapien fossilized finger bone was found at [Al Wusta](#) in the [Nefud Desert](#), which indicates that the first human migration out of Africa to Arabia might date back to approximately 90,000 years ago.^[46] Nevertheless, the stone tools from the [Middle Paleolithic](#) age along with fossils of other animals discovered at Ti's al Ghadah, in northwestern Saudi Arabia, might imply that hominids migrated through a "Green Arabia" between 300,000 and 500,000 years ago.^[47] [Acheulean](#) tools found in Saffaqah, [Riyadh Region](#) reveal that hominins lived in the Arabian Peninsula as recently as 188,000 years ago.^[48]

Pre-Islamic Arabia^[edit]

Main articles: [Pre-Islamic Arabia](#) and [Arabian Peninsula in the Roman era](#)



[Sabaean](#) inscription addressed to the god [Almaqah](#), mentioning five Ancient Yemeni gods, two reigning sovereigns and two governors, 7th century BC

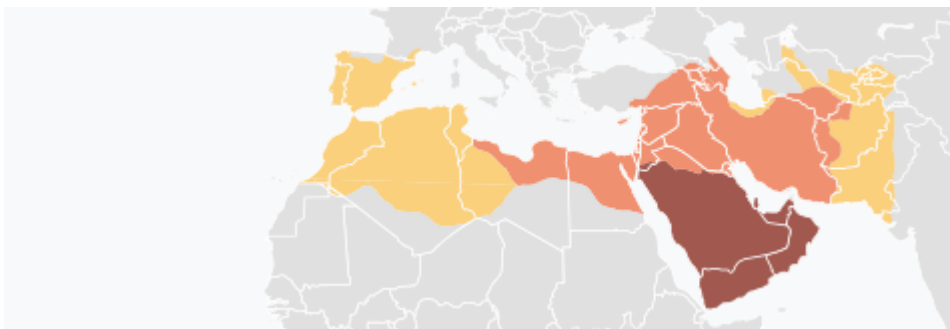
There is evidence that human habitation in the Arabian Peninsula dates back to about 106,000 to 130,000 years ago.^[49] The harsh climate historically^[when?] prevented much settlement in the pre-Islamic Arabian peninsula, apart from a small number of urban trading settlements, such as [Mecca](#) and [Medina](#), located in the [Hejaz](#) in the west of the peninsula.^[50]

[Archaeology](#) has revealed the existence of many civilizations in pre-Islamic Arabia (such as the [Thamud](#)), especially in [South Arabia](#).^{[51][52]} [South Arabian civilizations](#) include the [Sheba](#), the [Himyarite Kingdom](#), the [Kingdom of Awsan](#), the [Kingdom of Ma'in](#) and the [Sabaean Kingdom](#). Central Arabia was the location of the [Kingdom of Kindah](#) in the 4th, 5th and early 6th centuries AD. Eastern Arabia was home to the [Dilmun civilization](#). The earliest known events in Arabian history are migrations from the peninsula into neighbouring areas.^[53]

The Arabian peninsula has long been accepted as the original [Urheimat](#) of the [Semitic languages](#) by a majority of scholars.^{[54][55][56][57]}

Rise of Islam^[edit]

Main articles: [Early Muslim conquests](#) and [Islamic Golden Age](#)



Age of the [Caliphs](#)

Expansion under [Muhammad](#), 622–632/A.H. 1–11

Expansion during [Rashidun Caliphate](#), 632–661/A.H. 11–40

Expansion during the [Umayyad Caliphate](#), 661–750/A.H. 40–129



Approximate locations of some of the important tribes and Empire of the Arabian Peninsula around the time that [Muhammad](#) started preaching Islam (approximately 600 CE / 20 BH)

The seventh century saw the rise of Islam as the peninsula's dominant religion. The [Islamic prophet Muhammad](#) was born in Mecca in about 570 and first began preaching in the city in 610, but [migrated](#) to [Medina](#) in 622. From there he and his companions united the [tribes of Arabia](#) under the banner of [Islam](#) and created a single Arab Muslim religious polity in the Arabian peninsula.

Muhammad established a new unified polity in the Arabian peninsula which under the subsequent [Rashidun](#) and [Umayyad Caliphates](#) saw a century of rapid expansion of Arab power well beyond the Arabian peninsula in the form of a vast Muslim Arab Empire with an area of influence that stretched from the northwest [Indian subcontinent](#), across [Central Asia](#), the [Middle East](#), [North Africa](#), southern [Italy](#), and the [Iberian Peninsula](#), to the [Pyrenees](#).

Muhammad began preaching Islam at [Mecca](#) before [migrating](#) to [Medina](#), from where he united the [tribes of Arabia](#) into a singular Arab Muslim religious polity. With Muhammad's death in 632 AD, disagreement broke out over who would succeed him as leader of the Muslim community. [Umar ibn al-Khattab](#), a prominent [companion](#) of Muhammad, nominated [Abu Bakr](#), who was Muhammad's intimate friend and collaborator. Others added their support and Abu Bakr was made the first [caliph](#). This choice was disputed by some of Muhammad's companions, who held that [Ali ibn Abi Talib](#), his cousin and son-in-law, had been designated his successor. Abu Bakr's immediate task was to avenge a recent defeat by [Byzantine](#) (or [Eastern Roman Empire](#)) forces, although he first had to put down a rebellion by Arab tribes in an episode known as the [Ridda wars](#), or "Wars of Apostasy".^[58]

Following Muhammad's death in 632, [Abu Bakr](#) became leader of the Muslims as the first [Caliph](#). After putting down a rebellion by the Arab tribes (known as the [Ridda wars](#), or "Wars of Apostasy"), Abu Bakr attacked the [Byzantine Empire](#). On his death in 634, he was succeeded by [Umar](#) as caliph, followed by [Uthman ibn al-Affan](#) and [Ali ibn Abi Talib](#). The period of these first four caliphs is known as *al-khulafā' ar-rāshidūn*: the [Rashidun](#) or "rightly guided" Caliphate. Under the Rashidun Caliphs, and, from 661, their [Umayyad successors](#), the Arabs rapidly expanded the territory under Muslim control outside of Arabia. In a matter of decades Muslim armies decisively defeated the [Byzantine army](#) and destroyed the [Persian Empire](#), [conquering huge swathes of territory](#) from the [Iberian peninsula](#) to India. The political focus of the Muslim world then shifted to the newly conquered territories.^{[59][60]}

Nevertheless, [Mecca](#) and [Medina](#) remained the spiritually most important places in the [Muslim world](#). The [Qur'an](#) requires every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it, as one of the [five pillars of Islam](#), to make a pilgrimage, or [Haji](#), to [Mecca](#) during the [Islamic month](#) of [Dhu al-Hijjah](#) at least once in his or her lifetime.^[61] The [Masjid al-Haram](#) (the Grand Mosque) in [Mecca](#) is the location of the [Kaaba](#), Islam's holiest site, and the [Masjid al-Nabawi](#) (the Prophet's Mosque) in [Medina](#) is the location of [Muhammad](#) tomb; as a result, from the 7th century, [Mecca](#) and [Medina](#) became the pilgrimage destinations for large numbers of Muslims from across the [Islamic world](#).^[62]

Middle Ages^[edit]

Despite its spiritual importance, in political terms Arabia soon became a peripheral region of the [Islamic world](#), in which the most important [medieval Islamic states](#) were based at various times in such far away cities as [Damascus](#), [Baghdad](#), and [Cairo](#).

However, from the 10th century (and, in fact, until the 20th century) the [Hashemite Sharifs of Mecca](#) maintained a state in the most developed part of the region, the [Hejaz](#). Their domain originally comprised only the holy cities of [Mecca](#) and [Medina](#) but in the 13th century it was extended to include the rest of the [Hejaz](#). Although, the Sharifs exercised at most times independent authority in the [Hejaz](#), they were usually subject to the [suzerainty](#) of one of the major Islamic empires of the time. In the Middle Ages, these included the [Abbasids](#) of [Baghdad](#), and the [Fatimids](#), [Ayyubids](#) and [Mamluks](#) of Egypt.^[63]

Modern history^[edit]



Ottoman territories acquired between 1481 and 1683 ([See: list of territories](#))

The provincial Ottoman Army for Arabia (Arabistan Ordusu) was headquartered in [Syria](#), which included Palestine, the Transjordan region in addition to Lebanon ([Mount Lebanon was, however, a semi-autonomous mutasarrifate](#)). It was put in charge of Syria, Cilicia, Iraq, and the remainder of the Arabian Peninsula.^{[64][65]} The Ottomans never had any control over central Arabia, also known as the [Najd](#) region.

The [Damascus Protocol](#) of 1914 provides an illustration of the regional relationships. Arabs living in one of the existing districts of the Arabian peninsula, the Emirate of [Hejaz](#), asked for a British guarantee of independence. Their proposal included all Arab lands south of a line roughly corresponding to the northern frontiers of present-day Syria and Iraq. They envisioned a new Arab state, or confederation of states, adjoining the southern Arabian Peninsula. It would have comprised [Cilicia](#) – [İskenderun](#) and [Mersin](#), [Iraq](#) with [Kuwait](#), [Syria](#), [Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate](#), [Jordan](#), and [Palestine](#).^[66]

In the modern era, the term bilad al-Yaman came to refer specifically to the southwestern parts of the peninsula. Arab geographers started to refer to the whole peninsula as 'jazirat al-Arab', or the peninsula of the Arabs.^[67]

Late Ottoman rule and the Hejaz Railway^[edit]



The peninsula in 1914

In the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottomans embarked on an ambitious project: the construction of a railway connecting [Istanbul](#), the capital of the [Ottoman Empire](#) and the seat of the Islamic [Caliphate](#), and [Hejaz](#) with its holiest shrines of Islam which are the yearly pilgrimage destination of the [Hajj](#). Another important goal was to improve the economic and political integration of the distant Arabian provinces into the Ottoman state, and to facilitate the transportation of military troops in case of need.

The [Hejaz Railway](#) was a [narrow gauge railway](#) (1,050 km (650 mi)) that ran from [Damascus](#) to [Medina](#), through the Hejaz region of Arabia. It was originally planned to reach

the holy city of [Mecca](#), but due to the interruption of the construction works caused by the outbreak of World War I, it eventually only reached Medina. It was a part of the [Ottoman railway](#) network and was built in order to extend the previously existing line between Istanbul and Damascus (which began from the [Haydarpaşa Terminal](#)).

The railway was started in 1900 at the behest of the Ottoman Sultan [Abdul Hamid II](#) and was built largely by the [Turks](#), with [German](#) advice and support. A public subscription was opened throughout the Islamic world to fund the construction. The railway was to be a [waqf](#), an inalienable religious endowment or charitable trust.^[68]

The Arab Revolt and the foundation of Saudi Arabia[\[edit\]](#)

The major developments of the early 20th century were the [Arab Revolt](#) during World War I and the subsequent collapse and [partitioning of the Ottoman Empire](#). The Arab Revolt (1916–1918) was initiated by the [Sherif Hussein ibn Ali](#) with the aim of securing independence from the ruling [Ottoman Empire](#) and creating a single unified Arab state spanning from [Aleppo](#) in [Syria](#) to [Aden](#) in Yemen. During World War I, the Sharif Hussein entered into an alliance with the United Kingdom and France against the Ottomans in June 1916.

These events were followed by the [foundation of Saudi Arabia](#) under King [Abdulaziz Ibn Saud](#). In 1902, Ibn Saud had captured [Riyadh](#). Continuing his conquests, Abdulaziz subdued Al-Hasa, [Jabal Shammar](#), [Hejaz](#) between 1913 and 1926 founded the modern state of [Saudi Arabia](#). The Saudis absorbed the [Emirate of Asir](#), with their expansion only ending in 1934 after a [war with Yemen](#). Two Saudi states were formed and controlled much of Arabia before Ibn Saud was even born. Ibn Saud, however, established the third Saudi state.

Oil reserves[\[edit\]](#)

The second major development has been the discovery of vast reserves of oil in the 1930s. Its production brought great wealth to all countries of the region, with the exception of [Yemen](#).

Civil war in Yemen[\[edit\]](#)

The [North Yemen Civil War](#) was fought in [North Yemen](#) between royalists of the [Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen](#) and factions of the [Yemen Arab Republic](#) from 1962 to 1970. The war began with a [coup d'état](#) carried out by the republican leader, [Abdullah as-Sallal](#), which dethroned the newly crowned [Muhammad al-Badr](#) and declared Yemen a republic under his presidency. The Imam escaped to the [Saudi Arabian](#) border and rallied popular support.

The royalist side received support from Saudi Arabia, while the republicans were supported by [Egypt](#) and the Soviet Union. Both foreign irregular and conventional forces were also involved. The [Egyptian President](#), [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#), supported the republicans with as many as 70,000 troops. Despite several military moves and peace conferences, the war sank into a stalemate. Egypt's commitment to the war is considered to have been detrimental to its performance in the [Six-Day War](#) of June 1967, after which Nasser found it increasingly difficult to maintain his army's involvement and began to pull his forces out of Yemen.

By 1970, King [Faisal of Saudi Arabia](#) recognized the republic and a truce was signed. Egyptian military historians refer to the war in Yemen as their [Vietnam](#).^[69]

Gulf War[\[edit\]](#)

In 1990, [Iraq](#) invaded Kuwait.^[70] The [invasion of Kuwait](#) by Iraqi forces led to the 1990–91 [Gulf War](#). [Egypt](#), [Qatar](#), [Syria](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#) joined a multinational [coalition](#) that opposed Iraq. Displays of support for Iraq by [Jordan](#) and [Palestine](#) resulted in strained relations between many of the Arab states. After the war, a so-called "Damascus Declaration" formalized an alliance for future joint Arab defensive actions between Egypt, Syria, and the GCC member states.^[71]

Yemen Arab Spring[\[edit\]](#)

The Arab Spring reached Yemen in January 2011.^[72]

People of Yemen took to the street demonstrating against three decades of rule by President Ali Abdullah Saleh.^[73]

The demonstration lead to cracks in the ruling General Peoples Congress (GPC) and Saleh's Sanhani clan.^[74] Saleh used tactic of concession and violence to save his presidency.^[75]

After numerous attempt Saleh accepted the Gulf Cooperation Council mediation. He eventually handed power to Vice President Hadi. He was sworn in as President of Yemen on Feb 25,2012. He launched a national dialogue to address new constitution, political and social issues.

Transport and industry^[edit]

The extraction and refining of oil and gas are the major industrial activities in the Arabian Peninsula. The region also has an active construction sector, with many cities reflecting the wealth generated by the oil industry. The service sector is dominated by financial and technical institutions, which, like the construction sector, mainly serve the oil industry. Traditional handicrafts such as carpet-weaving are found in rural areas of Arabia.^[citation needed]

Gallery^[edit]

The old city of [Sana'a](#), Yemen. Peninsular Arabs trace their lineage to [Qahtan](#), who was reportedly based in Yemen.^[30]



A map of the peninsula made in 1720 by the German publisher [Christoph Weigel](#)

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