

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

JERUSALEM

Fascinating Facts

JERUSALEM. A crossroads for thousands of years, people once thought Jerusalem was the center of the world. Why not? Three continents meet nearby and several important bodies of water are very close. It is considered one of the holiest places on Earth by three major religions. And it is the most fought over piece of land in history. Today, the walled section of the city, or Jerusalem's Old City, is divided into four quarters. Jews, Muslims, Christians and Armenians, a Christian denomination, each live in their own quarter. They share a rich, complicated past.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

This rocky, isolated spot seems an unlikely place to build a city. But the first builders saw something in these hills, the most important being WATER. Jerusalem has a spring of fresh water that flows year round. Also, Jerusalem lies close to the junction of Africa, Asia and Europe. The Dead Sea, Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Sea of Galilee (which is actually a freshwater lake) are all nearby. Many people traveled through this area. That may help explain why dozens of languages are spoken here today. And that hilly terrain helped protect Jerusalem against hordes of invaders. Over the course of its history, Jerusalem has been captured and recaptured dozens of times, attacked countless more, and almost completely destroyed at least twice!



DIG IT. Archaeologists are trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle many thousands of years old in and around Jerusalem. This task is made more difficult by the fact that the ruins of the many different "Jerusalems" are deposited one on top of the other. Think of it as a many-layered "city sandwich." Archaeologists call them *occupation layers*. Each layer reveals information about the way different peoples lived and worshipped in Jerusalem. Imagine how many layers there might be! There are many archaeological sites in the region for good reason. It was, in fact, near Jerusalem where a shepherd boy stumbled on some pieces of the puzzle in a cave. This accidental discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (the oldest copy of the Hebrew Bible) is considered one of the most important archaeological finds of all time. What else might still be hiding in those rocks?

WORLD RELIGIONS

From the Jebusites to King David to the Crusaders to the present, religion is entwined in Jerusalem's history. The city is home to some of the holiest sites for Jews, Christians and Muslims. Not only that—some of those sites are the exact same place.

Judaism

The Temple Mount: This is a large stone platform that overlooks Jerusalem's Old City. At its center is the Foundation Stone, considered the holiest site in Judaism. Here it is believed that King David delivered the Ark of the Covenant (containing the Ten Commandments), and it is the site of many other important Bible stories.

Islam

The Noble Sanctuary: This same stone platform supports the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Foundation Stone is underneath the Dome of the Rock. Muslims believe this is where Muhammad climbed a ladder to heaven, part of his Night Journey.

Christianity

Church of the Holy Sepulchre: Ok, not on the stone, but not far from it. The church is built over a rocky hill where many Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



Temple Mount overlooks the Old City.

WORD FIND

Can you spot these words?

ARCHAEOLOGY

RELIGION

TEMPLE MOUNT

DOME OF THE ROCK

JERUSALEM

SEAS

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DO YOU KNOW?

1. Which site, that overlooks Jerusalem's Old City, do both Jews and Muslims consider sacred?
2. Where is the site that many Christians believed Jesus died?
3. Why was Jerusalem considered to be the center of the world?
4. Name two important bodies of water near Jerusalem.
5. What is one of the most important archaeological finds to date?
6. Why are there so many archaeological sites in this region?
7. Name one important natural feature that led people to build in Jerusalem?

WRITE IT DOWN!

Do you keep a diary? We know a lot about ancient people because they wrote things down. Practice writing down important things in your life—on paper. An archaeologist could discover your diary a thousand years from now!

