Ancient Greece

Geography

The ancient civilization of Greece was located in southeastern Europe along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The geography of the region helped to shape the government and culture of the Ancient Greeks. Geographical formations including mountains, seas, and islands formed natural barriers between the Greek city-states and forced the Greeks to settle along the coast.

Map of Modern Greece

Aegean Sea

The region of the Mediterranean where the Greeks first settled is called the Aegean Sea. Greek city-states formed all along the Aegean coastline and on the many islands in the Aegean Sea. The people of Greece used the Aegean to travel from city to city. The Aegean also provided fish for the people to eat.

Mountains

The land of Greece is full of mountains. Around 80% of the Greek mainland is mountainous. This made it difficult to make long journeys by land. The mountains also formed natural barriers between the major city-states. The tallest mountain in Greece is Mount Olympus. The Ancient Greeks believed that their gods (the Twelve Olympians) lived at the top of Mount Olympus.
Islands

The Aegean Sea is home to over 1000 islands. The Greeks settled on many of these islands including Crete (the largest of the islands), Rhodes, Chios, and Delos.

Climate

The climate in Ancient Greece generally featured hot summers and mild winters. Because it was so hot, most people wore lightweight clothing throughout most of the year. They would put on a cloak or wrap during the colder days of the winter months.

Regions of Ancient Greece

The mountains and seas of Ancient Greece formed several natural regions:

- Peloponnese - The Peloponnese is a large peninsula located at the southern tip of the Greek mainland. It is almost an island and only connects to the main land by a small strip of land called the Isthmus of Corinth. The Peloponnese was home to several major Greek city-states including Sparta, Corinth, and Argos.
- Central Greece - Just north of the Peloponnese is Central Greece. Central Greece was home to the famous region of Attica and the city-state of Athens.
- Northern Greece - Northern Greece is sometimes broken up into three major regions including Thessaly, Epirus, and Macedonia. Mount Olympus is located in Northern Greece.
- Islands - Major groupings of the Greek islands include the Cyclades Islands, the Dodecanese, and the Northern Aegean Islands.

Major Cities

The Ancient Greeks spoke the same language and had similar cultures. They were not one large empire, however, but were divided into a number of powerful city-states such as Athens, Sparta, and Thebes.

Greek Settlements

The Greeks set up colonies throughout the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. This included settlements in modern-day Italy, France, Spain, Turkey, and parts of North Africa. These colonies helped to spread the Greek culture throughout the region.

Interesting Facts About the Geography of Ancient Greece

- The Greeks called their land "Hellas." The English word "Greece" comes from the Roman word for the country "Graecia."
- Under the rule of Alexander the Great, Greece expanded into a large empire that included Egypt and stretched all the way to India.
- The Pindus Mountain Range runs north to south along much of mainland Greece. It is sometimes called the "spine of Greece."
- The Greek philosopher Plato once said that "we live around the sea like frogs around a pond."
Ancient Greece - Geography

1) Which type of landscape best describes much of the region of Ancient Greece?
   A  Flat
   B  Mountainous
   C  Desert
   D  Rainforest
   E  None of the above

2) In what continent is Greece located?
   A  Africa
   B  South America
   C  Asia
   D  Australia
   E  Europe

3) What sea is located along the eastern coast of Greece?
   A  Red Sea
   B  Arabian Sea
   C  Aegean Sea
   D  Black Sea
   E  Bering Sea
4) Where did the Ancient Greeks believe the Twelve Olympian gods lived?
A  Ionian Sea
B  Island of Crete
C  Cyclades
D  Mount Olympus
E  Attica

5) What are the Cyclades and the Dodecanese?
A  Seas
B  Groups of Islands
C  Rivers
D  Mountain Ranges
E  Regions of Ancient Greece

6) Which of the following best describes the climate in Greece?
A  Cold all year round
B  Cool summers and mild winters
C  Hot summers and mild winters
D  Mild summers and freezing winters
E  Cool summers and hot winters

7) What geographical feature formed borders between the city-states of Ancient Greece?
A  Mountains
B  Rivers
C  Lakes
8) What large peninsula at the southern tip of Greece was home to Sparta and Corinth?
A Thessaly
B Epirus
C Macedonia
D Peloponnese
E Crete

9) What word did the Ancient Greeks use to describe their land?
A Attica
B Graecia
C Hellas
D Aegia
E Thrace

10) What mountain range is nicknamed the 'spine of Greece.'
A Andes Mountains
B Rocky Mountains
C Alps
D Ural Mountains
E Pindus Mountains