

# Jordan Valley

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The Jordan Valley is a narrow, deep basin of a little more than 386 square miles (1,000 km<sup>2</sup>) extending from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. This geographic entity, shared by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and the State of Israel, is intensively cultivated and inhabited by more than 300,000 people. The deficiency of potable water in this arid and semiarid area indicates that the valley has almost reached its demographic and economic limits. But the Jordan Valley was not always the agricultural frontline of the southern Levant. Archaeological investigations confirm that the area was sometimes a harsh and unfriendly barrier, visited by humans only during the mild winters, and in other periods extensively inhabited and cultivated. Fluctuating conditions have influenced life as well as archaeological research. Based on vivid nineteenth-century descriptions of a harsh environment, scholars mistakenly assumed that the Jordan Valley could never have supported human life. Only after the archaeological survey of the American scholar Nelson Glueck in the 1930s did scholars recognize the enormous amount of archaeological material and the fascinating (pre-) historical geography of the Jordan Valley.

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