

How Oil Has Shaped Life in Southwest Asia



Now let's discover answers to the questions we asked about this photograph



Southwest Asia lies at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia. In ancient times, traders from distant lands crossed this region in dusty caravans. Today, most traders come in huge tanker ships looking for only one product:



oil.



Southwest Asia doesn't look very welcoming. Much of it is hot and dry. The Arabian Desert is so barren that some people call it "the place where no one comes out." But hidden beneath the region's deserts are vast reserves of oil and natural gas. More than half of the world's proven crude oil reserves lie under Southwest Asia.



Crude oil is another name for petroleum as it is found in the ground. Proven crude oil reserves are known deposits that can be pumped to the surface at a reasonable cost.

Developed countries depend on oil to meet most of their energy needs.



Oil is used for transportation, power plants, and even as a raw material for plastics, medicines, and other goods. Oil truly makes the world go around—which is why some countries in Southwest Asia have grown rich meeting the world's ever-growing demand.



Although Southwest Asia has large oil reserves, it lacks other resources. Fresh water, for example, is in short supply across the region. It is a nonrenewable resource. Oil is also a nonrenewable resource. There's only a limited amount of it. Once it is used up, it can't be replaced.



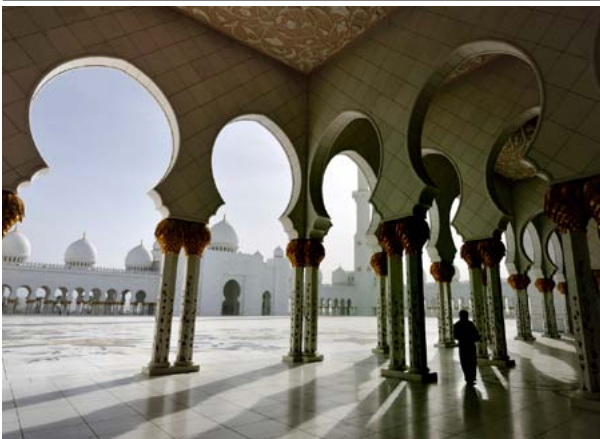
Before the oil is gone, the world will have to turn to renewable resources such as sunlight, wind,



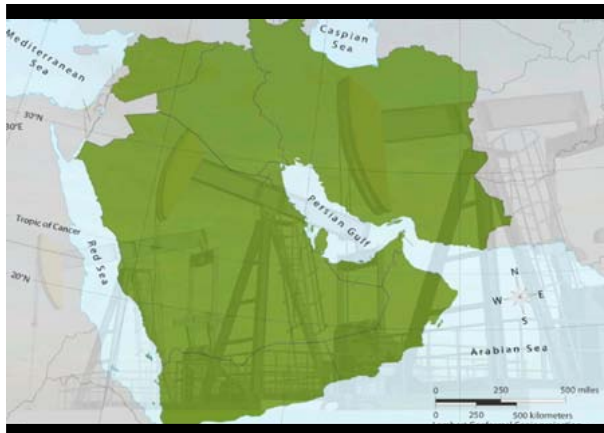
and geothermal energy, or heat from the center of Earth.



Most people in Southwest Asia are Arabs, or people who speak Arabic. Other major ethnic groups include Kurds and Persians. Kurds live in parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Persians are mostly in Iran.



Islam is the most important religion in Southwest Asia. Only one country in the region, Israel, does not have a Muslim majority. There are, however, several branches of Islam. Conflict among different ethnic and religious groups has led to unrest and violence.



In this lesson, you will look at how oil has shaped the development of 10 countries in Southwest Asia. These countries differ in area and population. But each has large oil reserves. And each has used oil in different ways to meet its people's needs.



The countries are Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.