

## Central Asia

### Section 1



#### MAIN IDEAS

1. Key physical features of landlocked Central Asia include rugged mountains.
2. Central Asia has a harsh, dry climate that makes it difficult for vegetation to grow.
3. Key natural resources in Central Asia include water, oil and gas, and minerals.

## Key Terms and Places

**landlocked** completely surrounded by land with no direct access to the ocean

**Pamirs** some of Central Asia's high mountains

**Fergana Valley** large fertile valley in the plains region of Central Asia

**Kara-Kum** desert in Turkmenistan

**Kyzyl Kum** desert in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

**Aral Sea** sea that is actually a large lake, which is shrinking due to irrigation

## Section Summary

### PHYSICAL FEATURES

Central Asia, the middle part of the continent, is **landlocked**. In the region's east, there are rugged, high mountains. Large glaciers are common in the high mountains. One area of high mountains is called the **Pamirs**.

Because it is landlocked and has such rugged land, Central Asia is isolated. Communication and travel are difficult. The area also has many earthquakes.

From the mountains, the land slowly slopes down to the Caspian Sea in the west. Some land there is 95 feet (29 m) below sea level. The land between the sea and mountains is plains and plateaus. The fertile **Fergana Valley** is in the plains.

Central Asia also has some rivers and lakes. Two important rivers are the Syr Darya (sir durh-YAH) and the Amu Darya (uh-MOO duhr-YAH).

**What two factors make Central Asia isolated?**

---



---

**Underline the sentence that names two important rivers in Central Asia.**

**Section 1, *continued***

They make the Fergana Valley fertile. The rivers flow into the Aral Sea, which is really a large lake. Lake Balkhash is also an important lake. It has freshwater at one end and salty water at the other.

**Circle the name of the sea that is really a large lake.**

**CLIMATE AND VEGETATION**

Most of Central Asia has a harsh, dry climate. Temperatures range from very cold to very hot, and there is not much rain. It is hard for plants to grow.

The mountain peaks are cold, dry, and windy. There are harsh desert areas between the mountains and sea. Two major deserts are the **Kara-Kum** and **Kyzyl Kum**. The deserts do have some sources of water. Some areas have rivers crossing them, which lets people live there. This lets people irrigate, or supply water to the land.

**Underline the names of two major deserts in Central Asia.**

Only the far north of Central Asia has a milder climate. Grasses and trees are able to grow there.

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

Some of Central Asia's natural resources are water, oil, and gas. There is also a supply of minerals, such as gold, lead, and copper.

**List some of Central Asia's natural resources:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

People use the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers to irrigate and make electricity. But water is limited. This has led to conflicts over how to use it. Also, irrigation has kept the rivers from flowing into the **Aral Sea**. As a result, the sea has lost much of its water.

Oil and gas can only help the region if the countries can sell it. There are no ocean ports to transport it, so they need to build and maintain pipelines. But this is hard because of the rugged land, as well as economic and political problems.

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Analyzing Information** Write a fact sheet called *Central Asia: Tips for Travelers*. Include key facts that travelers to the region should know and a list of supplies they should bring.