

Western Desert



Space, location

The Western Desert covers about 700,000 square kilometers and accounts for about two-thirds of Egypt's land area. This immense desert to the west of the Nile spans the area from the Mediterranean Sea south to the Sudanese border. The desert's **Jilf al Kabir Plateau** has an altitude of about 1,000 meters, an exception to the uninterrupted territory of basement rocks covered by layers of horizontally bedded sediments forming a or low plateau.



Gilf el kbir plateau extends 175k.m at length, and 125km at width

Great Sand sea

The Great Sand Sea lies within the desert's plain and extends from the Siwah Oasis to Jilf al Kabir.



Great sand sea extents 650 k.m

Nature of the western desert

Hills (ridges) and deep depressions (basins) exist in several parts of the Western Desert, and no rivers or streams drain into or out of the area.

Administrative division

The government has considered the Western Desert a frontier region and has divided it into two governorates at about the twenty-eighth parallel: Matruh to the north and New Valley (Al Wadi al Jadid) to the south.

Depressions in the western desert

There are seven important depressions in the Western Desert, and all are considered oases except the largest, Qattara, the water of which is salty. The Qattara Depression is approximately 15,000 square kilometers and is largely below sea level (its lowest point is 133 meters below sea level). Badlands, salt marshes, and salt lakes cover the sparsely inhabited Qattara Depression.



Qattara Depression

Nature resources

Limited agricultural production, the presence of some natural resources, and permanent settlements are found in the other six depressions, all of which have fresh water provided by the Nile or by local groundwater. The Siwah Oasis, close to the Libyan border and west of Qattara, is isolated from the rest of Egypt but has sustained life since ancient times. The Siwa's cliff-hung, Temple of Amun has a great fame because of its oracles for more than 1,000 years.

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