The Indus Valley Civilisation

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Where is the Indus Valley?

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The Indus Valley civilisation covered a massive area, four times the size of the UK. It centred on the Indus River, in modern day northeast Afghanistan, Pakistan and northwest India.

At the time there was a second major river which dried up around 2000 BC and now only flows during monsoon rains. It is called the Ghaggar River upstream of the Ottu barrage and the Hakra River downstream.

Do you know of any other civilisations that were centred on a river?

When was the Indus Valley Civilisation?

6500BC

Around 6500BC the first people started settling in one area, growing crops and keeping animals. Villages and towns began to form.

3200BC

The start of the civilisation was around 3200BC.

2600BC

The first cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro weren't built until roughly 2600BC.

1900BC

The civilisation flourished until around 1900BC.

1300BC

The civilisation was abandoned by 1300BC.

Do you know of any other civilisations around at this time in other parts of the world?

When was the Indus Valley Civilisation?

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Why were the rivers so important?

The rivers flowed down from the mountains. The nutrients from the mountains were transported to the land in the valleys when the rivers flooded their banks, making the soil perfect for growing crops.

Cities were built close to the rivers so people had access to water for cooking , cleaning and drinking.

The rivers also provided an efficient way to transport goods to be traded.

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The Cities - Houses

Rich Homes	Poor Homes
Two floors Kitchen, bathroom, living area, bedroom, storage and courtyard	One floor One room with a separate bathing area

Walls were really thick, and there were no windows or doors on the walls by the main streets.

Why do you think the walls on the side by the main street were solid?

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The Cities - Water

Wells were common.
Larger houses might have their own wells in a courtyard.

The city walls could just as easily have been built to protect them from flood water as from invaders.

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The Cities - Water

The 'Great Bath'

They also had the first public baths.

This is the most well-known, found in Mohenjo-Daro.

well

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The Cities - Advanced Architecture

As well as the drainage system and public baths, they built dockyards, granaries, warehouses, brick platforms and protective walls.

Is there a type of building missing that you might expect to see?
Think about famous buildings that can be seen in the remains of other ancient cities.

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What's missing?

Unlike in Ancient Sumer and Ancient Egypt, civilisations around at roughly the same time, no large monumental structures have been discovered.
There is no strong evidence that they built either palaces or temples. There are no monuments or tombs that suggest they had kings. Neither is there conclusive evidence of any armies or priests.

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Transport

Most people wouldn't stray far from the city, but traders had to travel to trade their goods. The methods some people use in the region today give us clues to how they travelled in the past.

What do these photos show?

Lighter goods transported over land might have been carried by goats or sheep in saddlebags.

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Artefacts

Like other parts of the world at that time, clay was a common material for making pots with a practical use as well as more decorative items.

Parts of the toy to the right might be missing. What and why?

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Artefacts

A number of sets of weights and scales like these were found. The item being measured would be in one pan, and stones were put in the other until they were in balance.

What can we deduce from the existence of scales?

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Artefacts

Clay was also used to make figures, and toys for children.

What do you think these toys are supposed to be?

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Artefacts

As well as toys, games have been found. This game has squares marked on the board and counters, some painted black.

How do you think it might have been played?
Does it remind you of any game you have played?

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Why did it end?

Some theories:

- The rivers dried up or changed course so the water source moved. We know the river Ghaggar-Hakra now only flows in the rainy season.
- There was an invasion and many people were killed.
- The water source was contaminated and led to lots of people becoming ill and dying.
- The cities were flooded.

Whatever did happen, there was a gradual decline. Poorer quality buildings were built on top of older, damaged buildings.

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