

Greek Climate and Physical Geography

The peninsula of ancient Greece had a Mediterranean climate. Its summers were hot and dry. Temperatures averaged about 75° F (24° C) in summer. The Mediterranean waters and a northwesterly breeze, known as the Etesian, kept temperatures at a comfortable level. In the winter, temperatures again were influenced by the surrounding water. Typically temperatures did not go below 40° F (4.4° C) with the exceptions in the high mountains. In the mountains, snow was typical during the wet winter months. The average yearly rainfall ranged from twenty to fifty inches, with the majority coming during the winter months. Greece typically experienced a large amount of sunny days during the year.

The geography of ancient Greece was divided into three regions: the coast, the lowlands, and the mountains. The rocky and uneven soil on the peninsula of Greece allowed for less than 20 percent of the land to be farmed, so the Greeks relied heavily on imports of grains and other foods from other regions around the Mediterranean. With no rivers that could be used for boats (because rivers would dry up in the hot summer and be overflowing during the winter), transportation on the sea was very important to the Greeks. The mountainous terrain made land travel difficult and contributed to the formation of independent city-states throughout the region.

