

# The Silk Road

## What was it?

The Silk Road was a group of trade routes that went across Asia to the Mediterranean Sea. This enabled China to trade with the Middle East and the Mediterranean world.

## Why was it called this?

It was called the Silk Road because silk was traded along it. At the time, silk was only made in China, and it was a valuable material. The Silk Road not only earned China a lot of money, but all along the route cities prospered and markets flourished. Cities like Samarkand and Bukhara were built largely on the trade from the silk route.

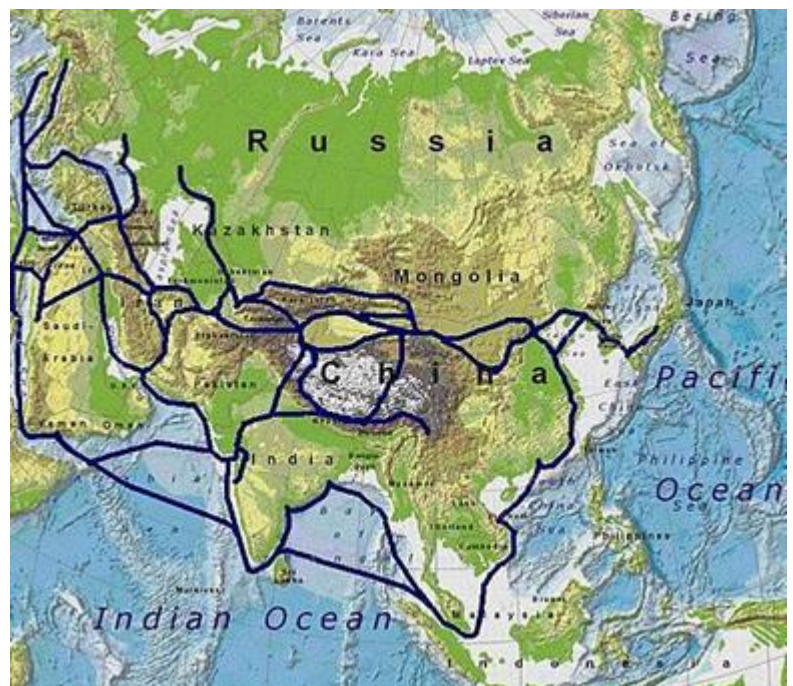
Trade on the Silk Road played a big part in the growth of the ancient cultures of China, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and Rome, and helped to make the beginning of today's world.

## Was silk the only thing traded?

Of course, many other things were also traded, even ideas. Because the traders came from many places, different ideas were brought to China, and China's ideas were taken to other places. Some of the other things traded were porcelain and other types of pottery, food, wine, and spices. Chess pieces from northern India were brought to China and Persia. Paper arrived in the west from China. Metals and jewels were certainly transported, and very likely slaves also. Probably no trader went the whole way along the road. Goods would be traded on at every stopping-point. Deals might be needed to get past difficult places.

## What path did the Silk Road take?

The Silk Road first travelled west from northern China. Then the part of the Silk Road on land, split into two branches. One branch went north of the Tibetan Plateau, and the other branch went south of it. After the two parts rejoined, it went in an almost straight line west through mountains via Tabriz in north Iran and the north tip of the Syrian Desert to the Levant (Syria, Israel, Palestine). From there Mediterranean trading ships took routes to Italy, and land routes went north through Anatolia or south to North Africa.



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## Questions

1. What was the Silk Road?

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2. During the time of the Silk Road, where was the silk made?

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3. What country introduced the game of chess to the world?

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4. How did traders get past difficult places on their journey?

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5. List four things traded on the Silk Road.

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6. Cities and towns along the Silk Road lost business due to the demand for silk. True / False

7. Why was the Silk Road important?

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