

History

Enquiry: How was Baghdad connected to the wider world?

## **Baghdad and the Silk Road**

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# A road of luxury

For many hundreds of years, some people have wanted to buy expensive luxury goods from different parts of the world. One of the most important was silk, a material made from a type of worm that lived in China. In the Roman Empire, people liked wearing silk so much they were willing to pay a lot of money to traders to transport it the huge distances. Over time, the routes these traders used became so famous they came known as the Silk Road.



# A new city

In 762 AD a man called al-Mansur became the new leader of the caliphate. He said he was related to Muhammad's uncle, who was called Abbas. This is why historians call this period the Abbasid Caliphate. The ruler of the Islamic Empire was called **a caliph**. Caliph al-Mansur decided to create a new city called Baghdad in the middle of two major rivers called the Tigris and the Euphrates.



# A good location

This area was surrounded by lots of farming land that could feed the people living in the new city. Baghdad was also located on the Silk Road. Therefore all the traders travelling across the world to buy and sell luxury goods could stop there. This made Baghdad hugely rich and powerful.



# A round city

Nothing remains of al-Mansur's city today. However it was so impressive and beautiful that many people wrote down descriptions of it. Unlike many cities, it was built from scratch, so al-Mansur could decide what he wanted it to look like. He made it in the shape of a circle, surrounded by huge walls and a canal system to help people move.



# Four gates

In the centre, he built a giant **mosque** and a palace that could be seen for miles around. There were four gates into the city. Each gate connected to a road which linked Baghdad to an important city in the area. The city **flourished** so wealthy people built huge palaces all around it.



# Glossary

**A caliph:** The leader of the Islamic empire.

**A mosque:** The place where Muslims worship.

**To flourish:** To grow quickly; to do well.



# Comprehension Questions

1. What expensive material was made in China and popular in the Roman Empire?
2. Who was al-Mansur?
3. Why was the location of Baghdad a good place for a new city?
4. What was the shape of Baghdad and what was in the centre?
5. Why were there so many palaces in Baghdad?

