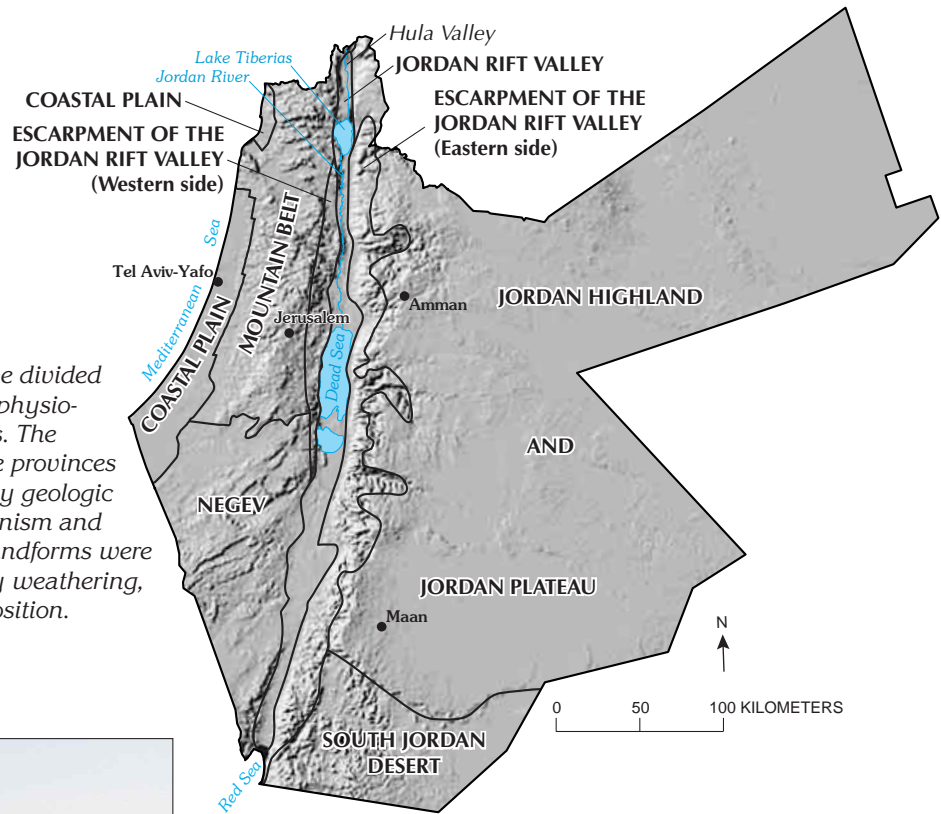


# Physical Geography

*The region may be divided into seven major physiographic provinces. The formation of these provinces was dominated by geologic processes of tectonism and volcanism. The landforms were further shaped by weathering, erosion, and deposition.*



**Coastal Plain**—Located along the Mediterranean Sea, the Coastal Plain is home to over one fourth of the region's inhabitants. It is characterized by a flat topography with a white-sand shoreline, bordered by fertile farmlands. The Coastal Plain is formed by the emergent surface of the continental shelf, consisting of thick Nile-derived sediments covered by eolian sands of Quaternary age.



**Mountain Belt**—Formed of sedimentary rocks originally deposited as flat layers that were folded in southern and central areas. In northern areas, including the mountains west of Lake Tiberias and their transverse valleys, the sedimentary rocks were offset by faulting. The Mountain Belt rises to elevations from 500 to 1,200 m above sea level. Cooling of coastal air masses as they rise over the mountains in northern areas results in relatively high rainfall.



**Negev**—An arid zone that does not support a large population. In the northern Negev, Upper Cretaceous and Tertiary sedimentary rocks were folded into a northwest-oriented mountain belt. The central Negev is characterized by low sandstone hills and plains. These highly erodible areas are deeply incised by wadis which flow after winter rains and often produce flash floods. Further south, the region becomes an area of volcanic craters, rock-strewn plateaus, and rugged mountains. Several large east-west oriented faults occur in the Negev.