

## Encyclopedic Entry

### village

town, hamlet

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A **village** is a small **settlement** usually found in a **rural** setting. It is generally larger than a "**hamlet**" but smaller than a "**town**". Some **geographers** specifically define a village as having between 500 and 2,500 inhabitants.

In most parts of the world, villages are settlements of people clustered around a central point. A central point is most often a **church**, **marketplace**, or public space. A public space can be an open space (sometimes called a village green), or **developed square** (sometimes called a plaza or piazza). This type of village organization is called a **nucleated settlement**.

Some villages are **linear settlements**. They are not clustered around a central public space, but around a line. This line can be natural, such as a **river bank** or **seashore**. (Fishing villages are often linear settlements.) Linear settlements can also develop around a **transportation route**, such as a railroad line.

Planned villages are communities that do not develop around a central point. They are outlined by **city planners**, often to avoid land-use **conflicts** that are common in nucleated settlements.

Planned villages are sometimes called "new towns." Tapiola, Finland, for instance, was planned as an "ecological village" or "garden city" in the 1950s. The **nonprofit organizations** that planned Tapiola were guided by the **principles** of providing local jobs, including all income levels, and establishing life in harmony with nature and the natural world.

Villages often function as units of local **government**. In China and Japan, a village is an official administrative unit. An administrative unit is a single component of government, with its own leadership (similar to city councils) and services, such as mail delivery.

### Villages in the Past

In the past, rural villagers usually engaged in a **primary activity** such as **farming** or fishing. In the United Kingdom, a "pit village" is a settlement whose primary activity is **mining**. In many underdeveloped nations, these primary activities are still the focus of rural village life.

Primary activities provide basic goods and services for inhabitants and for people in surrounding areas. In this way, some villages function as **trading centers**. Villages surrounding the city of Damascus, Syria, for example, have been trading hubs for thousands of years.

Many villages were surrounded by thick walls or gates. A *tulou*, for example, is a traditional building among the Hakka people of Southern China. These walled, circular buildings are constructed around a large, open, central courtyard. The tulou itself houses most villagers—up to 800.

The **Industrial Revolution** of the late 18th and early 19th centuries forever changed village life. The Industrial Revolution, defined as transition from animal-based labor to machines that **manufacture** goods, vastly increased **productivity**. As this happened, countless small villages grew into cities and towns.

In this process, called **urbanization**, nucleated settlements built up around around factories, not churches or community centers. This trend began on the island of Great Britain and eventually spread around the world. Hampstead was a English village that expanded rapidly after rail lines opened in the 1860s, for example. Today, Hampstead is a major **neighborhood** of London.

## Village Life Today

Agricultural villages remain the predominant form of rural settlement throughout most of the world. (In much of North America and Australia, however, the most common form of rural settlement is the **isolated farmstead**.)

Most villages in developed countries are no longer oriented toward primary activities. Cultural changes, **globalization**, and other factors have encouraged residents to seek other occupations, or, in some cases, to **migrate**. Perhaps the most radical change in village life came to Russia during the **Soviet** period. In the 1920s, Russia was an agricultural nation, with more than 75 million people living in villages. Russia quickly became an industrial nation, with the government supporting a manufacturing-based **economy** that was mostly located in cities. By the end of the Soviet Union in 1989, fewer than 40 million Russians lived in villages.

Some urban residents moved to villages and **commute** to jobs in larger cities and towns. This **phenomenon** is referred to as "**urban flight**" or "suburban colonization." Villages or suburbs not only grow larger, but gain political power. Conflict between village or suburban residents and inner-city residents over **resources** and priorities often define political debates in urban areas such as Delhi, India, or Mexico City, Mexico.

The word "village" is sometimes used to refer to certain neighborhoods within a larger urban area. Greenwich Village in New York City, for instance, has enjoyed a reputation as an artistic enclave for more than a century. Today, "the Village" is an upper middle-class residential area.

## VOCABULARY

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
<b>bank</b>	<i>noun</i>	a slope of land adjoining a body of water, or a large elevated area of the sea floor.
<b>church</b>	<i>noun</i>	building used for spiritual worship and religious practices.
<b>city</b>	<i>noun</i>	large settlement with a high population density.
<b>city planner</b>	<i>noun</i>	person who plans the physical design and zoning of an urban center.
<b>commute</b>	<i>verb</i>	to travel to and from specific places on a regular basis, usually for a specific purpose, such as employment.
<b>conflict</b>	<i>noun</i>	a disagreement or fight, usually over ideas or procedures.
<b>develop</b>	<i>verb</i>	to expand or grow.
<b>economy</b>	<i>noun</i>	system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.
<b>factory</b>	<i>noun</i>	one or more buildings used for the manufacture of a product.
<b>farming</b>	<i>noun</i>	the art, science, and business of cultivating the land for growing crops.
<b>geographer</b>	<i>noun</i>	person who studies places and the relationships between people and their environments.
<b>globalization</b>	<i>noun</i>	connection of different parts of the world resulting in the expansion of international cultural, economic, and political activities.
<b>government</b>	<i>noun</i>	system or order of a nation, state, or other political unit.
<b>hamlet</b>	<i>noun</i>	very small village.

<b>Industrial Revolution</b>	<i>noun</i>	change in economic and social activities, beginning in the 18th century, brought by the replacement of hand tools with machinery and mass production.
<b>isolated farmstead</b>	<i>noun</i>	single farm, consisting of one or several houses and farm buildings not associated with a settlement.
<b>linear settlement</b>	<i>noun</i>	settlement of people clustered along a line, such as a river bank or railroad route.
<b>manufacture</b>	<i>verb</i>	to make or produce a good, usually for sale.
<b>market</b>	<i>noun</i>	central place for the sale of goods.
<b>migrate</b>	<i>verb</i>	to move from one place or activity to another.
<b>mining</b>	<i>noun</i>	process of extracting ore from the Earth.
<b>neighborhood</b>	<i>noun</i>	an area within a larger city or town where people live and interact with one another.
<b>nonprofit organization</b>	<i>noun</i>	business that uses surplus funds to pursue its goals, not to make money.
<b>nucleated settlement</b>	<i>noun</i>	settlements of people clustered around a central point.
<b>phenomenon</b>	<i>noun</i>	an unusual act or occurrence.
<b>predominant</b>	<i>adjective</i>	leading or most influential.
<b>primary activity</b>	<i>noun</i>	work that provides basic goods and services, such as food, shelter, and clothing.
<b>principle</b>	<i>noun</i>	rule or standard.
<b>productivity</b>	<i>noun</i>	rate at which goods and services are produced.
<b>resource</b>	<i>noun</i>	available supply of materials, goods, or services. Resources can be natural or human.
<b>rural</b>	<i>adjective</i>	having to do with country life, or areas with few residents.
<b>seashore</b>	<i>noun</i>	beach or coast.
<b>settlement</b>	<i>noun</i>	community or village.
<b>Soviet</b>	<i>adjective</i>	having to do with the Soviet Union and the areas it influenced.
<b>town</b>	<i>noun</i>	human settlement larger than a village and smaller than a city.
<b>trading center</b>	<i>noun</i>	settlement or business area where goods and services are exchanged.
<b>transportation</b>	<i>noun</i>	movement of people or goods from one place to another.
<b>underdeveloped country</b>	<i>noun</i>	country that has fallen behind on goals of industrialization, infrastructure, and income.
<b>urban flight</b>	<i>noun</i>	process where city residents move to villages or suburbs and commute to jobs in larger towns.
<b>urbanization</b>	<i>noun</i>	process in which there is an increase in the number of people living and working in a city or metropolitan area.
<b>village</b>	<i>noun</i>	small human settlement usually found in a rural setting.

## For Further Exploration

### Audio & Video

- National Geographic Video: Stonehenge Builders Village
- National Geographic Video: Oil Spill Threatens Native American 'Water' Village

### Websites

- Laboratory for Anthropogenic Landscape Ecology: Village Anthromes



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