

The City of Baghdad

Baghdad, now the capital city of Iraq, was chosen by the Abbasid ruler, Caliph al-Mansur, to be the center of his empire in the eighth century. Baghdad was an ideal choice because it lay between two rivers and was at the crossroads of great trade routes. The city was built in concentric circles (each inside the other), with a deep moat surrounding three circular walls. The citizens of Baghdad lived in houses outside the walls. The space between the outer and middle walls was left clear for defense. Between the middle and inner walls were the houses of army officers. Behind the innermost wall were the residences of the Caliph's family and the highest officials. At the very hub of the city was the Caliph's palace of marble and stone. The Caliph chose this spot because he wanted to live at the very center of his empire.