

## THE GRAND CANYON



A canyon is a deep, narrow valley with steep sides. “Canyon” comes from the Spanish word *cañon*, which means “tube” or “pipe.” The term “gorge” is often used to mean “canyon,” but a gorge is almost always steeper and narrower than a canyon.

This canyon, a low-lying area between two higher mountain ridges, is a very deep river valley, and the Grand Canyon is created by the Colorado River in the State of Arizona, U.S. It is one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long and 18 miles wide. At some places it is one mile deep. There have been different opinions about the formation of the canyon, but recently the geologists have arrived at the conclusion that the Colorado River started flowing into the canyon about 17 million years ago. The river continued cutting its course, layer by layer, and this continuous corrosion is the cause of its extraordinary depth.

## THE INDUS VALLEY



Originating from Mansarovar Lake, at the Tibetan Plateau, 93 percent of the Indus River flows through Pakistan, while 5 percent of it is in China and 2 percent is in India. It is about 2,000 miles long and falls in the Arabian Sea near Karachi. The ancient Indus civilization developed on the banks of the Indus River about 5,000 years ago. Major cities of the Indus Valley Civilization: like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro date back to 3300 BC and were designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1980. They had developed very precise measuring units with the smallest terms comparable to millimeters. They had a language which, unlike the Egyptian hieroglyphs, has yet not been decoded.

## JAPAN



An archipelago is a group of islands closely scattered in a body of water. Usually, this body of water is the ocean, but it can also be a lake or river. Most archipelagoes are made of oceanic islands. This means the islands were formed by volcanoes erupting from the ocean floor. An archipelago made up of oceanic islands is called an island arc. Japan is an island arc. The Japanese archipelago consists of four large islands, from Hokkaido, in the far north, through Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu in the far south. Japan also includes more than 3,000 smaller islands. In several places in the Japanese archipelago, volcanoes are still active. Volcanoes do not form all archipelagoes. Many archipelagoes are continental islands formed only after the last ice age. As glaciers retreated, sea levels rose and low-lying valleys were flooded. Coastal mountain ranges became archipelagoes just off the mainland.

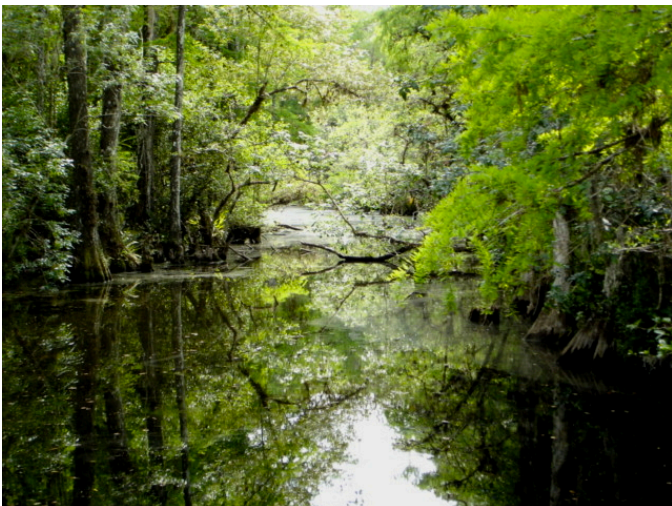


## HAWAII



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## THE EVERGLADES



A swamp is an area of land permanently saturated, or filled, with water. Many swamps are even covered by water. There are two main types of swamps: freshwater swamps and saltwater swamps. Swamps are dominated by trees. They are often named for the type of trees that grow in them, such as cypress swamps or hardwood swamps. Freshwater swamps are commonly found inland, while saltwater swamps are usually found along coastal areas. Swamps are transition areas. They are neither totally land nor totally water. The Everglades, in Florida, is one of the largest swamp complexes in the United States. Called the "River of Grass," this freshwater swamp is actually a wide, slow-moving river flowing from the Kissimmee River near Orlando to the Straits of Florida. The Everglades is 97 kilometers (60 miles) wide and 160 kilometers (100 miles) long. A rich collection of wildlife, from alligators to panthers, calls this freshwater swamp home.

## THE FERTILE CRESCENT



The freshwater swamps between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in the Middle East are so rich in biodiversity that the area is called the "Fertile Crescent." The abundant wildlife, agricultural opportunities, and ability for communication and trade fostered human technological development. A swamp is an area of land permanently saturated, or filled, with water. Many swamps are even covered by water. There are two main types of swamps: freshwater swamps and saltwater swamps. Swamps are dominated by trees. They are often named for the type of trees that grow in them, such as cypress swamps or hardwood swamps. Freshwater swamps are commonly found inland, while saltwater swamps are usually found along coastal areas. Swamps are transition areas. They are neither totally land nor totally water. The Fertile Crescent is recognized as the birthplace of civilization and the site of the first cities. The earliest recorded written language and the first recorded use of the wheel occurred around these swamps.



## THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR

A strait is a narrow body of water that connects two larger bodies of water. It may be formed by a fracture in an isthmus, a narrow body of land that connects two bodies of water. Tectonic shifts can lead to straits like this. One strait that was formed by tectonic activity is the Strait of Gibraltar, the only link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The Strait of Gibraltar is actually closing, as the African tectonic plate slides north. In a few thousand years, the Strait of Gibraltar will be the Isthmus of Gibraltar, and the Mediterranean will be a large, salty, inland sea.



## STRAIT OF BOSPORUS

A strait is a narrow body of water that connects two larger bodies of water. A strait can also be formed by a body of water overflowing land that has subsided or has been eroded. The Bosphorus, which links the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, was formed this way. Land at the southwestern edge of the Black Sea eroded and crumbled, creating a strait. Although scientists know that the Black Sea was once an enclosed lake, they do not know for sure whether the Black Sea flooded into the Aegean, or the Aegean flooded into the Black Sea. The Bosphorus is an extremely important strait, separating the continents of Europe and Asia. Besides two entire continents, the Bosphorus also separates a single country. It splits the European part of Turkey, called Thrace, and the Asian part, called Anatolia.



## BAY OF BENGAL

A bay is a body of water partially surrounded by land. A bay is usually smaller and less enclosed than a gulf. The mouth of the bay, where it meets the ocean or lake, is typically wider than that of a gulf. Bays form in many ways. Plate tectonics, the process of continents drifting together and rifting apart, causes the formation of many large bays. The Bay of Bengal, the largest bay in the world, was formed by plate tectonics. Millions of years ago, the Indian subcontinent crashed—and continues to crash—into the massive Eurasian plate network. The Indian plate is subducting beneath the small Burma plate, forming the Sunda Trench. Because plate tectonics remain an active force in the Bay of Bengal today, the region is home to





## KOWLOON BAY

A bay is a body of water partially surrounded by land. A bay is usually smaller and less enclosed than a gulf. The mouth of the bay, where it meets the ocean or lake, is typically wider than that of a gulf. Bays are also formed when the ocean overflows a coastline. Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong, was formed as the South China Sea overflowed the coastline of the Kowloon Peninsula. Today, Kowloon Bay has been almost entirely reclaimed from the sea. Kowloon Bay is a major industrial and financial area, and was home to Hong Kong's airport until a new facility was built in 1998.



## AMAZON RIVER

A river is a large, natural stream of flowing water. Rivers are found on every continent and on nearly every kind of land. Some flow all year round. Others flow seasonally or during wet years. A river may be only kilometers long, or it may span much of a continent. The longest rivers in the world are the Nile in Africa and the Amazon in South America. Both rivers flow through many countries. For centuries, scientists have debated which river is longer. Measuring a river is difficult because it is hard to pinpoint its exact beginning and end. Also, the length of rivers can change as they meander, are dammed, or their deltas grow and recede. The Amazon is estimated to be between 6,259 kilometers (3,903 miles) and 6,800 kilometers (4,225 miles) long. There is no debate, however, that the Amazon carries more water than any other river on Earth. Approximately one-fifth of all the freshwater entering the oceans comes from the Amazon.



## NILE RIVER

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