

What is Panama Canal?

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About Panama Canal:

- It is a **man made waterway** that connects the **Atlantic and Pacific oceans** across the Isthmus of Panama.
- It is owned and administered by Panama, and it is 40 miles long from shoreline to shoreline.
 - It was built by the United states and **completed in August 1914**,
 - It is one of the two most strategic artificial waterways in the world, the other being the Suez Canal.
 - From its opening in 1914 until 1979, the Panama Canal was controlled solely by the United States, which built it.
 - In 1979, however, control of the canal passed to the Panama Canal Commission, a joint agency of the United States and the Republic of Panama, and complete control passed to Panama at noon on December 31, 1999.
- It is a **sophisticated, highly-engineered system** which uses a system of locks and elevators to take ships from one end to the other.
- This is needed because the two oceans that the Panama Canal connects do not lie at the same elevation, with the Pacific slightly higher than the Atlantic.

- This difference means that for a ship entering the canal through the Atlantic, it needs to gain elevation during its journey to the Pacific. This is achieved **using a lock system** which lifts and drops vessels to the required sea level at either end of the canal.
 - Basically, locks are either flooded (to gain elevation) or drained (to lose elevation), and act as water elevators. In total, the system comprises three sets of locks — 12 locks in total — which are serviced using artificial lakes and channels.
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Q1: What is an Isthmus?

An isthmus is a narrow strip of land connecting two larger land masses which is bounded by water on two sides. The word has its origins from the Greek word *isthmós* which means “neck.”

News: Trump threatens to reclaim Panama Canal, sparking tension

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