

Rivers of the World

Rivers are dynamic natural systems that transport fresh water, sediment, and nutrients from elevated terrain to lower ground, eventually emptying into seas, lakes, or other rivers. A river's journey begins at its source — a spring, glacier, or area of high rainfall — and ends at its mouth. Along the course, tributaries join the main channel, and the total area of land drained by a river system is known as its drainage basin or catchment area.

Rivers are measured and compared by length, discharge, and the size of their drainage basins. The River Nile, stretching approximately 6,650 kilometres through north-eastern Africa, is widely considered the world's longest. The Amazon of South America, however, has by far the greatest discharge, releasing around 20% of all fresh water that enters the world's oceans. Its vast drainage basin encompasses the planet's largest tropical rainforest, which is home to an extraordinary diversity of wildlife.

Historically, rivers were the cradles of civilisation. The Nile supported ancient Egyptian agriculture through its annual floods, which deposited nutrient-rich silt across the floodplains. Mesopotamia flourished between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and major world cities including London, Paris, Cairo, and Baghdad all emerged on riverbanks, benefiting from water supply, fertile land, fishing, and trade routes.

Rivers also transform landscapes through erosion and deposition, cutting valleys and gorges, forming waterfalls, and building fertile floodplains and deltas at their mouths.

Questions

1. What is a catchment area?
2. What is meant by a river's discharge?
3. Approximately how long is the River Nile?
4. What fraction of the fresh water entering the world's oceans does the Amazon supply?
5. What type of ecosystem is found within the Amazon's drainage basin?
6. How did the annual flooding of the Nile benefit ancient Egyptian farmers?
7. Between which two rivers did the civilisation of Mesopotamia flourish?
8. Name four major world cities that developed on riverbanks.
9. Name two landforms created by river erosion.
10. What does the fact that so many early civilisations developed beside rivers suggest about what was most important for human survival and growth?



Text D Quiz



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