

The Panama Canal

The World's Most Important Shortcut



Where is Panama?



The U.S. took control of an area in Panama in order to build a canal.



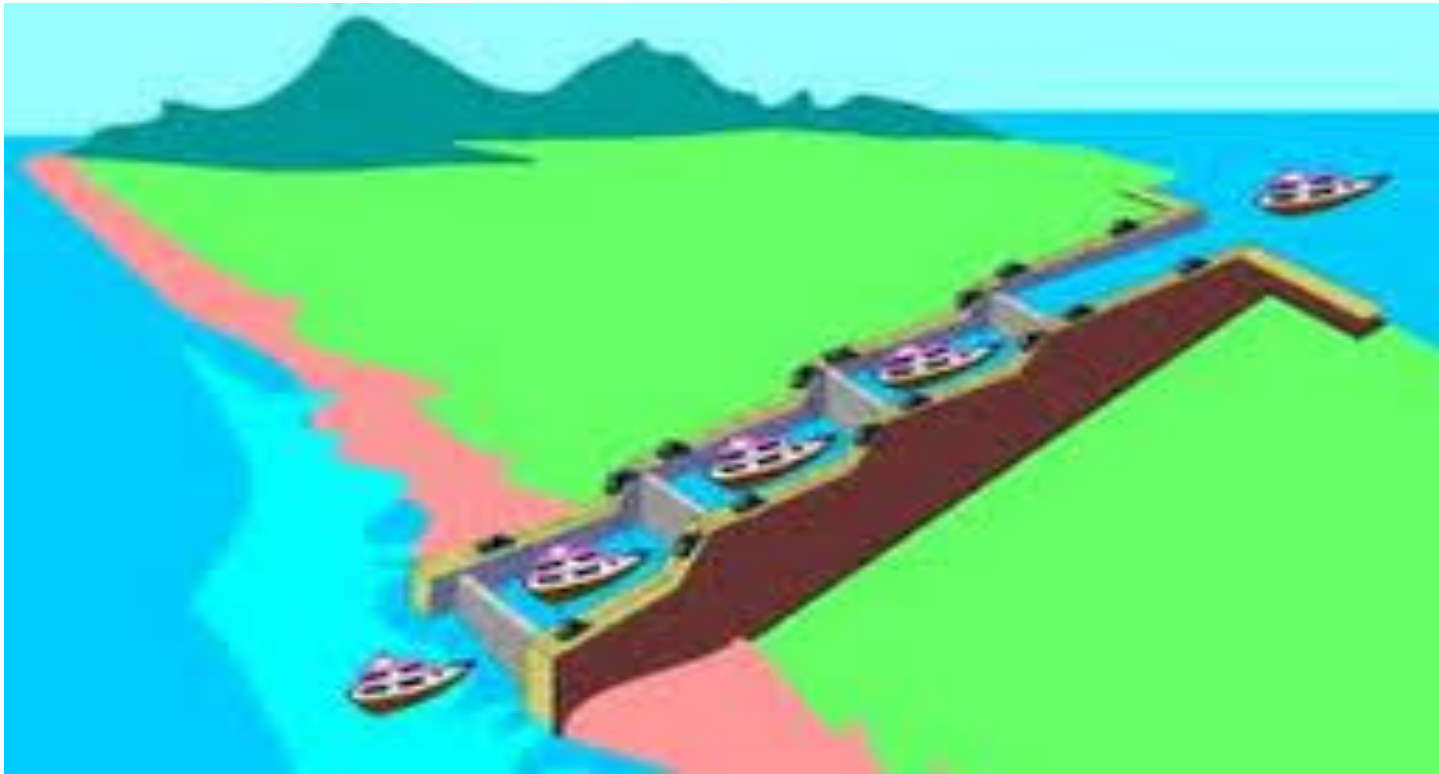
What is an isthmus?

Panama is an isthmus. An isthmus is a narrow strip of land which has water on each side and connects two larger bodies of land.



What is a canal?

An area of water that is dug across land. Canals connect bodies of water so that ships can travel between.



Early History

- 1513- Vasco Nunez de Balboa crosses the isthmus of Panama and becomes the first European to see the Pacific Ocean
- 1524- Spanish explorer Hernon Cortes suggests that a path across the isthmus of Panama would be a great idea
- 1534- The King of Spain wants to build a canal through Panama
- Although these men know it would be wonderful to have a canal they did not have the ability to make one

The 1800s

- 1835- France is given a permit to build a canal across Panama.
- First they have to come up with a plan
- 1881- Construction begins on the canal

Building the Canal

The next five pictures show what the area looked like when the French started building the canal.

What challenges do you think they faced?











The French Give Up

- Eight years after beginning construction the French company in-charge, gives up.
 - The company goes bankrupt
 - Over 20,000 workers die

The U.S. gets Involved (Duh...Imperialism)

- During this time period Panama is owned by Colombia
- U.S. want to by the area where the canal was located
- Colombia said “NOPE”, they did not want the U.S. to have permanent control in the area
- U.S. told the Panamanians they would help them if they rebel against Colombia, in exchange for the canal.
- Panama rebels
- U.S. gets control over the canal

The United States

- 1904- The United States began working on the Canal
- 1914- The canal is completed
- 1977- The United States signed a treaty with Panama and gives control of the canal to the Panamanians in 1999

Why was it important to build a canal?

- The trip from New York to San Francisco by ship would be shortened by nearly 8,000 miles



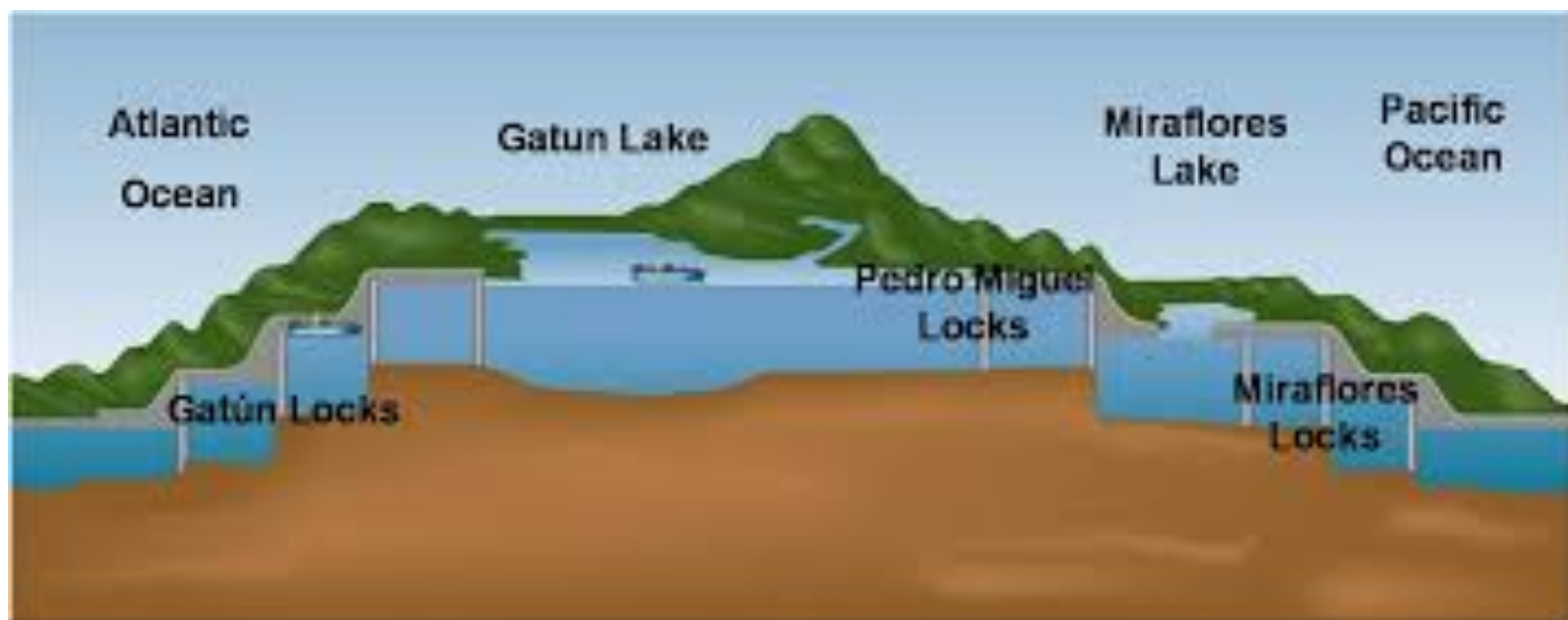
Why was it important to build a canal?

- Roosevelt was determined to finish the canal for the following benefits:
 - Expansion of trade
 - Easy self-defense
 - Easy movement of military ships
 - Shorter route from East to West or vice versa
 - Spread of U.S. influence in the region

What are locks?

A lock is a part of a canal with gates at each end where boats/ ship are raised or lowered to different water levels







How do locks work?

- The first lock is at sea level
- The water is then raised to the next level, the ship along with it
- Then the ship moves to the next lock
- This process is repeated until the ship reaches the other side of Gatun Lake
- The the ship is lowered lock by lock to sea level on the other side
- Think of it as stairs for ships









How it Works...

- [How it Works](#)
- [The Canal Today](#)