

Our Great Lakes



photo by Harshil Shah

Have you ever visited the Great Lakes? These huge bodies of water in the northern United States and southern Canada attract many tourists.

They're also important to transportation and industry in several of our states.

This week, The Mini Page finds out more about these amazing lakes.

Five lakes ...

The five lakes that make up the Great Lakes are:

- Lake Huron
- Lake Ontario
- Lake Michigan
- Lake Erie
- Lake Superior*

The largest of the Great Lakes is Lake Superior. It is also the coldest and the deepest. The smallest is Lake Ontario. The Niagara River flows over Niagara Falls into Lake Ontario.

... one system

We think of the Great Lakes as five different bodies of water. But they are all linked together.

1. From Lake Superior, water flows down the St. Marys River into lakes Huron

*You can remember the lakes' names by spelling HOMES with their first initials.

and Michigan.

2. From Lake Huron, the St. Clair River carries water to Lake St. Clair, and from there the Detroit River flows into Lake Erie.

3. From Lake Erie, the water goes down the Niagara River and over the famous falls into Lake Ontario.

4. After that, the water flows down the St. Lawrence River, where it finally reaches the Atlantic Ocean in the Canadian province of Quebec.

The entire journey for a drop of water is more than 2,000 miles!

Forming the lakes

Scientists believe that the Great Lakes area was once part of the Atlantic Ocean. They have found fossils from sea creatures around the lakes.

Thousands of years ago, a glacier (GLAY-shur), or river of ice, spread across the land in much of the Northern Hemisphere. The ice and rocks frozen in it were heavy, and when the ice began to melt, there were large holes left. Some water drained into channels, which became rivers. Some collected in the holes and became the Great Lakes.

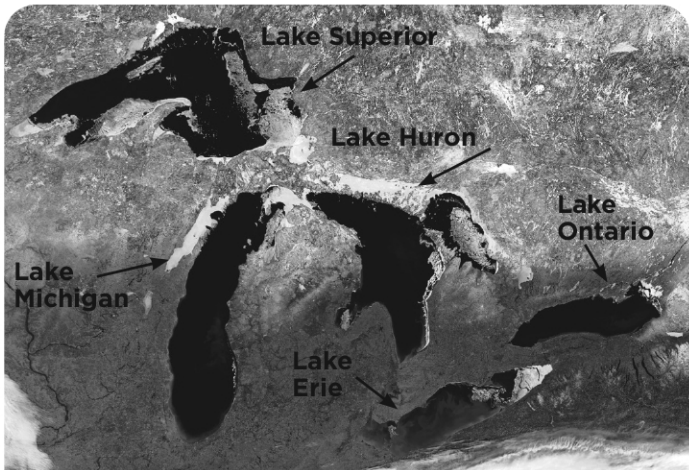


photo courtesy NASA

Important lakes

Today, more than 35 million Americans and Canadians depend on the lakes for drinking water and jobs. The lakes contain 6 quadrillion gallons of fresh water.

People in the area work in the fishery industry, mining and tourism. More than 170 different species of fish live in the Great Lakes system, including salmon, whitefish and walleye.

Canals and locks

Early ships traveling the Great Lakes had trouble moving between them. Rivers were too narrow or shallow, and waterfalls made passage dangerous.

People began to build canals and locks, machines that raise and lower ships between different levels of water.

For instance, if a boat is going from a river into a lake and the river is higher than the lake, the boat will steer into a lock. The lock will slowly release water until the boat is at the lake level, and then the boat will exit the other side.



photo U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, photo by Jerry Bleckitt

A ship in the Soo Locks, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPGreatLakes
- bit.ly/MPlighthouses

At the library:

- "Paddle-to-the-Sea" by Holling Clancy Holling

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the Great Lakes are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



BODY, CANAL, ERIE, FISHERY, GLACIER, GREAT, HURON, INDUSTRY, LAKES, LOCKS, MICHIGAN, ONTARIO, SHIPS, SUPERIOR, SYSTEM, TOURIST, TRANSPORTATION, WATER.

L	U	Y	D	O	B	N	M	H	G	R	E	A	T	T
S	A	N	O	R	U	H	S	Y	S	T	E	M	F	S
V	K	K	G	J	R	O	I	R	E	P	U	S	V	I
Z	V	C	E	R	I	E	A	U	R	K	P	Z	I	R
L	R	U	O	S	U	X	O	I	R	A	T	N	O	U
A	O	J	H	L	R	E	I	C	A	L	G	C	Z	O
N	O	I	T	A	T	R	O	P	S	N	A	R	T	T
A	K	Z	R	E	T	A	W	Y	R	E	H	S	I	F
C	I	I	J	N	A	G	I	H	C	I	M	U	S	E
Y	R	T	S	U	D	N	I	V	B	S	H	I	P	S

Mini Spy Classics

Mini Spy and Basset Brown enjoy fishing on the Great Lakes. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



Mini Spy Classics appear in the first issue of each month.

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- | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| • elephant head | • number 6 | • fish hook | • moose | • fish |
| • man's face | • letter B | • squirrel | • heart | • mug |
| • carrot | • wolf | • ladder | • envelope | |
| • bowl | • bird | • word MINI | • needle | |
| | | • snake | • dragon | |

Mini Jokes



Gilbert: How do the Great Lakes say goodbye?
Laura: They wave!

Eco Note



Researchers have observed that almost all bottlenose dolphins appear to have a dominant right-hand side. A team from the Florida-based Dolphin Communication Project say bottlenose dolphins appear to have an even more pronounced right-side bias than humans. The right-flipper trait is most evident when the mammals are chasing prey. They almost always use the right flipper to make sharp left-hand turns just before digging their beaks into the sand to grab a meal.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for stories about keeping our fresh waters clean.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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