

# Rivers of the World

## The Nile

The Nile is traditionally considered to be the longest river in the world measuring 4132 miles (6650 km) – that’s nearly seven times the distance from John o’ Groats to Land’s End! When most people think of the Nile, they think of Egypt but surprisingly, only 20% of the river is in Egypt - it also flows through other countries including Uganda and Ethiopia before ending at the Mediterranean Sea. Some people believe the source of the river is Lake Victoria (Africa’s biggest lake) while others believe that its source is one of the many streams that lead to the lake. The biggest stream is the Kagera River which is now believed to be the true source, where it starts in Burundi.

The River Nile makes the land nearby fertile. This is why the ancient Egyptians settled there, living and farming along the river producing food for themselves and their animals. The river became an important source of water and means of transport.

## The Rhine

The Rhine flows mainly through Germany and is 766 miles (1233km) long. It also travels through another five countries before reaching the North Sea at Rotterdam. Its source is a small stream coming from a glacier (called the Rheinwaldhorn Glacier) in the Swiss Alps (mountains in Switzerland).



The Rhine has been used to transport food and other goods since Roman times and there are many castles found on its banks, such as Maus (mouse) Castle.

Many years ago, the Rhine had a bad reputation and was labelled one of the most polluted rivers in Europe. It was even badly affected by a chemical factory fire in 1986. Since then, a lot of effort has been put in to clean it up including making the drinking water safe.

## The Volga

This river runs from its source in the Valdai Hills through Russia to the Caspian Sea and is the longest river in Europe. It measures 2294 miles (3692 km) in length. In places, Volga is so wide that you can't see the other side! Its name comes from Russian languages and means 'moisture' or 'wetness'.

Huge sturgeon fish can be found living in the water. However, the river is quite polluted due to factories dumping waste there which has a bad effect on the caviar industry. (Caviar is made from fish eggs and is a very expensive food.) The river is also used for transporting goods all over Russia but is frozen for around three months of the year.

One of the biggest battles of Second World War, the Battle of Stalingrad, was fought on the banks of the river at Volgograd, the city named after the river which used to be called 'Stalingrad'.

## The Danube

This is the second largest river in Europe. (The longest is the Volga.) It is 1785 miles (2680 km) long and its source in the Black Forest Mountains in Germany flowing to the Romanian coast of the Black Sea. This river flows through, or along the border of several different countries including Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania to name a few. It also flows through the capital cities of Belgrade, Budapest, Vienna and Bratislava.

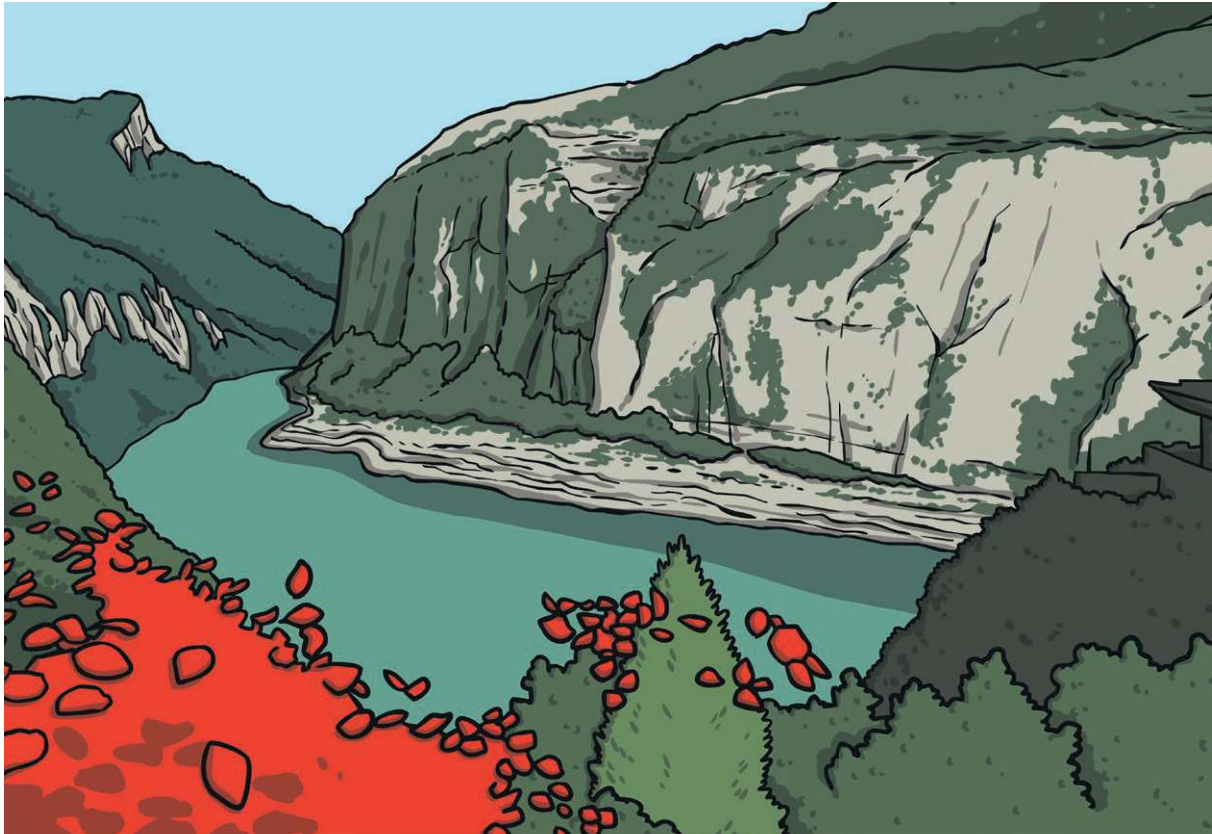
The Danube has many tourists who enjoy the river cruises and the river has also inspired artists and composers through time. One of the most famous pieces of classical music written is **The Blue Danube**, by the Austrian composer Johann Strauss II.

## The Amazon

With its source in the Andes Mountains in Peru, the Amazon is the second longest river in the world, stretching 3944 miles (6347 km); however, recent studies indicate that it is longer than the Nile. The river runs through the countries of Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil (with the largest city Manaus), Colombia, Guyana, Peru and Bolivia. Somewhat surprisingly, there are no bridges that cross the river although during the wet season,

the Amazon rapidly fills with more water and can reach over 120 miles (190 km) in width.

3000 species of fish live in the river (including piranhas) with new species being discovered all the time. One of the largest snakes in the world, the anaconda, lurks around in the shallow waters and is known to attack larger animals, such as goats, that get too close to the water's edge.



### The Yangtze

Its Chinese name 'Chang Jiang' means 'long river' which is a suitable name for the longest river in Asia, the third longest in the world, measuring 3915 miles (6300km). Its source is in the mountains in western China and it flows into the East China Sea. The river is one of the busiest in the world, filled with cruise ships and goods transportation.

More than 50 bridges cross this huge river and it is home to many different species of animals, including the Chinese alligator, the Finless porpoise and the Chinese paddlefish. However, these species are endangered due to river pollution and all the river traffic.

# Questions

1. What is the length in miles of the longest and shortest rivers here?  
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2. Name two of the major capital cities through which the Danube flows.  
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3. If Johann Strauss II is Austrian, which country is he from?  
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4. Why might people trying to cross the Amazon find it difficult?  
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5. In 2007, a man named Martin Strel swam the entire length of the Amazon, how far did he swim in kilometres?  
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6. Which famous historical event took place on the banks of the Volga and when was it?  
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7. Where is the source of the Rhine?  
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\_\_\_\_\_
8. In 'The Danube' section, why has the author used bold type for The Blue Danube?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Find two adverbs in 'The Amazon' section.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Which of these rivers might you most like to visit and why?  
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