The Suez Canal -
A vital shortcut for global commerce
Basic Information

- Located in Egypt
- Allows water transportation directly between Europe (the Mediterranean) and Asia (the Red Sea)
- Alternatives are:
  - navigating around Africa
  - carrying goods overland between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea
- The northern terminus is Port Said
- The Suez Canal is the man-made feature most easily spotted from space
8,900 kilometres saved

Via the Suez Canal
- 6,400 nautical miles (12,000 km)
- 14 days

Around Africa
- 11,300 nautical miles (20,900 km)
- 24 days

The shortcut reduces the distance by 43%

Source: Earth Observation Research Center
History

- Almost 2,000 years BC: Pharaoh Senusret III created a link between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

- Following centuries: Silted up. Trade is carried overland across Asia. Ships sail around Southern Africa. Several attempts are made to establish a waterway.

- 1799: Napoleon Bonaparte revives the idea.

- 1859 - 1869: The modern Suez Canal is built.


- Today: One of the most important waterways in world trade.
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<th><strong>Facts</strong></th>
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| **Length:** | 192 km (119 miles) of waterway  
163 km (101 miles) of constructed area |
| **Owned and maintained by:** | The Suez Canal Authority (SCA) of the Arab Republic of Egypt |
| **Maximum capacity:** | Ships of up to 150,000 tons displacement and 16 metres (53 ft) draft, planned to increase to 22 metres (72 ft) by 2010 |
| **Maximum throughput per day:** | 106 vessels, in one north bound and two south bound convoys |
| **Breadth:** | At water level 300 metres |
| **Maximum draught of ships:** | 16.1 metres |
| **Speed limit:** | 11-16 km/hr |
| **Average transit time:** | 14 hours |
| **Speed limit:** | Around 8 knots (15 km/hr) |
| **Records:** | The minor sea level difference and the flat terrain make the Suez Canal the longest canal without locks |

Source: BBC
Importance today

- In 2007, more than 7,700 container ships passed the Suez Canal, carrying more than 318,000 tons of cargo
- That is 7.5% of the world’s total ocean trade
- North bound cargo: Mainly oil from the Arabian Gulf to Western Europe
- South bound cargo: Mainly manufactured goods and grain from Europe and North America to the Far East and southern Asia
- Earns more than USD 5,000,000,000 in annual revenue

Source: Egyptian Maritime Data Bank, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Suez Canal Authority
For more information about the liner shipping industry that uses the Suez Canal, visit
www.worldshipping.org

For more information about the Suez Canal, visit
www.suezcanal.gov.eg