

## The longest river in the world

A twig or leaf that travelled all the way from one of the sources of the Nile to the sea would have gone through many, many different countries and landscapes! In fact, the River Nile is the longest river in the world: it's a whopping 6,695 km (4,160 miles) long.

## Where is the River Nile?

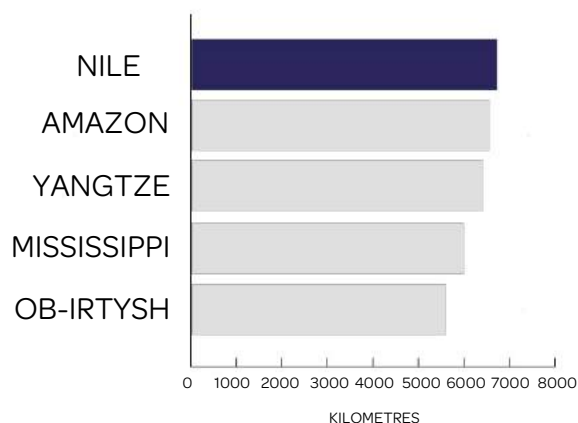
The River Nile isn't found in just one country. It winds its way through nine different countries in Africa, before finally flowing into the Mediterranean Sea at the northern edge of Egypt.

## Where does it start?

That's not an easy question to answer! The source of the Nile (another word for its 'beginning') is shared between several countries. In the highlands of Ethiopia, a river called the Blue Nile flows out of Lake Tana. Another longer river, the White Nile, comes out of a huge lake called Lake Victoria, which stretches across Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

The White Nile and the Blue Nile meet up in Sudan, to form the River Nile. The smaller rivers that come together to make the larger river are known as 'tributaries'.

How long are the world's longest rivers?



*It's a close-fought battle for the title 'world's longest river' between the Nile and the River Amazon.*

**Did you know?**

The White Nile isn't really very white, and the Blue Nile isn't all that blue, either – more of a murky brown.



*River Nile running through Juba, South Sudan.*



*Ancient Luxor temple, on the River Nile.*

But the White Nile doesn't really start in Lake Victoria itself! Smaller rivers flow into that lake from Burundi and from Rwanda. So the source of the Nile is actually shared between Ethiopia, Burundi and Rwanda.

## A river with a history behind it

The modern-day name 'Nile' comes from the Greek word 'neilos', which means 'valley'. In ancient times, however, the Egyptians called the river the 'Ar' or 'Aur', meaning 'black'. This was because of all the dark silt (bits of rocks, plants and so on) dumped by the river on the land whenever it flooded.

It was this flooding that helped Egypt to flourish. On the banks of the river, with the soil fertilised by river silt, and the crops irrigated by the water, one of the oldest civilizations in the world began.

The ancient Egyptians farmed along the River Nile from around 3000 BC, also using the river water for washing, cooking and drinking. They transported goods along the river to trade with other cultures and carried goods back to build their pyramids and farms.



*Egyptians have farmed along the Nile since ancient times.*



*You'll find hippos on the banks of the Nile!*



*The River Nile flows through Egypt's capital city, Cairo.*



*Satellite image of the Nile Delta.*

## What do people use the river for today?

People still use the water from the River Nile to irrigate (water) their crops. Even though the surrounding land is dry desert, there's a fertile green valley running along the sides of the Nile. Outside of the big cities and towns, people continue to use the water for washing, cooking and drinking, and the river remains an important transport route, with all sorts of heavy goods carried along it every day.

Tourism is popular along the River Nile too, especially in Egypt, where cruises take tourists to see the many sights. The Aswan High Dam, built in 1970, controls the flow of the river in Egypt and helps to reduce flooding. This dam has one of the world's largest reservoirs behind it: Lake Nasser.

## What animals might you spot beside the River Nile?

Many animals live in and around the Nile. The most famous is the Nile crocodile, which can grow as long as six metres, and can eat up to half its own body weight in one sitting!

Snakes, hippos, buffalo and different species of antelope can also be found along the river.

## The end of the river's story

As the Nile gets closer to the sea, it flows more slowly. Just north of Egypt's capital, Cairo, it splits into two different channels. Here, the land slopes only very gently towards the sea. As a result, the river no longer has enough energy to carry all the material (silt) it's managed to pick up on its long journey, and drops much of it here.

As the ancient Egyptians knew, the silt fertilises the soil it falls on, making it especially good for growing crops.

Where the river comes to an end, at the Nile Delta, the area is richly green, as the satellite photograph shows.



*Map of Egypt and the River Nile*

### Key Words:

**source tributaries Mediterranean Sea confluence sediment irrigate flooding fertiliser silt**



1. Draw yourself in the circle to become a detective!
2. Answer the questions below to complete your mission.

**A. Tick 'true' or 'false' for the statements below.**

Statements	True	False
1. The River Nile runs through nine different countries in Africa.		
2. The River Amazon is the longest river in the world.		
3. The Nile crocodile can grow as long as six metres.		

**B. Circle the correct answer.**

4. What is the beginning of a river called?

- a. Mouth
- b. Source
- c. Tributaries

5. What is used on the River Nile to reduce flooding?

- a. Logs
- b. The Three Gorges Dam
- c. The Aswan High Dam

6. What green feature is found close to the end of the Nile?

- a. The Atlantic Ocean
- b. The Nile Delta
- c. The Red Sea

**C. Draw three animals found in the River Nile.**

**D. Why is the River Nile important to the people that live near it?**

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**Observer Odd needs your help!**

His mission is to write a report on the facts presented in *The River Nile*. Answer the questions below in full sentences so that he can use the information in his report.

1. How many countries does the River Nile run through?

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2. Make a list of how people use the River Nile today.

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3. Why is the soil around the Nile rich and fertile, especially towards the end of the river?

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4. Why was the River Nile so important to the ancient Egyptians?

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5. What does 'fertilises' mean?

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**Inspector Izzi has a new job and needs a hand!**

Her task is to write a detailed analysis of *The River Nile*. She needs you to help her read 'between the lines' and answer the questions below in full sentences.

6. What type of text is this? How do you know?

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7. List five features of the text that you can see.

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8. What do you think are the three most important pieces of information in this text? Explain your answers.

<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>
Because...	Because...	Because...

9. How does the River Nile compare to another river you know about? Think of one similarity and one difference between them.

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**EXTRA MISSIONS:**

- Sort the sentences below into two columns: Fact and Opinion.  
*The River Nile isn't found in just one country. The River Nile is the best river in the world. Greek is a very beautiful language. The modern-day name 'Nile' comes from the Greek word 'neilos', which means 'valley'. People still use the water from the River Nile to irrigate (water) their crops. Odd and Izzi think it's important to learn about the River Nile.*
- Create a book cover for a new book about the River Nile. Include a title and images. On the back, put a summary of the big ideas you've read about in the text.