

# The Panama Canal Transit

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The Panama Canal is a 77 km (48 mi) ship canal in Panama that joins the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean and is a key conduit for international maritime trade. Built from 1904 to 1914, annual traffic has risen from about 1,000 ships in the canal's early days to 15,000 vessels in 2010, measuring a total 300+ million

Panama Canal/Universal Measurement System (PC/UMS) tons.

One of the largest and most difficult engineering projects ever undertaken, the canal had an enormous impact on shipping between the two oceans, replacing the long and treacherous route via either the Strait of Magellan or Cape Horn at the southernmost tip of South America. A ship sailing from New York to San Francisco via the canal travels 9,500 km (5,900 mi), well under half the 22,500 km (14,000 mi) route around Cape Horn.

The 8- to 10-hour journey through the canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific is one from northwest to southeast. This is a result of the isthmus's "curving back on itself" in the region of the canal.

The Bridge of the Americas at the Pacific end is about a third of a degree of longitude east of the end near Colon on the Atlantic.

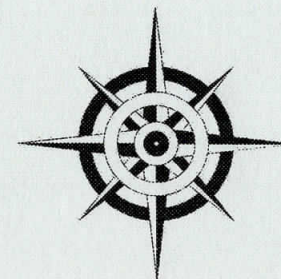
The maximum size of vessel that can use the canal is known as Panamax. A

Panamax cargo ship typically has a DWT of

65,000-80,000 tonnes. As demand is rising, the canal is positioned to be a significant feature of world shipping for the foreseeable future. However, changes in shipping patterns—particularly the increasing numbers of post-

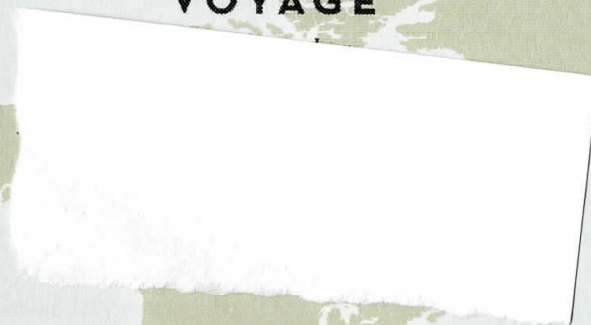
Panamax ships—has necessitated changes to the canal. Close to 50% of transiting vessels are already using the full width of the locks. An enlargement scheme similar to the 1939 Third Lock Scheme, to allow for a greater number of transits and the ability to handle larger ships, was approved by the government of Panama, and officially opened June 26, 2016.

The cost is estimated at US\$6.20 billion, and the project has doubled the canal's capacity and allows more traffic and the passage of longer and wider ships.



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