

The Panama Canal

The Panama Canal was built so people had a faster way to travel between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Before the canal, sailors had to take a 14,000 mile journey around South America to get from New York to San Francisco. After the Canal was built, sailors only had to travel 6000 miles to make that same trip. France began the building of the canal but could not complete it. The United States took over and completed the canal.



Gatun Lake is a lake in the middle of Panama that boats travel across when using the Panama Canal. Gatun Lake is at a higher elevation than the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In order to raise boats up onto Gatun Lake and then lower them back down to the elevation of the oceans, a series of locks had to be constructed.

The Panama Canal was an engineering marvel when it was completed in 1914 because it included the biggest locks in the world and the largest man made lake in the world. Those engineering feats from 1914 are still being used today!