

Location — the river

This map shows part of the river system upon which our nation and the world have depended. This third-largest drainage basin in the world sends water from rain and snow of 31 states and two Canadian provinces into major local rivers.¹⁵ Those rivers all flow into the Mississippi River. The Mississippi flows into the ports in and around New Orleans and on into the Gulf of Mexico.



Some Mississippi River Benefits

- Water supply all along the river—15 million people in the basin's upper half alone depend on the river and its tributaries for drinking water. No figures are available for the lower half.¹⁶
- Ports along the Mississippi handle 56% of the nation's grain shipments and the nation's top market share for import steel, natural rubber, plywood, and coffee.¹⁷ Gulf Coast ports anticipate growth from increased Asian markets and expansion of the Panama Canal.
- The Port of New Orleans connects to 19,000 miles of inland waterways.¹⁸ It is the only deep-water port in the United States served by six class-one railroads, providing direct-access rail service to anywhere in the country. There are also ocean carriers, barge lines, and truck lines.¹⁹
- The 52,000 port-related jobs are reasons for people to live here.²⁰ Shipbuilding, aerospace manufacturing, military operations, the cruise industry, tourism, and the petrochemical industry require more people.
- Including the oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana is the second leading natural-gas producer in the country and the third leading crude-oil producer. Crude-oil production and imports that are not sent to other states are processed at Louisiana's 19 operating refineries, clustered mostly along the Lower Mississippi River and in the Lake Charles area.²¹ Twenty-seven percent of America's oil and 30% of its gas travels through Louisiana's coast, serving half of the nation's refinery capacity.²²