

Fast Facts about the Greats

- About 34 million people live in the Great Lakes watershed – making up over 30% of Canada’s population and roughly 10% of the United States.
- By surface area, Lake Superior is the largest freshwater lake in the world.
- 170+ species of fish live in the basin, and 139 are native.
- The Great Lakes hold 20% of the world’s non frozen surface water.
- Over 6,000 shipwrecks have happened in the Great Lakes.
- Lake Michigan is the only Great Lake entirely within U.S. territory.
- About 120 Indigenous bands have occupied the Great Lakes basin over history.
- Lake Erie is the warmest and shallowest Great Lake, allowing it to hold about half of the total Great Lakes fish population.
- The Anishinaabemowin, or Ojibwe, word for Lake Superior is Gichigami which translates to “a great lake”.
- Lake Michigan is home to the largest freshwater sand dunes in the world.
- 99% of the Great Lakes water supply came from non-replenishable glaciers 10,000 years ago.
- Lake Huron is connected to Lake Michigan by the Straits of Mackinac, and are at the same elevation so technically they are one body of water.. At least that is what hydrologists claim.
- Over 1.5 million jobs and \$60 billion in wages are generated by the lakes each year.
- All of the Great Lakes ultimately drain into Lake Ontario, which flows into the St. Lawrence River and ultimately out to the Atlantic Ocean.
- The surface area of the Great Lakes is over 90,000 miles, which is larger than Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont combined.
- The Anishinaabemowin, or Ojibwe, word for Lake Trout is namegos, and they are present in all five lakes.
- Favosites, or honeycomb coral, are fossils from up to 450 million years ago that can be found in the Great Lakes region.
- The Great Lakes have 4,530 miles of coastline (which includes around 35,000 islands!)
- The “residence time” (how long it takes a drop of water to travel from the Superior/Duluth area all the way to the Atlantic Ocean) takes about 320 years!
- Lake Erie is sometimes called “the wide spot in the river” because it is so shallow.
- The Great Lakes are considered “Inland” or Sweetwater” Seas for two reasons: they can affect weather and they have coastal currents and waves.

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