

# Panama canal vs suez canal



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **Panama Canal vs Suez Canal**

The Panama Canal and the Suez Canal both are examples of one of human kind's important achievements so far. Everyone knows about these two major projects accomplished by humans. The Suez Canal is in Egypt, and it connects the Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea. This allows water transportation between Europe and Asia, so they do not have to go through a long route which takes more time. It was created in 1869 and is 192 km long. The Panama Canal was created in 1914 and is 77 km long connecting two oceans – the Atlantic and the Pacific. Although both canals have their importance in their place, the Panama Canal has the most influence on the world because of its historical values, difficulties during building and its influences on the global economy.

The Panama Canal is an epitome of engineering as is the Suez Canal; however, both had to deal with too many problems. Although the Panama Canal was created in 1914, its history starts from 16th century. In 16th century, it was taking months for reaching gold to Spain because of the lack of a short route. As a result, Charles V made the suggestion of cutting a piece of land in Panama. In 1529, many different suggestions were made. Among those suggestions there was a suggestion that implicated a canal route close to the present canal. As time went by, Spanish government lost their interest; however, the Spanish government gave the authorization for the construction. As a result, surveys started to be made for choosing a proper route. Two different suggestions were made to construct a route either in Panama or in Nicaragua (McCullough 262). After two years of debate, Panama was chosen. The International Company tried to build the

canal, but it failed. French Company was then assigned for the construction. Ferdinand Marie de Lesseps, a French engineer, was the organizer of that French Company. (McCullough 46-47, 85) About the Suez Canal, it was built in Egypt just ten years before the Panama Canal. Ferdinand de Lesseps planned and supervised the Suez Canal. In 18th century, when commerce between nations increased, there was only one main route which connected portions of Asia and Africa - a land road passing through Constantinople. When it was taken under the control of Turkey, nations started to find other routes and alternative ways to maintain their commerce with other nations of Asia. They thought of building canals and the Suez Canal was built. However, the purpose of making both canals was same; the world still needed a short route that connects Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea and saves time and money. As its result, the Panama Canal was built.

While building the Panama Canal, laborers had to go through many difficulties and the construction required significant amount of manual labor. When Ferdinand de Lesseps saw the route planned for the Panama Canal, he assumed that the project will take 8 years and 658 million francs to be completed. He was then assigned for the construction as a president of the Panama Canal Company. However, the project ended because of technical difficulties and wet tropical climate and the Panama Canal Company went bankrupt. The wet tropical climate created deadly diseases such as yellow fever and Malaria. These diseases made medical researchers become more receptive to the relationship between mosquitoes and these diseases to find medications. Finally it was discovered that yellow fever was transmitted by a specific mosquito, the *Stegomyia Fascita*, by Dr. Carlos Juan Finlay. However,

he could not prove it. In addition, no medications were found. That led these diseases to take many peoples' lives. 20, 000 workers died before Lesseps gave up. (LaFeber 11) This was the first reason why Ferdinand de Lesseps left the project. Another major problem was the Culebra Cut. This was another reason why Ferdinand de Lesseps left the Panama Canal Project. The problem while making the Culebra Cut was the landslides. The International Board of Consulting Engineers decided that the rock would be stable when it was planned. So the landslide problems were ignored. However, when they tried to cut these landslides, it started to fall down. In the French attempt, the company excavated 59. 75 million cubic meters in total in which 14. 255 million cubic meters from the Culebra Cut were included. Americans then excavated. Initially there were 2, 600 workers but then it increased to 39, 000 due to the difficulties in excavation. The Suez Canal also had technical, financial and political problems. In its construction also many people died. There were 30, 000 workers hired and thousands of them died. The amount of people died in the Suez Canal construction is relatively small compared to the amount of people died in the Panama Canal construction. That also indicates the amount of manual labor required for the Panama Canal construction. Some sources say that the Suez Canal was already found and attempted to build by Necho, Darius I, Ptolemy and even Napoleon. (Hallberg 60-65) The Suez Canal Company, who built the Suez Canal, already knew about the geographical and financial problems they would face. In contrast, the Panama Canal was planned repeatedly, was attempted by many companies and it took many years to build it. In addition, even Ferdinand de Lesseps, who constructed the Suez Canal, could not construct the Panama Canal and left the project.

About the global economy, some statistics will tell us about both canals' influences on global economy. According to the official web site of Panama Canal, the Panama Canal Tolls revenues will be spent on investments such as the expansion of Panama Canal and improvements in Canal to provide safe and efficient transit to the customers. These investments on improvements will increase the number of ships passing through the Panama Canal. Also according to an article on telegraph. co. uk, the widening of the Panama Canal will be the biggest infrastructure development after the creation of the Panama Canal in 1914. That will influence the routing of trade by the sea and also the global economy by raising tolls.( Heidi Blake) In contrast, according to an article from Daily News Egypt, the Suez Canal revenues and the number of vessels using the water way fell last year. The number of vessels using waterway fell to 1313 from 1690 while revenues fell 20% to 332. 4 million from 414. 2 million last year. (Crisis takes tolls on Suez Canal revenues). The decrease in the number of vessels shows us its influence on the global economy since revenues fell 20%. Comparing both canals and other possible routes for expanding commerce, the first competitor of both canals is the U. S. overland route. The U. S overland route pulls about a 60% market share which includes shipping from Northeast Asia to the U. S. East Coast. However, people find the Panama Canal safer and accurate due to its advantages as the U. S. Overland route is more costly, more complicated and has variety of risks such as weather and worse infrastructure conditions. These advantages include speed and the accuracy to deliver more directly to the final intended market. Another alternative is the Suez Canal route. But only about 1% market share is pulled out by this route. All these statistics and reasons are well enough to indicate the

influences that both canals have had on the global economy and will have in future.

To summarize, both canals are important having influences on the modern history and global economy. Both projects show humans' abilities. The purpose of both canals was same – to save time and money. While constructing both canals, there were difficulties and dangers. In addition, both canals used massive amount of workers and technical facilities. Workers had to deal with many dangerous and stressful situations and risk their lives. Also both canals have impacts on the global economy. But the Panama Canal is more important than the Suez Canal because of the time consumed in its construction, having more difficulties during construction and the influences on the global economy.

### **References**

McCullough, David G. The path between the seas: the creation of the Panama Canal. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977. Print.

LaFeber, Walter. The Panama Canal: the crisis in historical perspective. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. Print.

Hallberg, Charles Williams. The Suez Canal: its history and diplomatic importance. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931. Print.

Blake, Heidi. "Panama Canal widening raises fears about tolls." 19 august 2009: n. pag. Web.

"Crisis takes tolls on Suez Canal revenues." Daily News Egypt 16 February 2009: n. pag. Web

<https://assignbuster.com/panama-canal-vs-suez-canal/>