

Canada's Freshwater Supplies

Overview

Canada has the one of the world's largest reserves of freshwater. In fact, almost 9% of Canada's total area is covered by freshwater. The Great Lakes region alone contains approximately 18% of all the world's fresh surface water. The Canadian portion of the Great Lakes occupies 10% of the total area of freshwater supplies in the country.

In addition, hundreds of thousands of rivers in Canada discharge the equivalent of 7% of the world's renewable water supply. Despite this large figure, almost 60% of Canada's fresh water drains to the North whereas 85% of Canadians live in southern regions close to the borders with the United States.

Canada's Lakes

Believe it or not, there are around 2 million lakes in Canada, ranging in size from few hundred squared meters to few hundred squared kilometers. The Northwest Territories is home to Canada's largest lake, Great Bear Lake, measuring over 30,000 km², or the equivalent of 5.8 million football fields!

The deepest Canadian lake is Great Slave Lake, also in the Northwest Territories. The maximum depth is 614 meters, or a bit higher than the CN tower!

Wetlands

Wetlands are naturally occurring swamps and marshes that are submerged in shallow freshwater. Wetlands provide an excellent habitat for many animals and plants and their abundance is a good indicator of the ecological health of a region.

Canada has one-fourth of all the world's wetlands, totaling an area equivalent to 223 million football fields!



Lake Vermilion at Banff Provincial Park, Alberta

Wetlands are important to Canadian economic and ecological well being. However, they are environmentally fragile and are experiencing threats by drainage, pollution and land development.

Precipitation

Rain is an integral part of the natural hydrological cycle. Because the climate and environment vary significantly across the nation, precipitation levels do too. Lake Henderson in British Columbia has the largest annual precipitation levels in Canada while Eureka, in Nunavut, has the least average annual precipitation levels.

Glaciers

Glaciers consist of frozen freshwater in polar ice caps. Icefields and glaciers cover approximately 2% of the Canadian landscape, and they are mostly prevalent in Western Cordillera and the Eastern Arctic mountains.

Glaciers are important in the hydrologic cycle as they slow down the passage of water through the cycle. Besides, they are an excellent storehouse of freshwater just like groundwater.

Information source

