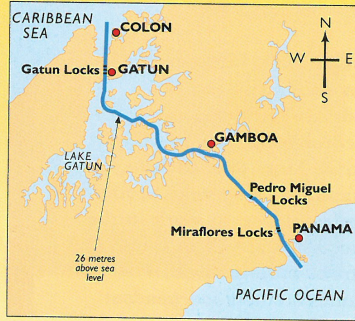


THE PANAMA CANAL



The Panama Canal links the Caribbean Sea with the Pacific Ocean. It was opened in 1914. Many workers died of fever while digging the canal through the jungle. It is 82 km long, and the deepest cutting is 82 metres deep – the world's biggest 'ditch'!

There are six locks along the route of the canal. The photograph (left) shows two ships travelling through the canal. The map and diagram show that part of the route is through Lake Gatun, at 26 metres above sea level. So the ships have to pass through three locks at each end.

Over 15,000 ships use the canal each year, and sometimes there are 'traffic jams' at the locks: it is the busiest big-ship canal in the world. Before the Panama Canal was built, the only sea route from the Pacific to the Atlantic was round South America.

In which direction are ships travelling from the Caribbean to the Pacific? Does this surprise you? Look at the map below.

PANAMA CANAL CROSS-SECTION

