

The Coastline of the United States

Describing man's present and future physical environment is central to the work of NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Much of this description is displayed in the cartographic products of NOAA's National Ocean Survey.

Surveyed, resurveyed, and refined over the past century and a half, National Ocean Survey nautical and aeronautical charts in a variety of forms are essential to safe, efficient navigation of the air and ocean. Bathymetric maps, a more recent development, are detailing the rich continental shelf lands of the United States. This pamphlet is still another part of that larger description.

GENERAL COASTLINE figures are lengths of general outline of the seacoast. Measurements were made with a unit measure of 30 minutes of latitude on charts as near the scale of 1:1,200,000 as possible. Coastline of sounds and bays is included to a point where they narrow to width of unit measure, and the dis-

tance across at such point is included. Most of the general coastline figures are the same as those published in the First (1915) Edition, but all were remeasured in 1948. The coastline of Alaska was again remeasured in 1961, and again the 6,640-mile figure of 1915 was retained. The principal change in the 1961 edition is the increase of Florida coastline from 1,197 to 1,350 miles; this was checked

and re-checked and reflects a new approach to measurement of the Florida Keys.

TIDAL SHORELINE figures were measured in 1939-40 with a recording instrument on the largest-scale charts and maps then available. Shoreline of outer coast, offshore islands, sounds, bays, rivers, and creeks is included to the head of tidewater or to a point where tidal waters narrow to a width of 100 feet.



	General Coastline*	Tidal Shoreline*
UNITED STATES	12,383	88,633
Conterminous only	4,993	53,677
Atlantic	2,069	28,673
Maine	228	3,478
New Hampshire	13	131
Massachusetts	192	1,519
Rhode Island	40	384
Connecticut	—	618
New York	127	1,850
New Jersey	130	1,792
Pennsylvania	—	89
Delaware	28	381
Maryland	31	3,190
Virginia	112	3,315
North Carolina	301	3,375
South Carolina	187	2,876
Georgia	100	2,344
Florida (Atlantic only)	580	3,331
Florida (Atlantic and Gulf)	1,350	8,426
Gulf of Mexico	1,631	17,141
Florida (Gulf only)	770	5,095
Alabama	53	607
Mississippi	44	359
Louisiana	397	7,721
Texas	367	3,359
Pacific	7,623	40,298
California	840	3,427
Oregon	296	1,410
Washington	157	3,026
Hawaii	750	1,052
Alaska (Pacific only)	5,580	31,383
Alaska (Pacific and Arctic)	6,640	33,904
Alaska (Arctic only)	1,060	2,521
EXTRATERRITORIAL		
Canal Zone	20	126
Atlantic		
Navassa	5	5
Puerto Rico	311	700
Swan Islands	8	10
Virgin Islands	117	175
Pacific		
Baker Island	3	3
Guam Islands	78	110
Howland Island	4	4
Jarvis Island	5	5
Johnston Island	5	5
Midway Island	20	33
Palmyra Island	9	16
Samoa Islands	76	126
Wake Island	12	20

*Statute miles.



Lengths of Great Lakes Shorelines and Connecting Rivers, Including Islands*

These shoreline lengths were measured in 1970 by the International Coordinating Committee on Great Lakes Basic Hydraulic and Hydrologic Data. A precision instrument called a Map and Plan Measure, designed especially to determine the lengths of broken or irregular lines, was used on topographic maps and navigation charts. The scale of the maps was mainly 1:50,000 with a few larger scale maps. The scale of the charts varied from 1:30,000 to 1:120,000.

Shoreline	United States	Canada
Lake Superior	1250	1480
St. Marys River	120	130
Lake Michigan	1640	0
Lake Huron	840	2990
St. Clair River	30	40
Lake St. Clair	140	110
Detroit River	70	60
Lake Erie	470	400
Niagara River	70	40
Lake Ontario	330	380
St. Lawrence River		
above Iroquois Dam	220	260
above Power Dam	320	140

*All numbers are rounded to nearest 10 miles.

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