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January 13, 2007

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GORP Trivia

We regret to announce that we've discontinued GORP's trivia section. Check out our [Trivia archives](#) for questions and answers about the world's people, places, and things.

Arrested Rivers
Question by Ethan Gelber

The Question:

The world's great rivers begin at an elevated source - a glacier, a wellspring, a tap sprung from the depths of the earth - and sweep ever downward to spill into sweet or salt water bodies below. Their courses meander; their currents swell; their fertile millennia-molded valleys provide havens for human and animal development. But sometimes, the waters coursing for thousands of miles never quite reach an open outlet to a sea or a vast inland lake. Nature is sometimes to blame, but human beings are more and more often the culprits.

However, there are two great examples of rivers denied their natural destiny: one in North America, reduced to a trickle by water-poor populations; the other in Africa, whose progress is arrested by the largest inland delta in the world. What are these two rivers?

The Answer:

The **Colorado River**, the 42nd longest river in the world, is often referred to as the "Lifeline of the Southwest." It is the incontestable force that once carved Arizona's Grand Canyon. However, today, as a result of a process begun in 1922 by the seven-state Colorado River Compact, drainage and reclamation work on and along the river has diverted almost all of its total annual flow. Supposed to empty into the Gulf of California, the Colorado

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is now no more than a pitiful stream when it flows across the Mexican border before drying up in the desert.

A number of dams impede the flow of the Colorado's waters: the engineering- milestone Boulder (now Hoover) Dam, which formed the much-touristed Lake Mead; the Glen Canyon Dam, which created the vast Lake Powell; the Parker Dam, whose Lake Havasu satisfies all of San Diego's water needs with some left over for Los Angeles; and numerous smaller projects in both the upper and lower basins, as well as along its major tributaries (Flaming Gorge on the Green River in Wyoming and Utah, Aspinall [Curecanti] on the Gunnison River in Colorado, and the Navajo on the San Juan River in New Mexico and Colorado). In addition to this, there are the Colorado-Big Thompson Project (a water tunnel that diverts flow beneath the Continental Divide to northern Colorado); the Fryingpan-Arkansas, which reroutes water from the Fryingpan River, a Colorado tributary, to the Arkansas River through a tunnel under the Rockies' Sawatch Range; and other tunnel feeds that divert water to Denver's Dillon Reservoir, and drainage areas of the Rio Grande, the Great Basin, and the North Platte.

The Colorado River system was the first water basin in which large-scale water management practices were employed. Opposition to huge and controversial undertakings like the Hoover and Glen Canyon Dams eventually led to changes in policy and an end to massive water storage projects. But the Colorado is still the lab rat for water-resource experimentation.

The 1,000-mile **Okavango River**, also known as the Kubango River, is the fourth longest river of southern Africa. With its headwaters on the Bié Plateau in the mountains of central Angola, it flows south and then southeast to northern Botswana and ends in the Okavango Swamp, the largest inland delta in the world covering between 4,000 and 6,500 square miles. 95% of the water then evaporates from the countless shallow channels.

The Okavango flows across parts of the Kalahari Desert, bringing water to parched land. However, few communities have settled along its banks and the river's resources are basically untapped by humans. This may be in part because the river is unnavigable by all but the smallest of boats and the Tsetse fly is

a problem. That said, the Moremi Wildlife Reserve located in the northeastern corner of the swamp is home to lions, cheetahs, buffalo, wildebeests, hippopotamuses, zebras, wild dogs, crocodiles, storks, ibis, herons, egrets, cranes, weaver birds, ducks, geese, quail and much much more.

The Winners:

Brian Palmer, Graeme Dods, Stephen Martin, Ed Berkowitz, and (after five very educated guesses) Iliana Chacon were our first five winners and will be receiving the much coveted bag of GORP.com GORP.

Nine other participants – Kendra and Malcolm, Duncan, Lkyasky, Jean, Nancy, Patrick, Will Paul and Ellen – correctly guessed the Colorado River as the American waterway, but the African clues proved to be more challenging. Most opted in with the Nile, but the Nile actually reaches its outlet – the Mediterranean Sea – after clawing through its extensive delta. That said, if current levels of Nile water use continue or are increased, there is a very good chance it could suffer the same fate as the Colorado.



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