

Map of trent severn waterway

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The Trent-Severn Waterway is a 386-kilometre-long (240 mi) canal route connecting Lake Ontario at Trenton to Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, at Port Severn. Its major natural waterways include the Trent River, Otonabee River, Kawartha Lakes, Lake Simcoe, Lake Couchiching and Severn River. Its scenic, meandering route has been called "one of the finest interconnected systems of navigation in the world".[1]

It reaches its highest point of 256.3 metres (841 ft) at Balsam Lake, the highest point to which a vessel can be navigated from sea level in the Great Lakes-Saint Lawrence River drainage basin. The navigable summit of the Monongahela River (part of the Mississippi River drainage basin) at Fairmont, West Virginia is, at 263 metres (863 ft), the highest point in North America (the summit of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal at its highest point of 406 metres (1,332 ft)[5] is higher still).

Samuel de Champlain was the first European to travel the network of inland waters from Georgian Bay to the Bay of Quinte with the Hurons in 1615. It was this same route that would later be canalized and become the Trent-Severn Waterway.[6]

The desire for a communications route from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron had been a topic of discussion as early as 1785, and gained new importance with the opening of the War of the First Coalition in 1793. Had the newly formed United States entered the conflict on the side of their French allies, they could have cut access to the upper great lakes at Detroit or Lake St. Clair. This would have denied waterborne access to the important British trading post at Michilimackinac.[7]



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