

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: List of Major Straits [Geography Notes for UPSC]

Major Straits of the world

A strait is a thin channel of a waterway that connects two large water bodies. The following are the main characteristics of a strait:

- Formed by natural processes
- Narrower than the seas it connects
- Navigable

Major straits of the world are used by commercial shipping to travel from one sea or exclusive economic zone to another and they are of immense strategic and commercial importance. They also serve as a channel through which ocean currents pass modifying the climate of that area. Due to these reasons, they play an important role in physical and human geography.

This is an important topic in Geography for IAS Prelims, as proved by an analysis of previous years UPSC Question Papers. It is important to know the different straits of the world as there can be multiple questions asked about this topic, in the UPSC exam.

The following table lists the major straits in the world important for UPSC IAS Prelims exam:

| Strait | Contiguous Landmass | Joining Seas/Water Bodies |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Hormuz Strait | Iran and the UAE | The Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf |
| Bab-el-Mandeb | Djibouti, Yemen and Eritrea of Somali Peninsula | The Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea |
| Ten Degree Channel | Car Nicobar Islands and Little Andaman | The Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal |
| Sunda Strait | Java island of Indonesia with its Sumatra island. | The Java Sea and the Indian Ocean |
| Florida Strait | Cuba and the USA | Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean |
| Bering Strait | Asia from America | Arctic ocean and East Pacific ocean |
| Strait of | Spain and Morocco | The Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea |

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| Gibraltar | | |
| Korea Strait | Japan and South Korea | East China Sea and Sea of Japan |
| Strait of Malacca | Malaysia and Sumatra | The Pacific Ocean to the east with the Indian Ocean to the west |
| Bonifacio Strait | Corsica island of France and Sardinia islands of Italy | The Tyrrhenian Sea and The Mediterranean Sea |
| Palk Strait | India and Sri Lanka | The Bay of Bengal in the northeast with the Palk Bay/Arabian Sea in the southwest |
| Bosphorus Strait | Divides Europe from Asia | The Black Sea to Sea of Marmara |
| Bass Strait | Tasmania island and mainland Australia | The Great Australian Bight and the Tasman Sea |
| Davis Strait | Between Greenland and Canada | The Baffin Bay and the Labrador Sea |
| Jamaica Channel | Jamaica and Hispaniola | The Caribbean Sea and North Atlantic |
| Hudson Strait | Baffin Island and Labrador peninsula | Hudson Bay and the Labrador Sea |

Straits have played an important role in human civilization since millennia. Empires have fallen whenever they failed to retain strategic control of the straits near their domain. Rich states have risen contiguous to these water bodies by taxing the traffic passing through them. They play an important role in economic and military matters to this day.