

Panama Canal Expansion Captured in EarthCam Time-Lapse

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It's hard to think of an engineering marvel that's more impressive than the Panama Canal. The 77-kilometre waterway changed international maritime trade forever, providing a shortcut for vessels travelling between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. After France started work on the perilous project in 1881, thousands of worker fatalities — caused by rampant disease and accidents — combined with increasing engineering difficulties and forced crews to stop. The United States assumed responsibility for the development in 1904 and completed it a decade later, but the heavy death toll defined the project's legacy as much as its engineering feats. Thankfully, advances in technology and safety mean tragedies on complex megaprojects are now few and far between.

100 years after it was completed, the Panama Canal underwent the largest new construction since its opening. Beginning in 2007 at a cost of over \$5 billion USD, an expansion project doubled the capacity of the canal by constructing a third set of locks while widening and deepening the existing channels. The operation has allowed for a larger breed of ships, called New Panamax, to pass through. These new vessels can carry over twice as much cargo as their predecessors. Numerous ports in Europe and along the United States Eastern Seaboard are undergoing renovations in order to accommodate this new class of ship.

Authorities had hoped the project would be completed and operational between 2014 and 2015, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the Panama Canal's opening. Seepage from the new locks and disputes with the construction consortium pushed the completion date back. The expanded canal finally began commercial operation on June 26, 2016, when a Chinese-owned container ship, a New Panamax vessel, successfully navigated the route using the third set of locks.

A mesmerizing time-lapse video compiled by [EarthCam](#) condenses 113,400 hours of construction from March 2011 to June 2016 into just two and a half minutes of footage. The high-resolution photos depict the painstaking project in clear detail, and given that Monday was the 102nd anniversary of the Panama Canal's opening, the video's release comes at an appropriate time.

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