



# Collegedunia NCERT Notes

*The Ultimate NCERT Revision Guide for Class 12 Geography  
Fundamentals of Human Geography (Part 2) · 2026-27 / New NCERT*

## Chapter 7: Transport and Communication

NCERT Notes for the 12th Class Board, CUET and UPSC

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Solutions](#)

**What this chapter is about:** Goods and people have to move from where they are made or live to where they are needed. This chapter covers the four modes of transport (land, water, air, pipelines), the world's big highways, railways, sea routes, canals, inland waterways, and how communication has grown from the telegraph to the Internet.

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## 1 Introduction to Transport and Communication

Natural resources, factories and markets are rarely found in the same place. So we need a way to link the place that produces goods with the place that uses them. Transport, communication and trade build these links. This is why a good transport and communication network is the backbone of any modern economy. In this chapter we study how people and goods move, the main routes of the world, and how messages travel across the planet.

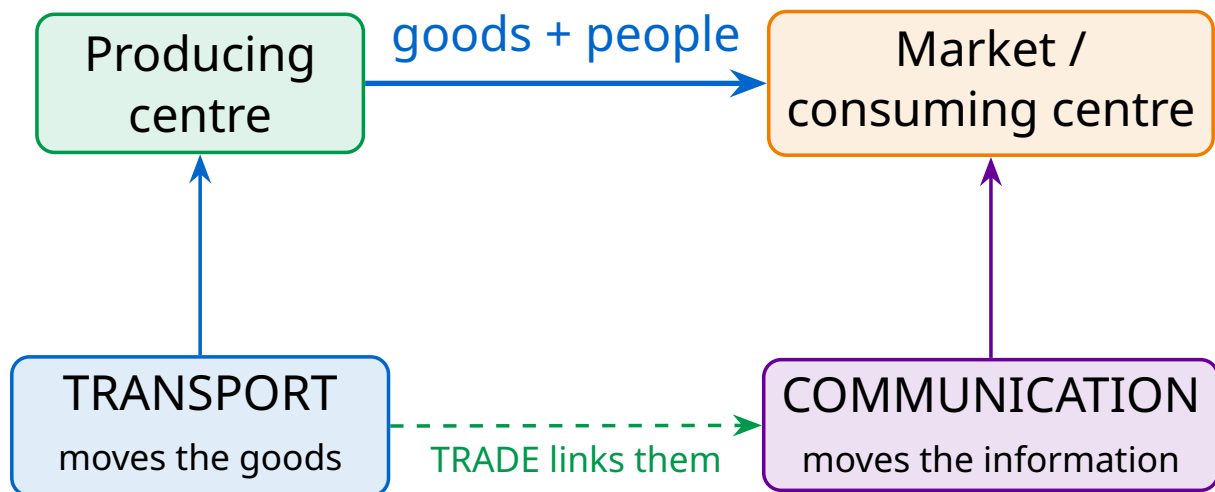
### 1.1 Transport, Communication and Trade

In early days, transport and communication were the same thing. A messenger who carried a letter also carried himself from one place to another. Today the two are separate. **Transport** moves people and goods. **Communication** moves information. **Trade** is the exchange of goods, and it depends on both.

- **Transport:** the carriage of persons and goods from one place to another using humans, animals and vehicles, over land, water and air.
- **Communication:** the sending of messages, words and ideas from one person to another, today mostly through electronic networks.
- **Trade:** the buying and selling of goods, which relies on transport to move the goods and on communication to fix the deal.

**Why these three go together**

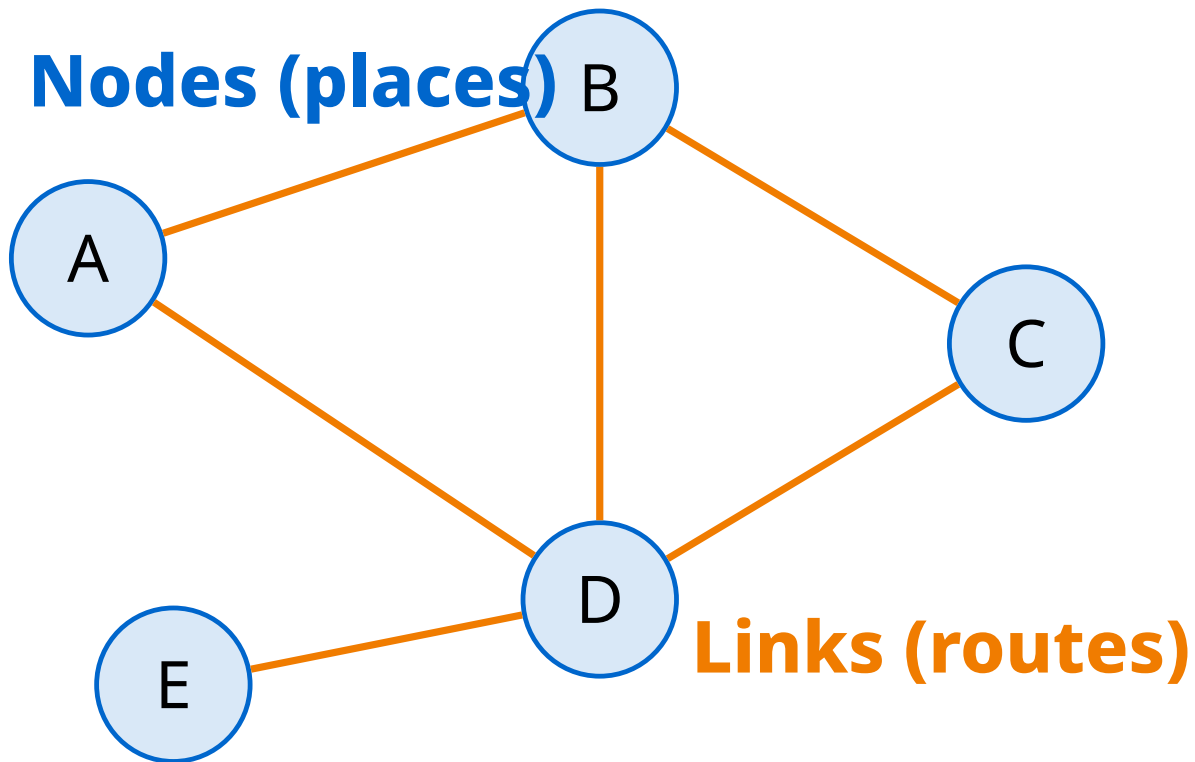
Each region produces the items it is best suited for. Trade lets regions exchange these items. But trade cannot happen without transport to carry the goods and communication to pass on prices, orders and demand. High living standards depend on all three working well together.

**1.2 What is a Transport Network?**

A transport network is the pattern formed when several places are joined together by routes. The places are called **nodes** and the routes joining them are called **links**. When you draw a map of all roads, railways and air routes of a country, the web you see is its transport network.

**Nodes and Links**

**Nodes** are the places (towns, ports, junctions). **Links** are the routes (roads, rail lines, sea lanes) that join them. A dense network has many links and short distances between nodes; a poor network has few links and long gaps.



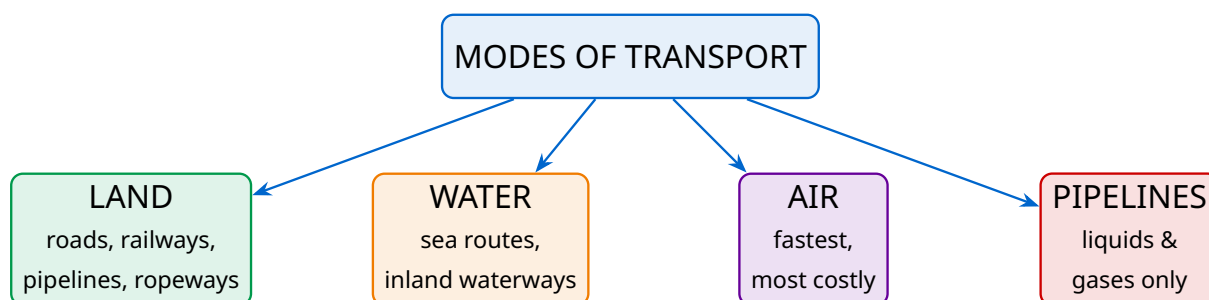
### 1.3 Modes of Transportation

The principal modes of world transport are **land, water, air and pipelines**. These serve movement both between regions (inter-regional) and within a region (intra-regional). Except for pipelines, each mode carries both passengers and freight (goods). The mode chosen depends on the kind of goods, the cost, the distance, and what is available.

- **Road:** cheaper and faster over short distances; gives door-to-door service.
- **Railways:** best for large volumes of bulky material over long distances within a country.
- **Ocean freighters:** handle the international movement of goods; cheapest for bulky cargo across continents.
- **Airways:** best for high-value, light and perishable goods that must move fast.
- **Pipelines:** carry liquids and gases such as petroleum, natural gas and water.

#### Match the mode to the cargo

A quick exam rule: **short distance, small load** → road; **long distance, heavy bulk inside a country** → rail; **across oceans** → ships; **fast, costly, perishable** → air; **liquid or gas, continuous flow** → pipeline.



### Modes that complement each other

A shipment of cars made in Chennai may travel by rail to Mumbai port, by ocean freighter to Europe, and then by truck to a showroom. No single mode does the whole job. In a well-managed system the modes hand goods to one another, each doing the part it is best at.

## 2 Land Transport

Most movement of goods and services takes place over land. In early days humans themselves were carriers, then animals became beasts of burden, and the wheel brought carts and wagons. The real revolution came with the steam engine in the eighteenth century and the internal combustion engine later. Land transport today means roads, railways, pipelines and ropeways, each suited to a different need.

### 2.1 Evolution and Pack Animals

The story of land transport is a story of speed. Human porters were slow and costly. Pack animals were the next step. With the wheel came carts and wagons. The first public railway line opened in 1825 between Stockton and Darlington in northern England, and railways became the fastest form of transport in the nineteenth century. The internal combustion engine then revolutionised road transport with motor cars and trucks.

- **Human porters:** still used in densely populated districts of India and China; the most expensive means per unit.
- **Pack animals:** horses (draught animal even in the West), mules in mountains, camels for desert caravans, bullocks for carts in India, dogs and reindeer for sledges over snow.
- **The wheel:** carts and wagons; a major leap before the steam age.

#### Order of land transport history

**P-A-W-S-I:** Porters → Animals → Wheel (carts) → Steam engine (rail) → Internal combustion (road). Remember "PAWS" with an I.



## 2.2 Roads and Highways

Road transport is the most economical for short distances and offers door-to-door service. Unmetalled (kutcha) roads are simple to build but become unusable in the rainy season. Metalled roads carry most traffic. The quality of roads varies greatly between developed and developing countries because building and maintaining roads is expensive.

### Key road facts

World's total motorable road length  $\approx$  **15 million km**.

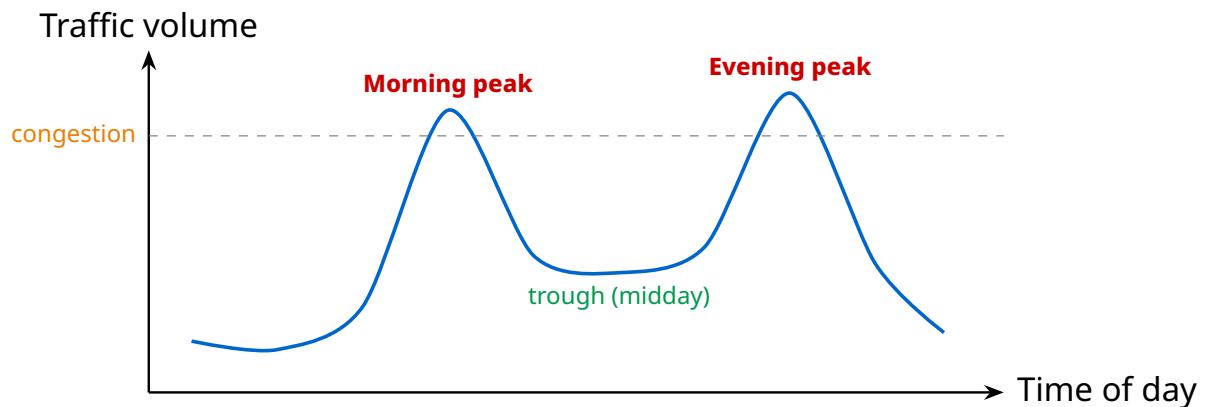
North America accounts for about **33%** of it, with the highest road density and the highest number of vehicles.

Highways are about **80 m wide** with separate lanes, bridges, flyovers and dual carriageways.

**Highways** are metalled roads built for unobstructed movement between distant places. In developed countries they take the form of **motorways**, **autobahns** (Germany) and inter-state highways. Some famous highways:

| Highway                          | What it connects                                       |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Trans-Canadian Highway           | Vancouver (west coast) to St. John's City (east coast) |
| Alaskan Highway                  | Edmonton (Canada) to Anchorage (Alaska)                |
| Pan-American Highway             | South America, Central America and U.S.A.–Canada       |
| Trans-Continental Stuart Highway | Darwin (north) to Melbourne (south), Australia         |
| Golden Quadrilateral (GQ)        | New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata (India)         |

- In North America highway density is high, about **0.65 km per sq km**; every place is within 20 km of a highway.
- In Russia highways are dense west of the Urals (hub: Moscow), but rail is more important due to the vast area.
- In Africa a highway joins Algiers (north) to Conakry (Guinea), and Cairo is connected to Cape Town.
- **Border roads** are laid along international boundaries; they integrate remote areas and serve defence.



### Highway width and density

Students often mix up the figures. Highways are about **80 m wide**. North American highway density is about **0.65 km per sq km**. Do not swap these with the world road length (15 million km) or North America's share (33%).

### Urban transport solutions

For the question on easing city congestion, remember four NCERT solutions: **higher parking fees**, **Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)**, **improved public bus service**, and **expressways**.

## 3 Railways

Railways are a mode of land transport for bulky goods and passengers over long distances. They opened up the interiors of continents for grain farming, mining and manufacturing in the nineteenth century. The width between the two rails is called the **gauge**, and it varies from country to country. About 13 lakh km (1.3 million km) of railways are open for traffic in the world.

### 3.1 Railway Gauges

The gauge decides how heavy and how fast a train can run. Wider gauges carry heavier loads at higher speed. The standard gauge of **1.44 m** is used in the U.K. and most of Europe.

#### Classes of railway gauge

**Broad gauge:** more than **1.5 m**

**Standard gauge:** **1.44 m** (used in the U.K.)

**Metre gauge:** **1 m**

**Smaller (narrow) gauges:** less than 1 m



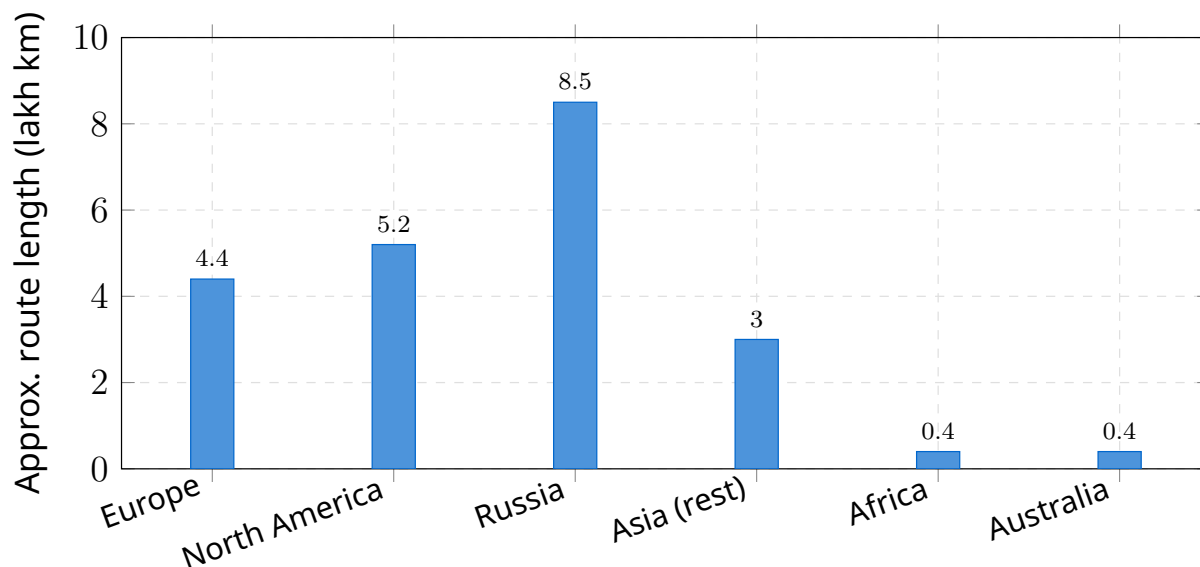
### Commuter trains

Commuter trains carry millions of city passengers daily to and from work. They are very popular in the U.K., U.S.A., Japan and India. Underground railways (metros / tube trains) are important in London, Paris and Moscow.

## 3.2 Railways Across the Continents

The spread of railways is uneven. Europe and East-Central U.S.A. have the densest networks, while Africa, West Asia and much of South America have sparse ones.

| Region        | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Europe        | Most dense network ( $\approx 4,40,000$ km), mostly double-tracked. Belgium has the highest density: 1 km of rail per 6.5 sq km. Channel Tunnel links London with Paris. |
| Russia        | Railways carry about <b>90%</b> of the country's transport; very dense west of the Urals; Moscow is the main rail head.                                                  |
| North America | Most extensive network ( $\approx 40\%$ of world total); used more for long-distance bulky freight (ores, grain, timber) than passengers.                                |
| South America | Dense only in the Pampas of Argentina and the coffee region of Brazil (together $\approx 40\%$ of the continent's route length).                                         |
| Asia          | Most dense in Japan, China and India. West Asia is the least developed.                                                                                                  |
| Africa        | Only $\approx 40,000$ km; South Africa alone has 18,000 km (gold, diamond, copper mining).                                                                               |
| Australia     | About 40,000 km; the west-east line runs from Perth to Sydney.                                                                                                           |



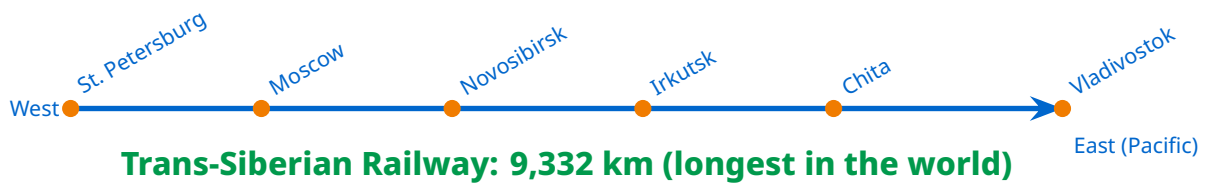
#### Why North America uses rail for freight

Unlike Europe, where trains mostly carry people, North American railways move heavy bulk like ores, grains, timber and machinery over long distances. The densest network is in the highly industrialised East-Central U.S.A. and adjoining Canada, where factories need a steady supply of raw material.

### 3.3 Trans-Continental Railways

Trans-continental railways run right across a continent and link its two ends. They were built for economic and political reasons, to carry goods over long distances and to bind distant regions together.

| Railway                       | Route and importance                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trans-Siberian Railway        | St. Petersburg (west) to Vladivostok on the Pacific (east), via Moscow, Ufa, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Chita. Longest ( <b>9,332 km</b> ), double-tracked and electrified. |
| Trans-Canadian Railway        | Halifax (east) to Vancouver (west), via Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary; <b>7,050 km</b> ; built 1886; the economic artery of Canada (wheat and meat).             |
| The Union and Pacific Railway | New York (Atlantic) to San Francisco (Pacific); exports ores, grain, paper, chemicals, machinery.                                                                      |
| Australian Trans-Continental  | Perth (west) to Sydney (east), via Kalgoorlie, Broken Hill, Port Augusta.                                                                                              |
| The Orient Express            | Paris to Istanbul via Strasbourg, Munich, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade; London to Istanbul now takes about 96 hours.                                                     |



#### Longest trans-continental line

**Siberia is the longest** road of rail: **Trans-Siberian = 9,332 km**. Tie it to the number 9 (nine-three-three-two) to recall it quickly in the exam.

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## 4 Water Transport

A great advantage of water transport is that it needs no route construction. The oceans are already there and are linked to one another. All that is needed is a port at each end. Water transport is the cheapest for bulky goods over long distances because the friction of water is far less than that of land, so the energy cost is low. Water transport is divided into sea routes and inland waterways.

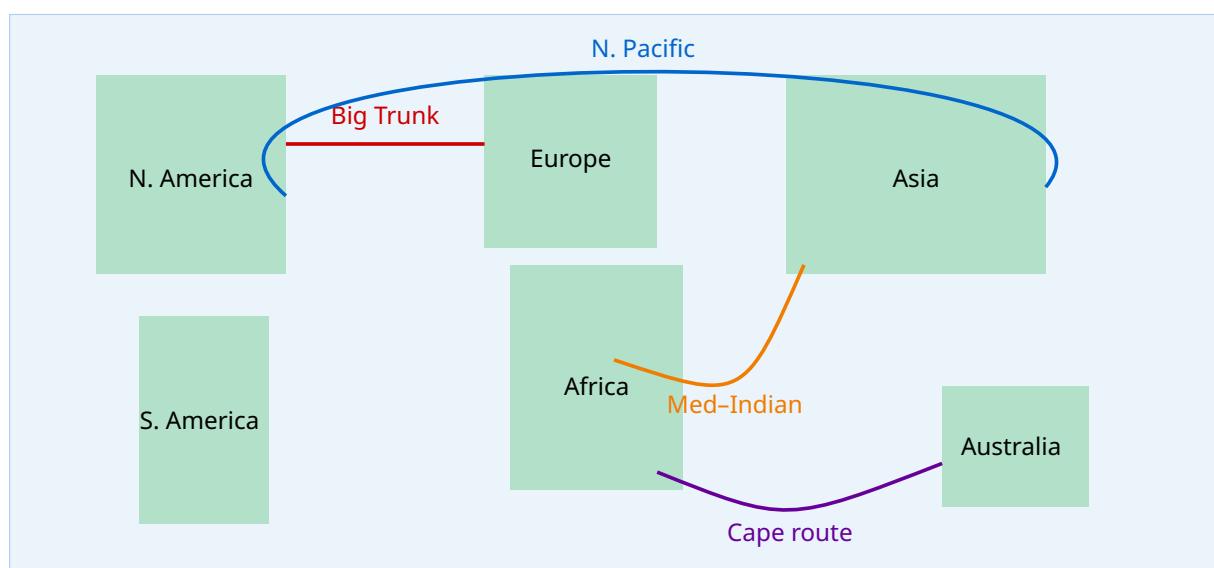
### 4.1 Sea Routes and Major Ocean Routes

The oceans offer a smooth highway in all directions with no maintenance cost. Modern liners and cargo ships carry radar, wireless and navigation aids; refrigerated chambers, tankers and containers have made cargo handling far easier.

| Sea route                           | What it links                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Northern Atlantic (Big Trunk Route) | North-eastern U.S.A. and North-western Europe; the <b>busiest</b> route; carries about one fourth of the world's foreign trade.                |
| Mediterranean-Indian Ocean          | Through the heart of the Old World; serves the most countries; ports Port Said, Aden, Mumbai, Colombo, Singapore; shortened by the Suez Canal. |
| Cape of Good Hope                   | Western Europe with West Africa, South Africa, South-east Asia, Australia and New Zealand.                                                     |
| Southern Atlantic                   | West Europe and West Africa with Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay; least traffic (limited development).                                              |
| North Pacific                       | West coast of North America with Asia; routes converge at Honolulu; Great Circle links Vancouver and Yokohama.                                 |
| South Pacific                       | Western Europe and North America with Australia, New Zealand and Pacific islands via the Panama Canal.                                         |

### The Big Trunk Route

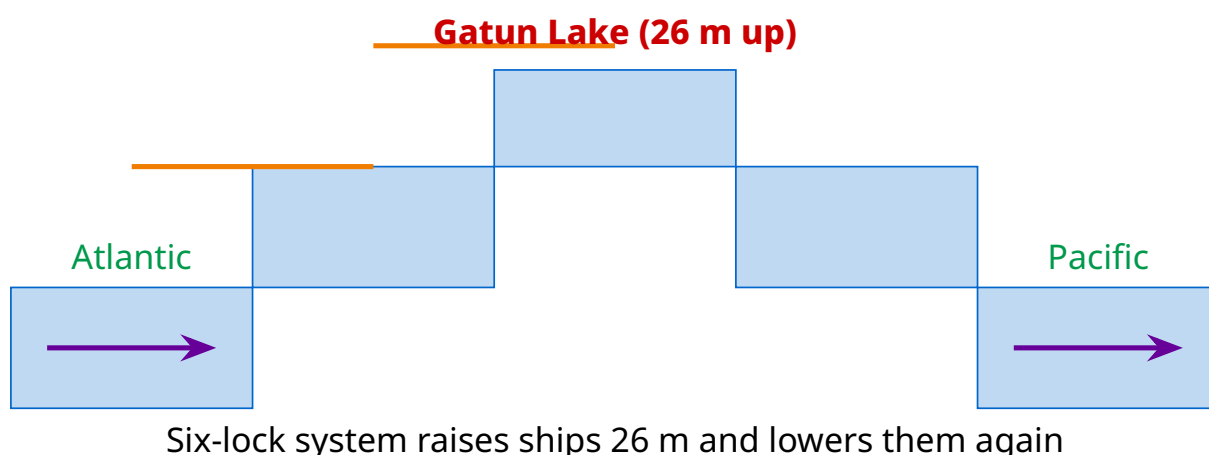
The Northern Atlantic route is called the **Big Trunk Route**. Foreign trade over it is greater than that of the rest of the world combined, and it carries about one fourth of the world's foreign trade. Both coasts have highly advanced ports.



## 4.2 Coastal Shipping and Shipping Canals

**Coastal shipping** runs along a country's own coastline. It is a cheap, convenient mode for countries with long coastlines such as the U.S.A., China and India. If properly developed, it can reduce congestion on land routes. **Shipping canals** are man-made waterways that cut sailing distances. The two vital ones are the Suez and Panama Canals.

| Canal        | Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Suez Canal   | Built <b>1869</b> in Egypt; links the Mediterranean Sea (Port Said) and the Red Sea (Port Suez); a <b>sea-level canal without locks</b> , about <b>160 km</b> long; gives Europe a shorter gateway to the Indian Ocean; about 100 ships pass daily, each taking 10–12 hours. |
| Panama Canal | Links the Atlantic (east) and the Pacific (west) across the Panama Isthmus; about <b>72 km</b> long; uses a <b>six-lock system</b> (ships rise and fall 26 m); shortens New York–San Francisco by 13,000 km; vital to Latin America.                                         |



### Suez vs Panama

**Suez = no locks** (sea-level, 160 km, 1869, Mediterranean–Red Sea). **Panama = six locks** (72 km, Atlantic–Pacific). If a question mentions "locks", the answer is Panama; if it says "sea-level", the answer is Suez.

## 4.3 Inland Waterways

Rivers, canals, lakes and coastal areas have been waterways since ancient times. Boats and steamers carry heavy cargo like coal, cement, timber and ores cheaply. The use of a river as a waterway depends on its navigability: the width and depth of the channel, a steady flow of water, and the transport technology in use. Many rivers lost importance to railways but have since been improved by dredging, stabilising banks and building barrages.

| Waterway                        | Details                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rhine Waterways                 | Flows through Germany and the Netherlands; navigable for <b>700 km</b> from Rotterdam to Basel; the <b>world's most heavily used</b> waterway. |
| Danube Waterway                 | Serves Eastern Europe; rises in the Black Forest; exports wheat, maize, timber, machinery.                                                     |
| Volga Waterway                  | Russia's most important; <b>11,200 km</b> ; drains into the Caspian Sea; linked to Moscow and the Black Sea by canals.                         |
| Great Lakes–St. Lawrence Seaway | Superior, Huron, Erie, Ontario joined by Soo and Welland Canals; lets ocean ships sail deep into North America to Montreal.                    |
| Mississippi Waterways           | Connects the interior U.S.A. with the Gulf of Mexico; large steamers reach Minneapolis.                                                        |

### Rhine vs Volga

The **Rhine** is the world's **most heavily used** waterway (700 km, Rotterdam to Basel). The **Volga** is the **longest** of Russia's waterways (11,200 km). Do not call the Volga the busiest or the Rhine the longest.

## 5 Air Transport and Pipelines

Air transport is the fastest mode but also the most costly. Pipelines, by contrast, carry liquids and gases quietly and continuously. These two modern modes show the two extremes of land-and-air movement: one for speed and high value, the other for steady bulk flow.

### 5.1 Air Transport

Air transport is preferred by passengers for long-distance travel and for moving valuable cargo quickly across the world. It is often the only way to reach inaccessible areas such as the Himalayas during landslides, or the snow-covered north of Canada. Airways also have strategic (defence) importance. At present no place in the world is more than **35 hours away** by air.

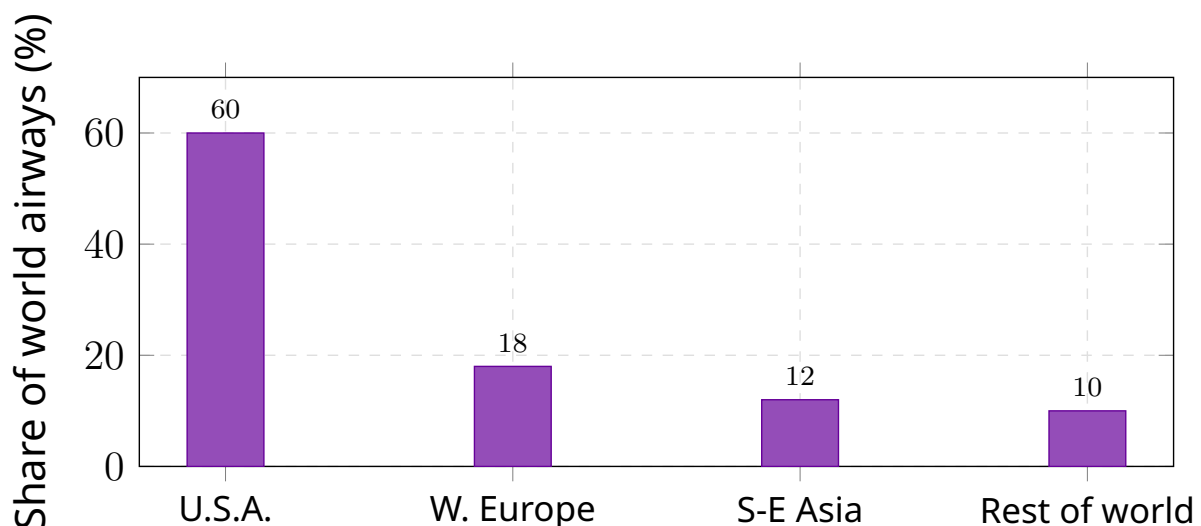
- More than **250 commercial airlines** offer regular world services.
- The **U.S.A.** accounts for about **60%** of the world's airways.
- **U.K.** pioneered commercial jet transport; the U.S.A. later developed international civil aviation.
- Building airports and running aircraft needs costly infrastructure (hangars, fuelling, maintenance), so air transport has grown most in industrialised countries.

### Inter-continental air routes

In the Northern Hemisphere there is a clear east-west belt of inter-continental air routes. Dense networks exist in Eastern U.S.A., Western Europe and South-east Asia. Nodal points where routes converge include New York, London, Paris, Frankfurt, Moscow, New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangkok, Singapore and Tokyo. Africa, the Asiatic part of Russia and South America lack air services.

### Pioneer vs developer of air transport

A common slip: the **U.K.** pioneered commercial jet transport, but the **U.S.A.** developed large-scale international civil aviation and now holds about **60%** of the world's airways. Do not credit the U.S.A. with pioneering the jet or the U.K. with the 60% share.



### Air as the only link

The aeroplane brings goods to the Inuit (Eskimos) of Northern Canada over frozen ground that no road can cross. In the Himalayas, when landslides or heavy snow block the routes, air travel becomes the only way to reach a place. Speed and reach, not cost, are the reasons air transport survives.

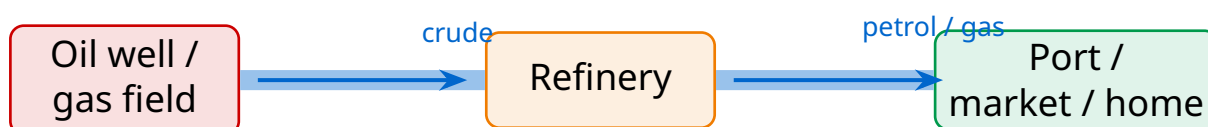
## 5.2 Pipelines

Pipelines carry liquids and gases such as water, petroleum and natural gas in an uninterrupted flow. Water and cooking gas (LPG) reach homes through pipelines. They can even carry liquefied coal, and in New Zealand milk is piped from farms to factories.

- In the **U.S.A.** there is a dense network of oil pipelines; about **17%** of all freight

(per tonne-km) moves through pipelines.

- **Big Inch** is a famous pipeline carrying petroleum from the oilfields of the Gulf of Mexico to the north-eastern states.
- In Europe, Russia, West Asia and India, pipelines connect oil wells to refineries and to ports or markets.
- The proposed **Iran-India via Pakistan** oil and natural gas pipeline will be the longest in the world.



Continuous, uninterrupted flow · no driver needed

## 6 Communications

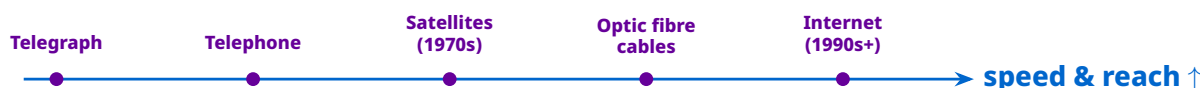
Communication moves information rather than goods. Through history people have used many ways to send messages over long distances, from the telegraph and telephone to today's optic fibre cables, satellites and the Internet. It is modern communication, even more than transport, that has turned the world into a **global village**.

### 6.1 From Telegraph to Optic Fibre

The telegraph helped the colonisation of the American West. In the twentieth century the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) held a near monopoly over the U.S. phone industry, and the telephone became central to the growth of cities. Even today the telephone is the most commonly used mode, and in developing countries cell phones (made possible by satellites) are vital for rural connectivity.

#### Optic fibre cables (OFC)

The first major breakthrough was the **optic fibre cable**. OFCs allow large quantities of data to be transmitted **rapidly, securely and virtually error-free**. With the digitisation of information in the 1990s, telecommunication merged with computers to form integrated networks called the **Internet**.



## 6.2 Satellite Communication and Cyberspace

Satellite communication emerged in the 1970s after the U.S.A. and the former U.S.S.R. pioneered space research. Artificial satellites connect even the remotest corners of the globe. Their great strength is that they make the **cost and time of communication independent of distance**: it costs the same to talk over 500 km as over 5,000 km.

### India's satellite milestones

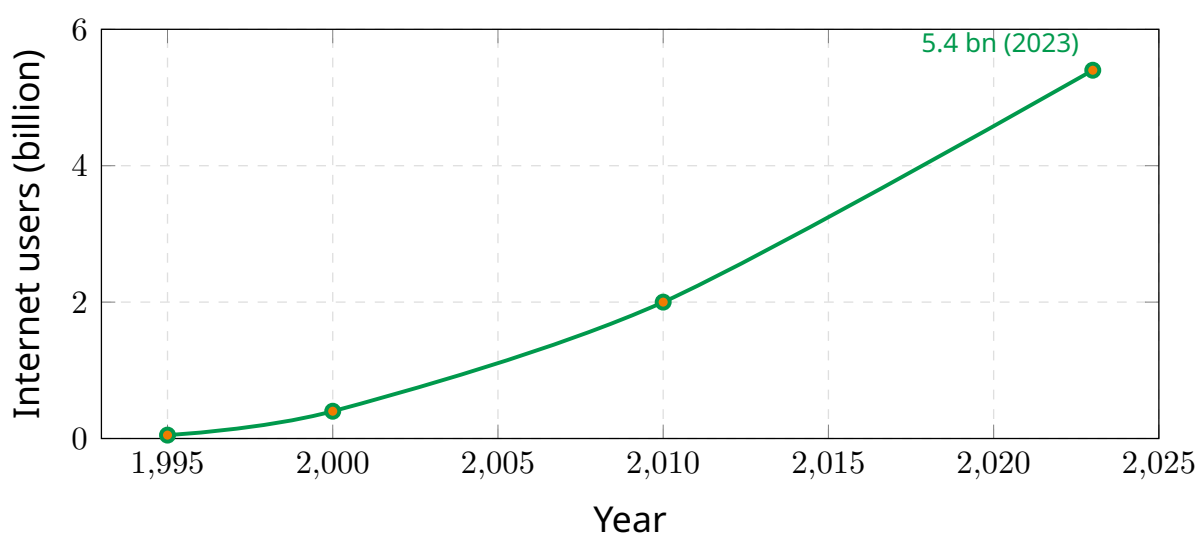
**Aryabhata** – launched 19 April 1975 (India's first satellite)

**Bhaskar-I** – 1979      **Rohini** – 1980

**APPLE** (Ariane Passenger Payload Experiment) – 19 June 1981

INSAT I-B and Challenger made long-distance communication, TV and radio effective; weather forecasting on TV became a boon.

**Cyberspace** is the world of electronic computerised space, encompassed by the Internet (including the World Wide Web). It exists everywhere: in an office, on a boat, in a plane. Its spread has been unprecedented in human history.



### The global village

As billions use the Internet each year, cyberspace expands the economic and social space of humans through **e-mail, e-commerce, e-learning and e-governance**. Together with fax, television and radio, it reaches more and more people across place and time. This is what has made the idea of a global village real.

### Internet's explosive growth

There were under 50 million Internet users in 1995, about 400 million in 2000, over two billion in 2010 and about **5.4 billion in 2023**. The U.S.A.'s share fell from 66% in 1995 to about 25% in 2005, as users in China, India and other

developing countries rose sharply.

## 7 Quick Reference Summary

This section pulls together the must-know facts of the chapter: the key figures, the famous routes, and the exam-favourite comparisons. Use it for last-minute revision before the board, CUET or UPSC paper.

### 7.1 Key Facts at a Glance

| Fact                              | Figure / Answer                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| World motorable road length       | ≈ 15 million km (North America 33%)             |
| Highway width                     | ≈ 80 m                                          |
| World railway length              | ≈ 13 lakh km (1.3 million km)                   |
| Standard gauge                    | 1.44 m (used in the U.K.)                       |
| Longest trans-continental railway | Trans-Siberian, 9,332 km                        |
| Busiest sea route                 | Northern Atlantic (Big Trunk Route)             |
| Suez Canal                        | 1869, ≈ 160 km, sea-level, no locks             |
| Panama Canal                      | ≈ 72 km, six-lock system                        |
| Most heavily used inland waterway | Rhine (700 km)                                  |
| U.S.A. share of world airways     | ≈ 60%                                           |
| Big Inch pipeline                 | carries petroleum (Gulf of Mexico to NE states) |
| Internet users in 2023            | ≈ 5.4 billion                                   |

### 7.2 Modes of Transport Compared

| Mode     | Best for                            | Strength                    | Weakness                       |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Road     | Short distance, small loads         | Door-to-door service        | Costly maintenance, congestion |
| Rail     | Long-distance bulk inside a country | Carries heavy volumes       | Fixed track, high setup cost   |
| Water    | Heavy bulk across oceans            | Cheapest, no route to build | Slow                           |
| Air      | Light, costly, perishable           | Fastest, reaches far places | Very expensive                 |
| Pipeline | Liquids and gases                   | Continuous, no driver       | Only liquids / gases           |

**Three Cs of this chapter**

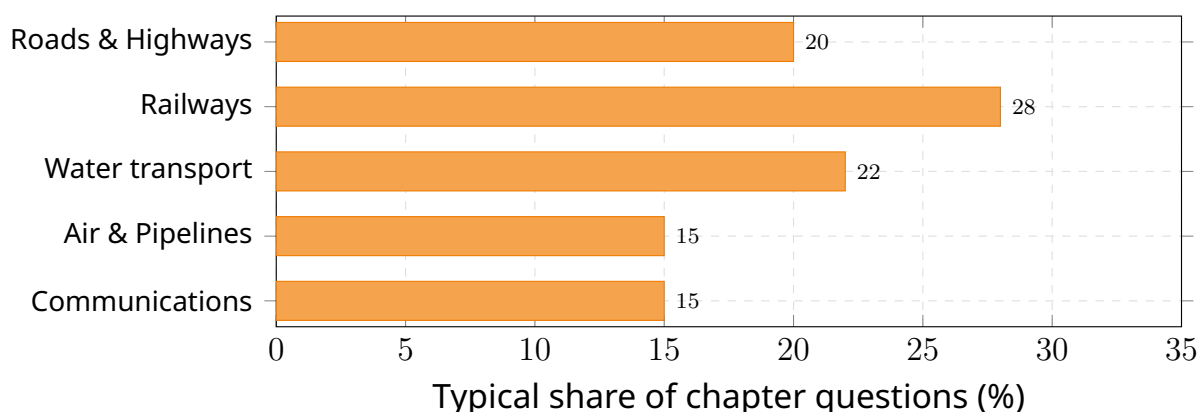
**Carry, Connect, Communicate.** Transport **carries** goods and people; trade **connects** producers and markets; communication lets them **communicate**. Every topic in the chapter fits under one of these three Cs.

**Map-pointing favourites**

For map and one-mark questions, lock these in: **Trans-Siberian** (St. Petersburg–Vladivostok), **Golden Quadrilateral** (Delhi–Mumbai–Chennai–Kolkata), **Suez** (Mediterranean–Red Sea), **Panama** (Atlantic–Pacific), and **Channel Tunnel** (London–Paris).

**7.3 Exam Trend and Important Questions**

Across recent board and CUET papers, this chapter is a steady scorer. Most marks come from the famous routes (railways, sea routes, canals) and from short comparison answers. The bar below shows roughly how questions split by topic, so you know where to spend revision time.



The questions students see most often are listed below. Practise writing each in the word limit shown.

| Question                                                                                | Type      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| What are the problems of road transport in mountainous, desert and flood-prone regions? | 30 words  |
| What is a trans-continental railway? Give two examples.                                 | 30 words  |
| What are the advantages of water transport?                                             | 30 words  |
| "In a well-managed transport system, various modes complement each other." Explain.     | 150 words |
| Which are the major regions of the world having a dense network of airways?             | 150 words |
| How will cyberspace expand the economic and social space of humans?                     | 150 words |

**How to write the 150-word answers**

Open with a one-line definition, give **two or three labelled points** (with an example each), and close with one line of significance. Examiners reward named routes, places and figures, so always slip in a concrete name like Trans-Siberian, Suez or Big Inch.

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