

Rival canals vie for world shipping revenues

As Panamanians hold a referendum which polls predict will approve the widening of their increasingly overloaded canal, Nicaragua wants to build an alternative, opening the way for ships more than double the size of those Panama will be able to accommodate even after expansion

Panama: Canal handles 5% of world shipping

PANAMA CANAL EXPANSION

Third shipping lane to be added by building two new lock complexes

Water-saving basins: Move ships between sea and lake level

Chambers: Handle bigger ships than existing canal

Lock gates

Lake

Miraflores Locks

Panama City

Pacific Locks

Panama Canal: Existing navigational channel to be deepened and widened

Atlantic Locks

Colon

Nicaragua

Gatun Locks

Gatun Lake

Maximum level to be raised 0.45m to increase canal's water reserve capacity

100km
60 miles

HONDURAS

NICARAGUA

Nicaragua Canal

Managua

Lake Nicaragua

San Juan del Norte

PACIFIC OCEAN

COSTA RICA

— New lock complexes
— New access channels

10km
6 miles

THE TWO CANALS

	Panama Canal (expanded)	Nicaragua Canal
Length	80km	280km
Completion	2014-15	2018
Cost	\$5.25bn	\$20bn
Maximum ship size	120,000 tonnes	250,000 tonnes
New York to San Francisco	9,500km	8,700km (a day less)