

The waters which surround the island and continental masses form a single ocean, but for convenience are divided into several great sections, an arrangement rendered easy by the irregular distribution of the solid portions of the surface. Thus we have the Arctic, Indian, Atlantic, Pacific, and Antarctic oceanic basins.

The Arctic basin, surrounding the North Pole, is bounded by the northern shores of America, Europe and Asia. Principal branches are Baffin's Bay, the White Sea, Sea of Kara, Gulf of Obi, Behring's Strait.

The Atlantic basin lies between America on the west, Europe and Africa on the east, and the Polar Circles to the north and south. The Equator, an imaginary line running for geographical purposes round the centre of the globe, divides it into the North and South Atlantic. Principal branches, the Baltic, the German Ocean, the Mediterranean and Black Seas, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Guinea.

The Indian basin has for its boundaries, Africa on the west, Persia and Hindoostan on the north, the Sunda Isles and New Holland on the east, and the Antarctic Ocean on the south. Principal branches, Red Sea, Persian Gulf, Bay of Bengal.

The Pacific basin is enclosed between America on the east, Asia, the Sunda Isles and New Holland on the west, and the Antarctic Ocean on the south. The Equator divides it also into the North and South Pacific. Principal branches, Sea of China, Yellow Sea, Sea of Japan, Sea of Okhotsk, Gulf of California, Gulf of Panama.

The Antarctic Ocean is confined between the South Pole and the Antarctic Circle.

The Arctic Ocean is closed to navigation in its higher latitudes by eternal frosts; but as the Arctic winters vary in severity, like those of temperate countries, though not so extensively, the area of the ice formed varies accordingly. Hence some navigators have found an open ocean where to others it has presented an impassable icy barrier at the same period in a different year, and have been unable to penetrate to the high latitudes reached by the former. It has long been the object of scientific men to discover, if possible, some passage in these northern regions, which might obviate the present lengthy voyages by way of Cape Horn and the Cape of

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