

Exploring the Ohio River Activity

by Kenny Karem, author of Discover Louisville and Probing the Wonders of the Falls

Enjoy the challenge! Work with a team, partner or by yourself.

1. What city upstream is located where the Ohio River begins (Hint: 3 rivers come together there?)
2. The Ohio River barges carry some of the most tonnage of items in the world, such as coal, sand, grains etc. What do you call the type of boat that pushes the barges.
3. Which is correct: The Ohio River is... a) 1,244 miles long b) 981 miles long c) 502 miles long d) 726 miles long
4. Which is true? The US Supreme court dictated the boundary line between Kentucky and Indiana and it is...
 - a) The entire river belongs to Kentucky, so the boundary line is the Indiana shoreline
 - b) Kentucky and Indiana share the river, 50-50
 - c) It is being contested in the courts now
 - d) The boundary line is 100 yards off the Indiana shore line.
 - e) There is no boundary line.
5. There are approximately 19 dams on the Ohio River. What is their chief purpose?
6. Slaves could cross the Ohio River from Kentucky to Indiana to escape slavery before the Civil War. What was that imaginary boundary line at the Ohio River called?
7. Jeffboat Inc. (located in the Jeffersonville on the Indiana shoreline) is the largest inland boat-building operation in the US, focusing on the construction of barges. (You can take a tour of the facility and you can see from the bridge upstream the barges being built upstream on the Indiana shoreline). It was previously the site of one of the world's largest ship builders, Howard Shipyards. What type of boat did they primarily build?
8. A confused mammoth crosses the new Big Four Pedestrian Bridge (formerly an 1880s railroad bridge) and spits off the left side of the bridge as it walks towards Indiana from Kentucky. What direction would his/her spit flow once it hits the river?
9. The Portland Canal was completed in 1830. What was the purpose of the Portland Canal? (Hint. Yes, boats went through it. We know that much. What else?)

10. The fastest bird in the US nests on a bridge in the Louisville area above the Ohio River. When it dives, it reaches speeds of over 200 miles per hour. What is it? (No, it is not a Louisville Cardinal which also sometimes soars then dives)
11. For many centuries, one of the most common and largest mammals used to migrate through Kentucky to Indiana by crossing at the shallow waters of the Falls of the Ohio and formed “traces” (trails), some of which are still visible today. In fact, Daniel Boone followed them on the Wilderness Trail through Kentucky to the Falls of the Ohio. What is the mammal?
12. Who is Louisville named after? (Okay... we all know it was some guy named Louis but more information needed, such as his official title and from what country is the person. A bonus point if you get the “digit” right))
13. Bourbon was invented and patented in Kentucky, with distilleries along the Ohio River and in Louisville. In the early days, much of it was shipped along the Ohio River. Today there is a surge of the bourbon industry in the state and even in Louisville. But one of its main ingredients was created by Native Americans. What is it?
14. What famous American Revolutionary War general who won the Northwest Territory for the American Colonies in 1778, established the “Falls City” of Louisville? (Hints: There is a bronze statue of him on the Belvedere of Louisville, he is buried in Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville and a city on the Indiana shoreline is named for him).
15. Built during the Civil War era, the Louisville Water Company’s Water Tower is a river landmark, recognized by the federal government for its historic significance, impressive design and innovative use. You can see it upstream on the Kentucky shoreline. What special designation was given to it by the federal government? (Come on, we have to have some “challenging” questions. Okay, okay... another hint: Actors Theater and Churchill Downs have been given the same honor or designation)
16. The famous bird painter, John James Audubon, lived in this area for a few years in the early 1800s, studying and painting birds, painting many of them along the river. It was the most common bird of that time and flocks of them darkened the skies when they flew over. Unfortunately, as they roosted they were easy targets and were slaughtered for a food source and “sport” which led to its extinction in the early 1900s. What bird was it?
17. Who was the most powerful Native American tribe in this area (Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio) in the 1700s? (Hint: George Rogers Clark defeated them in a military campaign in the early 1800s).
18. For thousands of years, Native American tribes survived in this area by eating thousands of these Ohio River creatures whose remains archaeologists have found in mounds. They still live in the river and streams today as bottom dwellers. What is it? (Hint: It is not a fish. They are still a popular food, particularly in Asia).
19. One of the largest fish in the river is also one of the oldest on earth, has no scales but skin like a shark and swims like a shark, a long flat snout, a bluish-gray body, can reach a length of 7 feet and a weight of two hundred pounds and is fished for its prized caviar (fish eggs). That’s a long run-on sentence, but what is this odd-looking fish?

20. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark met for the first time at the Falls of the Ohio to plan their famous expedition out West, recruited their Corps of Discovery crew from Kentucky and Indiana men here then launched the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-07) to explore the new western territories. Which US President commissioned them to do this? (Hint: Lots of things are name for him in this area).

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1. Pittsburgh.
2. Tow boat (tugboat is not acceptable. It is used for ocean liners)
3. B) 981 miles long
4. D) The boundary line is 100 yards off the Indiana shoreline, so ALMOST the entire river is Kentucky territory
5. The major purpose of the dams is to raise the river level and make it deeper for large boats such as the towboats and barges so they can navigate the river. The dam also raises the river level so boats can pass through the Portland Canal. The dams are NOT for flood control. City levees and concrete flood walls serve that purpose
6. Mason-Dixon Line
7. Steamboats. The original Howard family home across the road from Jeffboat is now a wonderful steamboat museum and the house is one of the grandest architectural achievements in the country
8. Mammoths are extinct so no mammoth could possibly walk across the bridge! However, we generously will give you a point if you answered... WEST... or even NORTHWEST
9. The purpose of the canal is to allow boats to bypass or go around the 2 ½ miles long Falls (or rapids) of the Ohio, an obstacle to river passage where many boats crashed and over 400 people have died.
10. The peregrine falcon is the fastest bird in the world. It particularly likes to grasp pigeons which roost on the bridges
11. American bison (buffalo) Before the era of dams on the Ohio River, the river was shallow during dry season and they migrated across the river, partially walking. Due to mass senseless slaughters, they were almost eliminated from the earth. With protection, they have increased their numbers significantly and roam many national parks and forest, including Kentucky's Land Between the Lakes
12. King Louis XVI of France. If you wrote "king" AND "France", you get a full point. If you wrote XVI (16th), you earn a BONUS point
13. Corn (maize). Along with corn, beans, and squash, these crops were the basis of the Native American civilizations for thousands of years
14. George Rogers Clark, hero of the American Revolution who conquered the then Northwest Territory from the British (states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota)

15. National historic landmark. This designation helps protect a structure from demolition and only the best structures in the US receive such a worthy designation

16. passenger pigeon. The last bird died in the Cincinnati zoo in the early 1900s. Once it was the most common bird in the US, but its inexcusable, thoughtless slaughter by humans eliminated it from the earth

17. Shawnee. The Iroquois often raided this area and fought the Shawnee, and there were many other tribes in the area, such as Cherokee, Chickasaw, Miami etc., but the Shawnee were the most dominating force for many years. General George Rogers Clark's campaign defeated the Shawnee, destroying their crops, villages (such as Chillicothe, Ohio) and eliminated them as a force in the Ohio Valley. Later, many were forced to move to a reservation in Oklahoma. Note: There are new exhibits on the Shawnee at the Falls of the Ohio State Park visitor center.

18. Mussels. They were very large and common and a main source of food. Today, they have been increasing in number and size as the river has become cleaner. However, invasive non-native species such as the Asiatic clam and zebra mussel compete with them for feeding grounds

19. Paddlefish (or also known as spoonbill catfish). One of the oldest species on earth, the paddlefish is easily identifiable with its distinctive "paddle" nose. It can weigh over 200 lbs., attain a length of 7 feet and live for 30 years!

20. President Thomas Jefferson. Some things named locally for Jefferson: Jefferson county, Jeffersonville, Jeffersontown, schools, streets etc.