

# ALL THE WATER IN THE WORLD

**When you look around you, you will see that water can be found in many places: in the sky, in rivers and streams, in the sea and even under your feet. In fact, about 1 260 million trillion litres of the stuff can be found on our planet – that's a lot of swimming pools!**

This does not mean we can use all of that water. Most of the Earth's water (97%) is found in the ocean, which covers about 70% of the planet, and therefore is unusable for drinking because of the salt. Another 2% of the Earth's water is stored in glaciers, ice caps, and snowy mountain ranges. That leaves only 1% of all the water on Earth available to us for our daily needs.

Our freshwater supplies are stored either in the soil (aquifers) or bed-rock fractures beneath the ground (groundwater) or in lakes, rivers, and streams on the earth's surface (surface water). The rest of the water on Earth is either floating in the air as clouds and water vapour, or is locked up in plants and animals. The human body is two-thirds water; this means if you weigh 30 kg you are carrying 20 litres or 80 cups of water inside you!

There is the same amount of water on Earth today as there was when the Earth was formed three billion years ago. The difference is that today many more demands are placed on water. There are many more people using the same volumes of water we had hundreds of years ago. This is one of the main reasons why it is so important not to waste water.

Water is used for all kinds of human activities. It is estimated that about 70% of all available water is used for irrigation, with another 22% used by industry. Domestic consumption (water for drinking, cooking and so on) accounts for 8% of total global water use.

## TRY THIS:

- ◆ Put 20 litres of water in a container. Imagine the container represents all the water in the world.
- ◆ Now remove four cups of water. This is all the water in the world that is not the ocean.
- ◆ Now take two of the cups of water that you removed from the container and put it aside. This is all

the water in the world that is available for us to drink, in rivers and streams and underground.

- ◆ Be sure to recycle all the water. Use it to water plants.

## WORLD RECORD HOLDERS

- ◆ The **world's deepest lake** is Lake Baikal, in Siberia, Russia. The deepest point of the lake, the Olkhon Crevice, has a depth of 1 637 metres of which 1 181 metres are below sea level. It is also the **oldest freshwater lake** on Earth, having formed between 20 and 25 million years ago. Baikal also contains one-fifth of all the world's fresh surface water! The lake is roughly crescent-shaped, 646 kilometres long, with a surface area of 31 500 square kilometres.
- ◆ The **largest lake** in the world is the Caspian Sea. It is 1 225 kilometres long and its area is 371 800 square kilometres.
- ◆ Angel Falls, in Canaima National Park, Venezuela, is the world's highest **waterfall** at 979 m.
- ◆ The Yellow River in China is the largest **river** in the world to dry up. For several months a year, the 5 464 kilometre river dries up in Henan province. This is due to below-average rainfall, increased irrigation and industrial demands of a growing population.

(Information sourced from [www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com))

