

London and the River Thames: True or false?

The prehistoric river

During the prehistoric era (Early to Middle Pleisocene), there were two main rivers running through the central and south lands of Britain. These were called the Bytham and the Thames. The ancestral Thames extended into what is today Wales, below the Chiltern Hills and through East Anglia. Whilst the Bytham was a tributary of the Thames, it had all but disappeared by 450,000 years ago; the period known as the Anglian glaciation.



The river Thames was a tributary to the river Rhine in Europe. The Thames flowed like a flood plain into Doggerland, the area of marshland that extended from what is now Lincolnshire and East Anglia and what helped to maintain linkage of Britain to mainland Europe.

The Thames used to be home to many prehistoric animals, such as woolly mammoths, woolly hippopotamus, crocodilians, saber-tooth tigers and large apes, or now live in Africa crocodiles, elephants, aurochs, sharks and hyenas to name but a few. So far, no dinosaur remains have been found in London but that is not to say they were not there once.



True or false?

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
1	The prehistoric Thames used to flow from Norway		X
2	The ancestral river Thames was once a tributary to the river Seine		X
3	The ancestral river Thames was once a tributary to the river Rhine	X	

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
4	In ancient times the river Avon was longer than the river Thames		X
5	Early to Middle Pleisocene time, (prehistoric) there were two main rivers running through the central and south lands of Britain, the Bytham and the Thames	X	
6	In prehistoric times there were two main rivers in Britain, the Thames and the Thame		X

Water water everywhere

The river Thames is the longest river in Britain being 215 miles long from source and ends between Whitstable, Kent, and Foulness Point, Essex. The true start of the river Thames is disputed by some people, however, officially, the river source re-appears during heavy rainfall in a meadow at Trewsbury Mead, which is 356 feet above sea level. There is a simple stone at the source site stating:

“The Conservators of the river Thames 1857 – 1974 This Stone was placed Here to Mark the source of the River Thames.”



During drought times, surface water cannot be seen, as the source is 4 springs beneath ground and for around 20 miles of the Thames is just a trickle of water. The disputed source of the river Thames comes from Seven Springs, which, if it were the official starting place, would make the Thames around 14 miles longer. Seven Springs water is part of the river Churn and flows throughout the year unlike the official source of the Thames.

The river has had lots of different names!

- Tamesas, (Brittonic Celtic)
- Tamesis, (Roman)
- Temese, (Middle English)
- Isis, (local usage from the source to Dorchester-on-Thames, where the river Thame joins the Thames and still in use today)
- The river is also referred to as “Old Father Thames”

There is a path that wends its way beside the river Thames from the source to the Thames Barrier which is 184 (296 km), miles long, it is suggested the distance can be done in two weeks.

True or false?

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
7	The river Thames is the longest river in Britain	X	
8	The river Avon is the longest river in Britain		X
9	The river Ouse is the longest river in Britain		X

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
10	The source of the river Thames is at Seven Springs, Gloucestershire		X
11	The source of the river Thames is at Thames Head, Gloucestershire		X
12	The source of the river Thames is at Trewsbury Mead, Gloucestershire	X	

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
13	The Thames is also known as the river Thame		X
14	The river Thames was named the Tamesis by Ancient Britons		X
15	The river Thames is also known as the Isis in some areas	X	

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
16	It is possible to walk beside the river Thames from Trewsbury Mead to the Thames Barrier	X	
17	It is possible to walk beside the river Thames from Greenwich to Erith		X
18	It is possible to walk beside the river Thames from Lechlade to Erith		X

No plaice like home

The river Thames has around 200 islands (sometimes known as eyots or aits). There are 45 locks on the river Thames. A lock lifts and lowers boats when the river gets higher or lower. Below the lock at Teddington, the water of the river Thames is tidal, and above the Teddington lock it is not.



From Gravesend to Battersea areas of the river are considered brackish water, (a mixture of salt and fresh water). This means that sea creatures, like crabs, prawns, sea lamprey and fish such as plaice, dab and sole can live in the Thames. When the water becomes brackish, other fish live in the river such as smelt, bass, flounder and trout.



Freshwater creatures like roach, chub, perch, freshwater lamprey, pike and bream live in the river from the top of Teddington Lock. Some fish, like eels and salmon also live in the river living in freshwater as well as salt water. Near the sea, sea horses and Chinese mitten crabs have been found living in the Thames. As the river has become cleaner, aquatic mammals such as seals, dolphins and whales have entered the river. The river is home to over 100 species of fish!

True or false?

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
19	There are approximately 50 islands in the river Thames		X
20	There are approximately 121 islands in the river Thames		X
21	There are approximately 200 islands in the river Thames	X	

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
22	The river Thames is all freshwater until it meets the sea		X
23	The river Thames is a tidal/brackish water to The Houses of Parliament		X
24	The river Thames is freshwater above the lock at Teddington going up river to Trewsbury Mead.	X	

No.	Which one of these three statements is correct	True	False
25	There are 12 locks on the river Thames		X
26	There are 103 locks on the river Thames		X
27	There are 45 locks on the river Thames	X	