

# Endorheic basin

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An **endorheic basin**, also called an **internal drainage system**, is a drainage [basin](#), or [watershed](#), that does not flow to one of the Earth's major [oceans](#). This is unlike normal basins that collect in [rivers](#) and flow to the ocean. Endorheic basins usually end in a saline [lake](#) or a salt flat. They can be found in all parts of the world, but usually in [desert](#) locations.<sup>[1]</sup>

## List of major endorheic basins

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Major endorheic basins of the world. Endorheic basins are shown in dark gray; major endorheic lakes are shown in black.

### Antarctica

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Endorheic lakes in Antarctica are located in the [McMurdo Dry Valleys](#), [Victoria Land](#), [Antarctica](#), the largest ice-free area in Antarctica.

- [Don Juan Pond](#) in [Wright Valley](#) is fed by groundwater from a rock glacier and remains unfrozen throughout the year.
- [Lake Vanda](#) in [Wright Valley](#) has a perennial ice cover, the edges of which melt in the summer allowing flow from the longest river in Antarctica, the [Onyx River](#). The lake is over 70 m deep and is hypersaline.
- [Lake Bonney](#) is in [Taylor Valley](#) and has a perennial ice over and two lobes separated by the Bonney Riegel. The lake is fed by glacial melt and discharge from [Blood Falls](#). Its unique glacial history has resulted in a hypersaline brine in the bottom waters and fresh water at the surface.
- [Lake Hoare](#), in [Taylor Valley](#), is the freshest of the Dry Valley lakes receiving its melt almost exclusively from the Canada Glacier. The lake has an ice cover and forms a moat during the Austral summer.
- [Lake Fryxell](#), in adjacent to the [Ross Sea](#) in [Taylor Valley](#). The lake has an ice cover and receives its water from numerous glacial meltwater streams for approximately 6 weeks out of the year. Its salinity increases with depth.

### Asia

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[Caspian Sea](#), a giant inland basin

Much of western and [Central Asia](#) is a single, giant inland basin. It contains several lakes, including:

- The [Central Asian Internal Drainage Basin](#), the largest of the three major basins covering [Mongolia](#).
- The [Caspian Sea](#), the largest lake on Earth. In fact, a large part of Eastern Europe drained by the [Volga River](#) also belongs to its basin.
- The [Aral Sea](#), whose tributary rivers have been diverted, leading to a dramatic shrinkage of the lake. The resulting ecological disaster has brought the plight faced by internal drainage basins to public attention.
- [Lake Balkhash](#) ([Kazakhstan](#))
- [Lop Nur Basin](#), in the southeastern portion of [Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region](#) in northwestern [China](#)
- [Issyk-Kul](#), [Son-Kul](#) and [Chatyr-Kul](#) lakes in [Kyrgyzstan](#)
- [Sistan Basin](#) covering areas of [Iran](#) and [Afghanistan](#)
- [Tarim Basin](#) in [Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region](#)
- [Uvs Nuur basin](#), [Mongolia](#), [Tuvan Republic](#) of [Russia](#)
- The [Dead Sea](#), the lowest surface point on Earth and one of its saltiest bodies of water, lies between [Israel](#) and [Jordan](#).
- [Sambhar Lake](#) in [Rajasthan](#), north-western [India](#), is also the terminal point of an endorheic basin.
- [Lake Van](#) in [Turkey](#) is one of the world's largest endorheic lakes.

## Australia

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[Australia](#), being very dry and having exceedingly low runoff ratios due to its ancient soils, has a great prominence of variable, endorheic drainages. The most important are:

- [Lake Eyre Basin](#), which drains into the highly variable [Lake Eyre](#) and includes [Lake Frome](#).
- [Lake Torrens](#), to the west of the [Flinders Ranges](#) in [South Australia](#).
- [Lake Corangamite](#), a highly saline [crater](#) lake in western [Victoria](#).
- [Lake George](#), formerly connected to the [Murray-Darling Basin](#)

A false-colour satellite photo of [Australia's Lake Eyre](#)

Image credit: *NASA's Earth Observatory*

## Africa

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- [Lake Turkana](#) in [Kenya](#)
- The [Okavango Delta](#), an endorheic inland delta in the [Kalahari Desert](#) of [Botswana](#)
- [Lake Ngami](#) in Botswana
- [Lake Chad](#) (between [Chad](#) and [Cameroon](#)), fed by the [Chari](#) and [Logon](#) rivers

- [Etosha pan](#) in [Namibia's Etosha National Park](#)
- [Qattara Depression](#) in [Egypt](#)
- [Chott Melrhir](#) in [Algeria](#)
- [Lake Chilwa](#) in [Malawi](#)
- [Afar Depression](#) in [Eritrea](#), [Ethiopia](#) and [Djibouti](#)
- [Chott el Djerid](#) in [Tunisia](#)

## North and Central America

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[Great Salt Lake](#), Satellite photo (2003) after five years of [drought](#)

- [Lago de Atitlán](#), in the highlands of Guatemala;
- [Bolsón de Mapimí](#), in northern [Mexico](#)
- [Crater Lake](#) in [Oregon](#)
- [Devil's Lake \(North Dakota\)](#)
- [Devil's Lake \(Wisconsin\)](#)
- The [Great Basin](#), which covers much of [Nevada](#) and [Utah](#), includes:
  - The [Black Rock Desert](#) in [Nevada](#), location of the [Thrust2](#) and [ThrustSSC](#) landspeed record runs, and the annual home to the [Burning Man](#) festival
  - [Death Valley](#) in California and Nevada, the lowest land point in the United States
  - [Groom Dry Lake](#) in Nevada, location of the secret [Area 51](#) base
  - Utah's [Great Salt Lake](#), the largest terminal lake in the [Western Hemisphere](#)
  - [Salton Sea](#) in [California](#), a lake accidentally created in 1905 when irrigation canals ruptured, filling a desert endorheic basin and recreating an ancient saline sea
  - Utah's [Sevier Lake](#)
  - [Pyramid Lake](#) in Nevada
  - [Mono Lake](#) in [California](#)
- The [Great Divide Basin](#) in [Wyoming](#), a small endorheic basin that straddles the [Continental Divide](#).
- [Guzmán Basin](#), in northern Mexico and the southwestern United States;
- [Little Manitou Lake](#) in [Saskatchewan](#)
- [New Mexico](#) has a number of desert endorheic basins including:
  - The [Tularosa Basin](#), a [rift valley](#);
  - [Zuni Salt Lake](#), a [maar](#);
- [Rogers Lake](#), at [Edwards Air Force Base](#) in [California](#)
- [Tulare Lake](#), an endorheic basin at the southern end of the [San Joaquin Valley](#) fed by the [Kings River](#), [Tule River](#) and [Kaweah River](#); since the late 19th century the lake bed has been reclaimed and used as farmland, though it occasionally floods when rainfall is especially heavy
- The [Valley of Mexico](#). In [Pre-Columbian](#) times, the Valley was substantially covered with five lakes, including [Lake Texcoco](#), [Lake Xochimilco](#), and [Lake Chalco](#).

Many small lakes and ponds in [North Dakota](#) and [Manitoba](#) are endorheic; some of them have salt encrustations along their shores.

## Europe

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- [Neusiedlersee/Fertő tó](#) in [Austria](#) and [Hungary](#)
- [Lake Trasimeno](#) in [Italy](#)
- [Lake Velence](#) in [Hungary](#)
- [Lake Prespa](#) between [Albania](#), [Greece](#) and the [Republic of Macedonia](#)
- [Rahasane turlough](#), in [Co. Galway](#), [Republic of Ireland](#), is the county's largest and covers about 2.5 square kilometres.

All these lakes are drained, however, either through manmade [canals](#) or via [karstic](#) phenomena. Minor additional endorheic lakes exist throughout the Mediterranean countries [Spain](#) (e.g. [Laguna de Gallocanta](#)), [Italy](#), [Cyprus](#) ([Larnaca](#) and [Akrotiri](#) salt lakes) and [Greece](#).

## South America

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MODIS image from November 4, 2001 showing [Lake Titicaca](#), the [Salar de Uyuni](#), and the [Salar de Coipasa](#). These are all parts of the [Altiplano](#)

- [Altiplano](#) basin, one of the largest and second highest in the world.
- [Lake Valencia](#) (Spanish: Lago de Valencia) the second largest lake in Venezuela.
- [Salar de Atacama](#), [Atacama Desert](#), [Chile](#) (although close to the Altiplano it is not part of it)
- [Northwest Pampas Basins](#) in the [Dry Pampas](#) of [Argentina](#)
- [Southwest Pampas Basins](#) in the [Dry Pampas](#) of Argentina
- [Meseta Somuncura](#) in the [Patagonia](#) region of Argentina

## Ancient

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Some of the Earth's ancient endorheic systems include:

- The [Black Sea](#), until its merger with the Mediterranean
- The [Mediterranean Sea](#) itself and all its tributary basins, during its [Messinian desiccation](#) (5 m.y. BP aprox.) as it became disconnected from the Atlantic Ocean.
- [Lake Lahontan](#) in the western US
- [Ebro](#) and [Duero](#) basins, draining most of northern [Spain](#) during the [Neogene](#) and perhaps [Pliocene](#).
- [Lake Bonneville](#) (Utah)

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- [Inland sea](#)

## References

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1. ↑ "[Home>Endorheic](#)". Archived from [the original](#) on 2008-10-13. Retrieved 2009-04-01.

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