

<http://www.gly.uga.edu/railsback/geog1.html>

Some Geographic Anomalies or Paradoxes: or at least some surprises for the uninformed

Southernmost Algeria is farther from Algiers than is London, England. The wording of this fact introduces an inaccuracy. The distance between Algiers and Southernmost Algeria is greater than that between Algiers and London, England. Reading the phrase on the site suggests that the distance from Southern Algeria to London is greater than Algiers to London which is, of course, nonsense.

Recife, Brazil, is closer to the African cities of Dakar (Senegal), Freetown (Sierra Leone), and Monrovia (Liberia), than it is to Cruzeiro do Sul in western Brazil.

First it is important to identify the city – there are four named Recife in Brazil. The facts are probably true of Recife in Pernambuco.

The Pacific is more than half again as large as the Atlantic, but the Atlantic drains three and a half times as much land area as the Pacific. At the moment! The Atlantic is widening along most of its length, whereas the Pacific is not; indeed the latter is probably getting smaller. This is the effect of plate tectonics and the unusually high number of subduction zones along the west coast of the Americas contrasted with the Mid-Atlantic ridge which is creating new crust and spreading. Iceland is a great example of new land being created.

The Ural Mountains, the eastern boundary of Europe, are east of the Straits of Hormuz, which are at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and thus very much in Asia.

It was only the Eurocentric nations who dominated the world, economically and militarily, during the so-called great age of exploration who determined that Europe was a continent, presumably to affect some sort of feeling of superiority. Geologically this is unimportant since continents will reform in the future, but in truth Europe, as it currently is constructed, is merely an adjunct of the continent of Asia. There is no physical reason to deem them as separate entities – it is arguable that parts of what we call Asia are in fact separate from the true continent of Asia. For example India, whose tectonic plate happens to have collided with the Asian plate, giving rise to the Himalayan range (and possibly the European Alps too!) – So rather than being described as a sub-continent India and its neighbours have a strong argument for being identified as a separate continent. How will people deal with the eventual collision between the continent of Africa and Europe (it is not going to be too long in coming in geological time) when the Mediterranean becomes a landlocked sea – will Africa become European, or Europe African? Interestingly some scholars refer to the continent of America, thereby reducing North America to the status of sub-continent!

North American Division I notice no mention of Greenland. Legally it is part of minute Kingdom of Denmark but occupying a significant chunk of the North American continent. It

represents nearly 8.8% of the whole of the North American continent; the United States occupy about 39.8% of the continent and Greenland is about 22% of the size of the USA. It measures above 2.1 million Km², Alaska, the 49th and largest state in the Union measures about 1.7 million Km² (a difference of about 400,000 Km²). Texas would fit three times into Greenland and still have spare space remaining for most of the state of Virginia or West Virginia, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Vermont together.

U.S. Division

Only one U.S. state borders on just one other state. That state is Maine. On the other hand, two U.S. states border on eight other states. They are Tennessee and Missouri. But two states have borders with no other states within the Union at all!