



Technology: 2009

Three Gorges Dam

Rising in the Kunlun Mountains of Tibet, the Chang Jiang winds for more than 3,400 miles. It flows through some of China's most fertile agricultural land before emptying into the East China Sea at Shanghai. A stretch of the Chang Jiang known as the Three Gorges includes some of the world's most beautiful scenery. It is also an area rich in archaeological treasures dating back thousands of years. At this site, the Chinese government is building the world's largest dam. With an estimated completion date of 2009, the dam will help control floods and generate much-needed electricity. At the same time, however, construction of the dam will destroy archaeological sites and much of the region's natural beauty while forcing between 1 and 2 million people to relocate.

Three Gorges Dam Facts

Height: 600 ft. (181 m)

Width: 1.5 mi. (2.415 km)

Reservoir: 370 mi. (595.7 km) long

Cost: \$25 billion

Workers: 40,000

Years to Complete: 17

CHINA

Area to be flooded

Three Gorges Dam

Sandouping

Wuhan

Shanghai

Chongqing

A series of locks will enable ocean-going ships to travel as far as Chongqing, at the far end of the new reservoir. This is expected to greatly improve the economy of Chongqing.

The dam will control flooding. However, it may also affect fishing and create other environmental problems.

Water-driven turbines will generate as much electricity as 18 nuclear reactors. This hydroelectric power, one of the cleanest forms of energy, will reduce air pollution. That is important in China because the Chinese burn so much coal.



When the Three Gorges reservoir is filled in 2009, it will be less than 1 mile wide but 370 miles long—about the distance from Los Angeles to San Francisco.

THINKING



1. Analyzing Motives

How will the Three Gorges Dam benefit China? What are the drawbacks of the dam?

2. Recognizing Effects

The construction of the dam will cause the flooding of about 1,300 archaeological sites. How will this affect China's cultural heritage?