The Mississippi River flows 1,345 miles along Tennessee’s western border and serves as the nation’s longest waterway. The river is 34 miles wide and is home to multiple species, including 245 fish and 145 amphibians. More than 40 percent of the country’s bird species migrate along the river’s flyway.

The Tennessee River is more than 650 miles long and divides Tennessee into three regions. The river was vital to the culture of several Native American tribes, including the Cherokee. Its name originates from the Native American word “Tamo.” The Battle of Bladens was fought along the Tennessee River during the Civil War.

The nearby 100-mile Cumberland River flows from Kentucky into northern Tennessee, winding through Nashville. Commercial fishermen harvest species like catfish and paddlefish from the river, which is also used for recreational paddling. It’s a popular river among recreational anglers looking for bass and crappie as well as catfish. Motorized boaters also enjoy the river and its lakes.

The Clinch River flows through Virginia and the Great Appalachian Valley before joining the Tennessee River in East Tennessee. The river used to be a major producer of freshwater mussels and pearls before it was dammed. Still, it is considered a great place for fly fishing. It was designated a scenic river near Knoxville and is used for recreational paddling.

For centuries, rivers have fueled Tennessee’s economy through commerce, with waterways. More recently, the tourism sector has benefited as well, translating to new jobs and new revenue for the state.