

# Where is salt found

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Salt is one of the most common and yet most controversial substances on Earth. You can't really live without it, but too much of it might kill you. It used to be very expensive, now it's really cheap, and most of it is used for industrial purposes. It's in the foods we eat, in the planetary oceans, and in us; but where does it come from?

Salt is actually a mineral that comprises sodium and chloride (NaCl). In its natural form, it's called rock salt or halite. In its most familiar form, salt is a white crystalline substance that is soluble in water. There are actually multiple types of salts; calcium chloride or copper sulfate are just to examples. We just call this one "salt" because it's by far the most widely used one.

The history of salt intertwines with the development of civilizations due to its value in food preservation before refrigeration. Ancient trade routes were heavily influenced by salt. The Via Salaria, an essential Roman road, was originally a path for transporting salt. Similarly, across the globe, the Sahara Desert saw caravans traversing what would famously be known as "salt roads," trading gold from sub-Saharan Africa for the precious "white gold."

Industrially, salt plays an important role vast array of products, from the manufacturing of chlorine and caustic soda to the production of plastics and textiles. Biologically, salt is essential for the proper functioning of cells and the nervous system.

Salt is extremely important for the alimentation of all mammals, including humans. Not having enough sodium in your blood can lead to a number of negative symptoms, including headaches, dizziness, and even heart problems. This is unlikely to be a problem in the modern world, but was quite a challenge in the past.

This is why salt has been a prized possession since before the Antiquity.

Roman soldiers were actually sometimes paid in salt; this is where the word "salary" comes from. For the Romans, which had a large empire, ensuring salt distribution throughout the land was essential. Salt deposits were cherished and defended fiercely.

For the coastal countries, the resource was accessible by boiling the oceanic water; open ocean has about 35 grams (1.2 oz) of solids per litre, a salinity of 3.5%. But for continental countries, salt is a scarce commodity. Civilizations fought wars over salt, as strange as that may sound now. It was a rare and highly valued resource.

But today, we don't value salt almost at all! We just eat it, without giving it much thought; but where does out salt come from?

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The methods of extracting salt in ancient times were as diverse as the cultures that valued it. One of the oldest methods, still in use today, is solar evaporation. This process involves allowing seawater to flow into shallow ponds, where the sun and wind evaporate the water, leaving behind salt crystals. This technique is still used in places like the picturesque salt pans scattered around the Mediterranean, which have been in operation since the Roman era.

The major source of salt today is seawater &#8211; seawater is basically an inexhaustible source of salt. There are two main techniques to extracting salt from seawater, and you can also mine salt from the depths of the Earth. The main ways of obtaining salt are:

Fast forward to today, and the extraction of salt has become more sophisticated. The most common modern method is vacuum evaporation, which involves pumping water into underground salt beds to create brine. This brine is then brought to the surface and heated in vacuum pans to rapidly evaporate the water, leaving behind pure salt. This method is efficient and allows for the production of salt with specific grain sizes and purity levels.

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Web: <https://kary.com.pl/contact-us/>

Email: [energystorage2000@gmail.com](mailto:energystorage2000@gmail.com)

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

