Longitude

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Longitude (, AU and UK also) is a geographic coordinate that specifies the east-west position of a point on the surface of the Earth, or another celestial body. It is an angular measurement, usually expressed in degrees and denoted by the Greek letter lambda (?). Meridians are imaginary semicircular lines running from pole to pole that connect points with the same longitude. The prime meridian defines 0° longitude; by convention the International Reference Meridian for the Earth passes near the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, south-east London on the island of Great Britain. Positive longitudes are east of the prime meridian, and negative ones are west.

Because of the Earth's rotation, there is a close connection between longitude and time measurement. Scientifically precise local time varies with longitude: a difference of 15° longitude corresponds to a one-hour difference in local time, due to the differing position in relation to the Sun. Comparing local time to an absolute measure of time allows longitude to be determined. Depending on the era, the absolute time might be obtained from a celestial event visible from both locations, such as a lunar eclipse, or from a time signal transmitted by telegraph or radio. The principle is straightforward, but in practice finding a reliable method of determining longitude took centuries and required the effort of some of the greatest scientific minds.

A location's north-south position along a meridian is given by its latitude, which is approximately the angle between the equatorial plane and the normal from the ground at that location.

Longitude is generally given using the geodetic normal or the gravity direction. The astronomical longitude can differ slightly from the ordinary longitude because of vertical deflection, small variations in Earth's gravitational field (see astronomical latitude).

Geographic coordinate system

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A geographic coordinate system (GCS) is a spherical or geodetic coordinate system for measuring and communicating positions directly on Earth as latitude and longitude. It is the simplest, oldest, and most widely used type of the various spatial reference systems that are in use, and forms the basis for most others. Although latitude and longitude form a coordinate tuple like a cartesian coordinate system, geographic coordinate systems are not cartesian because the measurements are angles and are not on a planar surface.

A full GCS specification, such as those listed in the EPSG and ISO 19111 standards, also includes a choice of geodetic datum (including an Earth ellipsoid), as different datums will yield different latitude and longitude values for the same location.

History of longitude

history of longitude describes the centuries-long effort by astronomers, cartographers and navigators to discover a means of determining the longitude (the

The history of longitude describes the centuries-long effort by astronomers, cartographers and navigators to discover a means of determining the longitude (the east-west position) of any given place on Earth. The

measurement of longitude is important to both cartography and navigation. In particular, for safe ocean navigation, knowledge of both latitude and longitude is required, however latitude can be determined with good accuracy with local astronomical observations.

Finding an accurate and practical method of determining longitude took centuries of study and invention by some of the greatest scientists and engineers. Determining longitude relative to the meridian through some fixed location requires that observations be tied to a time scale that is the same at both locations, so the longitude problem reduces to finding a way to coordinate clocks at distant places. Early approaches used astronomical events that could be predicted with great accuracy, such as eclipses, and building clocks, known as chronometers, that could keep time with sufficient accuracy while being transported great distances by ship.

John Harrison's invention of a chronometer that could keep time at sea with sufficient accuracy to be practical for determining longitude was recognized in 1773 as first enabling determination of longitude at sea. Later methods used the telegraph and then radio to synchronize clocks. Today the problem of longitude has been solved to centimeter accuracy through satellite navigation.

Longitude rewards

The longitude rewards were the system of inducement prizes offered by the British government for a simple and practical method for the precise determination

The longitude rewards were the system of inducement prizes offered by the British government for a simple and practical method for the precise determination of a ship's longitude at sea. The prizes, established through an act of Parliament, the Longitude Act 1714 (13 Ann. c. 14), in 1714, were administered by the Board of Longitude.

This was by no means the first reward to be offered to solve this problem. Philip II of Spain offered one in 1567, Philip III in 1598 offered 6,000 ducats and a pension, whilst the States General of the Netherlands offered 10,000 florins shortly after. In 1675 Robert Hooke wanted to apply for a £1,000 reward in England for his invention of a spring-regulated watch. However, these large sums were never won, though several people were awarded smaller amounts for significant achievements.

Longitude (book)

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Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time is a 1995 best-selling book by Dava Sobel about John Harrison, an 18th-century clockmaker who created the first clock (chronometer) sufficiently accurate to be used to determine longitude at sea—an important development in navigation. The book was made into a television series entitled Longitude. In 1998, The Illustrated Longitude was published, supplementing the earlier text with 180 images of characters, events, instruments, maps and publications.

Longitude (disambiguation)

celestial body. Longitude may also refer to: Longitude rewards, a British inducement prize for a solution to the longitude problem Longitude (book), by Dava

Longitude is a geographic coordinate that specifies the east–west position of a point on the Earth's surface, or the surface of a celestial body.

Longitude may also refer to:

Longitude rewards, a British inducement prize for a solution to the longitude problem

Longitude (book), by Dava Sobel about John Harrison

Longitude (TV series), a 2000 TV drama produced from the book

Longitude Prize, an inducement prize contest inspired from the longitude rewards

Cessna Citation Longitude, a business jet

Longitude Festival, an annual music festival in Dublin, Ireland

Longitude LLC, a private business in parimutuel betting technology

Longitude of periapsis

celestial mechanics, the longitude of the periapsis, also called longitude of the pericenter, of an orbiting body is the longitude (measured from the point

In celestial mechanics, the longitude of the periapsis, also called longitude of the pericenter, of an orbiting body is the longitude (measured from the point of the vernal equinox) at which the periapsis (closest approach to the central body) would occur if the body's orbit inclination were zero. It is usually denoted ?.

For the motion of a planet around the Sun, this position is called longitude of perihelion ?, which is the sum of the longitude of the ascending node ?, and the argument of perihelion ?.

The longitude of periapsis is a compound angle, with part of it being measured in the plane of reference and the rest being measured in the plane of the orbit. Likewise, any angle derived from the longitude of periapsis (e.g., mean longitude and true longitude) will also be compound.

Sometimes, the term longitude of periapsis is used to refer to ?, the angle between the ascending node and the periapsis. That usage of the term is especially common in discussions of binary stars and exoplanets. However, the angle ? is less ambiguously known as the argument of periapsis.

Mean longitude

Mean longitude is the ecliptic longitude at which an orbiting body could be found if its orbit were circular and free of perturbations. While nominally

Mean longitude is the ecliptic longitude at which an orbiting body could be found if its orbit were circular and free of perturbations. While nominally a simple longitude, in practice the mean longitude does not correspond to any one physical angle.

True longitude

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In celestial mechanics, true longitude is the ecliptic longitude at which an orbiting body could actually be found if its inclination were zero. Together with the inclination and the ascending node, the true longitude can tell us the precise direction from the central object at which the body would be located at a particular time.

Longitude by chronometer

Longitude by chronometer is a method, in navigation, of determining longitude using a marine chronometer, which was developed by John Harrison during

Longitude by chronometer is a method, in navigation, of determining longitude using a marine chronometer, which was developed by John Harrison during the first half of the eighteenth century. It is an astronomical method of calculating the longitude at which a position line, drawn from a sight by sextant of any celestial body, crosses the observer's assumed latitude. In order to calculate the position line, the time of the sight must be known so that the celestial position i.e. the Greenwich Hour Angle (Celestial Longitude - measured in a westerly direction from Greenwich) and Declination (Celestial Latitude - measured north or south of the equational or celestial equator), of the observed celestial body is known. All that can be derived from a single sight is a single position line, which can be achieved at any time during daylight when both the sea horizon and the sun are visible. To achieve a fix, more than one celestial body and the sea horizon must be visible. This is usually only possible at dawn and dusk.

The angle between the sea horizon and the celestial body is measured with a sextant and the time noted. The Sextant reading is known as the 'Sextant Altitude'. This is corrected by use of tables to a 'True Altitude'. The actual declination and hour angle of the celestial body are found from astronomical tables for the time of the measurement and together with the 'True Altitude' are put into a formula with the assumed latitude. This formula calculates the 'True Hour Angle' which is compared to the assumed longitude providing a correction to the assumed longitude. This correction is applied to the assumed position so that a position line can be drawn through the assumed latitude at the corrected longitude at 90° to the azimuth (bearing) on the celestial body. The observer's position is somewhere along the position line, not necessarily at the found longitude at the assumed latitude. If two or more sights or measurements are taken within a few minutes of each other a 'fix' can be obtained and the observer's position determined as the point where the position lines cross.

The azimuth (bearing) of the celestial body is also determined by use of astronomical tables and for which the time must also be known.

From this, it can be seen that a navigator will need to know the time very accurately so that the position of the observed celestial body is known just as accurately. The position of the sun is given in degrees and minutes north or south of the equational or celestial equator and east or west of Greenwich, established by the English as the Prime Meridian.

The desperate need for an accurate chronometer was finally met in the mid 18th century when an Englishman, John Harrison, produced a series of chronometers that culminated in his celebrated model H-4 that satisfied the requirements for a shipboard standard time-keeper.

Many nations, such as France, have proposed their own reference longitudes as a standard, although the world's navigators have generally come to accept the reference longitudes tabulated by the British. The reference longitude adopted by the British became known as the Prime Meridian and is now accepted by most nations as the starting point for all longitude measurements. The Prime Meridian of zero degrees longitude runs along the meridian passing through the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, England. Longitude is measured east and west from the Prime Meridian. To determine "longitude by chronometer," a navigator requires a chronometer set to the local time at the Prime Meridian. Local time at the Prime Meridian has historically been called Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), but now, due to international sensitivities, has been renamed as Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), and is known colloquially as "zulu time".

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