

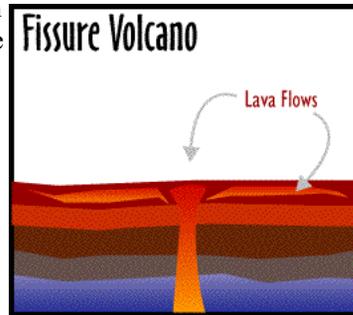
Types of Volcanoes

Most people have never seen a real volcano but have learned about them through movies or books. So when most people think of a volcano, they usually conjure up the Hollywood version: a huge, menacing conical mountain that explodes and spews out masses of lava which falls on rampaging dinosaurs, screaming cave people, or fleeing mobs of betogaed Romans - depending on their favorite volcano disaster movie. While those types of volcanoes do indeed exist, they represent only one "species" in a veritable zoo of volcano shapes and sizes.

Fissure Volcano

Fissure volcanoes have no central crater at all. Instead, giant cracks open in the ground and expel vast quantities of lava. This lava spreads far and wide to form huge pools that can cover almost everything around. When these pools of lava cool and solidify, the surface remains mostly flat. Since the source cracks are usually buried, there is often nothing "volcano-like" to see - only a flat plain.

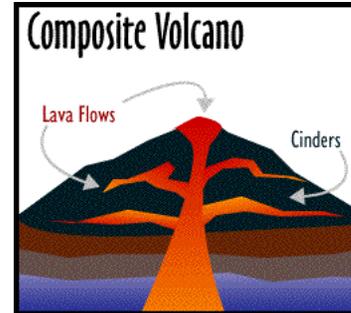
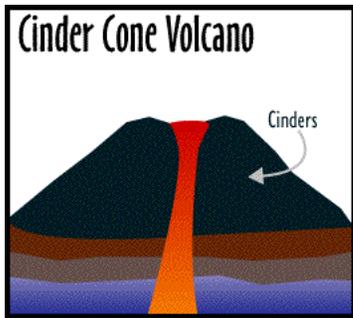
A fissure eruption occurred at the Los Pilas volcano in Nicaragua in 1952.



Cinder Cones

Cinder cones are simple volcanoes which have a bowl-shaped crater at the summit and steep sides. They only grow to about a thousand feet, the size of a hill. They usually are created of eruptions from a single opening, unlike a strato-volcano or shield volcano which can erupt from many different openings. Cinder cones are typically made of piles of lava, not ash. During the eruption, blobs ("cinders") of lava are blown into the air and break into small fragments that fall around the opening of the volcano. The pile forms an oval-shaped small volcano.

Famous cinder cones include Paricutin in Mexico and the one in the middle of Crater Lake in Oregon.



Composite Volcanoes

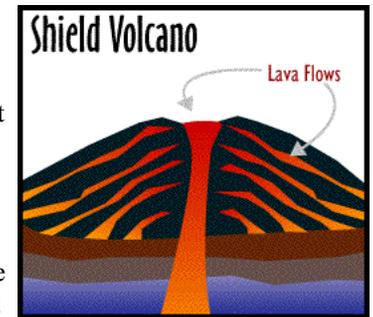
The most majestic of the volcanoes are composite volcanoes, also known as strato-volcanoes. Composite volcanoes are tall, symmetrically shaped, with steep sides, sometimes rising 10,000 feet high. They are built of alternating layers of lava flows, volcanic ash, and cinders.

Famous composite volcanoes include Mount Fuji in Japan, Mount Shasta and Mount Lassen in California, Mount St. Helens and Mount Rainier in Washington State, Mount Hood in Oregon, and Mount Etna in Italy.

Shield Volcanoes

Shield volcanoes can grow to be very big. In fact, the oldest continental regions of Earth may be the remains of ancient shield volcanoes.

Shield volcanoes are tall and broad with flat, rounded shapes. They have low slopes and almost always have large craters at their summits. The Hawaiian volcanoes exemplify the common type of shield volcano. They are built by countless outpourings of lava that advance great distances from a central summit vent or group of vents. The outpourings of lava are typically not accompanied by pyroclastic material, which make the shield volcanoes relatively safe during eruptions.



Mauna Loa, a shield volcano on the "big" island of Hawaii, is the largest single mountain in the world, rising over 30,000 feet above the ocean floor and reaching almost 100 miles across at its base. Other famous shield volcanoes include Kilauea, also in Hawaii, and Olympus Mons of Mars.

