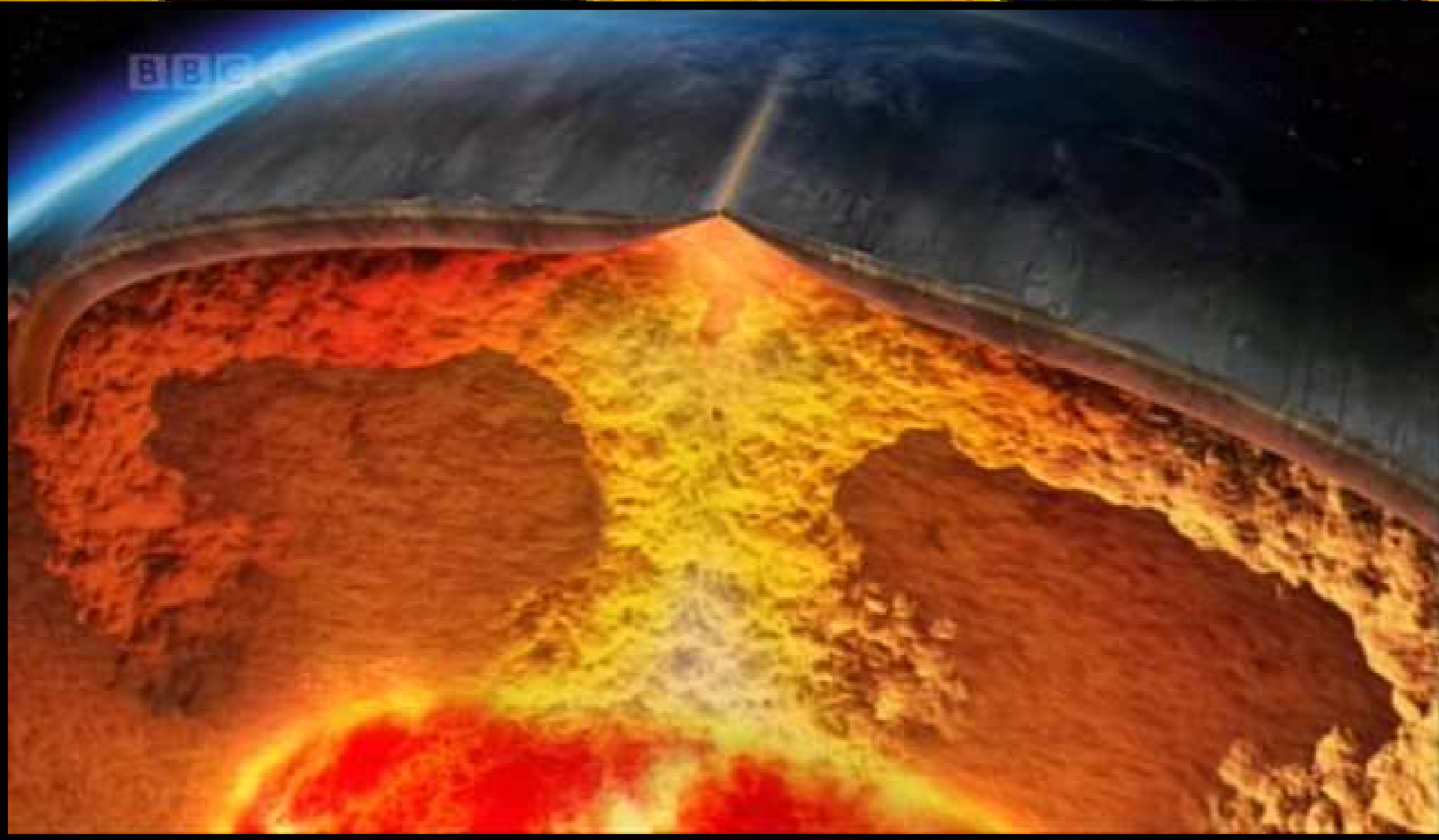
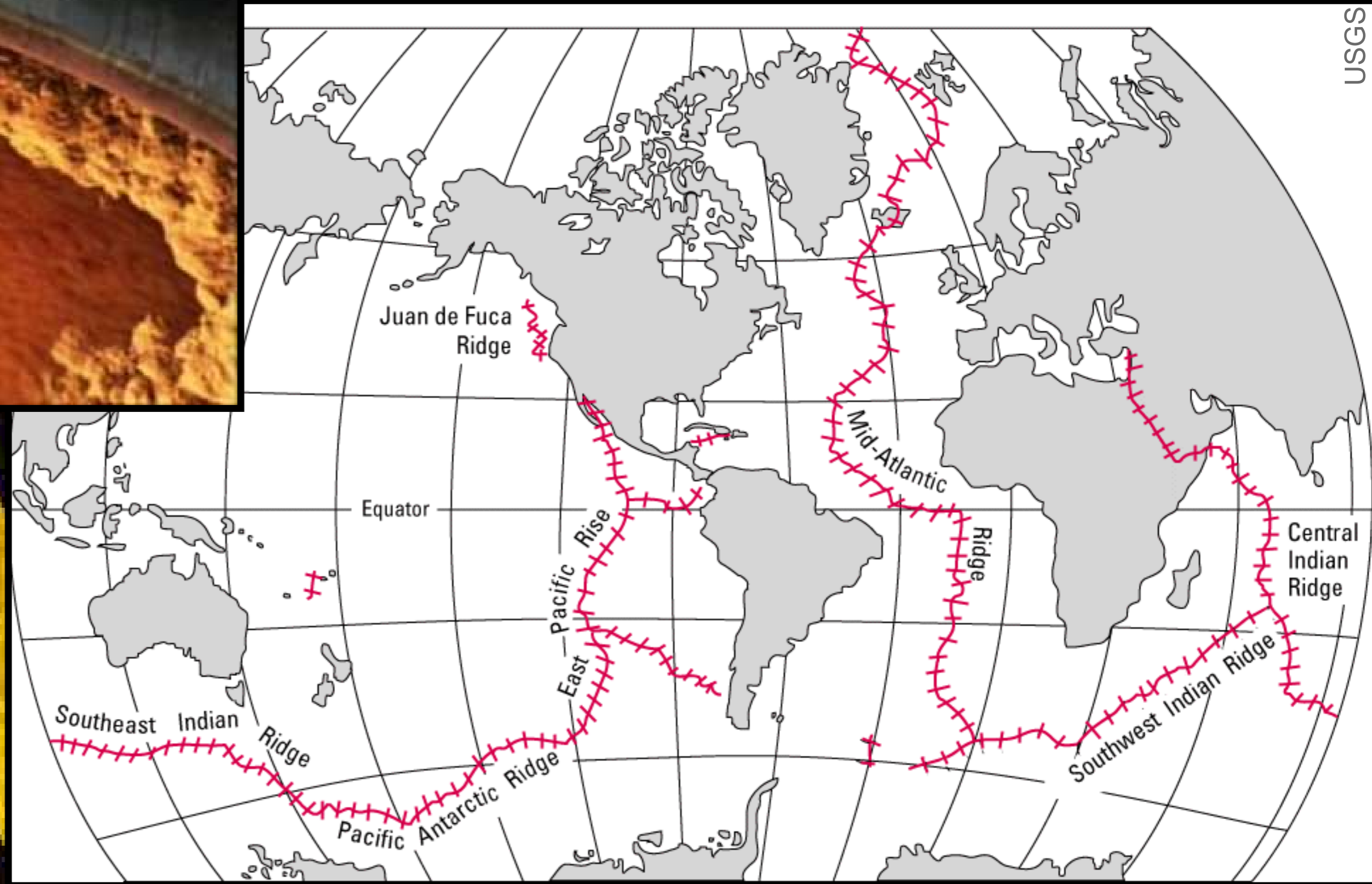


Mid-Ocean Ridge Volcanoes

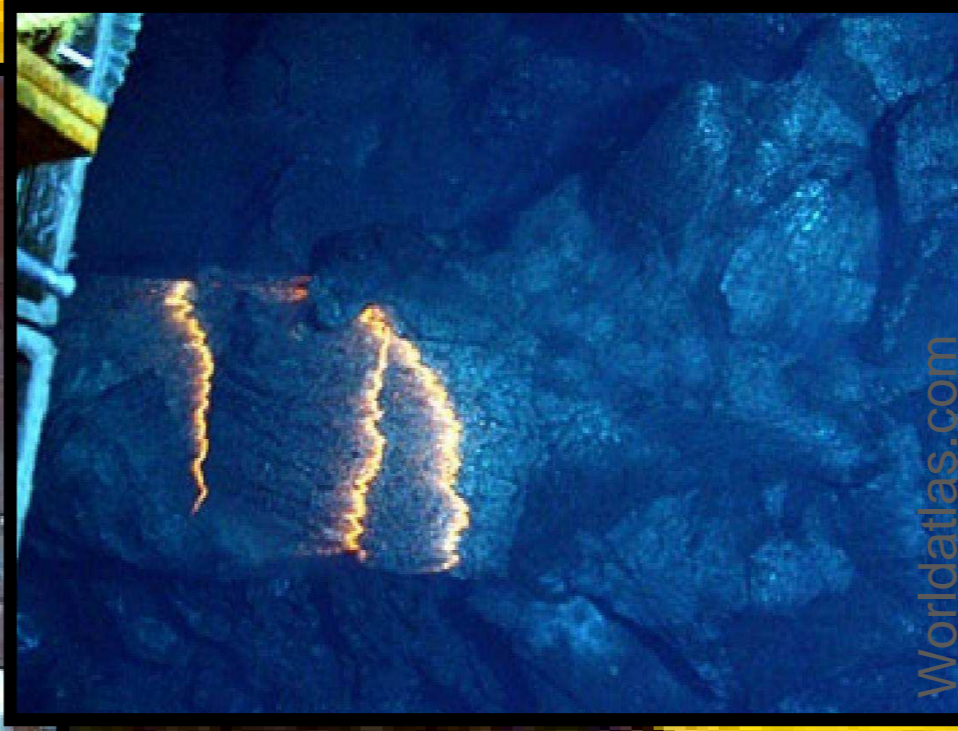
Earth's crust is made up of **tectonic plates**. **Mid-ocean ridge volcanoes** form where two plates are moving apart.



As the plates move apart, cracks form in the crust. Magma from the mantle surges up these cracks, and erupts onto the surface, forming new crust.



This new crust is very thin, so it forms an ocean basin. Only very thick crust can form land.



Mid-ocean ridges are very difficult to study because they are usually deep underwater. But occasionally, these plate boundaries run onto land, and begin slowly tearing a continent apart. This is happening now in Afar, Ethiopia.

In the Afar desert, you can see huge cracks in the ground where the crust is being pulled apart by moving plates.



Mid-ocean ridge volcanoes produce huge volumes of lava. This lava is very fluid – it pours onto the surface, and flows or forms lakes. Because it's movement is predictable, you can get quite close to this lava.



Because Afar is much easier to get to than the bottom of the sea, scientists are studying the region very carefully.

