

The Great Barrier Reef

One of the world's most remarkable natural wonders, the Great Barrier Reef lies just off Queensland's coastline. Home to countless species of marine wildlife, stunning natural scenery and world-class experiences, the Great Barrier Reef is a national treasure that everyone should experience first-hand. Want to learn more about the Reef? Let's dive in...

The World's Largest & Most Extensive Coral Reef System

The Great Barrier Reef spans two thirds of the north eastern coastline of Australia extending north from **Bundaberg** on Queensland's coast to **Cape York**, the northern tip of Australia.



It is the largest natural feature on earth and its impressive size makes it the only living structure that can be seen from **the moon**.



2900
Coral Reefs



600
Continental Islands



300
Coral Cays

The Great Barrier Reef is the largest and most extensive coral reef system in the world comprising about **2900** individual coral reefs, **600** continental islands and **300** coral cays.



It represents approximately **10%** of all coral reefs in the world.

It is **2300 kms** long and approximately **350 000 kms²** in size. That's about **70 million football fields** or the size of **Japan!**



World Class, World Heritage

The Great Barrier Reef is recognised internationally as one of the world's greatest natural wonders



It became the first coral reef system in the world to be awarded World Heritage status



The Great Barrier Reef meets all four of the natural criteria for World Heritage listing



The Great Barrier Reef is renowned as one of the world's healthiest reef systems

The Great Barrier Reef is easily accessible from various access points, including Port Douglas, Cairns, Townsville, Airlie Beach, 1770 and Bundaberg.

A range of "above water" activities are also available for visitors to experience the Great Barrier Reef without getting wet. These include air-based activities such as **aeroplane** and **helicopter** scenic flights over coral cays and islands or coral viewing from **glass bottom boats**.

The most popular way to experience the Great Barrier Reef is by boat. **Scuba-diving** and **snorkelling**, sailing, **bare boating**, cruise shipping and **expedition cruising** are just some of the world class water-based activities on offer.

Other great activities of the Great Barrier Reef can be experienced on one of its **600 islands** where visitors can stay at a tropical island resort, camp on a deserted island, hike one of the **world's best trails**, take in spectacular views, meet the **wildlife** or simply take part in **beach activities**.

A Rich Underwater World

The Great Barrier Reef is home to:



More than **30 species** of whales and dolphins



1625 species of fish



411 species of hard coral and over **150** species of soft coral (equates to **10%** of the world's soft coral)



As many as **3000** species of molluscs



6 of the world's **7** species of marine turtles



Giant clams over **120** years old



Millions of nesting seabirds

Dinosaurs of the Reef

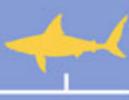
Turtles, crocodiles and sharks are the marine 'dinosaurs' of the Reef. Turtles have been on the Reef for **150 million** years, crocodiles for **200 million** years and sharks for around **400 million** years!



150 million years



200 million years



400 million years

Iconic creatures of the Great Barrier Reef



Whales



Turtles



Sharks



Clownfish



Giant Clam



Rays



Maori Wrasse



Potato Cod



Fascinating Coral Reef Formations

Coral reefs have been growing in the Great Barrier Reef region for over **25 million** years however they did not form the large reef system that we can see today until about **6000** to **8000** years ago.



Coral reefs are formed when tiny animals called **Coral Polyps** extract minerals from the ocean and convert it into hard skeleton homes. When Coral Polyps die the limestone skeleton remains. This forms the **building blocks** of a coral reef system.



Zooxanthellae algae assist in the process. They live inside the coral's cells and provide it with **food** and also its rich and vibrant colours.



Coral cays are **formed** when coral skeletons, algae and other reef creatures, sand and rubble are trapped by currents, wind and waves. Over time the environment stabilises and a **coral cay** is established.



About **one third** of the coral cays on the **Great Barrier Reef** support some form of vegetation.

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