

# The Great Barrier Reef



## Where Is the Great Barrier Reef?

The Great Barrier Reef is an enormous living formation in Australia. It has 2900 individual reefs and over 900 islands. The Great Barrier Reef is located in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia. It stretches along the Queensland coast from near the southern town of Bundaberg, to up past Cape York. It is a popular tourist attraction with over 2 million visitors every year.

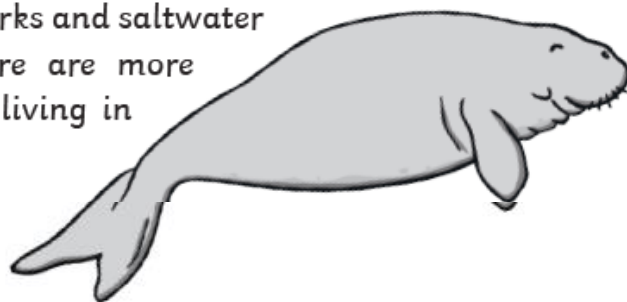
## How Big Is the Great Barrier Reef?

The Great Barrier Reef is a staggering 2600 kilometres long. It is not only the world's largest reef but also the world's largest living structure. The Great Barrier Reef is bigger than Tasmania and Victoria put together. Astronauts can even see it from outer space!

## Which Animals Live in the Great Barrier Reef?

The Great Barrier Reef is home to many thousands of animals, such as fish, sea turtles, giant clam, seahorses, sea snakes, sea turtles, stingrays, sharks and more. One of the most interesting, is the dugong. These unusual animals are closely related to dolphins and whales. They are large mammals and are herbivores. Dugongs feed on the many plants of the Great Barrier Reef.

They are hunted by sharks and saltwater crocodiles. Today, there are more than 50,000 dugongs living in Australian waters.



### **What Else Lives in the Great Barrier Reef?**

Many other species live in the Great Barrier Reef; including a wide variety of corals and sponges. 360 species of hard coral grow there, including bottlebrush coral, bubble coral, brain coral, mushroom coral, staghorn coral, tabletop coral and needle coral. Hard corals grow in shallow water and help build the structure of coral reefs. They grow in several forms, such as mounds, plates and branches. When a coral colony dies, a new one will grow on top of the skeletons of the dead coral. This creates three-dimensional architecture. Hot weather and warm water are bad for coral and cause 'coral bleaching'. This means they lose their natural colour and become a white-greyish colour.

### **How Do Aboriginal People Use the Great Barrier Reef?**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the traditional owners of the Great Barrier Reef. More than 70 Indigenous tribes have ownership over parts of the Great Barrier Reef. Many animals that live there are important to Aboriginal Dreaming, specifically the turtle and dugong. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have used the sea to give them food for thousands of years. Today, food from the sea is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who still collect food and prepare meals using their traditional foods.



# Questions

1. Where is the Great Barrier Reef?

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2. Which two states is the Great Barrier Reef bigger than?

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3. How is it possible that astronauts can see the Great Barrier Reef from outer space?

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4. In alphabetical order, list examples of animals that live in the Great Barrier Reef.

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5. Are dugongs extinct? Give reasons for your answer.

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6. Describe what 'coral bleaching' means.

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7. What happens when a coral colony dies?

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# Answers

1. Where is the Great Barrier Reef?

**The Great Barrier Reef is in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia.**

2. Which two states is the Great Barrier Reef bigger than?

**The Great Barrier Reef is bigger than Tasmania and Victoria put together.**

3. How is it possible that astronauts can see it from outer space?

**It's possible for astronauts to see it from outer space because of the size of the Great Barrier Reef and the equipment they use.**

4. In alphabetical order, list examples of animals that live in the Great Barrier Reef.

**dugongs, fish, giant clam, salt water crocodiles, seahorses, sea snakes, sea turtles, sharks, stingrays.**

5. Are dugongs extinct? Give reasons for your answer.

**No, dugongs are not extinct. There are more than 50,000 of them living in Australian waters.**

6. Describe what 'coral bleaching' means.

**Coral bleaching is when the coral lose their natural colour and become a white-greyish colour.**

7. What happens when a coral colony dies?

**When a coral colony dies, a new one will grow on top of the skeletons of the dead coral.**