

# Great Barrier Reef

## Location

The Great Barrier Reef is an enormous living formation which is located in Australia. It consists of 2,900 reefs and 900 islands. The Great Barrier Reef is in the Coral Sea which is off the coast of Queensland. It runs along the Queensland coast from near the southern town of Bundaberg to Cape York.



## Size

The Great Barrier Reef is 2,600 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 space!

## Animals

The Great Barrier Reef is home to many animals, such as fish, sea turtles, giant clams, seahorses, sea snakes, stingrays and sharks. 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 that grow in the Great Barrier Reef. They are hunted by sharks and saltwater crocodiles. Today, there are more than 50,000 dugongs living in Australian waters.



## Coral

Many different types of coral grow in the Great Barrier Reef. Most are types of coral and sea sponge. 360 species of hard coral grow there, including: bottlebrush coral, bubble coral, brain coral, mushroom coral, staghorn coral, tabletop coral and needle coral. Hot weather and warm water is bad for coral and causes coral bleaching. Coral bleaching is when high temperatures cause the coral to lose its natural colour and become white or grey.

## Indigenous People

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are the traditional owners of the Great Barrier Reef. 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 methods.

# Questions

1. Where is the Great Barrier Reef?

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2. How long is the Great Barrier Reef?

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3. From where can the Great Barrier Reef be seen?

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4. In alphabetical order, list the 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. What does **herbivore** mean?

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7. Describe the meaning of **coral bleaching**.

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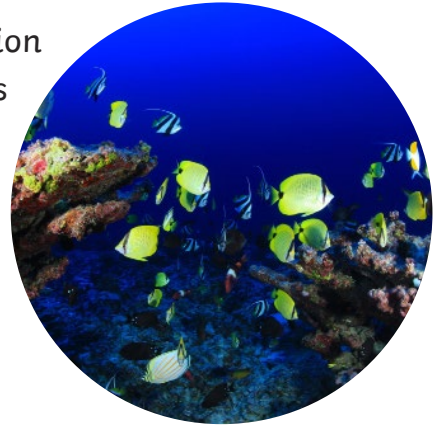
# Answers

1. Where is the Great Barrier Reef?  
**The Great Barrier Reef is in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia.**
2. How long is the Great Barrier Reef?  
**The Great Barrier Reef is 2,600 kilometres long.**
3. From where can the Great Barrier Reef be seen?  
**The Great Barrier Reef can be seen from space.**
4. In alphabetical order, list the examples of animals that live in the Great Barrier Reef.  
**Dugongs, fish, giant clams, 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. What does **herbivore** mean?  
**Herbivore means an animal that only eats plants.**
7. Describe the meaning of **coral bleaching**.  
**Coral bleaching is when high temperatures cause the coral to turn white and lose its natural colour.**

# Great Barrier Reef

## Location

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



## Size

The Great Barrier Reef is a staggering 2,600 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 space!

## Animals

The Great Barrier Reef is home to many thousands of animals, such as fish, sea turtles, giant clams, seahorses, sea snakes, stingrays, sharks and more. One of the most interesting is the dugong. These unusual-looking 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.



Plankton can also be found in the waters around the Great Barrier Reef. Plankton are tiny drifting organisms that live in the top layers of the ocean. They are not strong enough to swim against ocean current, which is why they drift. Plankton are important in the ocean's food chain because they are the main source of food for almost all fish. Some sharks and whales feed on them directly, while other large fish feed on them indirectly, by eating fish of smaller size which have eaten plankton.

## Coral

Many different types of coral grow in the Great Barrier Reef. Most are types of coral and sea sponge. 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 is bad for coral and causes coral bleaching. This means they lose their natural colour and become a white, greyish colour. Coral bleaching is common in the Great Barrier Reef due to the fact it is in such a warm, tropical climate.

## Indigenous People

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 methods.





# Questions

1. Where is the Great Barrier Reef?

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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5. Why are plankton important to the Great Barrier Reef?

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6. What is the difference between directly and indirectly eating plankton?

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7. What are the causes of coral bleaching?

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8. Using information from the text, draw and label what happens when a coral colony dies.

# 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?
  1. **Tasmania**
  2. **Victoria**
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.**
4. 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.**
5. Why are plankton important to the Great Barrier Reef?  
**Plankton is important to the Great Barrier Reef because almost all fish feed on it.**
6. What is the difference between directly and indirectly eating plankton?  
**Directly eating plankton means the fish eat the plankton itself whereas indirectly eating plankton means the fish eats another fish which has eaten plankton.**
7. What are the causes of coral bleaching?  
**Coral bleaching is when high temperatures cause the coral to turn white and lose its natural colour.**
8. Using information from the text, draw and label what happens when a coral colony dies.  
**Responses will vary but should include the skeleton on top of new coral.**

# Great Barrier Reef

## Location

The Great Barrier Reef is an enormous living formation in Australia. It consists of 2,900 individual reefs and over 900 islands. The Great Barrier Reef is located in the Coral Sea which is off the coast of Queensland. It stretches along the Queensland coast from near the southern town of Bundaberg to past Cape York. It is a popular tourist destination, attracting over 2 million visitors every year. Tourists dive, snorkel and fish there.



## Size

The Great Barrier Reef is a staggering 2,600 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 space!

## Animals

The Great Barrier Reef is home to many thousands of animals, such as fish, sea turtles, giant clams, seahorses, sea snakes, stingrays, sharks and more. One of the most interesting is the dugong. These unusual-looking 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. The dugongs that live in the Great Barrier Reef are the biggest and most important dugong population in the world.



Another animal which lives in the Great Barrier Reef is plankton. Plankton are microscopic drifting organisms that live in the top layers of the ocean. They are not strong enough to swim against ocean current, which is why they drift. Plankton are essential to the ocean's food chain because they are the primary source of food for almost all fish. Some sharks and whales feed on them directly, while other large fish feed on them indirectly, by eating fish of smaller size which have eaten plankton.



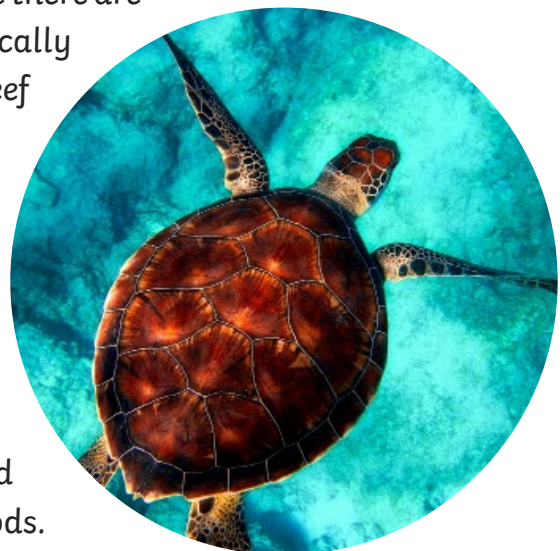
## Coral

Many different types of coral grow in the Great Barrier Reef. 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. Coral bleaching is a current threat to the Great Barrier Reef.

Algae grows on coral and they need each other to survive because the coral eats the algae. The algae also make the coral colourful. Pollution, high water temperatures, low water levels and too much sunlight makes the algae detach from the coral. When the algae detach from the coral, the coral is left bare. Over several weeks, it starts to turn white, losing all its colour. The coral then loses its nutrients and can become sick and even die. Several things can be done to help prevent coral bleaching. Being stringent with water, always putting rubbish in the bin, being gentle to the reef if you swim in it, planting trees and picking up rubbish at the beach are all ways you can prevent coral bleaching.

## Indigenous People

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. The Great Barrier Reef has been essential to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People for many thousands of years because it has been a primary source of food for them. They have used the sea to give them food for a long time. Today, food from the sea is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who still collect food and prepare meals using their traditional methods.



# Questions

1. Where is the Great Barrier Reef?

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

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

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4. Describe the importance of plankton to the Great Barrier Reef.

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5. What is the difference between directly and indirectly eating plankton?

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6. What happens when a coral colony dies?

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7. What causes coral bleaching?

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Write a persuasive paragraph, asking people to help reduce coral bleaching using the information from the text.

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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. 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.**
3. 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.**
4. Describe the importance of plankton to the Great Barrier Reef.  
**Plankton are important to the Great Barrier Reef because almost all fish feed on it, making them an important part of the food chain. There are thousands of types of fish in the Great Barrier Reef, all of which rely on plankton for food.**
5. What is the difference between directly and indirectly eating plankton?  
**Directly eating plankton means the fish eat the plankton itself whereas indirectly eating plankton means the fish eats another fish which has eaten plankton.**
6. Describe 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. This creates a three-dimensional structure of coral.**
7. What causes coral bleaching?  
**Pollution, high water temperatures, low water levels and too much sunlight causes coral bleaching.**
8. Write a persuasive paragraph, asking people to help reduce coral bleaching using the information from the text.  
**Responses will vary.**