

Year 4 General Studies

Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef ecosystem. It has been of great importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for thousands of years, and continues to be one of Australia's most important natural environments. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was created by the Australian Government in 1975 to save the reef from mining. Other activities, like fishing and tourism, are still allowed in some parts of the marine park.

World's Largest Reef System

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef ecosystem. At 2300 kilometres long and with an area of 344,400 square kilometres, it comprises about 600 islands and 3000 coral reefs and is home to one-third of all the world's soft coral species.

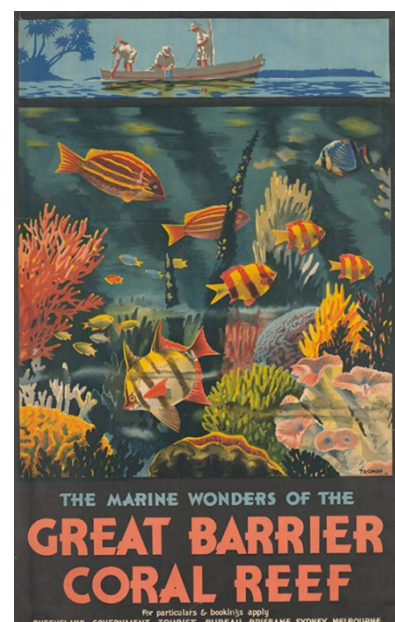
The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 set up a group called the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which would work with the Queensland Government to manage the marine park. The Act allowed fishing and tourism in some areas.

The first part of the marine park was set up in 1979 but more sections of the reef have been added over time. In 1981 the Great Barrier Reef became part of the UNESCO World Heritage List as one of the most important ecosystems on earth and an area of great natural beauty.

Animals and Plants

While it's known mostly for its large maze of colourful reefs, its intricate architecture also provides a home for a huge number of animals and plants. Some of these, such as turtles and crocodiles, have been around since prehistoric times and have changed little over the millennia.

The breathtaking array of marine creatures includes 600 types of soft and hard corals, more than 100 species of jellyfish, 3000 varieties of molluscs, 500 species of worms, 1625 types of fish, 133 varieties of sharks and rays, and more than 30 species of whales and dolphins.



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Questions

1. What is the Great Barrier Reef and what threat did it face in the 1970s?

2. How many coral reefs make up the Great Barrier Reef? (Circle the answer)

- 300
- 600
- 3000

3. In 1981 the Great Barrier Reef became a UNESCO World Heritage site.

True / False

4. What is the size of the Great Barrier Reef?

5. List three animals that call the Great Barrier Reef home.

i _____

ii _____

iii _____