



## The Great Barrier Reef

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- **The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has recommended that the Australia's Great Barrier Reef should be added to a list of "in danger" World Heritage Sites.** It was recommended to add to the list because of the impact of climate change. **It is the world's biggest single structure made by living organisms.**
- The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan is the Australian and Queensland Government's framework for protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef by 2050. Despite Reef 2050, the coral reef ecosystem has suffered three major bleaching events since 2015 due to severe marine heatwaves.
- The reef is located in the Coral Sea (North-East Coast), off the coast of Queensland, Australia. **It is the world's most extensive and spectacular coral reef ecosystem** composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands. **It was selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981.**
- This reef structure is composed of and built by billions of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps. Polyps are tiny, soft-bodied organisms. At their base is a hard, protective limestone skeleton called a calicle, which forms the structure of coral reefs. These polyps have microscopic algae living within their tissues. The corals and algae have a mutualistic (symbiotic) relationship.

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