

# Our Challenge

Despite their iconic World Heritage status, none of these sites are immune to the effects of accelerating ocean industrialization, increasing pressure for coastal development or the serious impacts from climate change. Nearly a third of all marine sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List are threatened by unsustainable or illegal fisheries. Pollution from plastic and maritime transport are increasing and invasive species become rapidly more common. Most sites struggle to comprehend the increasingly dangerous mix of cumulative and combined effects.



# Our Mission

Launched in 2005, the mission of the World Heritage Marine Programme is to establish effective conservation of existing and potential marine areas of Outstanding Universal Value to make sure they will be maintained and thrive for generations to come. The programme has four focus areas to fulfil its mission.

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## How World Heritage marine sites are selected

World Heritage sites are selected through a rigorous, multi-year nomination, evaluation and inscription process. Outstanding Universal Value is the central premise upon which World Heritage is built. Natural Sites must respond to at least one of the following criteria:

1. Superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
2. Outstanding examples of major stages in the earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going processes in the development of landforms or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
3. Outstanding examples of significant, ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and plant and animal communities, and
4. The most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including threatened species that are considered of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.

A site must also meet requirements for integrity and have adequate management in place to ensure conservation of the site's outstanding features.



## Contact

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# Marine World Heritage

Our legacy from the past • What we live with today • What we pass on to future generations



# 49 marine sites

inscribed on the World Heritage List

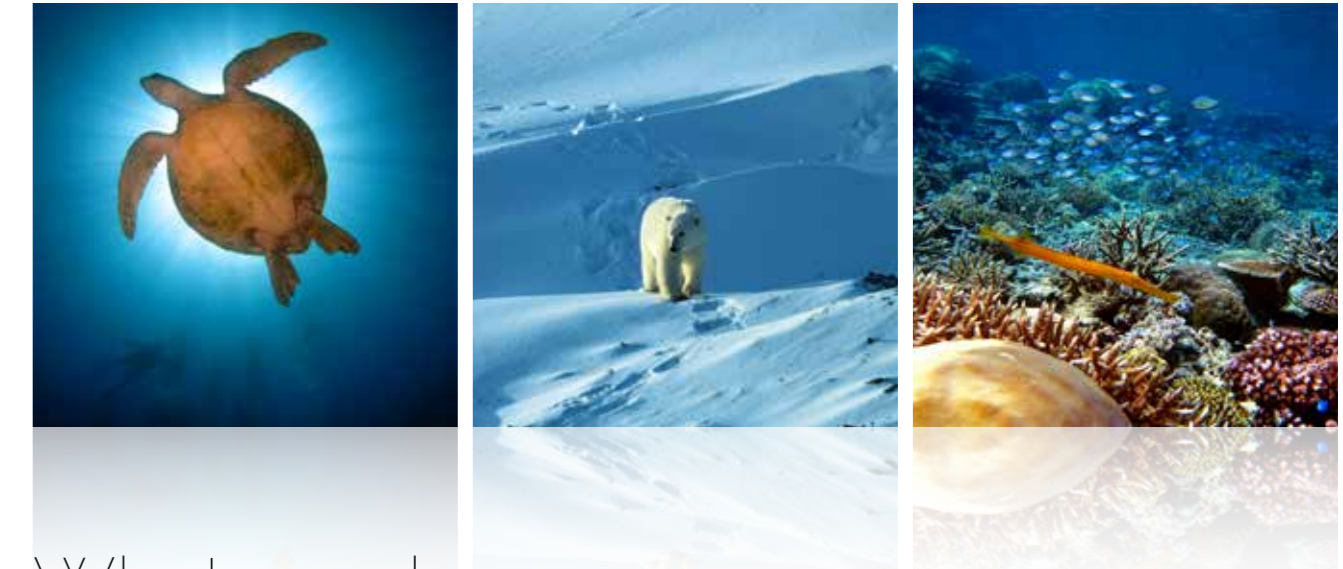


## 1972 World Heritage Convention

The 1972 World Heritage Convention unites nations behind a shared commitment to preserve the world's outstanding heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. It recognizes that the protection of these exceptional places is the duty of the international community as a whole and it ensures that the preservation of these special sites becomes a shared responsibility.

## World Heritage Marine Sites

The UNESCO World Heritage List includes 49 ocean places – distributed across 37 countries – recognized for their unique marine biodiversity, singular ecosystem, unique geological processes or incomparable beauty. Together these sites cover about 10 percent by surface area of all existing marine protected areas. Their disappearance would be an irreversible loss to humanity.



## What we do

### 1. Monitoring sites' conservation status

All sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List are subject to systematic monitoring and evaluation. In collaboration with advisory bodies, we provide support – based on scientific analysis and data – to the World Heritage Committee and national governments that allows the evaluation of the state of conservation of World Heritage marine sites.

### 2. Building a global managers network

World Heritage marine sites share similar conservation challenges and simultaneously hold a wealth of information about good and best practices in dealing with them. Bringing these success stories together, in ways that make them suitable for replication in other marine areas, is a central part of our work where a clear and univocal added value can be delivered.

### 3. Improving sustainable conservation

Site managers and their partners are constantly facing questions about new socio-economic development and yet have few tools to help them understand the impact that today's decisions will have 10 to 20 years into the future. We provide training and guidance to managers to help them achieve environmental, social and economic objectives in a tangible way that safeguards sites' exceptional values.

### 4. Exploring World Heritage in the High Seas and elsewhere

Sunken coral islands, floating rainforests, giant undersea volcanoes or even spires of rock resembling lost cities beneath the waves: none of these sites can be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List because they are found in the High Seas, outside any national jurisdiction. With our partners, we are exploring how the world's most visible Convention could be applied to the High Seas and in other under or non-represented marine gaps on the World Heritage List.