



United Nations  
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World  
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Convention

# MARINE WORLD HERITAGE: 50 BEACONS OF HOPE IN A CHANGING OCEAN

2019 was another year of highs and lows for marine World Heritage. We made progress in building climate adaptation strategies across marine World Heritage sites, saw a new marine site added to the World Heritage List and brought the 50 managers together to forge a joint path forward toward reaching the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Belize more than doubled its no-take zones while the West Norwegian Fjords adopted a landmark zero emissions policy.

Yet 2019 also underscored the urgent need for change – a need that was once more confirmed with the inscription of the Gulf of California on the UNESCO List of World Heritage sites in Danger last June. Despite their global recognition, nearly all World Heritage marine sites lack the capacity to face the threats of

climate change. With the help of a consortium of international partners, the tide is starting to turn. Ningaloo Coast and the Lagoons of New Caledonia recruited their first ever local resilience teams through the Resilient Reefs Initiative.

Our work would not be possible without our partners. Several new partnerships were signed, anonymous partners stepped up their efforts of support, and we were honoured to pitch Marine World Heritage at several international events across the globe. Protecting marine World Heritage is the responsibility of us all. We are grateful for every contribution made – small & large. Together we can bring the change marine World Heritage needs to thrive for generations to come.

## World Heritage Marine Programme

# 2020 ANNUAL OVERVIEW



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# HIGHLIGHTS OF CONSERVATION SUCCESSES ACROSS THE MARINE WORLD HERITAGE NETWORK



## Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, Belize

"In April 2019, the Government of Belize approved an increase of its no-take zones from 7.9 percent to 16.2 percent. The expansion is expected to further strengthen the Belize Barrier Reef which was removed from the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger in 2018."

**Beverly Wade**, World Heritage Focal Point, Belize



## West Norwegian Fjords Geirangerfjord and Nærøfjord, Norway

"In 2019 we started to gradually implement some of the world's most stringent emission regulations that obliges all cruise ships operating in the West Norwegian Fjords World Heritage area to prepare for zero emissions starting in 2026."

**Katrin Blomvik**, Director, Geirangerfjord World Heritage Foundation



## Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, Philippines

"Receiving the esteemed 2019 KfW-Bernhard-Grzimek-Preis for biodiversity conservation is such an honor. The recognition of decades of work from our team is an inspiration for us to continue to conserve and protect one of the world's most remote World Heritage sites."

**Angelique Songco**, Superintendent of Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park



## Archipiélago de Revillagigedo, Mexico

"Thanks to the re-categorization of Revillagigedo as a National Park, the presence of the Mexican Navy, the national park rangers, the support of our stakeholders and the use of technology such as 3 ultra-modern cameras and a military radar, our archipelago and its extraordinary biodiversity is now much better protected from illegal fishing."

**Javier Alejandro Gonzalez**, Director, Parque Nacional Revillagigedo



## Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture, Spain

"The Balearic Islands enforced no-anchorage zones for all vessels, no matter how small the boat, to protect the unique seagrass prairies. The first of its kind legislation in the Mediterranean Sea is supported by the installation of buoys and actively enforced to ensure compliance."

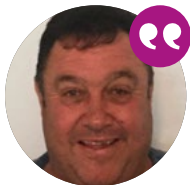
**Jordi Salewski**, Environment Councilor, Municipality of Ibiza



## Ningaloo Coast, Australia

"The recruitment of our first Chief Resilience Officer is a significant step that will further unite stakeholders behind a joint resilience strategy. The resilience strategy will complement existing management actions and identify innovative solutions that build on and expand current programs to address the Ningaloo Coast and the associated community's vulnerabilities."

**Arvid Hogstrom**, District Manager, Parks and Wildlife Service



## Gough and Inaccessible Islands, UK

"After years of planning, our mice eradication campaign critical to the restoration of Gough Island as a seabird haven and to safeguard one of the world's greatest wanderers, the Critically Endangered Tristan albatross, has now full government approval and will start this year."

**Trevor Glass**, Tristan's Head of the Conservation Department



# ➔ MARINE WORLD HERITAGE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE



The impacts of climate change are affecting marine World Heritage sites at an unprecedented speed. Rising sea levels, warming waters and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events are rapidly altering both these sites' ecosystems and the local communities who depend on them for their livelihood. While we continue to work with scientists to assess the impacts and understand their implications, the majority of our focus in 2019 has been on adaptation and building resilience at the local level.

The 4th global marine World Heritage managers conference confirmed once again that most of the ocean's flagship marine protected areas are not well equipped to navigate conservation through these changing times. Most sites have no comprehensive vulnerability assessments underway that could inform what management decisions will be most effective in the years ahead. Nor do sites have adequate adaptation strategies in

place that take into account both people and nature.

With the help of an international consortium of partners that is led by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, we embarked on a new ambitious initiative to build climate adaptation strategies across an initial five marine World Heritage sites in Palau, France, Belize and Australia. The project is being deployed over the course of an initial four years and has

a total investment of USD 9million. The project finances a Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) in each of the five sites who is responsible for designing an integrated climate adaptation strategy. The project further funds a series of initiatives to strengthen the sites' resilience. Both Ningaloo Coast and the Lagoons of New Caledonia have now appointed their first CRO. Teams in Belize, Palau and Australia are expected to be appointed in 2020.

Obviously, local management alone is no longer enough to safeguard marine World Heritage sites from climate change. It is obvious that the world needs to reach the targets set under the 2015 United Nations Framework Agreement for Climate Change. The World Heritage Centre is currently revising its climate policy and launched a public consultation end 2019. The results will be presented at the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee.



## Raising the stakes for marine World Heritage in global climate discussions

While effective local management is important, it is critical that CO2 emissions are drastically reduced if marine World Heritage is to be preserved for future generations. Scientific research illustrates that all 29 World Heritage-listed coral reefs might cease to function as reef systems before the end of the century under a business-as-usual climate emissions scenario. Over the course of 2019, raising awareness for these alarming predictions was at the heart of our actions. We chaired the oceans &

climate discussion at the Brussels High Level conference on climate change and ocean conservation and introduced marine World Heritage at the presentation of the IPCC Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere, organized by the German Permanent Delegation to the European Union. Representatives from indigenous communities in Palau led the presentation of our climate work at the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee in Baku, Azerbaijan in June 2019.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1492/>



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Our 2019 activities to assess climate change impacts on marine World Heritage and invest in building resilience at the site were supported by the French Biodiversity Agency and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.



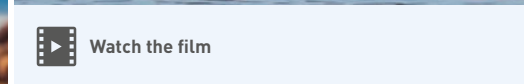
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➔ **WORLD HERITAGE MARINE MANAGERS:** A FLAGSHIP NETWORK EMPOWERED TO TRANSFORM HOW WE PROTECT

The UNESCO World Heritage List includes 50 marine sites across 37 nations. Local managers at these sites have confronted every imaginable problem facing our ocean, and many have created leading-edge solutions.

Under the auspices of UNESCO, expertise is shared from across the network to avoid duplication of efforts. This happens through exchange of staff, e-communication, and tri-annual global managers conferences to share management challenges and conservation success stories. In 2019, managers joined up in Glacier Bay to align strategic future priorities for the next decade, discuss a wide variety of topics, and demonstrate leadership.

Since its inception in 2010, the network has produced several tangible results, including the record-time designation of Tubbutaha Reefs Natural Park as a no-go area for international maritime traffic, joint monitoring campaigns of the millions of birds shared between Banc d'Arguin National Park and the Wadden Sea, zero emission targets for cruise ships visiting World Heritage sites, and the set-up of a state of the art fisheries compliance computer system in Galapagos. In 2020 our work will focus on establishing a new South-South cooperation agreement between sites in Africa.



## 4th World Heritage marine managers conference

Managers met up from 4 to 9 September 2019 to brainstorm about how Marine World Heritage can accelerate achieving the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and discuss topics ranging from establishing successful private-public partnerships, climate resilience and adaptation, cooperation with indigenous communities, the use of satellite and space technology and the

growing problem of plastics and marine debris. The conference took place in the Tribal House of the indigenous community of the Huna Tlingit at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, USA, in collaboration with the National Park Service.

The choice for the 2019 location was largely inspired by the incredibly successful public-private partnership

arrangement between the World Heritage site and the cruise industry that has drastically reduced air emissions and water discharges and contributes about 14 million USD per year for conservation and park management.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2020/>





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## Stepping up management of Komodo's outstanding marine environment

Staff and experts from the Great Barrier Reef, Galápagos Islands and Puerto-Princesa World Heritage marine sites met in Indonesia to support the Komodo National Park with the management of its marine component. The workshop focused on marine monitoring, sharing benefits equitably, and cooperation with the scuba diving industry. A training session was also held on how to put the Outstanding Universal Value at the centre of a World Heritage site's management system.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2065>



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## Glacier Bay and West Norwegian Fjords sign Partnership Agreement

Since the first World Heritage marine managers conference in 2010 in Hawaii, site representatives shared management plans, research and monitoring protocols, and met several times to discuss challenges related to cruise tourism, environmental protocols, and interpretation and education programs. A formal cooperation agreement was signed in September 2019 and aims to secure sustainable cruise ship operations at both UNESCO World Heritage marine sites.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2051>



© Wendy Strahm / IUCN

## French Austral Lands and Seas becomes 50th marine World Heritage site

In July 2019, the World Heritage Committee granted World Heritage recognition to the French Austral Lands and Seas, one of the ocean's last wilderness and home to over 50 million birds of up to 47 species. With nearly 700,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the largely pristine place is among the largest marine protected areas on Earth. The addition expanded the ocean surface covered by marine World Heritage by half.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1603>



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## Arabic World Heritage management tools

The best practice guide outlines a step by step approach on how to achieve environmental, social and economic objectives that lead to sustainably managed marine protected areas. The guide is based on best practices from across marine World Heritage sites and established expertise in marine protected area management. The guide was published in 2015 and is now also available in Arabic.

Read more: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369414>

Our 2019 activities to strengthen the World Heritage marine managers network and accelerate change were supported by the governments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Australia, Flanders and France, Carnival Corporation, the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Alaska Geographic, and anonymous partners.

# ➔ WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE REVIEWS CONSERVATION STATUS OF MARINE WORLD HERITAGE SITES



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World Heritage Listing is only the first step. Once a place is designated and inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, it becomes subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure its special values are maintained. In 2019, we contributed to the scientific assessments of 10 marine sites.

The World Heritage Committee oversees all sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List, reviews state of conservation reports, and requests governments to take action to address specific conservation challenges. At its 43rd annual session held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, last July, the Committee adopted decisions for 10 World Heritage marine sites.

List of decisions for 10 World Heritage marine sites. Click to read the Decision.

#### Area de Conservación Guanacaste

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### East Rennell

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### Everglades National Park

 [Read the Decision](#)


#### Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### Shiretoko

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### Socotra Archipelago

 [Read the Decision](#)

#### The Sundarbans

 [Read the Decision](#)





© National Geographic / Brian J Skerry



## Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California declared in Danger

In July 2019, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California in Mexico on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Central to the decision is the current vulnerable situation of the critically endangered vaquita species. The vaquita population has declined drastically mainly due to the continued illegal use of gillnets to capture the endemic totoaba.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2010/>



© UNESCO / Adam Stewart Hogg



## 14 recommendations for Solomon Islands' East Rennell

In May 2019, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN visited East Rennell to evaluate conservation progress of the site currently on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The mission team discussed avenues for sustainable livelihood development with the property's local Chiefs and evaluated the impact from the recent oil spill. The World Heritage Committee endorsed the mission's 14 recommendations.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1948/>  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/collections/44/>



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## Australia and New Zealand avert oil spill

Following the grounding of a bulk carrier in February 2019, an oil spill threatened to reach nearby East Rennell, a World Heritage site. Thanks to the immediate and considerable support from Australia and New Zealand to the Solomon Islands authorities, an ecological disaster was averted. The World Heritage Centre monitored the situation closely and supported Solomon Islands in holding the responsible company, owners and insurers to account.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1948/>



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## UNESCO 40th General Conference marks historic turnaround

Every two years, all UNESCO Member States meet in Paris to decide on budgets and priorities for the next biennium. The 40th General Conference brought together 193 nations and marked the start of a historic turnaround and repositioning of the organization on contemporary issues, including climate change.

Read more: <https://en.unesco.org/generalconference/40/results>



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## //// Save the date

The World Heritage Committee will convene for its **44th session from 29 June to 9 July 2020**. During the 44th session, the Committee will discuss the state of conservation of at least 9 World Heritage marine sites, including Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California, East Rennell, Everglades National Park, Socotra Archipelago, The Sundarbans, Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection, Galapagos Islands, Banc d'Arguin National Park and the Great Barrier Reef. The full list of sites for review will be available in spring 2020.



The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provides technical advice to help the World Heritage

Committee make informed decisions on natural World Heritage.

For more information:

<https://www.iucn.org/theme/world-heritage>

# PROTECTING MARINE WORLD HERITAGE STARTS WITH OCEAN SCIENCE

Ocean science is critical to inform the management of World Heritage marine sites and evaluate management effectiveness. Yet despite their iconic status, there remain several gaps in scientific understanding. In addition to collecting scientific data for our state of conservation work, we highlight the importance of science and assist sites with the set-up of marine monitoring mechanisms.



## Deep Ocean Expedition in Aldabra Atoll

From 18-20 March 2019, Nekton Deep Ocean Exploration made a first-of-its-kind descent in the Aldabra Atoll World Heritage site (Seychelles) to survey the site's deep sea coral health and establish baseline data. Aldabra Atoll received UNESCO World Heritage status in 1982 and has since recovered its green turtle population from the brink of extinction to one of the largest on Earth.

Read more: <https://news.sky.com/story/deep-ocean-live-rare-access-to-one-of-the-worlds-most-heavily-protected-coral-atolls-11668985>

## Marine World Heritage celebrates women in ocean science

Every year, on 8th June, the United Nations celebrates World Oceans Day. For the 2019 edition "Gender and Oceans", the World Heritage Marine Programme teamed up with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission to honour women in ocean science and highlight the fascinating work from women scientists.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1983/>



▶ Watch the film

## UN Decade of Ocean Science



2021  
2030  
United Nations Decade  
of Ocean Science  
for Sustainable Development

The Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development was proclaimed by

the United Nations and will be held from 2021 to 2030. The Decade aims to catalyze global investments in ocean science to ensure that ocean science can fully support achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Marine Programme aims to develop a roadmap that will set out the core scientific priorities for the next decade, which will allow mobilizing the necessary funding to close the science gap for Marine World Heritage.

The Decade's preparatory process is coordinated by UNESCO-IOC.

Read more: <https://www.oceandecade.org/about>

# WORLD HERITAGE IN MARINE AREAS **BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION**



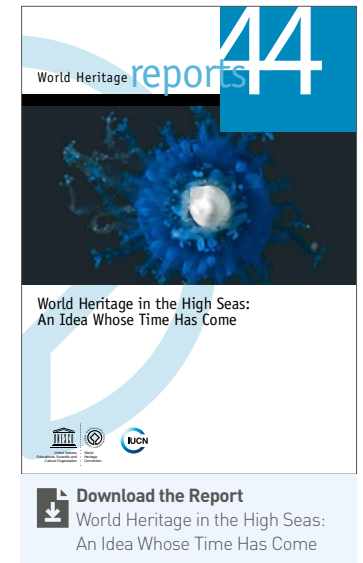
The 1972 World Heritage Convention currently does not protect places in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. Yet, ocean areas of potential universal value might exist in these waters. Following the UNESCO 2011 Audit Recommendation, we are exploring what it would take to extend protection to these areas in the future. A new report is expected in spring 2020.

## Advancing the possibility of World Heritage sites in the High Seas

In 2016, UNESCO and IUCN launched a report that, for the first time, explored ways in which the 1972 World Heritage Convention could help conserve wonders of the open ocean beyond national boundaries. The 2016 report concluded that the Convention could potentially protect exceptional places in these areas and that not doing so might be a historic oversight.

In December 2018, we brought together top legal experts in Monaco to discuss possible practical ways on how globally unique marine areas beyond national jurisdiction could potentially be protected through the 1972 World Heritage Convention. The results of the meeting will be presented at the forthcoming session of the World Heritage Committee in 2020.

Read more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1912/>



The World Heritage Marine Programme is grateful for the support of the French Biodiversity Agency and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation for their generous support to this initiative

# OUR PARTNERS

None of the successes we achieved in 2019 would have been possible without the support of our key partners. Cooperation across government, non-profit, corporate sector and private individuals is essential to preserve our ocean World Heritage legacy for generations to come. Join our growing global alliance today by writing to [wh-marine@unesco.org](mailto:wh-marine@unesco.org)

## KEY 2019 PARTNERS



Government of Flanders,  
Belgium



Principality of Monaco



Prince Albert II of Monaco  
Foundation



French Biodiversity Agency,  
Government of France



Adrian and Jacqui Beecroft  
/ Charities Aid Foundation



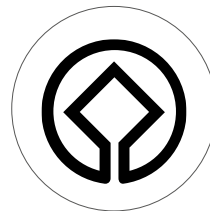
Great Barrier  
Reef Foundation  
  
The Great Barrier Reef  
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Kingdom of  
Saudi Arabia

**We wish to thank the anonymous donors whose generous support enables the World Heritage Marine Programme to fulfil its mandate. The Marine Programme is also grateful for the support from the Government of Australia, Carnival Corporation and Alaska Geographic to the 4th World Heritage marine managers conference.**

## IN COOPERATION WITH



The World Heritage marine site managers and their teams that work tirelessly on the ground to implement the 1972 World Heritage Convention.



The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), official advisory body for natural heritage under the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

# OUR TEAM

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Experts from all over the world have helped make our work possible throughout 2019. We are grateful for their support and look forward to working together in 2020.

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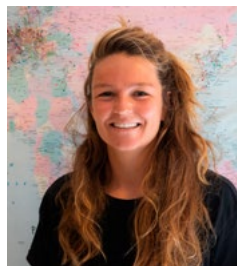
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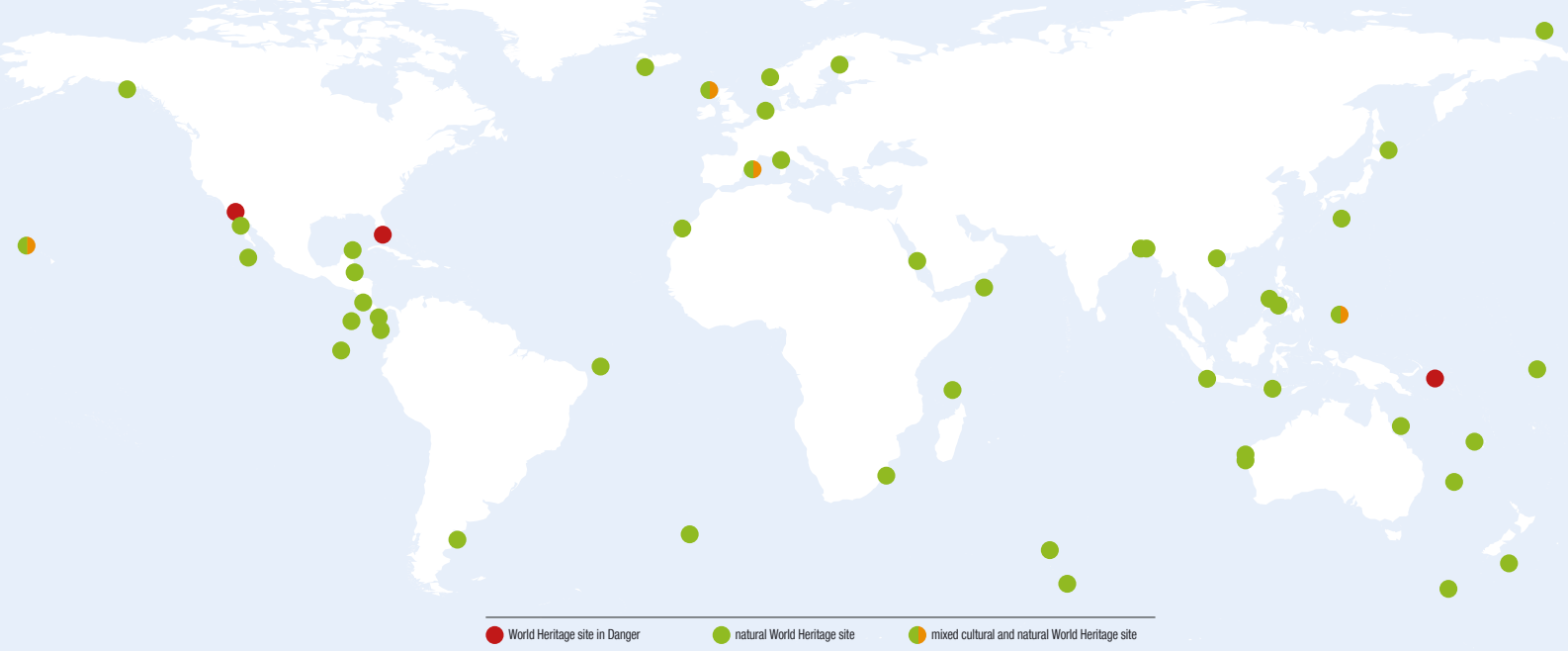
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# THE 50 MARINE SITES INSCRIBED ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

(AS OF 01/01/2020)



● World Heritage site in Danger ● natural World Heritage site ● mixed cultural and natural World Heritage site

- |  |   |   |   |  |  |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Argentina</b><br/><a href="#">Península Valdés</a>, 1999</p> <p><b>Australia</b><br/><a href="#">Great Barrier Reef</a>, 1981<br/><a href="#">Heard and McDonald Islands</a>, 1997<br/><a href="#">Lord Howe Island Group</a>, 1982<br/><a href="#">Macquarie Island</a>, 1997<br/><a href="#">Ningaloo Coast</a>, 2011<br/><a href="#">Shark Bay, Western Australia</a>, 1991</p> <p><b>Bangladesh</b><br/><a href="#">The Sundarbans</a>, 1997</p> <p><b>Belize</b><br/><a href="#">Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System</a>, 1996</p> | <p><b>Brazil</b><br/><a href="#">Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves</a>, 2001</p> <p><b>Canada/USA</b><br/><a href="#">Kluane / Wrangell-St. Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek</a>, 1979</p> <p><b>Colombia</b><br/><a href="#">Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary</a>, 2006</p> <p><b>Costa Rica</b><br/><a href="#">Area de Conservación Guanacaste</a>, 1999<br/><a href="#">Cocos Island National Park</a>, 1997</p> | <p><b>Denmark/Germany/Netherlands</b><br/><a href="#">The Wadden Sea</a>, 2009</p> <p><b>Ecuador</b><br/><a href="#">Galápagos Islands</a>, 1978</p> <p><b>Finland/Sweden</b><br/><a href="#">High Coast / Kvarken Archipelago</a>, 2000</p> <p><b>France</b><br/><a href="#">Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve</a>, 1983<br/><a href="#">Lagoons of New Caledonia: Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems</a>, 2008<br/><a href="#">French Austral Lands and Seas</a>, 2019</p> | <p><b>Iceland</b><br/><a href="#">Surtsey</a>, 2008</p> <p><b>India</b><br/><a href="#">Sundarbans National Park</a>, 1987</p> <p><b>Indonesia</b><br/><a href="#">Komodo National Park</a>, 1991<br/><a href="#">Ujung Kulon National Park</a>, 1991</p> <p><b>Japan</b><br/><a href="#">Ogasawara Islands</a>, 2011<br/><a href="#">Shiretoko</a>, 2005</p> <p><b>Kiribati</b><br/><a href="#">Phoenix Islands Protected Area</a>, 2010</p> | <p><b>Mauritania</b><br/><a href="#">Banc d'Arguin National Park</a>, 1989</p> <p><b>Mexico</b><br/><a href="#">Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California</a>, 2005<br/><a href="#">Sian Ka'an</a>, 1987<br/><a href="#">Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino</a>, 1993<br/><a href="#">Archipiélago de Revillagigedo</a>, 2016</p> <p><b>New Zealand</b><br/><a href="#">New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands</a>, 1998</p> <p><b>Norway</b><br/><a href="#">West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord</a>, 2005</p> | <p><b>Palau</b><br/><a href="#">Rock Islands Southern Lagoon</a>, 2012</p> <p><b>Panama</b><br/><a href="#">Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection</a>, 2005</p> <p><b>Philippines</b><br/><a href="#">Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park</a>, 1999<br/><a href="#">Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park</a>, 1993</p> <p><b>Russian Federation</b><br/><a href="#">Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve</a>, 2004</p> <p><b>Seychelles</b><br/><a href="#">Aldabra Atoll</a>, 1982</p> | <p><b>Solomon Islands</b><br/><a href="#">East Rennell</a>, 1998</p> <p><b>South Africa</b><br/><a href="#">iSimangaliso Wetland Park</a>, 1999</p> <p><b>Spain</b><br/><a href="#">Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture</a>, 1999</p> <p><b>Sudan</b><br/><a href="#">Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dungonab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park</a>, 2016</p> <p><b>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</b><br/><a href="#">Gough and Inaccessible Islands</a>, 1995</p> | <p><a href="#">St Kilda</a>, 1986</p> <p><b>United States of America</b><br/><a href="#">Everglades National Park</a>, 1979<br/><a href="#">Papahānaumokuākea</a>, 2010</p> <p><b>Viet Nam</b><br/><a href="#">Ha Long Bay</a>, 1994</p> <p><b>Yemen</b><br/><a href="#">Socotra Archipelago</a>, 2008</p> |
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