

OUR NATURAL WATER ATTRACTIONS

GREAT BARRIER REEF

Located off the coast of Queensland, the Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system composed of roughly 3,000 individual reefs and 900 islands. Selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981, it is also seen as one of the seven natural wonders of the world. The Great Barrier Reef is also the world's largest World Heritage Area extending 2,000 kilometres and covering an area of 35 million hectares. The Great Barrier Reef can be seen from outer space and is the world's biggest single structure made by living organisms.



The Great Barrier Reef is home to a range of animals, from microscopic plankton to whales weighing more than 100 tonnes. More than just fish and coral, the Great Barrier Reef supports:

- 1625 species of fish, including 1400 coral reef species
- More than 3000 species of molluscs (shells)
- 630 species of echinoderm (starfish, sea urchins)
- 14 breeding species of sea snakes
- 215 species of birds including 22 species of seabirds and 32 species of shorebirds
- Six of the world's seven species of marine turtles
- 30 species of whales and dolphins
- One of the world's most important dugong populations
- 133 species of sharks and rays



LAKE EYRE

Lake Eyre, in South Australia, is Australia's largest salt lake, located in the driest region in the country. To the east and north-east of the lake lie the Tirari, Strzelecki and Sturt Stony deserts, which are seen as some of the most inhospitable environments within Australia. When dry the lake bed is a sparkling sheet of white salt. When the lake does fill which has only been on three occasions in the last century, it becomes temporarily Australia's largest lake as it spreads out to 9500 square kilometres. The lake itself was named after Edward John Eyre who in 1840 became the first European to sight it.

AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC TERRITORY

The Australian Antarctic Territory is the part of Antarctica claimed by Australia and is the largest territory of Antarctica claimed by any nation, with an area estimated at 6,119,818 kilometres squared in size, which is almost as large as the Australian mainland. Antarctica is the coldest, windiest, driest and highest continent in the world. It is also the most isolated where for part of the year the sun doesn't rise, and for another part it never sets. The territory is inhabited only by the staff of research stations and occasional tourists. Technically the highest peak in Australia, Mount McClintock stands at 3,492m within the Australian Antarctic Territory.



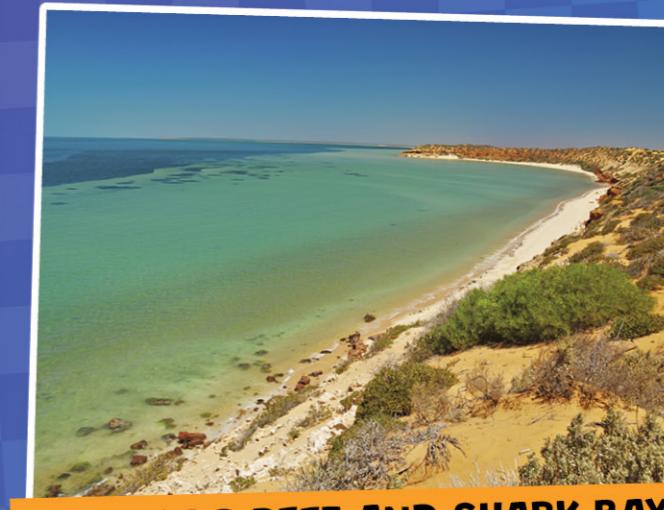
THE HORIZONTAL FALLS

The Horizontal Falls, which are located near Talbot Bay, in the north-west of Western Australia is described by David Attenborough as "one of the greatest natural wonders of the world". Although they are called waterfalls, this natural phenomenon actually consists of enormous tidal currents racing through narrow coastal gorges. And they do all this sideways, which is where the name 'Horizontal Falls' came from. The gorges were created by the enormous variation in tides. The water level rising, or falling, in Talbot Bay (due to the tide) causes a major height difference with the water level in the inlet on the other side of the Falls. It is also one of the largest tidal changes in the world. Talbot Bay is almost Australia's last frontier; few people have ever seen this spectacular event as there is no car access.



TWELVE APOSTLES

Erosion created these limestone stacks that are viewable from the Great Ocean Road, off the Victorian coast, where they continue to erode. In spite of being named the Twelve Apostles, there were only nine when they were named, but after a recent fall, there are now eight. Their base erodes at a rate of two centimetres a year.



NINGALOO REEF AND SHARK BAY

Stretching for almost 300 kilometres Ningaloo Reef is a World Heritage listed coral reef system. The nearby Shark Bay, Australia's largest bay, features a 1,030 square kilometre Wooramel Seagrass Bank and is the largest of its type in the world. Ningaloo Reef is, at times, home to the Whale Shark, the largest fish species in the world.



CRADLE MT – LAKE ST CLAIR

Lake St Clair National Park which includes Cradle Mountain is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Lake St Clair is the deepest lake in Australia and the head of the Derwent River. It is located in the Central Highlands area of Tasmania, 165 km northwest of Hobart.