



The story of the **Great Barrier Reef** is about more than fish and coral. It's a **human** story, too.

A Place for People, Too

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AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PEOPLE

The Great Barrier Reef has been important to Australia's people for thousands of years. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were the first people to live in what is now Australia. For more than 60,000 years, they have been part of the Great Barrier Reef region. Over the centuries, the Torres Strait Islanders travelled through the

waters to trade with mainland Aboriginal groups along the coast. They travelled great distances in canoes using the wind and stars as their guides.

The native, or original, people have myths and legends of the sea. Often, the reef plays a role in traditional song and dance. They have many creation stories for the region's islands and reefs.

And the animals of the Great Barrier Reef, such as dugongs and turtles, are important in their cultures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are considered the traditional owners of the Great Barrier Reef. Because of this, they are allowed to use the natural resources of the Great Barrier Reef in ways they have done for thousands of years. They can do traditional hunting and fishing that others are not permitted to do. They are allowed to collect shellfish and others creatures. And they can look after sites that are important in their cultures.

FISHING

With as many as 1600 different kinds of fish, the Great Barrier Reef is a paradise for fishing. Today, commercial fisheries fish for business. And “regular people” fish for fun. To protect the reef, however, it has been declared a marine park. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is divided into zones. Different activities are allowed in each zone. Fishing is such a popular activity that it's only permitted in certain places. This is to prevent overfishing. (When an area is overfished, the fish population cannot reproduce enough to maintain itself. So the fish population declines.)

TOURISM

Would you like to visit the Great Barrier Reef and see this amazing natural wonder? You could look at coral through glass-bottom boats. Or snorkel among the fish and reefs. For a different perspective, you could take a helicopter or airplane and see it from above. Every year up to two million people from around the world visit the Great Barrier Reef. Australians are proud to have one of the world's greatest natural attractions.

