

An Ocean of Life

If you were to zoom into space in a rocket and gaze back at our planet, you would see a beautiful blue ball. This is because oceans cover almost three-quarters of the Earth's surface. The Pacific Ocean alone is bigger than all the dry land put together. Looking down upon all that glittering water, the sea seems like an empty place, but under the surface it is a busy, lively world.

Did you know?

Nine out of ten of the living creatures on our planet are found in the sea.



Go with the flow

The pull of the Moon, the spinning of the Earth, and changes in temperature can all make seawater move around. In all parts of the ocean, waters move up and down with the tides. In some areas, large ocean currents act like moving sidewalks that carry small animals over long distances. These currents can also climb up and down like escalators, bringing food from the deep sea up to the surface. Some whales time their migrations to meet these food-filled currents.



Atlantic Ocean

Pacific Ocean

Indian Ocean

Southern Ocean

Underwater world

The bottom of the sea is much like the land above water. There are towering mountains and low valleys, flat plains and deep canyons, sheltered and wild waters. Shallow reefs made up of millions of living corals stretch for thousands of miles. There are even cracks in the seafloor where boiling water bubbles up from far underground. All of these places are home to different kinds of animals, including the fish and krill that many whales eat.

Glass towers

Not all sponges are soft and squishy—some are hard and brittle. Like corals, sponges are actually big groups of tiny animals. One kind of sponge has a skeleton made of specks of silica, which is the same stuff used to make glass. These glass sponges build towers that can be as tall as an eight-story building.

Long-distance calls

Sound travels further under water than it does in the air. Underwater sounds travel differently, depending on how cold and deep the water is. About 3,300 ft (1,000 m) below the surface there is a layer of seawater that is just right for carrying sounds for long distances. Fin whales and other whales may dive to this sound channel to send their deep, grumbling calls across entire oceans.