

# Chagos Archipelago Marine Park



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The Chagos Archipelago, along with its surrounding ocean, is one of the most remote and unspoiled marine areas left on Earth.

## CONSERVING SPECIAL PLACES IN THE SEA

Located in the central Indian Ocean 1,000 miles south of India, the isolated Chagos Archipelago is a chain of more than 50 islands and vast coral reefs surrounded by some of the world's purest seas.

This "Galapagos of the Indian Ocean" is home to the world's largest coral atoll with a remarkable diversity of 220 coral species and 1,000 species of fish. It serves as a refuge and breeding ground for large, critically important populations of sharks and dolphins, as well as green and hawksbill sea turtles. This atoll also provides habitat for the richest diversity of seabirds in the Indian Ocean and the world's largest land arthropod, the coconut crab.

The exceptionally healthy reefs of the Chagos Islands are considered among the

most resilient in rising temperatures, providing an invaluable scientific benchmark against which to measure other affected corals. Although Chagos reefs suffered heavy mortality in 1998 from spikes in water temperature, research in 2006 revealed that they had made a vigorous recovery, unusual for Indian Ocean reef systems, which were more seriously affected elsewhere.

The archipelago also plays a vital role in the health of the Indian Ocean, generating an abundance of larvae and juvenile marine life that migrate and sustain marine populations throughout the region.

The Chagos, a territory of the United Kingdom, represents more than two-thirds of the coral reefs under the British flag

and is by far its greatest area of marine biodiversity. Except for a military base, the islands are uninhabited and largely undeveloped.

The Chagos represents an unparalleled opportunity to preserve one of the world's premier ecosystems as a highly protected marine park amid the nations of the Indian Ocean, whose shores are densely populated and industrialized and whose waters are increasingly over-exploited and degraded.

The Chagos campaign is part of Global Ocean Legacy, a collaboration of Lyda Hill, the Oak Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Robertson Foundation and the Sandler Foundation to protect some of the world's largest and most spectacular marine habitats.