



Almost everyone loves beach holidays. But there are lots of different kinds of beaches and beach holidays. For example, some people like big resort hotels. Others would rather go to isolated beaches where there aren't many people. Some people go to beaches to relax. Others go to explore and be active.

If you could choose any type of beach holiday, where would you go? Grab your passport, your sunglasses and sunblock, and let's visit some of the world's most interesting and amazing beaches.

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Beaches with soft white sand are very popular all over the world. The beach with the whitest sand in the world may be Hyams Beach in Australia. At least that's what the *Guinness Book of World Records* says. The sand is so white because it is made of tiny particles of quartz crystal.

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# Facts About Coral Reefs

Not far below the surface of the ocean lie colourful, large, rock-like structures called coral reefs. Lots of kinds of fish live in coral reefs. These reefs are found in tropical ocean waters around the world. Most reefs are between 5,000 and 10,000 years old. Some began as long as 50 million years ago!

## What Are Coral Reefs Made Of?

Coral reefs are made of thousands of tiny, tube-shaped animals called corals, or polyps. These animals are related to jellyfish but are much smaller. Most polyps are less than 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) in size. Corals get food from colourful algae, or tiny plants, that live on the coral. The algae give corals their beautiful colours, such as blue, red, yellow, orange and green.

## How Do Coral Reefs Form?

A reef begins to form when a polyp attaches to something hard lying on the floor of the ocean. Before long, the polyp splits into thousands of other polyps. These connect to one another and form one large group of corals called a colony. These colonies grow and join together to form reefs over thousands of years.

## Why Are Coral Reefs Important?

Coral reefs cover less than 0.2% of the ocean floor. Yet coral reefs are home to at least 25% of all sea life on our planet! The reefs protect the sea creatures and provide them with food. But many reefs are in danger. If the reefs are not protected, more than a quarter of the original coral reef areas could be lost forever.

