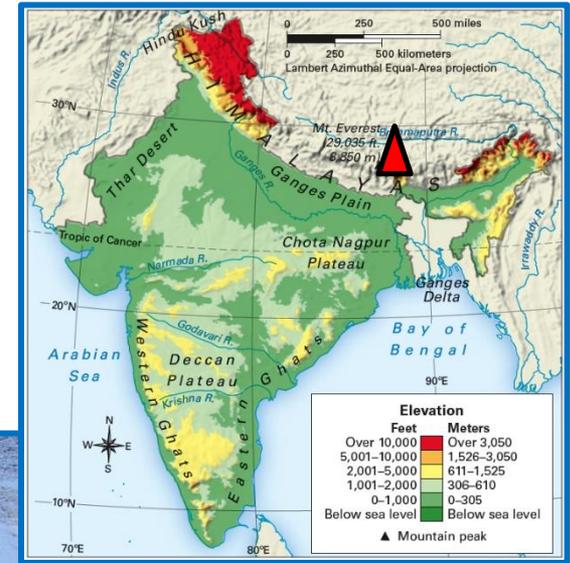




# Earth's Extreme Places and Natural Wonders



The summit of **Mount Everest**, Himalayas, is the **highest point on Earth measured from sea level**: *elevation* of its peak has been recently updated to measure at **8,849 meters (29,032 feet)**.

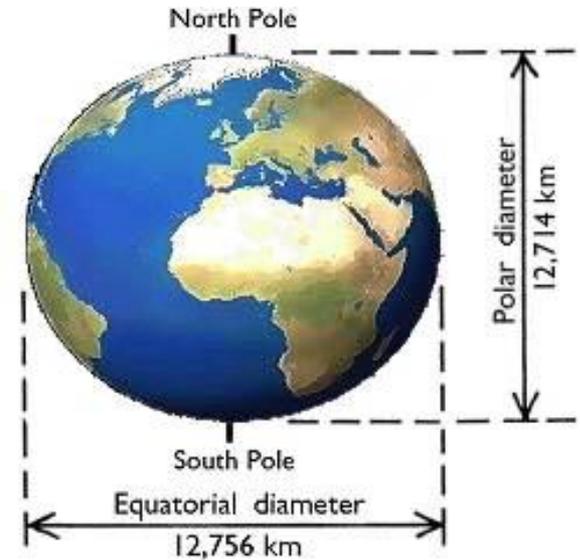


From its base atop Himalayas to the summit, **Mount Everest** stands at **~4,600 m (15300 feet)**.

The point **farthest from the Earth's center** is the summit of *near-equator* peak

## Chimborazo

in Ecuador, at about **6,384 km (3,967 miles)**.

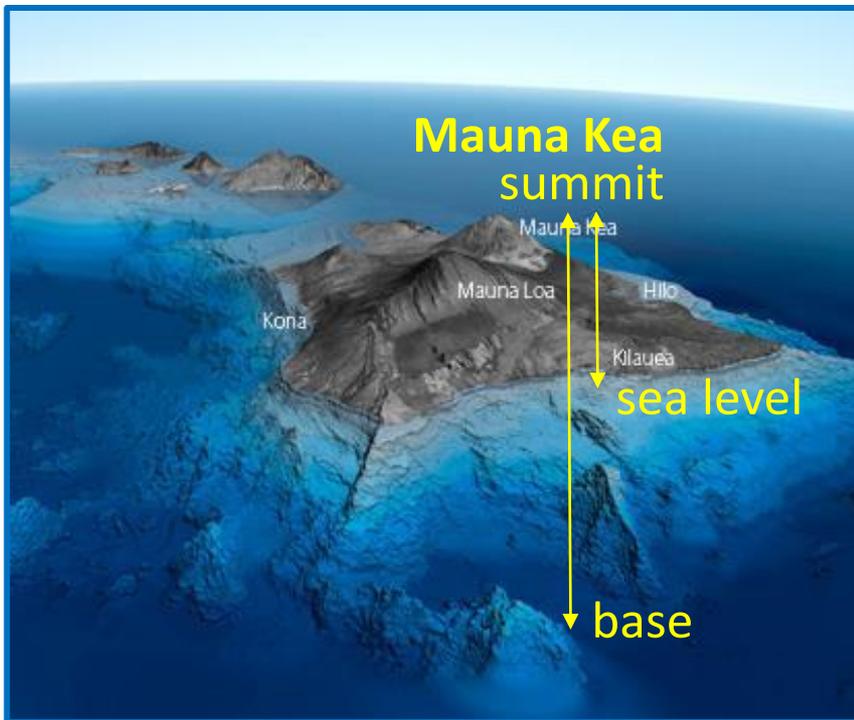


Despite the peak's elevation in relation to the sea level being only 6,268 m (20,564 feet), it is about **2 km farther from Earth's center** than **Mount Everest!**

The Earth's **tallest mountain**  
is **Mauna Kea**, Hawaii,  
which rises about **10,203 m (33,474 feet)**  
**from the Pacific Ocean floor**  
(4,207 m or 13,802 feet above sea level).

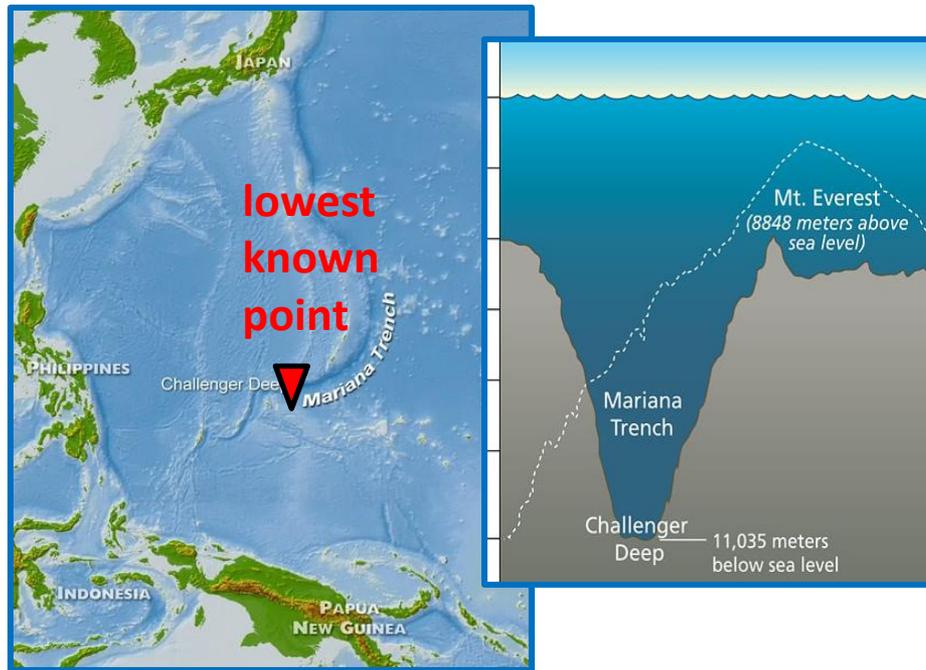


**Mauna Kea observatories**



Measured from its base to summit,  
**Mauna Kea is more than double**  
the height of **Mount Everest!**

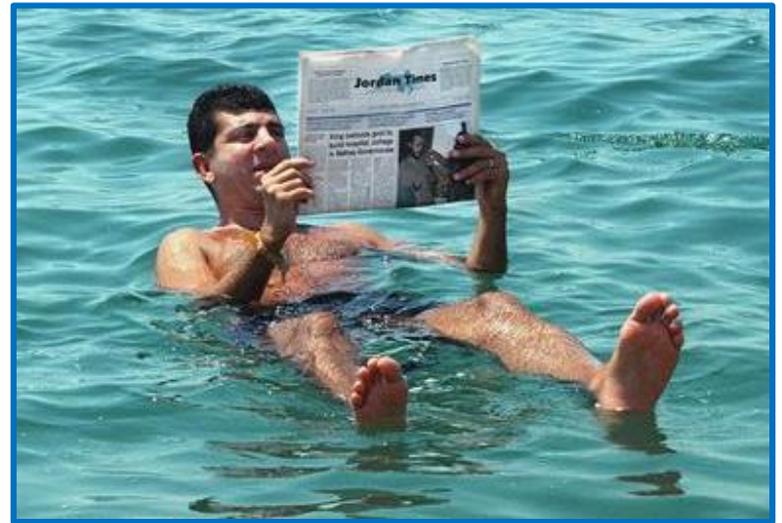
The absolute **lowest known point** is **Challenger Deep** at the bottom of the **Mariana Trench**: **11,034 m (36,201 feet)** below sea level.



**Only three humans have reached “the bottom of the Earth”**: Jacques Piccard and US Navy Lieutenant Don Walsh in **1960** aboard **Bathyscaphe Trieste** and filmmaker James Cameron in **2012** aboard **Deepsea Challenger**.

# A Sea below Sea Level? Dead Sea

The surface and shores of the Dead Sea are **423 m (1,388 feet)** below sea level, making it Earth's **lowest elevation on dry land**.



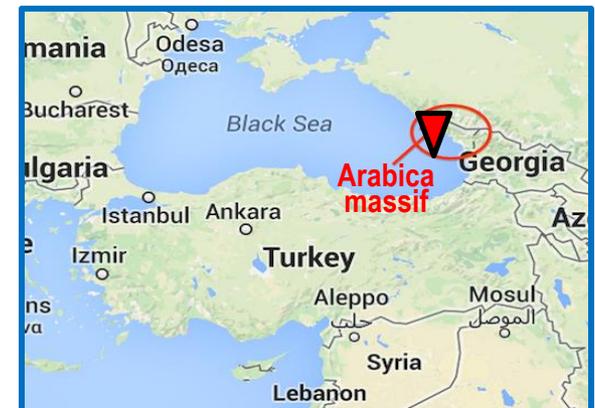
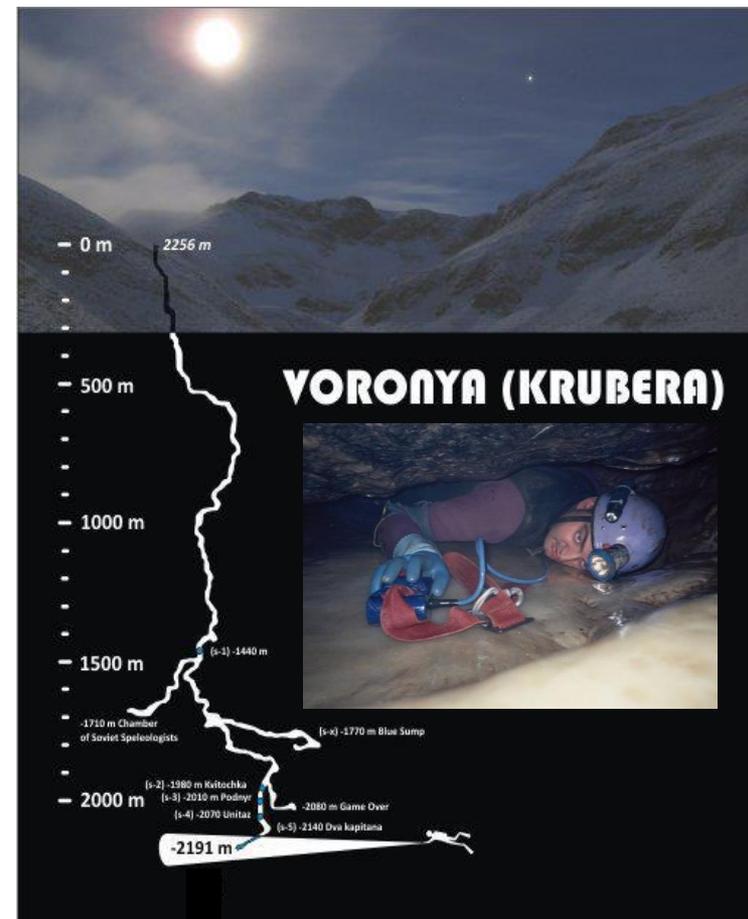
The Dead Sea's unusually **high salt concentration (34.2% salinity)**, roughly 9.6 times saltier than the ocean) means that **people can easily float** in the Dead Sea due to natural buoyancy. This also makes for a harsh environment in which animals cannot flourish (hence its name). Historically it was **one of the world's first health resorts** due to mineral content of the water.

The **lowest point underground**  
is the deepest known cave on Earth:  
**Krubera (Voronya) Cave**

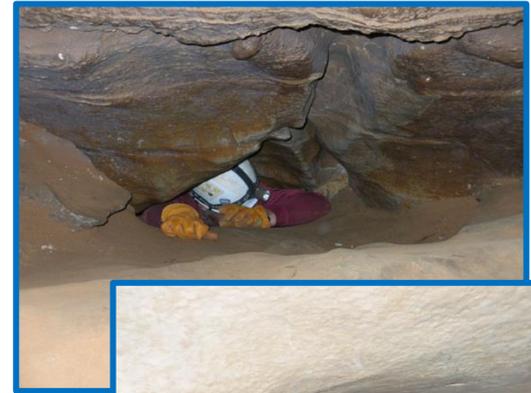
in Georgia, reaching more than 2,000 m  
(6,600 feet) below surface.



The difference between its  
entrance and the deepest  
explored point is **2,191 ±  
20 m (7,188 ± 66 feet)**.



**Mammoth Cave**, KY, USA,  
the **longest known cave system**  
**on Earth**, is a giant twisting labyrinth  
of more than **400 miles**.

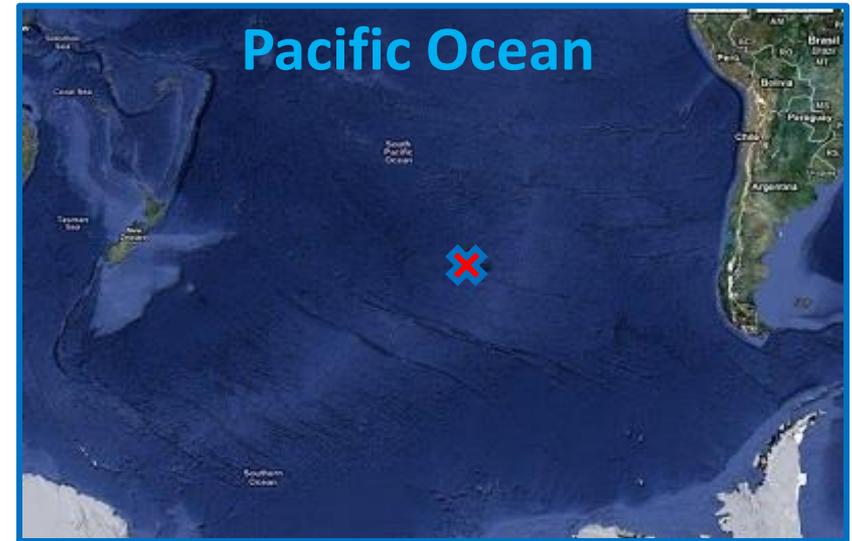


No one knows how far the cave system  
actually extends, as new caverns and  
recesses are continuously being discovered.  
One of the cave's most remarkable features  
are **thousands of stalactite formations**.



# The Middle of Nowhere (Points of Inaccessibility)

The **Pacific Pole of Inaccessibility** (also called **Point Nemo**), the point in the ocean **farthest from any land**, lies in the South Pacific Ocean at  $48^{\circ}52.6'S$   $123^{\circ}23.6'W$ , which is approximately 2,688 km (1,670 mi) from the nearest land.



Of the continental points, the **most distant from an ocean** is the **Eurasian Pole of Inaccessibility** at  $46^{\circ}17'N$   $86^{\circ}40'E$ , in China's region near the border of Kazakhstan, which is about 2,645 km (1,644 mi) from the nearest coastline.

# Flat Earth? Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia

There are a few **incredibly flat** places on Earth, like most dried lakebeds. The most famous of all is Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia.



It's water supply from a nearby river is small; the water level drops significantly during drought spells. As the water evaporates, **salt is left behind deposited one fine layer at a time**, the process that creates the incredibly flat surface. So flat in fact that the region is used for satellite calibration. But as the water starts to build up again over the flat surface, the **world's largest mirror** is created as the very shallow water is almost perfectly still.

# Grand Canyon, Arizona, United States

The **Grand Canyon** is a steep-sided canyon carved by the Colorado River in the state of Arizona in the United States.

It is **277 miles (446 km) long**, up to **18 miles (29 km) wide**, and **over a mile deep** (6,000 feet or 1,800 m).



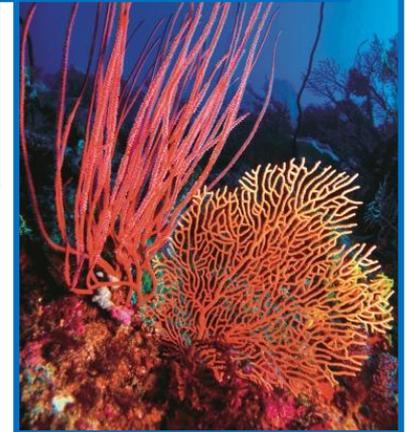
View from international Space station



Nearly two billion years of Earth's geological history have been exposed as the Colorado River and its branches cut their channels through layer after layer of rock while the Colorado Plateau was uplifted. Evidence suggests that the Colorado River established its course through the canyon **at least 17 million years ago** and continued to erode and form the canyon to its present-day configuration.

# Great Barrier Reef, Australia

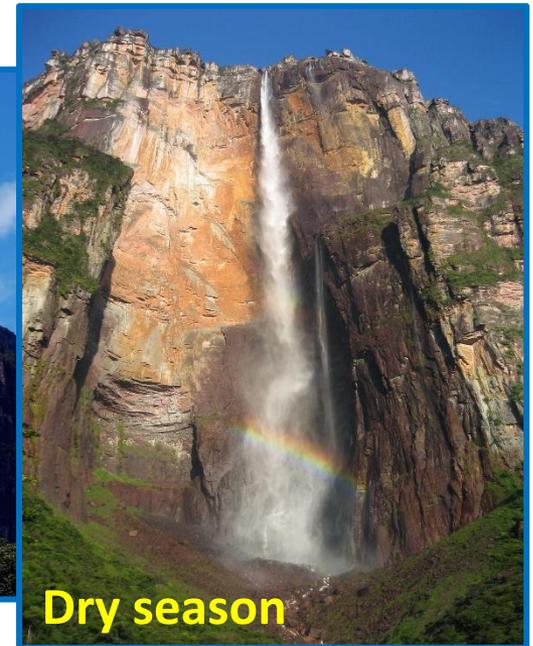
The Great Barrier Reef is the world's **largest coral reef system** composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands stretching for over 2,300 km (1,400 mi) over an area of approximately 344,400 km<sup>2</sup> (133,000 sq mi). Located in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia, it **can be seen from outer space** and is the **world's biggest single structure made by living organisms** (coral polyps).



The Great Barrier Reef supports a diversity of life, including **many vulnerable or endangered species**. According to a 2012 study by the National Academy of Science, since 1985, it has **lost more than half of its corals** due to pollution, climate change and other factors.

# Highest Waterfall: Angel Falls, Venezuela

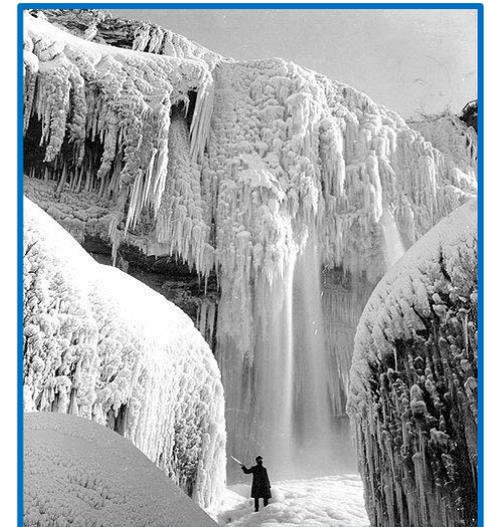
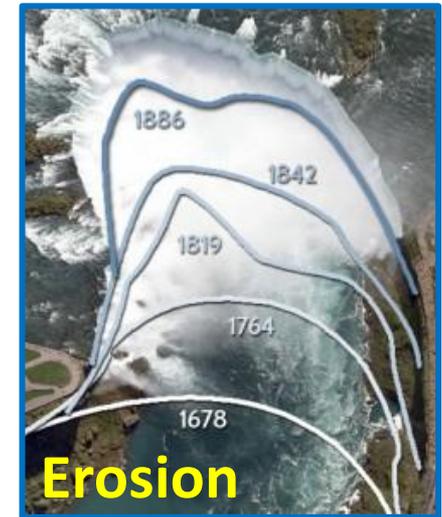
The water drops from the top of Auyantepui mountain, from the **height of 979 m (3,212 feet)**, and a **plunge of 807 m (2,648 feet)**. The waterfall is **150 m wide** at its base. In the drier months most of the water evaporates before reaching the ground.



Angel Falls was **discovered only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century** by American aviator **Jimmy Angels** (he crashed his plane on top of it and spent 11 days descending the tepui on foot by the gradually sloping back side; his plane remained on top for 33 years before being lifted out by helicopter, restored and displayed at the Aviation Museum in Maracay).

# Niagara Falls, United States/Canada

The three waterfalls of Niagara are the **Horseshoe Falls**, the **American Falls** and the **Bridal Veil**.



Combined, those three form the **highest flow rate of any waterfall in the world** with the average annual flow rate of 85,000 cubic feet per second (2,400 m<sup>3</sup>/s). Niagara Falls have a vertical drop of more than 165 feet (50 m).