

Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve

April 7, 2021

About Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve

- Great Nicobar is the southernmost island of the Nicobar Islands Archipelago.
- The Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve encompasses a large part (some 85%) of the island of Great Nicobar, the largest of the Nicobar Islands in the Indian Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The Nicobars lie in the Bay of Bengal, eastern Indian Ocean, 190 km to the north of the Indonesian island of Sumatra.
- The Reserve has a total core area of approximately 885 km², surrounded by a 12 km-wide “forest buffer zone”.
- It covers 103 870 hectares of unique and threatened tropical evergreen forest ecosystems.
- In 2013 it was included in the list of Man and Biosphere programs of UNESCO to promote sustainable development based on local community effort and sound science.

Geography

- The Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve harbours a wide spectrum of ecosystems comprising tropical wet evergreen forests, mountain ranges reaching a height of 642 m (Mt. Thullier) above sea level, and coastal plains.
- It incorporates two National parks of India, which were gazetted in 1992: the larger Campbell Bay National Park on the northern part of the island, and Galathea National Park in the southern interior.
- The non-Biosphere portions of the island (set aside for agriculture, forestry and settlements) are confined to the southwestern and southeastern coastal reaches.

- The environment is classified by the World Wide Fund for Nature as Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests biome, and located in the Indomalayan realm.

Indigenous inhabitants

- The Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve also incorporates territories and traditional lands of the indigenous Nicobarese and Shompen peoples.

Flora

- It houses 650 species of angiosperms, ferns, gymnosperms, bryophytes and lichens among others.
- The tract is rich in plant diversity and fosters a number of rare and endemic species, including *Cyathea alboretacea* (tree fern) and *Phalaenopsis speciosa* (orchid).

Fauna

- In terms of fauna, there are over 1800 species, some of which are endemic to this area.
- A total of 14 species of mammals, 71 species of birds, 26 species of reptiles, 10 species of amphibians and 113 species of fish have been reported.
- The region also harbours a large number of endemic and endangered species of fauna. To date, 11 species of mammals, 32 species of birds, 7 species of reptiles and 4 species of amphibians have been found to be endemic.
- Of these, the well-known Crab-eating Macaque, Nicobar Tree Shrew, Dugong, Nicobar Megapode, Serpent Eagle, saltwater crocodile, marine turtles and Reticulated Python are endemic and/or endangered.