



## The Most Dangerous Islands on Earth

**1** Some islands just weren't made for visitors. In fact, there are many islands around the world where tourists are strictly prohibited from visiting. As it turns out, the risks of visiting these desolate places don't outweigh the advantages. On these dangerous islands, animals take charge and the only humans allowed to witness it all are members of the military or scientists specifically trained to combat the threats at-hand. While each island has its own deceptive beauty, each one also has a terrifying secret. From human-hungry crocodiles to lethal snakes, nuclear radiation, and sharks, these are places no tourist would dare to visit.

### **2 Ilha de Queimada Grande**

This island isn't known for its beauty or the sparkling blue waters that surround it. Instead, Ilha de Queimada Grande is known as being one of the world's deadliest islands. Commonly known as Snake Island, it's the only home on Earth to this endangered species of snake – the golden lancehead viper. Located approximately 90 miles off the coast of Brazil, the island is said to house between 2,000 and 4,000 snakes. The island is so small in size that it averages about one deadly snake per square foot.

### **3 Farallon Islands**

Just 25 miles off the shores of San Francisco, California, is a group of other deadly islands that are off limits to people. The only people who are allowed there are scientists trained to work in the unsafe conditions. The field research station houses a few of these conservation scientists at a time, but they are unable to stay for extended periods of time. On these islands and below their waters, there is said to be more than 47,800 drums of radioactive waste. The most terrifying part of the island oasis is that the exact location of the containers is still unknown, as are the potential hazards to the environment.

### **4 Enewetak Atoll, Marshall Islands**

Another radioactive site lies just to the west of Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Enewetak Atoll was taken over by the U.S. at the end of World War II. The Navy evacuated all residents living on the island in order to perform nuclear tests. After the evacuation, over 43 nuclear tests were fired off. Today, most of Atoll still isn't fit for humans to live due to the high levels of contamination of nuclear waste and radioactivity. It is, however, slated to be safe for humans by 2027.

### **5 Australia**

Though this island might not seem dangerous, Australia houses some of the most venomous creatures alive, as well as some of the most powerful. Snakes, spiders, crocodiles, and octopuses may seem like ordinary animals, but when you put them together on the same island, no one can be totally safe. The saltwater crocodiles are the most powerful and deadly of their kind, weighing in at 2,000 pounds per beast with powerful jaws. They are the most likely genus of crocodile to eat humans. Octopuses are also a hazard to swimmers in the Australian waters. One bite from a blue-lined octopus could mean paralysis in a few short minutes, followed by heart failure.

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## Snake Island

**6** Going to Snake Island without the Brazilian Navy is illegal. It's also illegal for the Navy or scientists to visit without a specially trained physician. No one is allowed on Snake Island and for good reason. It's home to the highest concentration of the most venomous snakes in the world. Snake Island can be found approximately 90 miles off the coast of Santos, Brazil and is the only place in the world where scientists can go to study and observe the lethal golden lancehead viper.

**7** If someone were to step ashore, they would need to keep steady a watch. From that first moment, they could expect to see a snake every 10 minutes. In other parts of the island, snakes can average one per square foot. This means a sturdy pair of boots might help you survive on the beach, but walking past a bush could cost you your life. A single bite from one of these killer snakes can kill a human in less than an hour. This many snakes wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for their venomous bite in these extremely close quarters. The golden lancehead is an extremely rare type of pit viper that has been able to reproduce on the island at record speeds because the island has no natural predators for this particular genus of serpent.

**8** Snake Island is uninhabited now, but this wasn't always the case. There was a short time prior to 1920 when people did live on the island with the intention of manning the lighthouse. According to the Brazilian locals, the lighthouse keeper and his family died when a number of vipers found a space to crawl in through the window. They slithered into the living quarters and bit them. Now, the Brazilian Navy looks after the lighthouse during an annual upkeep mission in addition to checking the water occasionally to ensure wanderers steer clear of the island. Even with a close watch on the island, unfortunate events can happen. In another grisly tale told by locals, a fisherman unknowingly wandered onto the island in search of bananas. While searching, he was bitten. Though he managed to make it back to his boat, he never sailed again due to the speed of the snake's deadly venom. He was found some time later laying on the boat deck, unalive.

**9** These snake bites are no laughing matter. The island, which used to be part of mainland Brazil, was separated as water levels slowly rose over a span of 10,000 years. The lancehead snake is still commonly seen in Brazil today and is the closest relative of the golden lancehead viper. The snakes that were isolated on the island evolved differently than the snakes on the mainland. Because there was not enough prey on the island, they evolved to have extra-potent venom that can melt flesh almost instantly. This allows them to kill and eat birds without waiting for the venom to set in. Because of this, if someone is bitten, they have a 3% chance of survival even with treatment.

**10** With the many dangers the island carries with it, it is no wonder that humans steer clear. One trip to the island without the proper training, equipment, and a doctor ready to administer an antivenom could mean certain death.

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## Disaster on Ramree Island

**11** Out of an estimated 400 Japanese troops that entered the swamplands, it is said that only 20 survived. Known by the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the place with the "greatest disaster suffered by humans due to animals," Ramree Island takes its place among the world's most dangerous locations.

**12** The story began in 1942 when the allied forces set up camp on the beaches of Ramree Island. Soon 1,000 Japanese troops came and began to fight these allied forces. In a turn of events, what was left of the Japanese Army was forced back into the swampy marshes of Ramree Island. There they remained trapped with both the allied forces and the natural predators to worry about. The common mosquito carried illnesses and infected the soldiers. Poisonous snakes swam in the Burmese waters and scorpions littered the ground.

**13** The fiercest predators of them all proved to be the saltwater crocodiles living in the marshes where the Japanese had gone to hide. Each of these crocs weighed as much as 2,000 pounds and had jaws so powerful they could eat water buffalo, wild boar, and even sharks. A human weighing a mere 200 pounds was no match for these beasts of the wild.

**14** A man named Bruce Stanley Wright described the horrifying situation in his book *Wildlife Sketches Near and Far*. He wrote, "That night was the most horrible that any member of the M.L. [marine launch] crew ever experienced." He recounts the sounds of rifles shooting and the splashing of water. "Of about 1,000 Japanese soldiers that entered the swamps of Ramree," he said, "only about 20 were found alive."

**15** Despite these horrific events, today there are many people who are able to live safely on Ramree Island. While there are still many crocodiles living in the swamps and marshes, the number of crocs has slowly decreased over time. The swamplands and marshlands are still considered highly dangerous, so the island's inhabitants have learned to steer clear of those murky waters.

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