



3 trillion plastic particles in the Mediterranean Sea



The Mediterranean Sea, along with the five gyres, contains some of the highest amounts of marine litter in the world. This is partly due to the geography of the Mediterranean, where 2.5 million km² of sea is only connected to the open Atlantic Ocean by a narrow 14km gap through the Strait of Gibraltar. The Med is surrounded by 22 countries with 450 million people living around its coast and is affected by intense fishing, shipping and touristic activities. This adds up to an estimated 3 trillion pieces of plastic in the Med, and this figure is rising. Despite heavily polluted shorelines, most of the problem is hidden from view as 70% of plastic sinks. Our film team found plastic at depths even sunlight could not be found.



The effects on marine life is widely documented and a recorded 134 species have been affected by marine plastic in some way. This figure includes all manner of animals such as pelagic fish, deep-sea fish, baleen whales, seabirds and turtles. Plastic debris in the Mediterranean is dominated by tiny micro-plastic, with an estimated 100,000 particles per km² and a total of 500 tonnes throughout the sea. These 1mm sized pieces of plastic are mistaken for food by plankton feeders and the toxicological effects of the ingested plastic lead to serious detrimental health effects all the way up the food chain.