

Scientists scour 'Mexico's Galapagos' for quake, volcano clues

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Scientists visited the remote Revillagigedo archipelago to study if a volcanic eruption off Mexico's coast could unleash a tsunami, as well as the causes of earthquakes.

Could a volcanic eruption off Mexico's coast unleash a tsunami like the

one that devastated Tonga? What really causes tectonic plates to shift and trigger earthquakes? Scientists visited a remote archipelago in search of answers.

Located in the Pacific Ocean several hundred kilometers from the Mexican coast, the Revillagigedo Islands are known as "Mexico's Galapagos" due to their isolation and biodiversity.

One of the archipelago's volcanos, Barcena, last erupted spectacularly in 1953, and another Evermann, in 1993. Both remain active today.

Located on a mid-ocean ridge, the four islands, which were added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2016, are uninhabited apart from navy personnel, and access is tightly restricted.

Getting there takes about 24 hours or more by boat and few civilians visit apart from scuba drivers lured by giant manta rays, [humpback whales](#), dolphins and sharks.

Last month, an international team of 10 scientists carried out a week-long mission whose aims included trying to determine if—or more likely when—there will be another [volcanic eruption](#).

"What we're trying to find is how explosive these volcanos can be and how dangerous," said the group's leader, Douwe van Hinsbergen, a professor at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

Challenging convention

The worry is that something similar to the cataclysmic [eruption](#) of the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcano in January could send a tsunami hurtling towards Mexico's Pacific Coast.

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