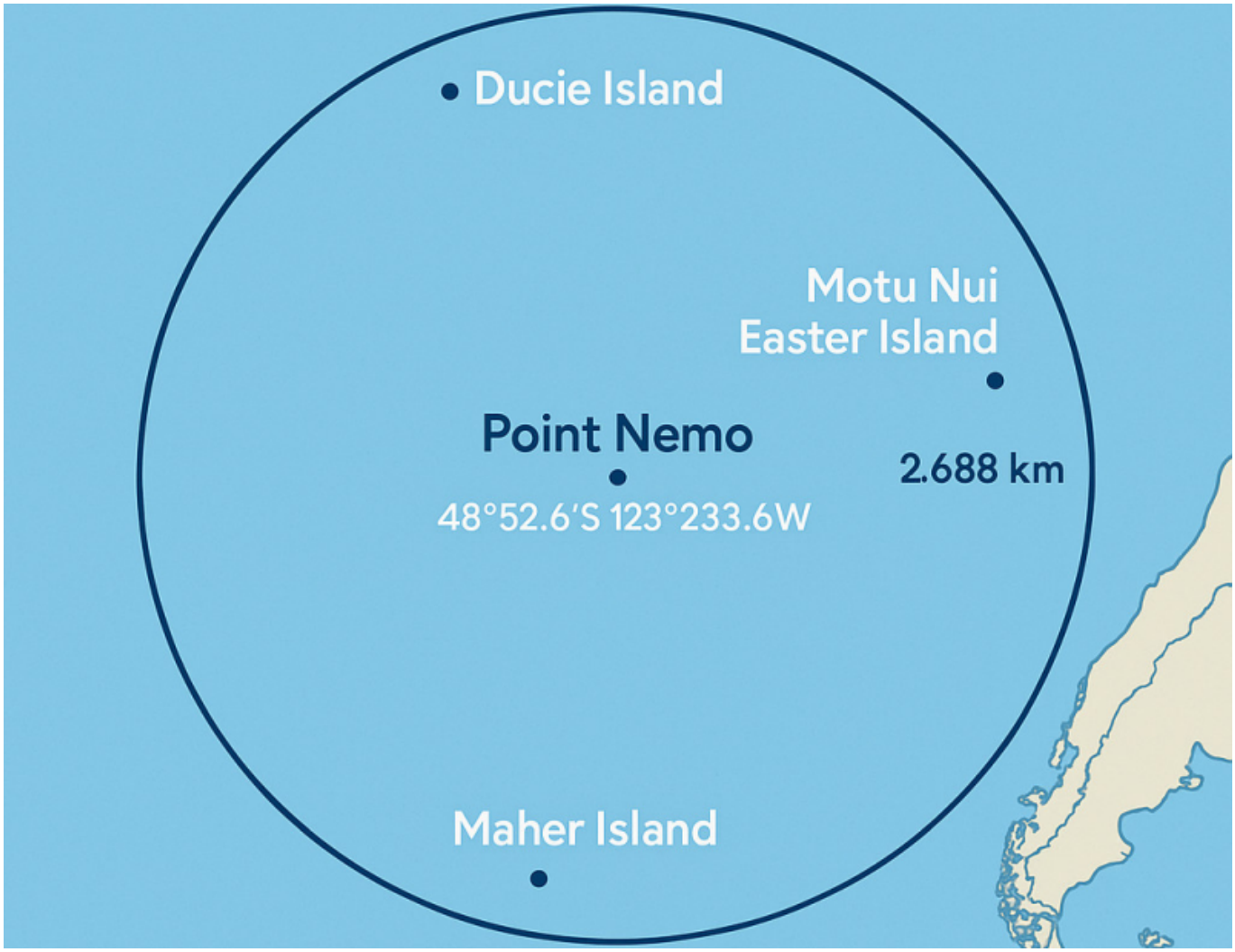
There is (*at least*) one place on Earth which, although very interesting, is likely to feature on very few people's bucket lists. We used to read this in storybooks: '*...far, far away, beyond the Sea of Nowhere*; well, in our case it goes like this: "*so far away that, in some cases, the International Space Station is the nearest inhabited place*".

Point Nemo

The **Point Nemo** is the Earth's oceanic pole of inaccessibility. **It is situated in the southern Pacific Ocean**at coordinates 48°52.6′ south latitude and 123°23.6′ west longitude. **The nearest landmasses are exactly 2,688 kilometres (1,670 miles) away.**

To the north lies **Ducie Island, part of the Pitcairn Islands**, and to the north-east, the rocky islet of ** Motu Nui**, and to the south, the Antarctic **Maher Island** . All three shores are completely uninhabited.



The point was named **Hrvoje Lukatela** in 1992, after a Croatian-Canadian cartographer and engineer, using a computer programme. The name **was taken from the hero of Jules Verne's novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*** (the *'nemo'* means 'nobody' in Latin), which perfectly reflects the desolation of the location.

Although an image is circulating online showing a buoy marking the location, in reality there is no

buoy at Nemo point, nor any physical beacon, structure, or floating object. To secure a buoy, a gigantic anchor chain would have to be lowered 4 kilometres into the open ocean. What's more, buoys require maintenance (battery replacement, cleaning), but as the location is incredibly far from everything, no one would sail out there just to service it.

When the International Space Station (ISS) passes over the Nemo point, the astronauts are at an altitude of only around 415–420 kilometres. This means that the nearest people are not on Earth, but in space.

Human presence in the area occurs almost exclusively once a year, when the **The Ocean Race** (formerly *Volvo Ocean Race*) round-the-world sailing race sails through the southern waters.

Although the sea is not entirely sterile, biologically speaking, it is one of the most barren areas of the oceans. The region lies within the South Pacific Gyre (*South Pacific Gyre*). This vast gyre prevents cooler coastal currents, which are nutrient-rich, from entering the region.

Furthermore, due to the distance from land, the wind is unable to blow organic matter or mineral dust (such as iron) into the water, which is necessary for the growth of phytoplankton – the foundation of the marine food chain. Perhaps this is why **'The Bloop'**, which provided daily fodder for countless conspiracy theorists for years.



The Bloop

The US **NOAA** (*National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*) recorded an extremely loud, ultra-low-frequency rumble lasting roughly one minute in the southern Pacific Ocean in the summer of 1997.

The sound was detected by hydrophones (underwater microphones) originally installed by the US Navy during the Cold War to detect Soviet submarines. The phenomenon was shocking because the sound was clearly detected even by microphones situated more than 3,000–5,000 kilometres apart – meaning that the sound was amplified underwater to an astonishing, unprecedented degree.

The acoustic profile of the sound (its rapidly rising frequency) bore an uncanny resemblance to the sounds produced by living organisms, such as whales. However, calculations suggest that not even a blue whale (the largest animal on Earth) would have been capable of producing such a high volume. This led to the widespread assumption that a gigantic, unknown marine creature (a colossal octopus or sea monster) was lurking in the unexplored, dark depths around the Nemo Point.

Fans of horror literature also immediately noticed the chilling coincidence: **H. P. Lovecraft's** 's

fictional aquatic monster, **Cthulhu**, who, according to the short stories, dwells in a sunken city (**R'lyeh**). In his 1928 story, Lovecraft pinpointed the coordinates of this city almost exactly where the Nemo Point is located in reality, and from where the 'The Bloop' sound also originated.

Of course, the flourishing of grand theories came to an end with a rather mundane explanation when – 15 years later – NOAA researchers officially solved the mystery based on data from additional microphones situated closer to Antarctica. The *'The Bloop'* was not a living creature, but a *glacial quake* (**icequake**).

The sound was caused by enormous, gigantic icebergs cracking, breaking off from the Antarctic ice sheets and scraping against the ocean floor. The cracking and breaking of the ice underwater produces precisely this kind of powerful, low-frequency, *'bubbling-like'* rumbling, which travels as far as a thousand miles via marine acoustic channels.

Incidentally, the version widely known to the public is a recording sped up 16-fold (so it really does sound like a bubble or an animal); the original sound is actually a slow, deep, rumbling roar.

Space Graveyard

As the area is vast, uninhabited and free from maritime traffic, international space agencies have officially designated this zone for the controlled destruction of decommissioned spacecraft. This zone is known as *'space graveyard'* (**spacecraft cemetery**). Since 1971, 260–300 spacecraft have been directed here upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere.

The imaginary headstones in this cemetery are lined with the key figures of space exploration:

- The Soviet-Russian Mir space station, which was buried here in March 2001.
- Six Soviet Salyut space stations.
- More than 140 Russian Progress cargo spacecraft.
- Five ATV (Automated Transfer Vehicle) cargo spacecraft from the European Space Agency (ESA).
- The HTV cargo spacecraft from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).
- Various launch vehicle stages and components from private companies (e.g. SpaceX).

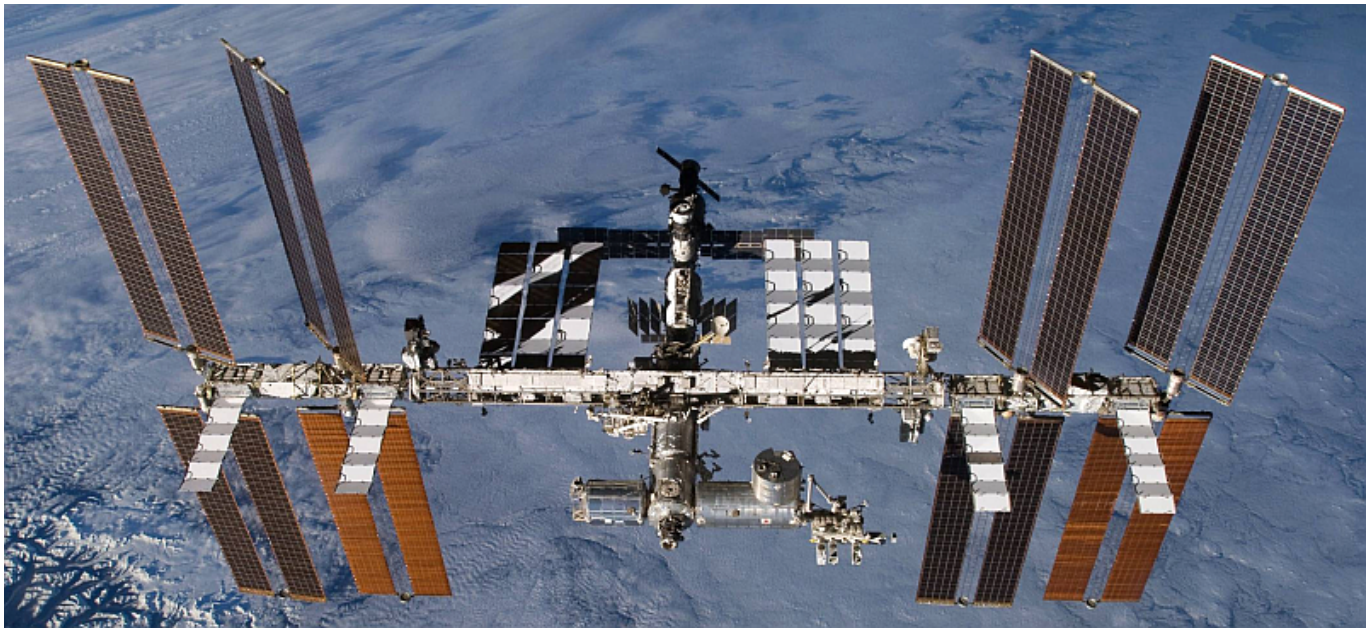
Then there were also nuclear space vehicles that should really have been buried here rather than in Canada; the the story of the Cosmos 954 can be read here.

Most space debris burns up in the atmosphere due to the immense friction upon re-entry, but some larger pieces—which are resistant to heat or unable to disintegrate—reach the water's surface and then sink to a depth of 4,000 metres.

Oh, and before I forget, this is where *"buried"* the ISS mentioned above.

The ISS's final journey

According to the plans of NASA and its international partners, the International Space Station will remain in operation until the end of 2030, and **its final decommissioning will take place in early 2031**.



The ISS will not be left to orbit unchecked, as it would otherwise plummet uncontrollably. Initially, it will be allowed to lose altitude naturally through atmospheric drag. When it reaches a critical altitude, a purpose-built vehicle – the *U.S. Deorbit Vehicle* (**USDV**) – will initiate a massive re-entry burn (*re-entry burn*) to steer it precisely towards the Nemo point.

A significant portion of the football-pitch-sized station will burn up in the atmosphere as a spectacular fireball, but its more robust sections will plunge into the ocean at the Nemo point. The ISS's swan song also marks the end of an era in spaceflight: that of the major government-funded programmes.

What comes after the ISS?

The era of government-funded behemoths is drawing to a close; after the ISS, the "*Low Earth Orbit*" (**LEO**) will be taken over by commercial space stations operated by private companies. NASA will not be building another station of its own here, but will instead lease space for its researchers as a service. The most important upcoming projects are:

- **Axiom Station:** Modules developed by Axiom Space, which will initially be docked to the ISS. When the ISS is decommissioned, these will detach and continue to operate as independent commercial space stations.
- **Orbital Reef:** A modular business and research '*space industry park*".
- **Starlab:** A permanently habitable, global scientific laboratory being developed in collaboration between Voyager Space, Nanoracks and Airbus.
- **Russia's own space station (ROSS):** Russia – following its planned withdrawal from the ISS – is planning to build its own national space station.

The latest posts on the blog

The story of Route 18' (07 Aug 2026)
Point Nemo (04 Aug 2026)
LAWS (31 July 2026)
The Ozempic War (22 July 2026)
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2026/07/16 13:11 · vamsan

Dear reader! If you’ve got this far in your reading, I think I’m fair in assuming that you haven’t found this post entirely uninteresting. Oh, please don’t close the tab just yet; I’m not trying to squeeze any money out of you.

All I’m asking is that if you know anyone with whom you could have a good discussion about what’s written here, or if you’d simply like to share it with them, please don’t hesitate!

I’m still looking for opportunities to get my writing published. If you have any ideas, please do share them with me! My contact details can be found in the the Legal Notice section at.

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Previous posts on bolyongó.hu

All posts, sorted alphabetically, indexe can be found here. Posts on the blog that are linked to specific locations can also be found on Google Maps: The true wonders of the world.

2026/07/15 22:45 · vamsan

Sources

I also used Gemini AI to help write this post.

- **NOAA PMEL Acoustics:** The "Bloop" – Acoustic Mysteries Solved (NOAA’s official report on the ‘Bloop’ sound and icequakes)
- **NASA (Space Station):** International Space Station Transition Report (Official plans for the decommissioning of the ISS in 2030 and the deorbit vehicle)
- **ESA (European Space Agency):** ATV: Spacecraft Cemetery in the Pacific (Controlled disposal of European cargo spacecraft at the oceanic pole of inaccessibility)
- **The Ocean Race:** Racing through the Southern Ocean and Point Nemo (Route and details of the round-the-world sailing race in the Southern Ocean)
- **National Geographic:** Point Nemo: The Earth’s watery graveyard for spacecraft (Facts and figures on the marine biological desert and the determination of its coordinates)

- **Lukatela, H. (1992):** Computing the Oceanic Pole of Inaccessibility (Hrvoje Lukatela's own calculations and the background to the choice of name)

2026, Point Nemo, Ducie-island, Motu Nui, Maher-island, Jules Verne, Hrvoje Lukatela, ISS, The Ocean Race, 1997, The Bloop, South Pacific Gyre, NOAA, H P Lovecraft, Cthulhu, icequake, space cementary, Axiom Station, Starlab, Orbital Reef, ROSS

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