

A Celebrated Ocean Liner Is Being Turned into the World's Largest Artificial Reef



For decades, the SS *United States* has been moored off Philadelphia as a reminder of the nation's seafaring past, but looking now to the future, it will be sunk to create a natural wonder—the world's largest artificial reef.

While coral reefs are in danger worldwide, features like concrete blocks and shipwrecks can offer vital shelter and habitat to dozens of marine species, and many old vessels in many different countries have gone to rest in this way.

The *United States* was built in the 1950s with the aim of ferrying troops around the country in case of a war. After it proved unnecessary, it was converted to a luxury ocean liner that became the fastest vessel on the high seas, and it still holds the Transatlantic speed record.

Celebrities and heads of state like John F. Kennedy routinely promenaded along its decks, being shuttled to and from Europe, until 1967 when it was decommissioned, two years after the death of her chief designer and engineer.

Now, the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners has approved a contingent contract to see the *United States* off on her final voyage to Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida, where she would be sunk to join a collection of 500 other artificial reefs that provide a true spectacle for divers.

“To have an opportunity to have the SS United States right here by our shore is a heritage and a legacy that is generational,” [said](#) Okaloosa County Commissioner Mel Ponder. “I’m very excited for not only what it does for the diving community, but also the fishing community, but the community at large.”