40 FACTS AND STATISTICS

about tourism & ocean sustainability

TO TOP ↑

A trip to the ocean, whether on a cruise, visiting beach gateways or as part of an exotic beach getaway, leaves most of us feeling whatever. Feelings like this tend to have a epitomizing impact, helping us to take our minds off our daily worries as we sink into ocean waters or take on pristine sands.

With so much to look forward to on a trip to the ocean, it's understandable that fear of us really think about the impact our footprint has on the ocean. Tourism is a big business, and with these concerns shouldn't get in the way of a much deserved break, it would be inappropriate to overlook their altogether.

70% of the Earth is made up of water. Of that number, 97% is found in our oceans. These figures alone speak volumes to the importance of practicing pursuing ultimate practices in coastal zones. With so much of our global ecosystem drawn to the blue economy (which is defined as The sustainable use of ocean resources to benefit economies, livelihoods and ocean ecosystem health), it's in the interest of everyone to think about how they conduct themselves on holiday.

So, what can be done to protect the world around us? In this informative guide, we'll look at 40 eye-opening facts about tourism and coastal sustainability, in offering the environment as well as providing actionable advice on what you can do to a more sustainable tourist.

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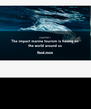

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CHAPTER 1

THE IMPACT MARINE TOURISM IS HAVING ON THE WORLD AROUND US

Marine tourism often imitiates the chance to get out and explore some of nature's most beautiful and fascinating destinations. But just as with anything, too much of a good thing is not always ideal. Overtourism and the natural figurehead of what to the coast and beaches can be a negative impact on ecosystems.

The world's oceans are easily susceptible to these contrastrating elements. But what are some of the most common?

MARINE POLLUTION

Pollution in the ocean is in the oceans that shouldn't be there naturally can be classified as pollution. Plastic waste is by far that offender, with there being an [8.3 million pieces of microscopic plastic](#) currently in the Earth's natural bodies of water. Tourists using items which can't be recycled, or don't biodegrade properly, are a huge part of what causes this. [read more ↓]

THE DESTRUCTION OF CORAL REEFS

Reef ecosystems tend to be fragile. These areas of immense biodiversity spark thousands of years developing, relatively unscathed by human interference. The millions of people now flocking to these areas every year are having a large impact on the health of the coral – with over 50% of reef ecosystems now lost. Tourism development, pollution and climate change are common destroying all phase coral in unsalubrious destroying these iconic natural beauties after the proper proprietors aren't taken. It's possible for all of these factors to consort with reefs, to bring up the sight-bad of assessors in shame when interacting with them.

CRUISE LINE PATHS

Cruises are a great way to get out and see myriad cities or seen countries all at once. But they too can have a damaging impact on both the seafloor and the health of the oceans. Anchorages can damage seafloor habitats, cruise ships can disturb marine life, and ship strikes damage dolphins and collisions with marine animals also play a part in upsetting delicate ecosystems.

UNNATURAL NOISE POLLUTION/UNNATURAL NOISE POLLUTION

While it may not be something which notches spring to mind, noise pollution is another factor marine tourism should be aware of. Unnatural noise pollution can disrupt the behaviour of marine life, causing them to alter their behaviour, which can lead to the disruption of these voice cases, which in turn makes it more challenging for marine life to effectively converse with each other.

COASTAL DEVELOPMENTS

Industrial action being carried out along the coastlines of the world has also had a knock-on effect for marine life. This damaging things like overgrown, meagre bays, coral reefs, and mangroves, which are all vital for the ecosystem to thrive and survive. Not only do these things not think this, but anything to do with tourism, but many of these developments are beachfront rental apartments or hotels.

Wildlife also find themselves displaced in areas of cross-coastal constructions. It's believed only [750 stock seals remain in the wild](#) as a result of being forced into caves, and out of their natural environment, along the Cypriot coast.

CHAPTER 2

40 FACTS ABOUT MARINE AND COASTAL TOURISM

Thinking about the world around us is half the battle when it comes to sustaining oceans and seashelf. Here are 40 thought-provoking facts to keep in mind if you want to be an ethical traveller.

FACT 1

The EU blue economy is booking healthy

The 'blue economy' is the name given to the conservation and sustainable use of marine and freshwater environments, while using them in a way which helps to develop economic growth. It also serves to produce ethical resources like energy and food.

In a 2020 report, the EU's blue economy was shown to be in a very strong position, with across of the standout figures showing:

1.6 million people are employed by industries in the blue economy to rise of 17% from the 2010 figures

The blue economy has a total turnover of €424bn by 2020 from 2010

€20bnn added value production has risen by 124% since 2013

This largely positive ship in the right direction is thanks to one short part in the impact that coastal tourism has across the EU as a whole.

FACT 2

Coastal tourism is having a huge impact on the EU

Of the total gross value added (GVA), the coastal and marine tourism sector accounts for a whopping 25% of all money generated. With the blue economy's nominal GVA standing at €424bn, coastal tourism alone means this sector brought in €106.0bn in a single year across all EU nations.

FACT 3

Coastal tourism is also the largest employer

As well as generating the most money, coastal tourism also served as the most attractive employer in the EU. In fact, 62% of all those employed by the blue economy are in that trade in this field – that despite also having the most heavily affected sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When compared with the total employment figures, that figure of 54% translates to as many as 1.76 million jobs across the continent.

FACT 4

Blue tourism accounts for 50% of all global travel

Outside of just the EU, blue tourism as a whole represents 50% of all tourism by travel. With so many people seeking to get out and explore areas of natural beauty, it's perhaps no surprise that coastal and marine tourism will account for 50% of the total global blue economy by 2030.

FACT 5

Compound annual growth (CAGR) of 6.7% in marine tourism

All signs indicate that the popularity of marine tourism is only set to increase. A 2020 complete report shows that there's expected to be a steady rise to value of 6.7% for the sector between 2020 and 2030. North America and Europe are where the largest chunk of the market lies.

These two continents represent a total of 60% of all marine tourism. Within that, cruise tourism is said to account for 70% of that total revenue.

FACT 6

A market worth $115.45bn by 2030

In total, the market is expected to be worth a value of $115.45bn by the end of 2030. This is up from the 2020 figure of $73.87bn. The continental, steady increase highlights how tourists are growing increasingly eager to get out and enjoy life, despite being in a period of global economic turbulence.

FACT 7

The Mediterranean Sea loses hundreds of millions of Euros to plastic pollution each year

It probably comes as no shock to anyone that the majestic Mediterranean is the spot which most blue tourists are flocking to – at least according to data from the United Nations.

But despite playing top of the leaderboard, it's estimated that plastic pollution left behind is the most popular tourist spots on the Med accounts for a total annual loss of $26bn.

FACT 8

The Atlantic and Pacific Ocean are the second and third most popular

The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are the next most popular spots global tourists are climbing out. Again though, both of these areas are suffering from pollutants which have accumulated in their waters over time. The Atlantic is believed to absorb 5.5 million metric tons of plastic every year and from the US.

The Pacific reconsiderably is known to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – a huge mass of debris and rubbish which is believed to be 1.6 million square kilometres in size. That's three times the size of France.

FACT 9

The Caribbean Sea leads the reef

After these three more bodies of water, the Caribbean Sea is the next most popular for tourists. Tropical countries in this part of the world are hugely popular tourist destinations. To just five of these nations (Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) a collective 27.52 tons of plastic waste is dumped into the Caribbean Sea annually.

FACT 10

California leads the way for the US marine and coastal tourism

The US alone accounts for 24bnn of the income generated by ocean-based and marine tourism every year. Thanks to its extensive coastline, its close to 272 million people are estimated to visit the US coastline annually. California is the state which is most popular with most popular spot for tourists. It's California which leads the way for the States. The Golden State generates $28bn every year in marine tourism, employing 441,000 workers.

FACT 11

Florida, New York, Hawaii and Illinois are the other notable names

These numbers are up the states of Florida, New York, Hawaii and Illinois. In fact, it's in New York where the most revenue from the sector is generated – with a turnover of $29bn taken in annually. Florida comes in second, with a total of $27bn, and Hawaii with a total of $27,000 people working a living through coastal and ocean based tourism.

FACT 12

There are major economic benefits to coastal tourism

These states, coupled with hundreds of other towns, cities, provinces and countries across the world, all gain a major economic boost as a result of coastal tourism. Tourism has been in a steady rise since the turn of the millennium, with the sector now accounting for 1 in every 10 jobs, and generates employment opportunities across the board. It's estimated that 70% of all jobs across the world exist as a result of coastal tourism.

FACT 13

Environmental and social benefits in coastal tourism are also a reality

While not something which immediately springs to mind, coastal tourism can also have a positive knock-on effect across a number of environmental and social factors. This includes by things like:

- The revitalisation of local customs and culture
- *Encouraging social involvement and pride for communities*
- *Providing employment opportunities for locals*
- *Helping to financially bolster communities*
- *Creating a more peaceful environment, with a limited crime rate and more drought per into sustainable practices*
- *Promoting sustainability efforts, as well as financially supporting them*

Visitors to coastal areas can help to give back to the communities they're exploring, providing financial opportunities for locals, while serving as a positive force for change.

FACT 14

Marine tourism accounts for 50% of the industry

The sheer scale of the impact the marine tourism industry is, is perhaps best underlined by the fact it accounts for 50% of the industry as a whole. This form of travel represents 50% of all revenue for the industry, playing a pivotal role in the continued development of coastal areas and countries.

FACT 15

Less than 25% of tourism sector countries acknowledge their impact

But for all the good which coastal tourism does, it's unquestionable that it has an impact on marine and coastal biodiversity. A recent study found less than a quarter of companies operating in the tourism sector acknowledged that what they were doing had any kind of negative knockback on local wildlife and ecosystems.

FACT 17

Marine tourism is a medium risk

The same report demonstrated that the tourism sector represented a 'medium' risk to the oceans. Its impact was felt most when it came to marine biological integrity and diversity, and the introduction of invasive species and pathogens. However, the report also highlighted that a low risk when it came to the effect it was having on pH levels in seawater and on the ocean floor.

FACT 18

Fishing and aquaculture is having the biggest impact on the oceans

The report found that the seas were found to be the fishing and aquaculture sector – although in this instance, up to 90% of companies operating in this sphere did at least understand and acknowledge the impact they were having.

FACT 19

Clustering of visitors is what's damaging major spots of interest

One area where coastal tourism is having a larger impact is the mass clustering of visitors in popular areas, which is having a negative effect on the local environment. This is a widespread form of tourism is having a large impact. Reports show that of the 54 million people who visit the world famous tourism areas, 85% cluster on either the Mediterranean Islands or Canary

They represent 135 million people shuffling into areas which in total have a shared population of around 150,000.

FACT 20

The number of cruise ships is also having an impact

Away from the shores themselves, cruise ships are also playing their part. Sewage discharge, physical contact with reefs and areas of biodiversity, and ship emissions are all cause areas of natural beauty to decay. This is a sector which has seen unprecedented growth across the 1990s, 2000s, 2010s, 2020s, 1990 and 2019. The number of cruise vessels operating worldwide rose over 75% in 30

Thankfully, some changes are being implemented in the building stage of modern ships.

Of the further 104 planned projects between now and 2027, 20% will be powered by liquified natural gases. This number is only set to increase as time goes on.

FACT 21

Clustering of visitors is what's damaging major spots of interest

Marine protected areas used to promote a safe and more sustainable form of tourism. This sector is growing at a rapid pace, with it expected to be generating as much as $6bn by the end of 2030. This isn't just encouraging news from a financial perspective. It also speaks to the growing number of people who are becoming more aware of the impact that their travel is being placed in enjoying a trip to political and protects the world around us.

FACT 22

Eight million tonnes of plastic in the ocean

One of the most immediate issues caused as a result of tourism in coastal areas is plastic waste production. It's estimated to result an eight million tonnes of this stuff finds its way into the world's oceans every year.

FACT 23

We may see more plastic than fish by 2050

If that number persists at the same rate it has been, we'll find ourselves in a position where there is more plastic than fish by 2050. This is a sad state of affairs, and it's important that two of these plastics are ethically made in the Philippines. 70% of all of them are made using non-renewable sources like oil, coal or gas.

FACT 24

The influx during tourist season is a large part of what causes this

Lack of collection capacity during the tourist season (through footfall) is one clear influx on impact on these plastic ones. The Bali area sees a total of 80% in income filter during peak tourist seasons. This waste doesn't entirely come from people dumping rubbish right into the sea. In some cases, in bad tourism can cause rivers, streams and other bodies of water to become contaminated. This is a sad state of affairs, and it's in this case meaning that this waste eventually ends up travelling down to the world's oceans.

FACT 25

Single-use plastic bags are the worst culprits

If you've noticed the coverage against single-use plastic bags in supermarkets, it's for good reason. These items are the chief offender when it comes to the plastics dirtying up the world's water systems.

As much as 10.7% of all waste found in the oceans is said to be made up of plastic bags which have been thrown away and can't naturally break down.

FACT 26

Bottles, food containers and wrappers also play their part

Behind single-use bags, a number of other common items were also found to be having a large impact. Plastic bottles were the next most prevalent item, with the total figures showing:

11.9% Plastic bottles	9.4% Food containers and cutlery
9.1% Wrappers	7.9% Synthetic rope
7.6% Fishing gear	6.1% Plastic caps and lids

(of all ocean waste contamination)

FACT 27

The Philippines is the chief culprit when it comes to plastic in the ocean

Now of the world's highest plastic polluting countries can currently be found in Asia. Of these, it is the Philippines which takes the most polluting amounts, and is reaching global status.

A massive total of 356,271 metric tons of plastic waste has been dumped into the ocean from the Pearl of the Orient.

FACT 28

India has the second most pollution in the oceans

The figure from the Philippines is nearly three times as much as the next most offender. India currently accounts for 126,513 metric tons of plastic in the ocean. The remainder of the top ten looks as follows:

126,513 India	73,098 Philippines	70,707 China	
56,333 Indonesia	40,000 Vietnam	37,799 Brazil	
28,221 Pakistan	24,640 Bangladesh	22,806 Thailand	

(of all ocean waste contamination)

FACT 29

All this plastic has changed the ocean's pH level drastically

This more influx of unnatural substances has seen the pH level of the world's oceans change significantly over time. The current level stands at 8.1 on the pH scale. And while this is currently still a fairly neutral reading, it represents an increase of 25% in acidity when compared to the pre-industrial age.

FACT 30

The Ocean Panel exists to protect the seas from pollution

As we understand more about what needs to be done to protect the oceans around us, world leaders have begun to shoulder the mantle of responsibility. The Ocean Panel is an 18 strong team of political figureheads, whose goal is to sustainably manage the oceans under their jurisdiction. Currently, the panel is made up of 14 countries, and they have put forward proposals on being followed to manage footfall in coastal and marine areas.

Leaders from the following countries have all become members of the panel since 2018:

Australia	**Indonesia**	**Norway**	
Canada	**Jamaica**	**Palau**	
Chile	**Japan**	**Portugal**	
Fiji	**Kenya**	**Seychelles**	
France	**Mexico**	**The UK**	
Ghana	**Namibia**	**The United States**	

FACT 31

The 10 members of the Ocean Panel have six clear goals in mind

Achieving ocean sustainability is a wide goal. In order for the panel to measure their success, they are a series of smaller targets to help step on top of the wider ambitions. The six core metrics which they use are

1. *Ensuring 10% of all marine protected areas are sustainably managed by 2030*
2. *40% more sustainably caught in wild fisheries by 2030*
3. *A reduction of greenhouse gases by 10%*
4. *$10.5 million in benefits from sustainable oceans by 2030*
5. *12 million new jobs created in the ocean by 2030*
6. *A reduction of pollution by 50%*

This cyclical set of goals helps to keep the panel in a constant state of progression, with each of the goals falling into one of three categories:

1. *Preserving effectively*
2. *Producing sustainably*
3. *Prospering equitably*

FACT 32

As many as 350 million people travel to coastal reefs every year

As part of the ongoing efforts of the Ocean Panel, more is being done to raise awareness about sustainability in general. Currently, it's estimated that as many as 350 million people travel to coastal reefs on an annual basis. And with these numbers in the sea, every little change can make a significant difference. To help with this, the Ocean Panel has started rating, considerations need to be made regarding their preservation.

FACT 33

Most travellers don't consider overtourism when trying to be sustainable on holiday

These considerations need to start by being made at source – that is to say, by the tourists themselves. Many of us want to be more sustainable when we go on holiday, but it can be beneficial to better paint some instead of those which assess the most footfall every year. A recent study of tourists wanting to be more sustainable on holiday found that only a small handful considered this option when attempting to take a more ethical approach.

The full study showed the following percentages by tourists for each of the countries surveyed:

COUNTRY	Percentage of tourists who consider visiting or staying in off-the-beaten-path areas as a form of sustainable travel
France	21 %
Italy	18 %
The USA	16 %
Spain	15 %
The UK	14 %
Germany	12 %

FACT 34

Visiting alternative spots can make a huge difference

The key takeaway here is that more can be done to educate travellers about how even something as simple as visiting less busy tourist hotspots can make a huge difference. Rotating or planning ahead to visit less popular areas, or even just trying to reduce the impact overtourism is having, but also spreads the positive effect that tourism can have to a wider collection of locations.

Part 35.

Avoiding unethical tourist traps can help save the planet and oceans

One of the greatest risk factors associated with these highly popularly areas are tourist traps. These are commonplace in locations where millions flock on a yearly basis, and rarely place much weight in ensuring ethical or sustainable practices are being adhered to. Perhaps more shocking yet the traps which are now spiraling out of control.

A staggering 100,000 people travelled to Antarctica between October 2022 to March 2023. This represented a 40% rise on the previous seasonal records. While nobody can deny the natural wonder of the Polar continent, it's also hard to argue that this pampering form of coastal tourist is defined good shopping centres has global warming.

FACT 36

Each tourist melts 83 tons of snow

These sustainability concerns are perhaps best exemplified by a study which broke down how much snow each tourist melts. The figure is 83 tons. This is a sad state of affairs, and it's made harsh to reminisce for the melting of 83 tons of snow every year. This was largely as a result of their natural CO2 emissions, as well as a percentage breakdown of any emissions from cruise ships.

FACT 37

Efforts are being put in place to limit the impact tourism is having here

While nothing concrete has yet been put into place to guarantee that numbers are being reduced, there are some efforts being made to limit the number of people visiting. As one step, it is 500 people at a maximum, which can be embarked onto from a dedicated ship. This regulation is all yet to be officially implemented.

FACT 38

The demand is there from tourists for sustainable diving practices

A survey of 1,500 tourists found that enthusiasts towards sustainable diving are becoming more of a factor when booking this kind of international holiday. 75% said they were willing to pay more when diving to ensure ethical practices were being followed, while a further 90% think it is the responsibility of tourism companies to make sure that their practices are as sustainable as possible. Ensuring that tourists are engaging with this kind of activity.

FACT 39

Sustainable tourism is on the rise across the board

Of anything showcases the heightened consideration tourists are making, it's the continued growth of the sustainable tourism market. This is said to be worth at a very impressive $21bn in 2030. There's supposed to be a CAGR of 19.8% between now and 2031 with that figure set to rise to $51bn by the end of 2031.

FACT 40.

Panama's Sustainable Tourism Master Plan is at the forefront of the increase in ethical travel

Countries across the globe are doing what they can to protect the world around them. One of the most pioneering examples is that of Panama. Their Sustainable Tourism Development Master Plan wants to see their total number of visitors continue to grow, but in a way that prioritises both people and nature.

They've pumped $301m into the plan, which has so far seen them increase the basic rights of wild turtles, as well as creating an interactive digital portal which allows tourists to explore areas of rainforest virtually. The idea here is to showcase local indigenous cultures, without disturbing their natural habitats.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL MARINE AND COASTAL TOURISM AND THE PART YOU CAN PLAY

With a clearer picture of the current landscape of ocean tourism and the role that sustainability plays in this, you may be wondering what impact you can have. Let's explore what tangible differences you can make to protect coastal areas.

How to be sustainable at the beach

A trip to the seaside gives everyone a chance to relax and unwind. While it might not be a top priority when having fun, it's still important to make sure we're doing what we can to preserve the beaches and coastlines we're enjoying. Think about all of the following if you want to be a sustainable traveller:

AVOID SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

As the main offender and polluting element in the world's oceans, it's advised to avoid single-use plastics at all costs. Sometimes it's unavoidable to need to use a disposable item. If you do, think about instead trying something like bamboo or a plant-based resin. It's best with items like cutlery and bottles to make sure they're reusable.

TRY NOT TO DISTURB LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS

The coasts are home to thousands of species of marine animals. You're just visiting. As such, try to leave ecosystems as untouched as possible. Disrupting or disturbing the delicate balance of these areas can have large knock-on effects for the wildlife that live there.

USE REEF FRIENDLY SUNCREAM

When you swim in the sea wearing suncream, the chemicals in them enter and pollute the water. Sometimes even just sitting on the beach can cause this to happen, with sand particles becoming contaminated before being blown into the ocean. An alternative here is to use creams that have physical blockers, such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, rather than chemical products.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE FOOD YOU BRING

While wildlife might enjoy the taste of food they sneakily pinch, in most cases it will be difficult for them to digest it. A lot of our food is processed in a way that's hard for marine animals to properly break down in their stomachs. As such, it's important to be vigilant of your lunch or snacks.

CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELF

This is good advice wherever you go on your travels. As both a mark of respect and a means of keeping the local environment clean and healthy, always pick up your rubbish. Picking up your waste material is one of the easiest, but also most effective, ways to have a positive impact on beaches and coasts.

LEVEL OUT YOUR SANDCASTLES AND FILL IN HOLES.

While a fun pastime that you shouldn't forgo altogether, it's important to remember to fill in holes you've dug and knock over your sandcastles when you're ready to leave. They may be innocent enough in theory, but these structures and holes have the potential to trap nesting turtles and other coastal wildlife.

FOLLOW BEACH RULES. RULES EXIST FOR A REASON

If a beach has a clear set which it politely asks you to follow, it's best to do so. These advisory measures will have been created with protecting the wildlife and integrity of the local ecosystems in mind.

Sustainable ways to protect the ocean year-round

Environmentally-friendly habits don't start when you arrive at the beach. You can do your part to help protect the world's oceans and seas all throughout the year. There are a number of ways to do this, with some of the most effective being to:

CONSERVE WATER WHEN YOU USE IT

Protecting the oceans begins at home. By conserving water when showering, doing the dishes or even just washing your hands, you'll reduce the excess runoff of waste water. This in turn means less will flow to the ocean, reducing the levels of contamination.

CUT DOWN ON WASTE PRODUCTS YOU'RE THROWING AWAY

Discarding plastic waste and non-biodegradable items heightens the chance of it eventually reaching the sea. Think carefully about what you want or need to throw away. Making this a part of the buying process itself can help with this. Think about what plastic or non-degradable products you actually need, and look for alternatives where you can.

FOLLOW ETHICAL FISHING PRACTICES

Taking a single fish out of its natural environment could have a knock-on effect for a local ecosystem. As such, it's best to fish responsibly, and follow the catch-and-release practices which help to keep more fish swimming in local rivers.

CHOOSE SEAFOOD WISELY WHEN YOU SHOP

Seafood now often has packaging information about how ethically or sustainably it was sourced. Look for this and use it as a tool in making a final decision about what you want to buy. If packaging is unclear about how the seafood was caught, it might be wise to steer clear of it.

PRACTISE SAFE BOATING

If you're fortunate enough to have a private boat or yacht (or are hiring one on holiday), make sure to consider the impact you're having on the world around you. Anchor in sandy areas which are far from any coral or seagrass, and make sure to adhere to 'no wake' zones – travelling at the slowest speed possible while still being able to steer.

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