

# TRAVEL DESTINATIONS ENDANGERED BY MARINE POLLUTION



In the current society, plastic consumption is one of the biggest problems on the planet. Only one third of plastic produced in EU is recycled. Half of the plastic waste in countries such as Italy, France and Spain end up in landfills. Tourism plays a very important role in this issue. In a world where travel destinations are within the reach of almost everyone, finding solutions and applying them is the only way to continue enjoying the landscapes that our planet provides.

Plastic is made of carbon fuel. Most plastic is derived from oil and other fossil fuels. If we only look at its production, we can realize that it is a material that is not sustainable. **Producing a single plastic water bottle requires 8 liters of water.**

Plastic is one of the most used materials worldwide due to its durability. However, precisely its durability also makes it a very dangerous resource. The data is alarming. According to the organization Seas at Risk, it is estimated that each year 100,000 tons of plastic from coastal countries of the EU end up in the sea. Today the Mediterranean is one of the seas with the highest levels of plastic pollution in the world.

Unfortunately, the main consequence of these numbers is marine pollution, including the travel destinations. It is estimated that there are about 150 million tons of plastics in the ocean as of now. This is a number that will increase every year, if we do not reverse this trend. It is predicted that in 2050 there could be more plastics than fish in the sea.

The plastic pollution will not only affect a photo on Instagram, it goes much further. Only in the Mediterranean there are at least 135 species that have ingested plastic. The main victims are birds (35%), fish (27%), invertebrates (20%), marine mammals (13%) and sea turtles. Globally, there are about 700 marine species threatened by plastics. Large pieces of plastics injure, suffocate and often kill marine animals, as the world has witnessed recently.

Marine pollution also economically affects coastal cities in two key sectors: fishing and tourism. 61.7 million euros each year due to the reduction of fish numbers. As there is more and more information about it and society is concerned about the quality of seafood, the demand has fallen.

The main “polluters” are, for obvious reasons, coastal countries of the EU, with the issue further deepening during the high tourist season and the inflow of mass tourism into the travel destinations.

Italians consume about 2.1 million tons of plastics each year and only 41% is recycled. Every day, 32 million plastic bottles are used in Italy. The country is the biggest consumer of bottled water in the world.

Spain consumes almost double of Italy (3.84 million tons of plastics) per year, with 38% being recycled. The Spanish population consumes 10% of the continent's single-use plastics, from plastic bottles to millions of cigarette butts.

France, meanwhile, consumes from 2 to 4 million tons of plastics per year. **Only a staggering number of 22% plastics is recycled, which is one of the worst ratios in Europe.** The population is a top 3 consumer of bottled water and top 10 worldwide, while cotton swabs are the second most common item. Other significant polluters of the Mediterranean are Turkey, Croatia and Greece.

There are different ways to tackle marine pollution and official institutions as well as tourism companies are applying various methods. At the same time, travelers and people themselves can contribute to a more sustainable future for the Mediterranean. II of the potential solutions and measures will be discussed in our second edition on the topic next week, so stay tuned.

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