

Ranking in the top spot is New Zealand, with its neighbouring Australia in second place, followed by Chile, Canada and the UK rounding out the top 5, and Croatia was ranked as one of the best countries in Europe.

The newly released Positive Oceans Index ranks the best countries around the world for protecting their oceans, and Croatia features. The brand new study released by sustainable travel pioneers Positive Travel analyses how countries protect their ocean and marine life, examining four key elements - marine biodiversity; coastal development and infrastructure; leisure activities, and conservation and regeneration. The eco-travel enterprise worked alongside thirty organisations, including global institutions, boards, ministries of environment, local NGOs, universities, and research centres to compile the study.

The researchers took into account various factors surrounding marine life, conservation and tourism. Within marine biodiversity the study focuses on the diversity and maintenance of different marine life; the coastal development and infrastructure indicator examines the coastal tourism and living infrastructure and how this impacts waste, pollution and other factors affecting ocean health; leisure activities looks at the various coastal activities and how these impact the environment and local communities while conservation and regeneration takes into account the measures, laws and actions being put in place to protect the country's oceans.

Within each of the indicators a subset of four to five elements has been examined to award each indicator score. The indicator scores were averaged to create a total score for each country. The initial release of the Positive Oceans Index examines 50 countries which were selected based on the importance of local and marine tourism for the local economy and communities, and the value of marine assets linked to the destination. Positive Travel will be continuing to develop the index with further releases which will include 100 countries and specific destinations within each country.

The Positive Oceans Index is part of Positive Travel's wider Positive Ocean mission which was launched with the inaugural Life Under Water Photography Challenge and is being supported by the Positive Oceans Pledge. The pledge is calling upon travellers, tourists boards and tour operators alike to sign up and pledge their support for protecting our oceans - with the chance for one lucky supporter to win a luxury eco-hotel stay and plenty of other sustainable goodies up for grabs too.

Raising awareness and inspiring positive action to protect our oceans is a crucial part of Positive Travel's work as they aim to create awareness on the impact of travel, leisure and recreational activities on marine life and drive behavioural changes toward being more mindful and conscious ocean users.

Oceans have been a source of fascination and inspiration to humanity for millennia. They house some of the most diverse and abundant species on Earth and marine eco-systems play a key role in balancing our Planet's climate. 40% of people live within 100km from the coast, 3 billion depend on the ocean for their livelihoods and 200mn are employed in coastal and marine tourism. In fact, 30% of all leisure travel is coastal and its activities are closely linked to the health and well-being of marine life. The annual revenue from coastal and marine travel is estimated to be around \$500-700bn and the annual reef recreational value is a staggering \$36bn.

Source: thedubrovniktimes.com