



## The World's Ten Best Ethical Destinations 2013

### Addendum: Bullet Points

#### Why Countries Were Chosen, Points for Improvement & Why to Visit

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by Jeff Greenwald, Christy Hoover and Natalie Lefevre / © 2012 by EthicalTraveler.org

*Note: Many indexes were measured during our research; this is a small sample of examples.*

#### Barbados

- + Working with the United Nations Environmental Program, the comprehensive Barbados Green Economy Scoping Study (GESS) was compiled to highlight policy, investment, and governance options to further integrate environmental protection to Barbados' social and economic fabric.
- + Approved the Mangrove Pond Green Energy Complex and is developing community outreach with the Public Sector Smart Energy program.
- + Highest Human Development Index ('very high human development') of all the CARICOM member states.
- + Praised by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights this year for its excellent standing in literacy and education.
- + The second best ranking in the Americas after Canada in Transparency International's 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index.
  
- Areas it could work to improve are human trafficking, including more women into the government, and progressing LGBTQ rights.
- Homosexuality criminalized, possibility of life imprisonment.
- US State Dept. Trafficking in Person's Report 2012 places Barbados on Tier 2 Watch List.
- The Government of Barbados does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government has not shown evidence of increasing efforts to address human trafficking over the previous year.
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has called on the Government of Barbados to adopt stronger culture of human rights in order to achieve developed country status.
  
- \* Eco-conscious SCUBA diving via Barbados Blue. Barbados Blue is dedicated to the conservation and preservation of the marine ecosystem they operate in, and employ two full time Marine Biologists that work in teaching diving, conserving and resorting the reefs, and educating people on the reefs and associated ecosystems.
- \* Some of the best surfing in the Caribbean. The Soup Bowl, near Bathsheba, on the east coast of the island, is meant to have some of the best and most challenging surfs in the whole of the Caribbean, and world-class surfers flock here for an adventure. Other popular spots are Cattlewash Beach and Bottom Bay Beach, the latter of which is famed for its dramatic scenery of cliffs and coconut trees.
- \* Barbados is famous for it's rum, and tours of distilleries are available. For those interested in small local craft batch production, check out St. Nicholas Abbey.

## Cape Verde

- + West Africa's highest standard of living.
- + No laws explicitly provide a basis for discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- + Received the second-highest ranking for governance performance in the 2011 Ibrahim Index of African Governance.
- + Working towards 100 percent, then possibly 300 percent renewables.
- + A zero emissions concept for tourism is in the works, according to the gov't.
- Rising tourism could pose a threat to Cape Verde's marine life. Important nesting site for loggerhead turtles and humpback whales.
- Tourism remains mostly in the busy hubs, not reaching the poor areas who need the boost.
- Propensity to import vs. buying/producing locally.
- \* Black sand beaches, bleached-white beaches, high cliffs and mountainous peaks and desert plains interrupted by volcanic cones. There is plenty to see and do: Diving, Hill Walking, Fishing, Windsurfing or just relaxing on the beach.
- \* Since Tourism is a relatively recent arrival, you can still sample the real culture of the islands from the more European (Sao Vicente) to the more African (Santiago). Cultural richness and geographic diversity abound.
- \* In the islands of Sao Nicolau, Santiago and Boa Vista there is a major focus on ecotourism. Monte Gordo National Park on the island of Sao Nicolau, near the main island of Sao Vincent, is part of the Protected Areas of Cape Verde Network.

## Costa Rica \*

- + Ranked #1 happiest country out of 151 countries by the Happy Planet Index (HDI) conducted by The New Economic Foundations.
- + Pres Chinchilla signed a ban on shark finning 10/10/12.
- + Congress provisionally approved a ban on hunting for sport (though not to indigenous groups for survival or to scientific research) as part of its Wildlife Conservation Law 10/2/12.
- + Dramatic decrease in crime rate this year due to an increased focus on citizen security.
- + The Costa Rican gov't stopped Diquis Dam project that would have flooded Terraba indigenous territory.
- Increasing production of coffee has boosted economy, but has caused deforestation, erosion, and central river pollution.
- Lawmaker Justo Orozco denounces homosexuality as a sin and reversible; then, in June, Human Rights Commission voted against passing a bill that would have guaranteed equal economic rights to LGBT citizens in Costa Rica. Led to Marcha de los Invisibles.
- Police accused of discriminating against a gay club (Club Oh!) and so ordered by municipality to end abuses.
- "Morning-after pill" still illegal in Costa Rica, despite attempts to legalize its sale in 2008.
- Still doesn't comply with minimum protection against sex trafficking according to U.S. State Department
- Received highest CPI (Corruption Perception Index) in Central America (4.8) but still extremely low.
- \* 20 natural parks, 8 biological reserves, and a series of protected areas that captivate ecotourism lovers.

- \* Includes horseback riding, hiking mountainous paths in the cloud forests, and guided bird-watching tours.
- \* Tortuguero National Park is especially famous for sea turtle nesting that takes place every year, and the natural canals that abound with protected species such as crocodiles, manatees, and otter

## Ghana

- + One of the more stable nations in the region, with a good record of power changing hands peacefully. Political rights and civil liberties are mostly respected, according to Freedom House.
- + Interim President Mahama is a respected historian, writer and communications specialist. Regarded as a champion of the underprivileged, he has a keen interest in environmental issues, particularly the problem of plastic pollution in Africa.
- + High degree of media freedom, the private press and broadcasters operate without significant restrictions.
- + Several important national parks; about 15% of Ghana's land area is under some form of protection.
- + Peaceful transition of power after President Mills died.
- Human rights abuses against individuals suspected of same-sex relations continued.
- People with mental disabilities suffer severe abuses in psychiatric institutions and spiritual healing centers in Ghana, according to Human Rights Watch.
- Prisons are overcrowded and poorly resourced, according to Amnesty International.
- Thousands remain under threat of forced eviction, however none were actually evicted and President Mills publicly committed not to forcibly evict the people living in Old Fadama.
- \* A wealth of national parks worth visiting, including Kakum and Mole. Pioneer in the field of community-based ecotourism.
- \* Vast array of wildlife including elephants and monkeys, marine turtles, crocodiles, hundreds of colorful bird and butterfly species. Monkey sanctuaries, butterfly and bird sanctuaries, etc.
- \* Stunning beaches and greatly varied landscapes.

## Latvia \*

- + Human rights in Latvia are generally respected by the government, according to Freedom House and US Department of State.
- + Latvia is ranked above-average among the world's sovereign states in democracy, press freedom, privacy and human development.
- + On Nov 18, 2011, President Obama praised Latvia, saying "Today Latvia is a flourishing democracy and an inspiration to countries around the world."
- + Nearly all inland waters are pollution-free.
- + Most improved country on the Environmental Protection Index.
- Non-citizens, including stateless persons, historically suffered from limited or no access to a broad range of rights, according to UN and Council of Europe bodies.
- \* Virtually half of Latvia is unspoiled nature – a safe haven to countless protected species. Very strong culture of ecotourism (including preservation of habitat and culture). Apart from marked private property, Latvia's forests, berries, mushrooms and hazelnuts are accessible to anyone.

- \* There are 4 state reserves, 3 national parks, 22 nature parks, 211 nature reserves, 6 protected landscape areas, and 1 biosphere reserve.
- \* Small harbors neglected or destroyed during the Soviet era have been revived and now support a thriving fishing culture, which tourists can participate in.

### **Lithuania \***

- + Lithuania is ahead of Latvia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine in terms of business environment and opportunities, according to a Swedish study.
- + Many examples of environmental proactivity, such as water protection measures in the Neman River Basin.
- + Kaunas, Lithuania entered as candidate for European Green Capital 2015 on the basis of 12 indicators covering climate change and energy performance, sustainable local transport, air quality and noise levels, green urban areas and sustainable land use, nature and biodiversity promotion, waste management, water consumption and waste water treatment, eco-innovation and sustainable employment, and the environmental management practice of the local authority.
- + In Oct. of 2012, the Energy Security Centre of Lithuania was awarded the status of NATO Centre of Excellence for efforts in energy security and identification of alternative energy sources.
- + Strong culture of historical preservation and preservation of natural resources.
- Still experiencing some issues with human and drug trafficking.
- Greenhouse emissions increased in Lithuania by 3% 2011-2012.
- \* The Zarasai Region named one of the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN).
- \* Countless, diverse tourism opportunities.

### **Mauritius \***

- + Mauritius's economy is the 8th freest in the Heritage Foundation Economic Freedom 2012 Index.
- + One of Africa's highest per capita incomes. Literacy and life expectancy levels continue to rise. Laudable healthcare program.
- + Regular free elections.
- + Excellent human rights record.
- + In the past year, the Government of Mauritius has put a strong emphasis on greening the economy and implementing various sustainable development programs such as improving energy efficiency, increasing the share of renewable energy, alleviating poverty and creating various social programs.
- Domestic violence regarding women continues to be a prominent issue and unfortunately it seems little progress has been made in establishing gender equality.
- Mauritius has not yet met the recommendations of the 2005 SADC Declaration in regards to the 30% quota of women in different structures of power in government positions.
- The HIV/AIDS rate is 1.7%. While significantly lower than other African countries, when compared to countries like Germany with a rate far below 0.1%, Mauritius' infection rate must be seen as way too high.
- Rate of diabetes is one of the highest in the world.
- According to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2011, other reported human rights problems included security force abuse of suspects and detainees, prison overcrowding, official corruption, abuse and sexual exploitation of children,
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discrimination against persons living with AIDS/HIV, discrimination and abuse based on sexual orientation, restrictions on labor rights, antiunion discriminations, and child labor.

- \* Mountain climbing or explore nature through forests, plants or endemic flowers. Enjoy the spectacular beauty of waterfalls or live an exciting adventure by going down the waterfalls.
- \* Take breathtaking views on foot, on bike or kayak; or go trekking through fields, rivers and forests on all terrain quad bikes and discover the magnificent views of the south-eastern coastal regions.

## Palau \*

- + The country is a vanguard in its conservation efforts through the Green Energy Micronesia Initiative (which includes such initiatives as creating of the world's first shark sanctuary and leading the Organization of Tuna Exporting Countries).
- + Palau has an excellent human rights record, a high Human Development Index (ranked 49 in the world and higher than the average for East Asia and the Pacific and the world as a whole).
- + Tourism funds in the form of an airport fee channeled towards conservation projects.
- + Innovative tourism product development e.g. shark diving has substantial economic and environmental benefits.
- Plans to drill for oil for greater economic stability are in motion. Long-term implications remain to be seen.
- Issues such as overfishing, dredging of coral reefs, and inadequate waste disposal continue to pose an environmental threat, but evidence suggests that steps are being taken in the right direction.
- Substantial decline in sea cucumber densities in Ngardmau State (cause: overharvesting).
- \* UNESCO names the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon as one of the new wonders of the world in 2012 – Travel & Leisure, 2012
- \* Palau is home to 4 TripAdvisor 2012 Certificate of Excellence recipients (Palau Royal Resort, Fish n' Fins, Palau Pacific Resort & Sam's Tours).

## Samoa

- + Samoa's constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status.
- + Samoa is strong on environmental policies. This stems from the traditional Samoan concept of va tapuia, which signifies the sacred relationship amongst all things, including people and the environment.
- + The government has proactively sought protection of the environment through the designation of national parks and improved management of the coast, both done in consultation with local communities. The government has been very vocal in its support of finding solutions to climate change impacts.
- + One of the first to sign the Kyoto Protocol.
- Domestic violence remains a problem and women traditionally have a subordinate role in society, this is changing slowly with the help of the government, church and local NGOs.
- Spousal rape is not illegal.
- Same-sex sexual acts are illegal, but few incidents of LGBT discrimination.
- Poor prison conditions, domestic violence against women, abuse of children, and discrimination against women and non-Matai (according to U.S. Department of State).

- \* Staying in a beach fale is the simplest form of eco-tourism in Samoa. Beach fales are all locally owned and operated by local villagers and enable them to achieve a standard of living whilst retaining their daily subsistence lifestyle.
- \* Falealupo Rainforest Preserve (in the north) and Tafua Peninsula Rainforest Preserve (in the south), provide some eco-tourism infrastructure in the form of organized tours and canopy walks.
- \* Caves, lava fields and waterfalls are part of the menu on the island of Savaii. For culture aficionados, the biggest attraction could be the fact that traditional village life on Savaii has not been overtaken by the modern world.

**Uruguay \***

- + LGBT rights and women's rights are among the best in the region.
  - + Uruguay has pursued agricultural policies that are both environmentally sustainable and profitable for the farmers.
  - + Pursuing wind power, electric buses, energy efficient lighting, and pursuance of an international treaty on the use and mining of mercury.
  - + The first nation to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, showing their dedication to workers' rights.
  - + Granted each primary and secondary school student a laptop, showing their commitment and creativity in education.
- According to US State Departments' 2012 Narcotics Control Strategy report, Uruguay increasingly used as a transit zone for narco trafficking.
  - Police are worried about a rise in cocaine processing.
- \* Uruguay's landscape is wonderful, flat, grassland, full of animals, plant life and opportunities for outdoor exploration.
  - \* Uruguay is an amazing bird watchers paradise, home to many rare and colorful species and destinations like Rocha and Laguna de Castillos close to the seashore are well equipped for observing and photographing the local wild life.
  - \* There are miles of unspoiled beaches at Punto Diablo, Cabo Polonio and Fortaleza de Santa Teresa, with the crashing waves and surfing on the Atlantic Ocean.

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