



PRESS RELEASE NATUREFRIENDS INTERNATIONAL

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World Environment Day: Plastic pollution threatens the environment, health and tourism

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On the occasion of today's World Environment Day, Naturefriends International is drawing attention to the importance of an intact natural environment for people and the economy. A functioning ecosystem is an indispensable basis for tourism. This year's focus on 'plastic pollution' once again emphasizes the urgency of concrete measures – also in the travel and leisure industry.

It is estimated that 8 million tons of plastic end up in the world's oceans every year. Between 80 and 150 million tons of plastic waste are already floating in our oceans - with fatal consequences for the marine ecosystem, marine animals and ultimately also for us humans. A plastic bag takes around 20 years to decompose, a PET bottle up to 450 years. Only around 15 per cent of the waste floats to the surface - the rest sinks to the seabed or is ingested by marine animals and returns to humans via the food chain. An alarming fact is also that "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch" is as big as Central Europe.

Tourism: Part of the problem – and the solution

Plastic waste pollution is present in many popular holiday regions. For example, the highest point in the Maldives is the "Thilafushi garbage mountain", which is an artificially created island. The lack of waste management systems further intensifies the problem. This not only hazards the environment, but also the economic basis of many regions that are heavily dependent on tourism. For travelers, this means rubbish instead of sea views, plastic instead of postcard idylls.

Best practice-examples: Tilos and Bornholm

The Greek Island of Tilos and the Danish island of Bornholm show that things can be done differently. Tilos has been committed to a comprehensive circular economy since 2023. Organic waste is composted, recyclable materials are recycled, and non-recyclable materials are used to generate energy. The Island of Bornholm is going one step further. The government is planning to go completely waste-free by 2032 and to shut down the waste incineration plant. These projects show that with a clear strategy and a political will, the local population and tourists can benefit.

That is why Naturefriends International is calling for:

- **The realization of the international UN Plastics Convention**, which defines binding targets and bans;
- **The consistent development of a circular economy** to conserve resources and minimize waste;
- **Mandatory measures in tourism** to measurably reduce plastic consumption.

Travelling is also a responsibility. A conscious approach to plastic use on vacation not only protects nature but also preserves the quality of life for the local people.

More information:

NFI RESPECT Sustainable Tourism: <https://www.nf-int.org/en/themen/sustainable-tourism>

UN Environment Programme: www.worldenvironmentday.global

End Plastic Pollution: www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution

Best-Practice-Example Tilos: <https://www.justgozero.com/en/tilos/#articles-tilos>

Best-Practice-Example Bornholm: <https://bofa.dk/fremtiden/>

#BeatPlasticPollution

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