

The World's Ten Best Ethical Destinations 2015

Addendum: 2015 Bullet Points

Why Countries Were Chosen (+), Points for Improvement (-) & Reasons to Visit (*)

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Note: Many indexes were measured during our research; this list includes a small sample.

Cabo Verde

- + Cabo Verde ranked at #123 on the Human Development Index, showing an upward trend during the last year.
- + The country has abolished the death sentence.
- + An Ethics Code was introduced to deal with corruption.
- + It has made good strides towards reaching its UN Global Development Goals.
- + Violence against women still exists, but the government adopted a series of legislative reforms to combat those criminal offenses.
- + Cabo Verde has decriminalized homosexuality.
- + The country supports several environmental projects and implemented an Eco Education Project to provide environmental training for teachers.
- + At the UN SIDS Conference, Cabo Verde developed an action plan for sustainable development. Furthermore, it shows a strong commitment to implement the main international conventions.
- + Cabo Verde has a standard of living higher than most African nations and is one of the most politically liberal nations on the continent as well as in the world.
- + In May the president argued for the introduction of new legal procedures to ensure the media has easier access to information from public institutions.
- + In December, 2013, the Cabo Verde National Assembly approved a new law, the Status of Children and Adolescents, to improve efforts toward combating child labor and violence against children.
- + Cape Verde is ranked 3rd of 46 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa Index.
- + The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has made progress in its New Agricultural program, establishing stronger bonds between rural development, poverty alleviation, and economic growth. Agriculture has increased in Cabo Verde as well as fishing.
- + In June, the Cabo Verdean Association of Gays Against Discrimination organized and celebrated the second Cabo Verdean Gay Week "Mindelo Pride" on Sao Vicente, the first having been held in 2013.

- + In February, the Animal Balance Team held a dog sterilization campaign in Santiago, collaborating with the government, NGOs, and local volunteers.
- + The government announced a series of reforms to transfer a larger share of central government funds to the municipalities. Also, the president of the Commission on Parliamentary Reform introduced a proposal to promote transparency and ethical behavior in the National Assembly.
- Human trafficking continues to be a problem, with Cabo Verde ranking at #15 on the Global Slavery Index.
- No prosecutions involving cases of child sex tourism were reported, and the government did not make significant efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor or commercial sex acts or to address sex tourism.
- Domestic violence against women is considered to be widespread, and although the national assembly adopted a law criminalizing gender-based violence in 2010, the implementation needs improvement.
- The recent approval of Blue Shark fishing (for their fins) is of concern, considered to be inhumane and harmful to ocean ecosystems by many environmentalists.
- Cabo Verde's infrastructural development has generated multiple allegations of corruption at the municipal and national levels.
- Although Cabo Verde's judiciary is independent, the capacity and efficiency of the courts are limited, and lengthy pre-trial detention remains a problem. The occasional use of the military as a domestic police force is generating some concern.
- Environmental concerns include soil erosion, deforestation, water shortages, desertification; threats to several species of birds and reptiles, illegal beach sand extraction, and overfishing.
- * According to *National Geographic*, Cape Verde is one of 21 "must-see tourist destinations" in 2014.
- * The country is known for gorgeous hikes, crystal beaches, water sports, and local hospitality.
- * Attractions include its highest peak, Mt. Fogo; dune-studded Boa Vista; turtle-watching tours on Boa Vista; Mindelo, Cabo Verde's version of the Riviera; the art gallery/café Dja'r Fogo; and the dizzyingly vertical isle of Santo Antão.

Chile

- + The country received the World Responsible Tourism Award for its Huilo Biological Reserve.
- + Chile ranks 29 of 178 in the EPI index, reflecting a 7.44% increase over the last ten years.
- + Chile received the highest possible scores on Freedom House rating and high scores for press freedom.
- + The HDI ranked Chile at 41 out of 187, in the category of Very High Human Development.
- + President Bachelet expressed her intention to reform the controversial antiterrorism law and to guarantee the rights of Chile's indigenous people.
- + In April, 2014, the Chilean Senate moved to prioritize a bill that would allow transgender people to legally change their names and sex without sex

- reassignment surgery. Additionally, President Bachelet expressed her commitment to fight for same-sex marriage.
- + Chile is leading the way in Latin America for solar energy production and solar thermal technologies, with more than a dozen large solar PV projects under construction.
- + In June 2014, the government rejected plans for the construction of five hydroelectric dams in Patagonia that would have jeopardized the rivers, wilderness, and local culture.
- + Chile is expanding its carbon tax to cover about 55% of emissions.
- + Chile is the pilot country representing Latin America and the Caribbean for the "Institutional Strengthening of Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC).
- + President Bachelet is promoting a reduction in gender discrimination, appointing women to half of her Cabinet positions and enacting laws to improve women's labor rights and pay.
- + Chile moved to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape, incest, risk to the woman's life or health, or when the life of the fetus is not viable.
- + President Bachelet outlined a multibillion dollar package of educational reforms, including an end to state subsidies to for-profit universities and schools and potentially the introduction of university education for all.
- + Chile ranked 22 of 177 countries in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. It is also listed favorably as a Tier 1 country by the U.S. State Department.
- + The government convicted 75 former agents of the Pinochet regime's secret police for aggravated kidnapping of Pinochet's political opponent in May 1974.
- + Chile's Inter-Agency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons adopted a National Plan against Trafficking in Persons
- Despite co-sponsoring a UN Human Rights Council resolution to combat violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, violent attacks have been reported, with authorities allegedly failing to fully pursue the cases.
- Still very high inequality rates.
- Continuing tensions between the Mapuche Indians and the government and police violence during public demonstrations.
- Amnesty calls for reform of the military justice system and enactment of legislation to fully protect and respect human rights of migrants.
- Agricultural exporters exploit thousands of women employed as seasonal workers in rural areas, who suffer high levels of poverty and poor working conditions, despite the huge profits their labour generates.
- LGBT people continue to face bias, despite a 2012 antidiscrimination law covering sexual orientation and gender identity. Violent attacks are reported each year, and authorities have allegedly failed to pursue the cases energetically.
- Government and/or companies regularly interfere in collective labor rights or fail to fully guarantee them; deficiencies in laws make frequent violations possible.
- Chile's prisons are overcrowded and violent; inmates suffer physical abuse as well as substandard medical and food services.
- * Chile offers a vast natural landscape, with 19% of its territory being protected park or natural reserves, and features snow and skiing in the southern zones.
- * Attractions include the driest desert in the world, spectacular glaciers and fjords, lakes and canals, volcanoes along the Pacific "ring of fire," Calama's Mining

Museum, whales and penguins, a flamingo reserve, hot springs, and excellent Chilean wine.

Dominica

- + The constitution guarantees freedom of the press and the judiciary, as well as freedom of speech, assembly, and religion. Advocacy groups operate without interference, and the internet is neither restricted nor censored by the government.
- + Elections are generally free and fair, and the law provides criminal penalties for official corruption.
- + Dominica's law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, color, and creed.
- + The law protects children against assault, mistreatment, neglect, domestic violence, and abandonment. The government operated two shelters for abused children, "Chances" and "Operation Youth Quake."
- + Dominica prioritized the implementation of the National Action Plan on gender violence, enforcement of domestic violence laws, raising of the minimum employment age to at least 15, and poverty alleviation.
- + Indigenous rights are protected both in law and in practice.
- + The government has established a National Action Plan that aims to maintain and conserve the island's eco-system, addressing issues such as biodiversity, species preservation, deforestation, sustainable development and energy, and water quality.
- + Dominica has positioned itself at the forefront of geothermal energy production among Caribbean nations and has completed the drilling phase of its geothermal power project. Along with a coalition of island nations, it hopes to cut its carbon emissions by 45% over the next 20 years.
- + Dominica's bank launched an initiative to provide financial support to small and midsize businesses attempting to implement energy efficient practices and technologies.
- + A Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has been established for 2014–2020.
- Robberies and violent crime have occurred in tourist areas.
- Same-sex relations are still criminalized, and Dominica rejected recommendations from the UN Human Rights Council and other international organizations to repeal the pertinent law, stating that no one had been arrested or prosecuted under the provision.
- Although the government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it has not enacted its provisions, nor does the law specifically prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities.
- The most serious human rights problem is domestic violence against women and children. The law criminalizes rape but not spousal rape.
- Although women have played an important role in Dominica's government, they continue to face discrimination in employment opportunities and other areas of life. In recent years, the government has taken steps to increase their rights.
- The Kalinago people, particularly women, continue to suffer from low levels of unofficial and societal discrimination. Unemployment in the territory is higher than in the rest of the country and mean income below the national, although the poverty level has decreased.

- There are no protections for whistle-blowers in either public or private entities, and labor organization is prevented.
- * Known as the "Nature Island" of the Caribbean, an extensive network of national parks and reserves protects a significant portion of Dominica's landscape, with its lush flora and fauna and volcanic peaks of lava craters, as well as its spectacular coral reefs, many considered pristine and which provide some of the best scuba diving in the world.
- * The country offers many sports activities and hiking attractions, including the 115-mile Waitukubuli National Trail, the longest of its kind in the Caribbean and the region's first major walking trail. Attractions include Boiling Lake—the second largest in the world—Morne Trois Pitons National Park, Kalinago Barana Autê, and the Rosalie Bay Resort.
- * Dominica has many eco-tourism opportunities and displays a willingness to establish sustainable resource solutions, including its conservation of sea turtles.

Lithuania

- + Lithuanian government has finally opened an investigation into the secret CIA "black sites".
- + They have sent several humanitarian aid packages to the Ukraine
- + A Wolf Protection Plan took effect in September.
- + In order to alleviate dependence on fossil fuel the European Union set a goal of 23% use of renewable energy by 2020. Lithuania is currently already at 22% use of renewable energy, far ahead of schedule.
- + Lithuania received the highest score of all of our countries on the UN's Human Development Index.
- + Lithuania scored well on the Gini Index, suggesting reduction in inequality.
- + Received a perfect score from Freedom House Perfect in the areas of civil and political rights.
- + Lithuania's National Heat Sector Development Programme 2014-2020 proposes increases in its use of wood as biofuel, as well as building new water heating and cogeneration power plants, made partly or fully from fuel peat.
- + Lithuania's 2014 National Reform program includes budgeting for a total of ecobuses in nine cities, decreasing CO2 emissions by 1.3 thousand tons per year.
- + Lithuania has one of the most effective social welfare systems in Europe.
- + Social assistance programs focus on the needs of the young, disabled and most vulnerable.
- + On January 20th, Lithuania signed the UN's Optional Convention for Prevention against Torture.
- Due to the loss of the Russian market for beef, they Lithuania has lifted a ban on "ritual slaughter" of livestock so that it can be sold to Muslim countries.
- Lithuania has joined a bloc of countries that may oppose the EU's plan to decarbonize energy and cut emissions by 40% by 2030.
- Lithuania's energy use per capita is more than twice the EU average.
- They are looking into liquid natural gas, or "fracking", to increase energy independence.

- According to Freedom House, "discrimination against ethnic minorities...remains a problem, especially among the small Romany population."
- Lithuanian lawmakers are considering a measure a measure similar to Russia's anti-gay propaganda law.
- Human Trafficking is still a problem in Lithuania and they remain on Tier 2 of the State Department's Trafficking in Person's Report.
- * 5 national parks
- * 3 UNESCO heritage sites
- * Many pilgrimage sites (Zemaiciu Kalvarija, Samogitia, Gate of Dawn, Hill of Crosses) and UNESCO World Heritage Sites (including Lithuania's "Troy", Kernave).
- * Many national parks, including Aukshtaitskiy National Park which hosts the
- * Museum of Ancient Beekeeping, Dzukiyskiy National Park with its Museum of Ethnography and bicycle paths, and Zhemaitia National Park, famous for its castle ruins, cycling, kayaking, fishing, diving, and birdwatching.
- * The European Commission named the Zarasai region (which borders Latvia and Belarus) the "Heavenly shore on Earth", known for its lakes and rivers.

Mauritius

- + Mauritius retains a rich, diverse flora with over 670 species of flowering plants, over three hundred of them endemic.
- + Mauritius embarked on a tree-planting campaign with a goal of 200,00 trees.
- + It has also established fishing reserves and marine parks and has instigated a community-based coral farming program to combat the loss of reefs.
- + The Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index found that Mauritius had the highest score in the African region.
- + Mauritius has been ranked number one on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance for the last eight years.
- + Democratic government is stable and generally has positive reputation for transparency and accountability, and encourages economic development at the regional level.
- + Mauritius is the only African country that has comprehensive income security programs for citizens over 60.
- + Received the second highest score from Freedom House in the areas of civil and political rights.
- + Although Mauritius remains a Tier 2 country on the US State Department's Human Trafficking Report, they have made significant progress in this area, while conditions in other countries in the region have stagnated or worsened.
- + In 2013, the Ministry of Health removed a provision requiring blood donors to report their sexual orientation.
- + Continued progress in Millennium Development Goals include reduced poverty, improved drinking water, gains in gender parity, increased political participation of women, and decrease in malnutrition and child morality.
- Homosexuality is still illegal
- This year, Mauritius slipped from being ranked 98th to 106th out of 142 countries on the World Economic Forum's gender equality ranking.

- There is only one domestic television network and it is owned and operated by the government.
- Pervasive poverty is more common among Creoles (citizens of African descent) than in any other community. There have been claims that Creoles face discrimination in public service employment
- Although women comprise about 36% of labor force, they receive less compensation than men for similar work.
- Problems continue with police brutality, arbitrary arrests, abuse of detainees, prison overcrowding, official corruption, sexual exploitation of children, gender discrimination, and child labor.
- * Tamarin Bay: one of world's best known surfing spots.
- * Picturesque shallow waters surrounding white sand beaches, island surrounded by coral reefs.
- * Distant, isolated and a perfect year-round climate, talcum-soft sands, crystalline waters, world-class diving, big game fishing, fields of purple litchi fruit, rum and tea plantations.
- * The country is home to some of the world's rarest plants and animals.
- * Mauritius includes nearly a hundred tiny islets and rocks scattered around the coast many of which are perfect for little excursions. You can explore these by your choice of sea vessels catamaran, speed boat, sea karts and kayaks are just some of the options.
- * Rodrigues is a wonderful playground for scuba divers who quickly fall in love with the diverse coral reef eco-system and its colorful assortment of sub-aquatic flora and fauna. Equally, the island appeals to those with a love of windsurfing, kite-surfing, sailing and fishing

Palau

- + Palau had the lowest unemployment rate of countries on our list.
- + Palau is a matrilineal society where property rights and money pass down through the female line so gender inequality is low.
- + Freedom House reports that incidences of domestic violence and child abuse are rarely reported and spousal rape, workplace discrimination and sexual harassment are illegal.
- + Received a perfect score from Freedom House in the areas of civil and political rights.
- + Palau has finally decriminalized homosexuality in a revision of its penal code.
- + Palau is promoting energy efficiency through an innovative financing scheme that provides subsidies for citizens to own energy efficient homes.
- + It has a target of 20% renewable energy and 30% energy efficiency by 2020.
- + At the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) convention, Palau was designated an "Environmental Star" for its extensive care of marine and terrestrial areas.
- + Palau scores very highly on the UN's Human Development Index.
- + Palau has the world's first shark sanctuary, which bans commercial shark fishing in its waters.
- + A remarkable 28% of marine and terrestrial areas are protected in Palau.
- + The death penalty does not exist in Palau.
- + Favors sustainable tourism, which is a pillar of its economy.

- Common reports of discrimination and abuse against foreign workers who account for one-third of Palau's workforce.
- Regulations make it extremely difficult for foreign workers to change employers once they arrive in Palau, increasing their vulnerability to involuntary servitude and debt bondage
- They have seen some negative impacts from excess tourism.
- The 2014 Environmental Protection Index shows an unfavorable downward trend in fish stocks and there are problems with illegal fishing, overfishing and coral dredging.
- Palau is almost 100 % dependent on imported fossil fuels.
- Human Trafficking is still a problem in Lithuania and they remain on Tier 2 of the State Department's Trafficking in Person's Report.
- Agreement with the US to establish military bases.
- Survival International has raised concern over Palau's indigenous Batak population. The Batak (population now 300, decreased from 700 in 1900) have been threatened by conservation schemes that have declared their ancestral and cultivation lands as 'protected areas'. Logging and exposure to disease have also posed great dangers. The Batak, as a sub-population, suffer from undernourishment, high infant mortality and low birth rates.
- * Tourist activity focuses on scuba diving and snorkelling in the islands' rich marine environment, including its barrier reefs walls and World War II wrecks.
- * Palau has unspoiled reefs, caves, and walls with an amazing array of marine life.
- * Gardens of coral just beneath the clearest waters, lakes filled to the brim with "stingless" jellyfish. Forests, waterfalls and unspoiled caves.
- * Rock Island Southern Lagoon, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- * Taste "local delicacies such as clam pancakes and fruit bat soup, which are both a bit of an acquired taste.

Samoa

- + The new crimes act makes it legal for a man to dress like a woman. This is a major step as an important part of Samoan culture is the Fa'afafine men who live as woman and are generally considered a third sex.
- + Samoa passed legislation against sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace.
- + A law was passed in Samoa reserving 10%, or five, of a total of 49 seats in parliament for women
- + Major legislation on disability rights was passed this year
- + Samoa has demonstrated a commitment to forest conservation by establishing national parks and reserve areas. Deforestation, however, remains a problem.
- + They are leaders in the fight against climate change and promote renewable energy, biodiversity and conservation.
- + Samoans also enjoy important freedoms, including the freedoms of speech and of assembly, the right to change their government through periodic elections, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention.

- + Samoa passed an amended crimes act that outlawed spousal rape and improve measure against domestic violence.
- The main concern remains the law criminalizing same-sex sexual activity between males and calls to repeal them have been met with strong opposition
- Children in Samoa are engaged in labor activities in street vending and agriculture. Despite recent legislative progress, there is no government mechanism to functionally combat child labor
- Despite a gain in forest cover through at least 2005, deforestation in Samoa appears to continue to be a concern and at least partially responsible for flash floods on the islands.
- Societal discrimination based on religion and the power of village chiefs to curtail religious freedom remains a problem, particularly in small villages where village chief sometimes choose the Christian denomination of even their extended family
- Domestic violence against women continues to be an endemic problem in Samoa
- Prison conditions in Samoa are harsh and inadequate.
- * World-class pristine beaches and enticing landscapes
- * An abundance of gorgeous waterfalls, cave pools and rocky trails into extinct craters
- * The combination of tropical climate and fertile soil make Samoa the perfect breeding ground for rainforests and other lush landscapes.
- * Multicolored coral and other marine life in the shallow waters of beautiful lagoons

Tonga

- + First country in the world to put in place a law that manages seabed mineral activities within its national marine space and under its sponsorship in international waters
- + Integrating traditional local knowledge of plants and weather warnings with scientific observations to help communities prepare and adapt to the effects of climate change
- + Tonga's Freedom House rating improved from 3 to 2 due to the orderly implementation of constitutional procedures in response to the prime minister's incapacitation by illness, and the opposition's increasing ability to hold politically dominant nobles accountable to the electorate
- + The new Family Protection bill includes provisions to safeguard victims of domestic violence
- + The implementation of a large project to improve access to water and increase income generation opportunities for local communities through the installation of solar powered water pumps and deep freezers
- + Freedom of the press: Criticisms of the government appear regularly in all newspapers, including those wholly or partly owned by the state
- + Tonga is rated 47/178 countries, with a score of 61.68/100, on Yale's EPI study.
- + Tonga aims for a 50% reduction of diesel importation by 2020 by promoting solar home energy
- The monarchy and nobility still dominate politics and the economy.
- Corruption is widespread, with royals, nobles, and their top associates allegedly using state assets for personal benefit.

- Colonial-era laws outlawing same-sex relations remain on the books, but there is little evidence of government persecution or discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual preference
- Tonga does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of sex trafficking
- Tonga is rated The Fattest Country in the World. Nearly 60% of the population of Tonga is obese. In response, the government is expanding their Unhealthy Choices food tax.
- The increasing population is leading to environmental concerns. More and more land is being cleared for agriculture and new housing, resulting in serious deforestation and erosion.
- The coral reefs are being damaged by runoff and by tourists who have little regard for the coral reefs.
- * Tropical beaches, rainforest and active volcanoes
- * Great for snorkeling, diving and whale-watching
- * 170-odd islands, with tiny forested islets

Uruguay

- + The most liberal policy for LGBTQ in the region and the Uruguayan LGBTQ community has lauded the government's policies
- + They have improved women's rights by making abortion legal and have instituted a 30% quota for representation of women in the government
- + Uruguay have accepted Syrian refugees and have a program in place to help the refugee families adapt to life in Uruguay
- + Uruguay also currently uses 80% renewable energy for it's power and is aiming to become carbon neutral.
- + Near perfect score in Freedom's House assessment of Political Rights and Civil Liberties
- + Ranked near the top of press freedom
- + Uruguay is committed to address environmental concerns with a plan for "climate smart agriculture" with a 10 year goal to produce enough food for 18 million more people.
- + Uruguay is investing in modernizing its water and sanitation services
- + Uruguay was ranked 19 out of 177 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Index, making it one of the best performers in Latin America.
- Laws were passed at the end of 2013 to make large-scale mining legal and a new open-air iron ore mine could start soon
- Inequality of opportunities afforded to Afro-Uruguayans
- The World Organization Against Torture has submitted a joint report to the UN claiming imprisoned children in Uruguay have been deprived of liberties and, in some cases, tortured.
- Gun ownership rates are unusually high in Uruguay, and more than half of the weapons in the country are illegal.

- Rise in crime due to warring drug gangs, with Uruguay becoming an increasingly important transit point for narcotics.
- * Rich cultural life in Montevideo
- * Gaucho culture
- * Historic town of Colonia
- * Beaches of Punta del Este
- * Large number sustainable tourism options

Vanuatu

- + Vanuatu has the unique designation of being the Happiest Country in the World according to the Happy Planet Index, which focuses on life expectancy, experienced wellbeing, and ecological footprint
- + Vanuatu has made substantial progress by carrying out a land reform that supports indigenous rights. Leases of indigenous lands now require prior and informed consent of organizations of traditional landowners
- + The government generally respects freedoms of speech, press and assembly
- + In June 2013, the Council of Ministers agreed to a proposal to reserve 30 percent of parliament seats for women
- + At the forefront of the fight against climate change
- + Communities have increased their water storage capacity by constructing rainwater tanks. On the drought prone island of Aniwa in Vanuatu, communities have built small solar desalination stills capable of producing sufficient fresh water to meet local consumption needs.
- + Vanuatu has terminated a defense cooperation agreement with Indonesia in favor of support for the independence struggle of West Papua from Indonesia
- + A good variety of ecotourism products from discovering the flora and fauna in its natural environment, to learning about the history and cultural background of certain natural attractions and meeting local communities that are involved in environmental projects.
- In October 2014, 400 indigenous were displaced even after land reforms were in effect
- The development of holiday apartments and resorts has led to some people being removed from their land, and access to beaches and traditional fishing areas cut off.
- Corruption is a serious problem, and official abuse is widespread
- Discrimination against women is widespread. No laws prohibit spousal rape, domestic abuse, or sexual harassment, which women's groups claim are common and increasing.
- The population growth has led to problems of water pollution in urban areas because of inadequate sanitation
- Legal loopholes that allow safe haven for fugitives suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity (but Rome Statute ratified in 2011, yet to be turned into national law)
- * Diving among shipwrecks

- * The world's most accessible active volcano on the island of Tanna;
- * A giant banyan tree the size of a soccer field;
- * Pounding, cascading waterfalls;
- * Cultural ceremonies and dances on the island of Malekula;
- * Villages where you can witness local traditional culture; and
- * Pristine beaches
- * Bush walking passing coconut plantations and historical sites, mountain biking, river kayaking, volcanoes and hot springs, bird watching at Vatthe Conservation on Santo, turtle tagging on Moso north of Efate.

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