

Last Chance to Waste

Tourism as a vehicle for meaningful change, and what's at stake if we don't commit to action

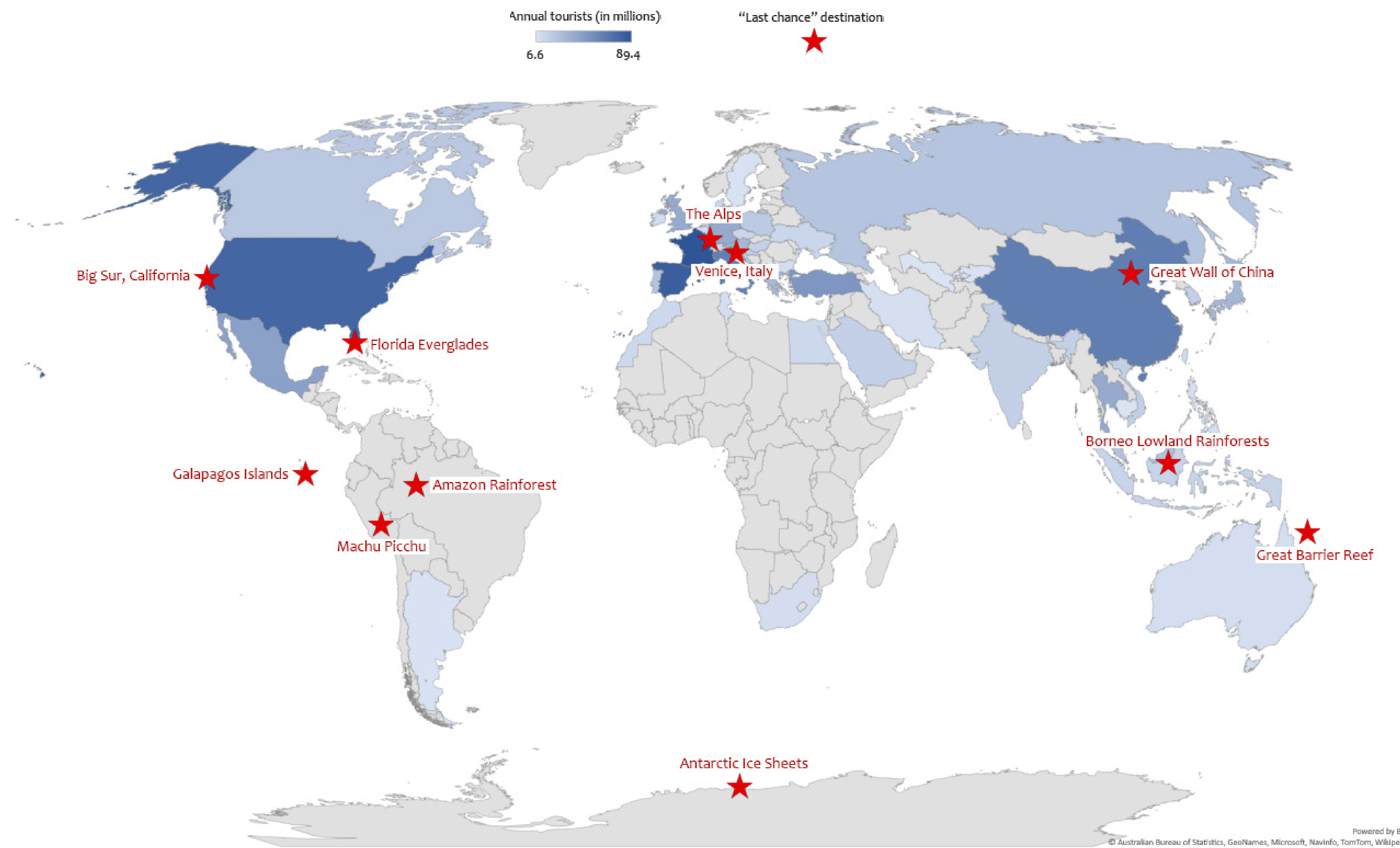
Stephanie Marcjanmead | Arizona State University

Preserving the Future

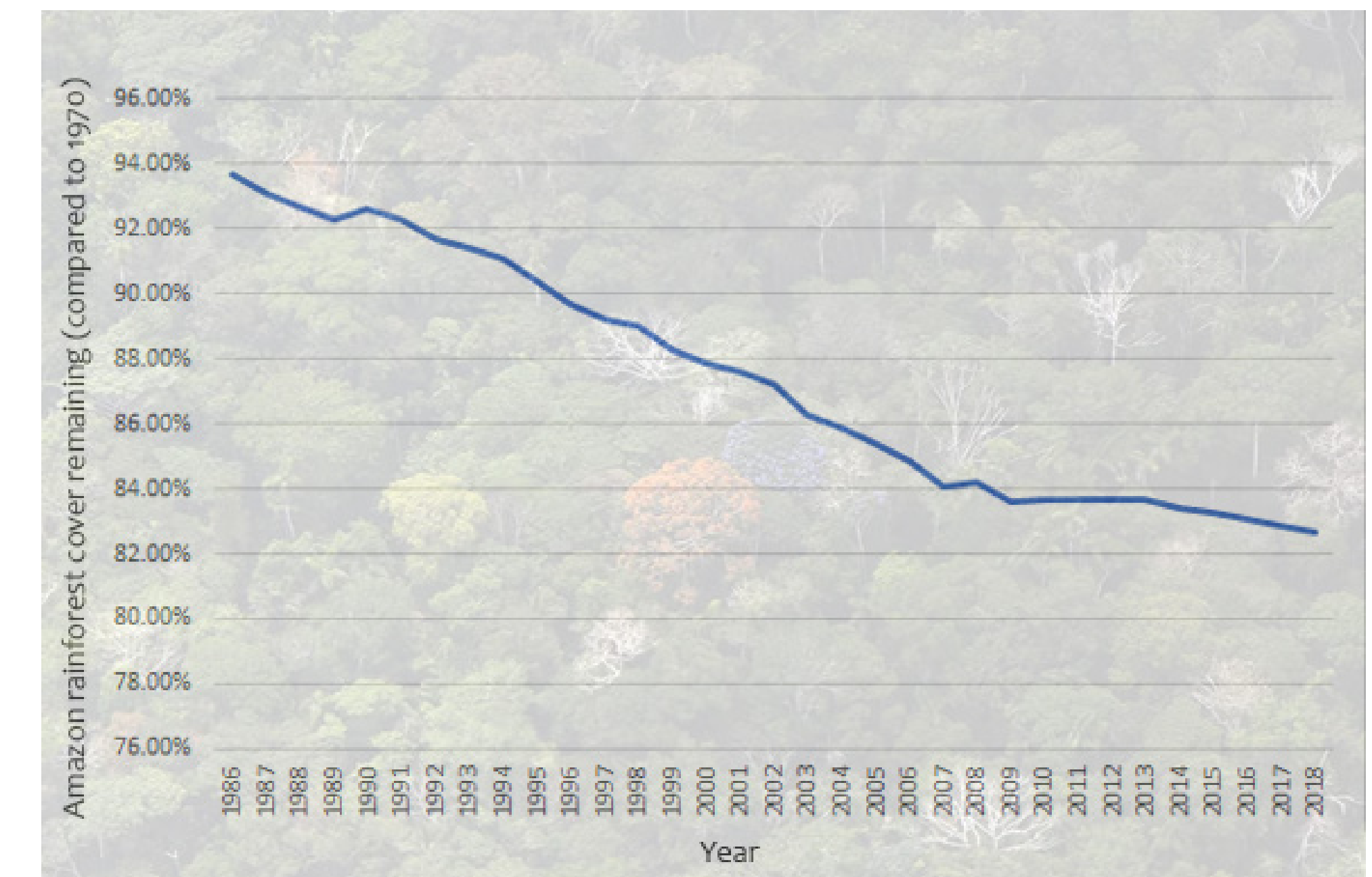
Tourism has often been used as an example of human activity that significantly harms the environment through contributions to climate change, pollution, and the destruction of our most vulnerable ecosystems. Instead of advocating against tourism entirely, however, it may be more worthwhile—and more effective—to use tourism as a vehicle for enacting meaningful change in our attitudes and actions.

By using the “last chance” destinations presented here—that is, tourist destinations most immediately threatened—as examples of world heritage sites that may no longer exist if change does not occur, we can inspire people to critically evaluate their lifestyles and attitudes. In promoting these “last chance” destinations, we can motivate others to protect them, ensuring future generations don't lose out on the opportunity to experience Earth and its natural beauty the same way we have.

Worldwide Tourism and “Last Chance” Destinations

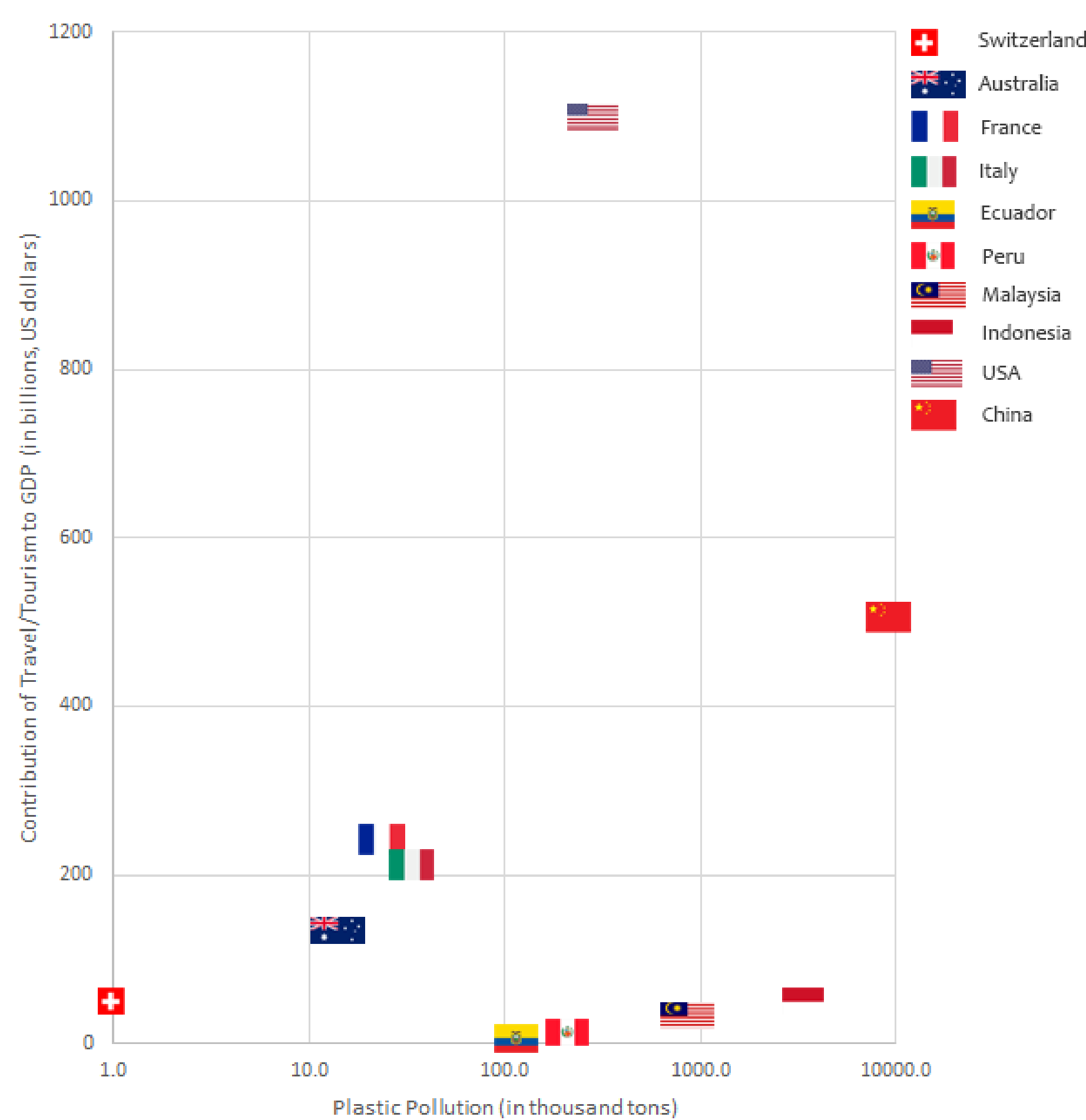


Amazon Rainforest Tree Cover Loss



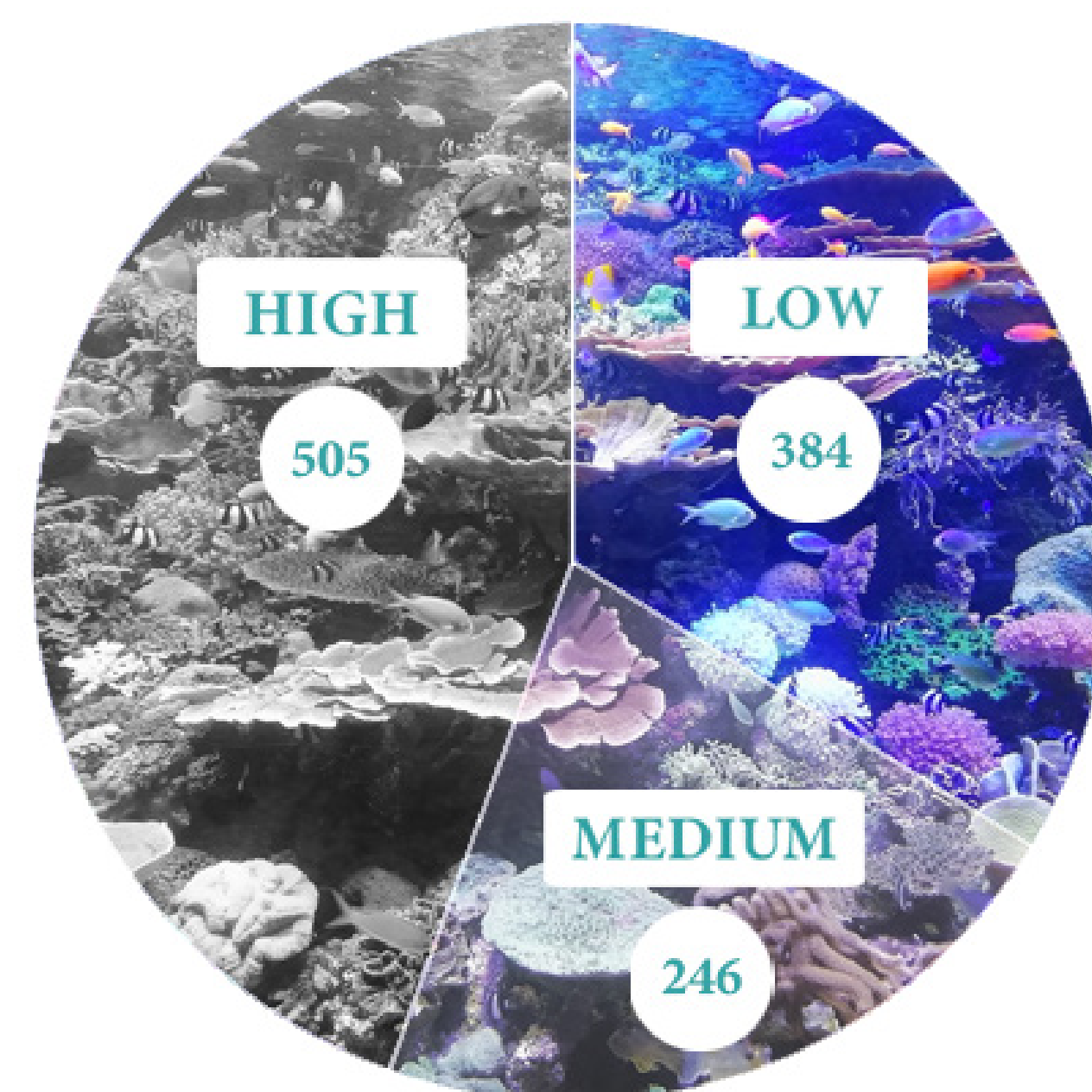
Due to deforestation, less than 85% of Amazon rainforest tree coverage remains (compared to pre-1970 coverage). If coverage were to drop to 50%, the results would be catastrophic for the rainforest ecosystem.

Plastic Pollution vs. Tourism Income



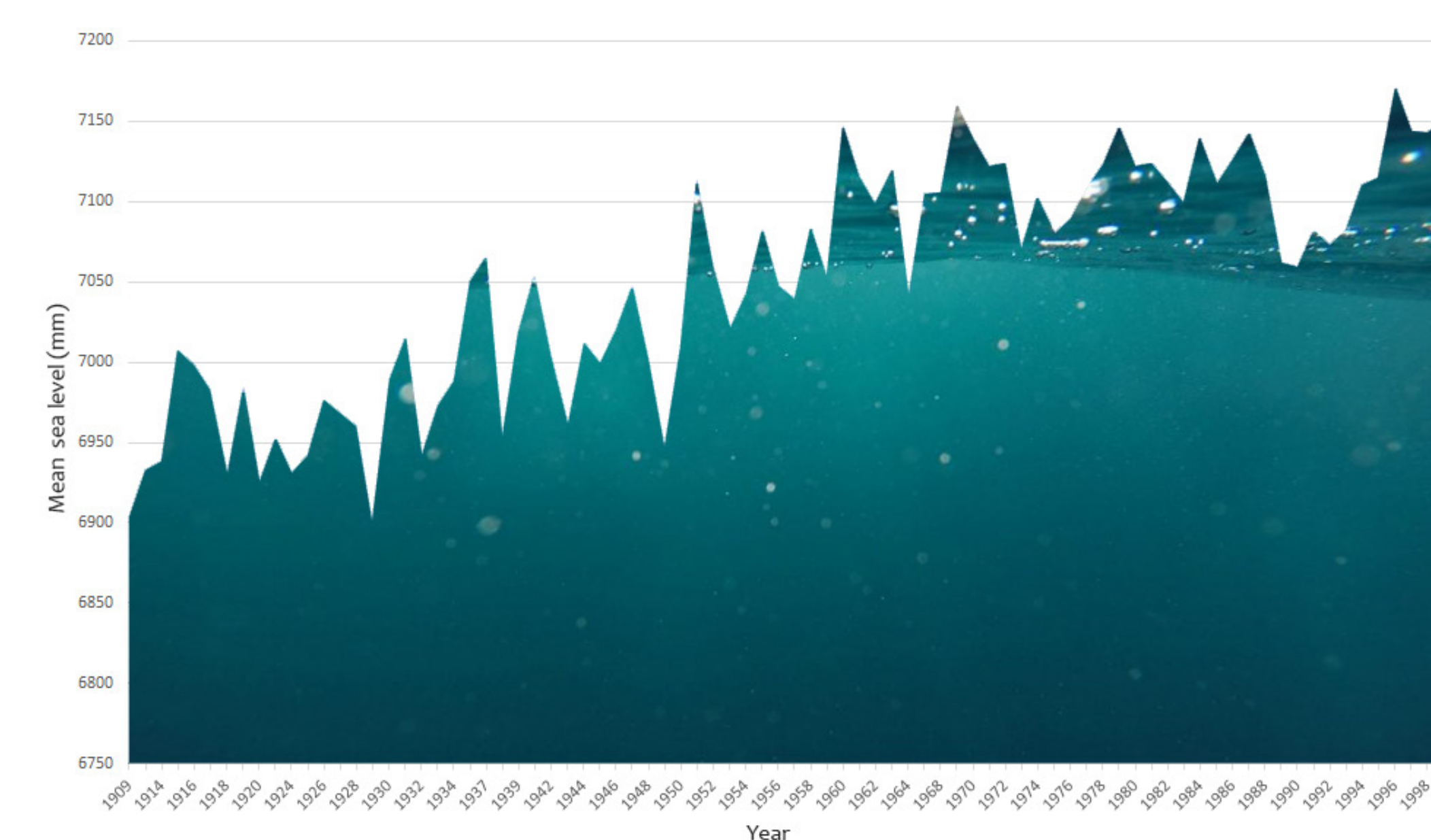
Tourism remains low for most countries with “last chance” tourist destinations despite comparatively high rates of plastic pollution. This likely indicates a more systemic cause.

Great Barrier Reef Bleaching Events



For the past 40 years, there have been over 500 high-severity bleaching events. Each bleaching event brings the Great Barrier Reef closer to the point of no return.

Rising Sea Levels in Venice, Italy



The sea levels in Venice, Italy have continuously risen from a low of 6904mm in 1909 to 7148mm in 2000. As the sea level rises, much of the city's infrastructure and historical structures are at risk of salt-water corrosion and damage.

Disappearing Species of the Galapagos



Climate change, pollution, overfishing, and many other human activities threaten the existence of life on the Galapagos Islands. Of the 823 plant and animal species on the islands, more than half are threatened in some way.

References

- “Tourism Flows – Source Markets and Destinations.” United Nations World Tourism Organization, <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-flows-source-markets-and-destinations>
- Zapata, Mariana. “11 Endangered Bucket List Locations (and How to Visit Them Responsibly).” 31 Jan. 2021, Smarter Travel, <https://www.smartertravel.com/endangered-bucket-list-destinations/>
- Sanchez, Jereza P., et al. “Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean.” Science, 11 Feb. 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1260013>
- “Wenatchee (Punta Della Salute).” Permanent Service for Mean Sea Level, 27 Jan. 2016, <https://www.psmsl.org/data/obtaining/stations/168.php>
- Butler, Rhieta A. “Calculating Deforestation Figures for the Amazon.” Mongabay, 24 Apr. 2018, https://rainforests.mongabay.com/amazon/deforestation_calculations.html
- “Galapagos Species Checklist.” The Charles Darwin Foundation, <https://www.darwinfoundation.org/en/darwinzone/checklist>
- “Coral Bleaching Data.” ReefRecovery, 2016, Harvard Dataverse, <https://doi.org/10.7927/D7N81XQV>