



2021 United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
2030 for Sustainable Development

today we have ✓

THE BEST STORIES I LIVE BY THE SEA

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH PHOTO AND FILM CONTEST 2025



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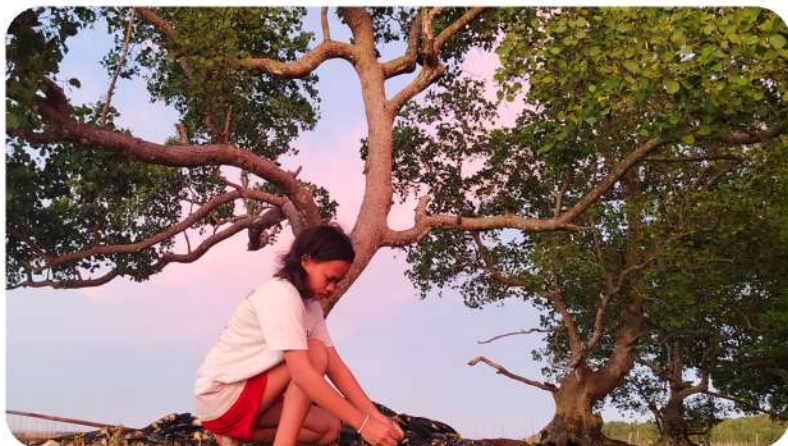
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Beneath the Mangroves: A Life by the Sea

by Iyana Mclyn Nazarene Bonifacio
& Princess Decejoy Bonifacio Espinola, 10
PHILIPPINES



In the coastal sitio of Tugbungan, Barangay Bay-ang, Batan, Aklan, my cousin Janne Trixie gently gathers "talaba" (oysters) beneath a sprawling mangrove tree as the sun sets. Here, talaba is more than just food for the table - it's a vital source of livelihood for many families. This moment reflects more than daily life - it shows our community's deep respect and care for the sea and its gifts.

Living by the sea teaches us not only to harvest from it but also to protect and nurture marine life, ensuring its abundance for future generations.

I live near the sea

by Rădulescu Maria, 10
ROMANIA

In the yard of my house, located in the city known as the 'gateway to the Delta', I found these little 'toys' — the turtles — next to the eggshells they had just hatched from. They are baby spur-thighed tortoises from Dobrogea, a rare species protected by law and declared a natural monument.

Together with my family, we took them and brought them to the heart of the Dobrogean mountains, so they could grow safely on their ancient ridges, watching the Danube lazily winding its way toward the Black Sea.



The Eyes of God

by Chris Gountsidis, 13

GREECE



From above, the world looks calm.

An endless sea, scattered with ships. A quiet city, resting on the edge of the ocean.

But this stillness is a lie. A trick of distance. Because from here, you can't hear the screams.

The ships do not move. They linger like shadows, like scars. Their bellies full of oil, waste, plastic, and silence. The water below is tired, not just polluted, but exhausted. It remembers a time before the metal came. Before the ocean became a highway for profit and poison.

The clouds above thicken. The sky is heavy with warnings, but no one looks up. The city grows and grows, reaching its fingers deeper into the sea, clawing land from water. More buildings. More lights. More noise. But from above, all of it is voiceless. Still. Dead.

You are flying. You are watching. You see it all. Like a god. And maybe, in this moment, you are one.

So what will you do?

Will you close your eyes, like all the others?

Or will you speak?

Because the sea is not just water. It is memory. It is life. It is drowning in what we've left behind, in what we've chosen to ignore. And it cannot scream for help anymore.

But you can.

This image is not a photo.

It is a warning.

The question is:

Will anyone listen?

Human in infinity of the sea

by Olaf Szydłowski, 14
POLAND



This photo was taken in Gdynia which is a part of Baltic coast. During the winter temperature of water could be close to zero degrees. Countries on the Baltic sea are: Poland, part of Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, part of Russia, Finland, Sweden and Denmark. In Baltic sea lives seals, fishes, jellyfishes and unfortunately sometimes you can see a dolphin and whales there.

The sea is an element and we always must have a humility to forces of nature.

STOP - destroying dunes.

STOP - interfere to seas because the sea can get angry and take back its own this what it belongs to it.

Without seas our planet will die.

Take care about it.

Human in infinity of the sea shows how the human is unprotected towards the powerful of the sea.

JUGO IN SPLIT

BY TOMISLAV LUKIĆ, 14
CROATIA



This is the sea in Split, Croatia during a strong Jugo wind, when the waves go wild. In Dalmatia Jugo means it's time for wind, restless sea, grey skies and people blaming the weather for everything. Some say Jugo at sea makes you crazy, but I just think it makes the sea dramatic and photos awesome.

Unusual visitor graces our coastline

by AJ Sanchez-Soiza, 16

GIBRALTAR



An inquisitive grey seal has recently visited our coastline in Gibraltar. Far from where she normally resides, the seal has made all her way down from the Northern Atlantic Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Onlookers, although respecting a safe distance, have enjoyed watching the pinniped lunch on moray eels, rest on beaches and swim to her heart's content. Locals are following her journey with great interest as, the now named seal Luisa, makes the headlines with her every move.

The Great Separation

by King Gerson C. Ractis, 21

PHILIPPINES



The earth was created in three realms, the land, the air and the sea. People call it the balance of the world but I call it "The Great Separation".

While the three are considered each other a different world, a creature suddenly exist to held it all together. A dreamer, an ambitious organism, a creature of peace and destruction, someone who reach for the heavens, fell on the sea and start back again on land.

We're all separated humans who are trying to figure things out, but sometimes we must stop, breathe and admire what this separation has to offer.

Maybe life showed us something like this breathtaking scenery to remind us that we are sometimes too engrossed with our own world and fail to notice our surroundings.

I almost forgot that this is the whole point, to live in the moment for it was a present.

We are all connected by the sea

by Andreea Vaduva, 17

ROMANIA



No matter where we live, or in what period we dwelt during our existence, we were all, at some point, connected by the sea. As humanity, we keep counting the years passing by, glorifying our rich, long-lasting history with every single invention and discovery we manage to complete. However, we seem to be forgetting one important aspect of our evolution: never undermine the life that existed before ours.

For millions of years, the maritime ecosystem developed all by itself, resulting not only in a fascinating, still undiscovered world, but also in an entirely new system of reference that helps sustain human life.

Providing food, climate regulation, medicine, cosmetics, large quantities of the oxygen we breathe, and furthermore being an important element that influences cultural aspects all over the globe, the world ocean is the foundation to which we owe the existence of humankind.

Moreover, in the selected picture, the association of the modern, bustling city with the ancient, solemn architecture of the fortress guarding the place, both elements being connected by the sea, reestablishes the greatness of the sea as a unifying temporal power. The sea, in this context, becomes the connecting element between the two time periods.

As a form of everlasting respect to the world ocean, our behavior should lean more towards helping and protecting the maritime environment, since every drop in the ocean counts!



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Itanos or Erimoupolis Beach

by Germanou Dorilia & Perraki Eleni, 12

GREECE



The beach of Itanos (or Erimoupolis), which has been named after the ancient city ITANOS that once stood there and today you can see the ruins in the sea water. Around the archaeological site of Itanos, there are three little coves.

This beach is right after the archaeological site, and it is mostly sandy. To the south, there is another secluded beach, which boasts crystalline waters and a lush palm tree grove, while the northernmost one is the most beautiful, as well as the most popular of the three. Being bigger than the other two, it is known for its striking turquoise waters and fine golden sand. Though none of these beaches are organized.

Erimoupolis Beach is part of the Sitia Geopark and presents some rock formations of particular interest. More specifically, there are some shales, siltstones and pelites with a variety of multi-colored folds, which look as if a sculptor had carved geometrical patterns on the stone! For us it's very important because we have to protect this nature amazing part of our place and its historical value.



Just Right

by Clarisse Elias, 14

PORTUGAL

The sky is bright, the sea is wide,
Small boats move gently with the tide.
The waves are calm, the wind is light,
The sun above is warm and bright.
The tiny boat leaves trails behind,
It moves ahead, so calm and kind.
Far off, a bridge stands tall and thin,
Where land and sky both blend in.
This peaceful place, so still, so fair,
Brings quiet thoughts and cleaner air.
It's where the sea and sky unite,
And everything just feels so right.



Our Sea, Our Future... by Jingyang Xie, 14 PORTUGAL

Do I Know How to Act Beach and Ocean-Friendly?

I believe being beach and ocean-friendly is about having respect for nature. It's about understanding that the beach and the ocean are not just places we visit, but living spaces that deserve care. When I go to the beach, I try to remember that it's not just about having fun, it's about being responsible for the place I'm enjoying.

Acting beach and ocean-friendly means thinking beyond yourself. It means realizing that everything we do has an effect, even if we don't see it right away. If we care about the ocean, we should act like it, not just once, but every time. It's not about following a list of rules; it's about having the right attitude and wanting to protect something that gives so much to the world.

I think being ocean-friendly also means thinking about the future. We are not the last people who will walk these beaches or swim in these waters. If we want future generations to enjoy the same beauty, we have to treat it with respect now. It's not about being perfect; it's about doing our best and caring enough to make good choices.

In the end, I believe I do know how to act beach and ocean-friendly, because I understand that it's about kindness, respect, and thinking beyond just myself.

Luanda's Shores by Lukieza Chinjamba, 14 PORTUGAL

On Luanda's shores,
where the sea meets the sun's final flame,
the sky turns to fire,
and the sand whispers names.
The waves, a soft murmur,
carry the heartbeat of the city—
a dance of history and modernity,
of kilus and dreams yet to be.
As the sun dips behind the horizon,
the evening breathes in gold,
and in the hush of the breeze,
the stories of the sea unfold.
The sun may set,
but the city stays alive,
with kilombo in its blood
and the sea's lullaby to survive.



Harmony

by Esra Zulchefil, 16
ROMANIA



The Nestos River in northern Greece is one of the most beautiful and peaceful places I've ever seen. Surrounded by green hills and calm water, it's a perfect example of how nature and wildlife can live in harmony.

This photo shows the river reflecting the trees and sky, creating a peaceful, almost untouched scene.

The Nestos area is part of the Natura 2000 network because of its rich biodiversity.

It's home to many species like otters, herons, and different types of fish.

What makes this place special is how the river flows through gorges and forests, making it a safe space for animals and plants. I chose to capture this landscape because it shows how beautiful nature can be—but also how fragile. One local issue here is pollution from farming. Chemicals from fertilizers and pesticides often end up in the river, which can harm fish and birds.

These pollutants can even reach the sea and cause more problems. Even though the river looks clean and peaceful, we need to be careful.

Places like Nestos should be protected, not just admired.

If we're not responsible, we could lose something that's both beautiful and important for the environment.

To the sea

by Teodora Militaru, 16
ROMANIA



A river that crosses two countries on its way to the sea and is affected by humans. It is used by both for municipal water supply, irrigation and hydroelectric power production. Nestos River is the most important water resource in its region and has been subject of bilateral negotiations for many years. The famous delta is protected as a RAMSAR site but is in danger due to pollution caused by various human activities and to large-scale hydraulic works dams constructed along the river. The water quality as the day starts and the dams open shows how the life and the flow are affected by the changes to its liberty. Heavy urbanization, industry and agriculture have lead to a significant decrease in the river flow, affecting especially the Greek part. From 1975 the Nestos flow declined from 1,500 million m³ to 600 million m³, resulting in repeated Greek protests.