UNRAVELLING THE BLUE GYM EFFECT

TOURISM IS INFLUENCED BY THE BLUE GYM EFFECT

• The positive effect of coastal environments on human health and wellbeing and the preference of many people to spend their leisure time at the coast has resulted in the coastal and maritime tourism sector representing over one third of Europe's maritime economy.

• 'Sea' and 'view' combined are considered to be the two most 'expensive' words in the English language, referring to the fact that people are willing to pay more for homes and hotel rooms with sea views.

• Coastal and maritime tourism is listed as one of the five focus areas for delivering sustainable growth and jobs as part of Europe's Blue Growth strategy. The strategy acknowledges that high quality bathing waters and pristine coastal and marine habitats have a high recreation value.

FUTURE BLUE GYM RESEARCH

• More feelings of restoration (i.e. feeling calm, relaxed, revitalized and refreshed) are recalled by individuals after visits to coastal environments compared to rural/countryside environments and urban green/open spaces.

• Families in Southwest England emphasized that the key health benefits they experienced from living in coastal regions were psychological, including experiencing fun, stress relief and engagement with nature. Other benefits indicated were increased social and family interaction and encouragement to be physically active.

• Populations living near the English coast have higher levels of self-reported health than those living inland. The positive effects of coastal proximity were greater amongst more socio-economically deprived communities, indicating that access to ‘good’ environments may play a part in reducing health inequalities.

• A laboratory study found that higher restorativeness was associated with pristine rather than littered coastal scenes. This demonstrates that the presence of marine litter can undermine the psychological benefits that the coast provides and that as well as the environmental costs of marine litter, there are also costs to people.

EXPERIENCE THE BLUE GYM EFFECT FOR YOURSELF

Walk by the sea: Coastal walking is the single most popular activity which connects people to the sea.

Visit an aquarium: Spending time in aquariums has been shown to have positive effects on mood, heart rate and blood pressure.

Leave only footprints: Take your litter home with you when you visit the beach.

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Key Information Sources and Further Reading


Find out more about initiatives you can get involved in and the everyday actions you can take by visiting the Sea Change website.

WWW.SEACHENGAGEPROJECT.EU

@SeaChange_EU

#OceanLiteracy #BlueGrowth #OurOceanHealth

A virtual reality environment used in a study simulating dental experiences and people's recollection of pain (Tanja-Dijkstra et al., 2014).

Developed by the European Marine Board and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science. Front page illustrations by Marker Wizards Limited.

The Blue Gym Initiative was created in 2009 and is run by a team of researchers working at the European Centre for Environment and Human Health at the University of Exeter, UK.