

# Epilogue

Our long journey along the coastlines of the world has now come to an end. We hope you have enjoyed reading about coastlines and coastal phenomena within the 450 illustrations including 200 from a satellites' viewpoint, and maybe we have given some of you an inclination to have a closer look when you next enjoy a stroll on the beach. We also hope that the short descriptions throughout the book have been informative enough to better understand the extreme variety of forms and processes at coastlines, not only in terms of coastal hazards and risks but also with respect to their impressive beauty and aesthetic values. This is important, because only a better understanding and open minded inquisitive approach will allow us to protect the last untouched and unspoiled coastal landscapes of the world. And our coastal ecosystem are under severe threat, e.g. recent research has shown that an IPCC "business as usual" scenario of carbon emissions will result in catastrophic coral reef decline worldwide possibly already within the next decade!

In the 21st century there is a delicate balance between ever increasing numbers of people using coastlines for recreation and business yet, this also increases the chance that natural disasters transform into national catastrophes for individuals and societies. And, for the first time in the history of our planet, mankind influences natural processes on a global scale as for example sea level rise or endangering coastal ecosystems. Our technical and scientific capabilities enable us to safeguard our planet with sustainable management, only if we all agree to the importance of conserving our coasts. We are convinced that it is not too late to start preserving our planet and its precious resources, and if this book contributed to protecting our coastlines' beauty and variety, we have reached our goal.

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