

# HEAT HITS THE MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM



Europe is witnessing tropical heat these days. Especially the Mediterranean suffers from the hot weather. In Romania the heat wave caused the death of 15 people as the temperatures reached 40°C and more. The heat also damages the country's farmland and crops. Air conditioning and cooling systems are pushing the energy consumption toward levels recorded during the cold winter months. Other states have problems too. The Budapest Transport Company was cooling tram tracks with water and a popular chair-lift in the Buda hills was closed as it had become unsafe after its cable elongated in the heat. Moldova is suffering the worst drought in 60 years and Macedonia has declared a state of emergency. In Greece forest fires are destroying wide areas. Firefighters spent days on extinguishing the fire on Mount Parnitha. The fire has destroyed vast tracts of trees, along with hundreds of plants endemic to the region. Unique species of deer, turtles, snakes and hares were killed. There are reports saying that tourists had to flee the flames on the Aegean island of Kos. In Athens many fires came within meters of the apartment buildings. "Less precipitation, more evaporation: the two phenomena together will lead to the drying out of the zone around the Mediterranean," said Climate: Dangerous Games author Jean Jouzel. This development has again stirred the debate about the global warming. "The Mediterranean climate of this country no longer exists," Michalis Petrakis, director of the Greek Institute of Environmental Research, told the Observer. "It is changing even faster than we expected." Tourism experts worry that the unbearable heat could scare off visitors. It is expected that the Mediterranean's high season will shift from August and July to earlier in the spring. Nevertheless, the Greek Tourism Ministry said that the tourism industry did very well despite the heat. The Ministry expects some 15 million tourists to visit Greece this year.

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