

CLIMATE CHANGE IN PROVENCE: HOTELS AND CAMPSITES ENDEAVOR TO CONSUME LESS WATER

Professionals seek ways that do not deplete the resources in Provence popular with tourists but where water becomes scarce due to climate change.

Water usage restrictions were implemented across Provence from mid-April this year. However, the area also attracts tourists in the summer with popular events such as the Avignon Festival. The Luberon region and its villages, including Gordes, have also received recognition for their beauty. They are frequently ranked among the world's most stunning destinations.

Provence's region in France, featured in the popular Netflix series *Emily in Paris* and the bestseller *A Year in Provence* by Peter Mayle, significantly contributes to the local economy through tourism. A 2020 study showed that the sector generates over 1.3 billion euros annually, accounting for 8.5% of the department's Gross Domestic Product. In 2019, there were 23.3 million tourist overnight stays in the region, as the departmental agency *Vaucluse Provence Attractif* (VPA) reported.

Pilot Project for More Sustainable Tourism

The tourism industry has a significant impact on natural resources, especially water. The Ecological Transition Agency (Ademe) reports that highly touristic areas can experience up to three times more water consumption per person. Thus, VPA is advocating for a shift towards more sustainable tourism practices.

As part of a pilot project, volunteer professionals are conducting assessments of tourism infrastructure and methods to identify the improvement areas. VPA and its partners, including tourist offices and professional organizations, are working on initial test visits to approximately thirty establishments.

Emilie André, a project manager at VPA, explains that they focus on identifying the main issues and supporting actors to bring about changes in their services. They offer an in-depth inventory of the best eco-friendly solutions and provide financial engineering services, including funds allocated by Ademe to the tourism sector, which amount to over 30 million euros in 2023/24.

Monitoring the Water Usage

Lionel Davin may find this particularly interesting since his campsite with 153 pitches still incurs a water bill of around 20,000 euros a year, even though the swimming pool, built a few years ago to attract more family clients, is not emptied during the season but put in "wintering" mode to save water.

The director is exploring ways to decrease usage and save resources. One option being considered is implementing electronic wristbands for customers. This would offer an essential volume of usage, and any additional use would be billed accordingly. Another option is to install faucets with infrared usage detection. The director welcomes funding for these initiatives, even though the return on investment may be two to three times greater with reduced invoicing.

In recent months, multiple local groups have emerged to oppose hotel projects they deem too taxing

on resources. France Nature Environment is backing these efforts, stating that the available resources are insufficient to meet their needs. Patrick Faure, a member of FNE-Vaucluse, highlights the contradiction between the economy and the environment, which is incompatible with the resources nature offers and will only worsen with climate change.

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