

# MASS TOURISM AFFECTS MAJOR TRAVEL DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE



Over the past years, Turkey, Tunisia or even Paris became dangerous places for tourists, at least for some time. However, the truth is that in some destinations travelers themselves cause harm to the cities and cultural heritage – mass tourism is a growing problem.

At the end of the summer season, various travel destinations in Europe witnessed something unusual – locals opposing the crowds of tourists. For instance, **in late August angry signs appeared on the buildings in Spanish Mallorca, saying “Tourists, go home” and “Tourists, you terrorists!”**

Tourism experts identified two main reasons why the flow of tourists has become excessive and uncontrollable in Europe in the recent months. Firstly, this year many preferred European resorts as a result of terrorist attacks in Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia. But Europe was not ready for such an influx.

Secondly, authorities feel threatened by the increasingly popular booking website Airbnb. Usually, travel destinations cannot accept more guests than is the number of hotel beds in the given city. But with Airbnb, the rooms of locals are added, making the overall number immense. Therefore, for example, from 1 May this year, Berlin residents are forbidden to offer their apartments on Airbnb. A high penalty awaits anyone who violates the measure – 100 thousand euros.

So why is mass tourism so harmful? It would seem that the main aim of the visitors is sightseeing or just enjoying the beach. However, experts of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) outlined several negative environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of mass tourism.

In terms of ecological harm, tourism boosts the depletion processes of water, fuel, food, and forests in the travel destinations. For example, golf resorts in countries such as Cyprus are extremely costly. These resorts need 1500 kg of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides per year. For maintenance the amount of water that could be consumed by 60 thousand villagers is used. Other than that there is obviously pollution, emissions, noise, waste.

In terms of economy, there is a great risk of revenue leakages. Especially in developing countries this is not uncommon. 70% of all money spent by tourists in developing countries eventually goes into the pocket of international companies – airlines, hotels, importers of beverages and food, not to local businesses.

When it comes to infrastructure, local authorities often allocate funds for the development of airports, roads, but neglect more important areas and issues. Other than that local residents are affected by the price jumps connected with mass tourism inflow, as their income does not increase proportionately.

Another risky factor is the dependence on tourism. Over-reliance on tourism entails significant risks. For example, natural disasters, or a structural change in tourism can have a devastating impact on the local economy of the travel destinations and leave a large number of people unemployed.

In the socio-cultural sphere tourism can cause change or loss of local identity and values. With the growth of tourism, local residents begin to adapt to tourists in everything, thus somehow repressing their own cultural values.

High inflow of tourists also increases the risk of culture clashing. The locals usually have a negative attitude towards tourists. In addition to that, when visitors do not respect local customs, conflicts can arise.

Which regions have been affected the most by the mass tourism during the summer season?

### **Spain: Barcelona, Ibiza, Mallorca**

This year, according to experts, Spain will welcome 67 million tourists, more than the population of the country itself (47 million). Thus, the most popular resort Ibiza is struggling to cope with the huge inflow of tourists. But not only the locals are struggling, even the authorities themselves are having a hard time. The Head of Tourism Department, Vincent Torres, admitted that tourists consume too much water on the island. Now the authorities have to decide how to reach out to travelers and make them save water.

To somehow maintain a balanced level of tourism inflow, from 1 July in Ibiza, as well as on other Balearic Islands (Mallorca and Menorca), a tourist tax was introduced. This tax is about 2 euros per day, depending on the stars of the hotel. The collected funds will be spent on the protection of natural resources.

Residents of Barcelona generally consider mass tourism one of the main problems of the city. Together with poverty, unemployment and busy transport.

### **Italy: Venice**

About 22 million tourists visit Venice every year. The number of tourists every day - 60,000 - now exceeds the number of local residents.

In August, locals in Venice hung posters "Tourists leave! You destroy this city." Yes, most people - from hoteliers to gondoliers - earn their living from tourists. But they understand that the consequences may be irreversible. Tourists swim in the Grand Canal, though it is strictly forbidden, and are continuously filling the narrow streets of the city.

The United Nations warned in the summer that Venice could be placed on the list of endangered World Heritage sites, if it does not prohibit the entry of giant cruise ships.

### **Greece: Santorini**

This year, Greek authorities imposed restrictions on the arrival of tourists to Santorini by water. The reason was that last year 790 thousand people visited Santorini. That is a lot for the picturesque port. So now the number of passengers on cruise liners arriving to the island is limited to the aggregate capacity of 8 thousand per day. Previously the number was higher than 10 thousand people per day. Authorities took these measures to protect the city.

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