

# EXCESSIVE TOURISM BECOMES A CONCERN FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR



Venice loses its cruises, Barcelona tightens control of the rents, and Dubrovnik imposes quotas on its visitors. Faced with the plague of excessive tourism, professionals in the tourism sector are looking for urgent solutions.

“In 2030, there will be 1,800 million tourists in the world.

Something is certain: this infinite growth is impossible in a space that is limited, which generates more and more visible conflicts,” states Roland Conrady, scientific director of the ITB, annual conclave of tourism professionals.

**From 1995 to 2016, the number of international travelers has gone from 525 million to over 1,200 million** thanks to low-cost airlines, and to tourists from growing markets such as China, India or the Gulf countries.

2017 has been marked by a record increase of 7% in the number of tourists in the entire world, and by unprecedented movements of rejection of excessive tourism, with several repercussions, like the distortion and ousting of local populations from their homelands.

And the first consequences or events have not taken long to manifest: in Thailand, the coral reefs of the famous Maya Bay have not survived the swimmers, and the place is now threatening with closure. In Bhutan, the government imposes tourism quotas, and in Dubrovnik the mayor forbids more than 8,000 people from entering the historic city compound per day.

## 10% of the World's GDP

“There is much talk today of excessive tourism, as it has increased in several destinations, mainly due to cruises,” Torsten Kirstges, professor of tourism sector economics, said, citing the case of Mallorca, where they can disembark “five boats of 4,000 passengers who reach shore at the same time to visit the cathedral.”

The tourism sector envisions at least four leads to ensure that tourism will not self-destruct: the most obvious one, and the most positive for local economies, is to distribute the flow of visitors in a better way.

For example Venice, with 265,000 inhabitants compared to 24 million annual visitors, limits the access of its lagoon to the immense cruise ships.

The city also publishes a bold monthly guide called “Detourism”, which highlights other secondary sites with the hope of dissuading tourists from mass gathering in the San Marcos Square.

“It's always the same ‘tours’, always the same places ... In Mexico, people only thought about Cancun, but we finally managed to take them to the Mayan route,” explains Gloria Guevara, president of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), from the ITB.

Guevara recalls that tourism represents 10% of world's GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and that “a neighborhood invaded by one represents a source of income for another.”

## Rates According to Time of the Day

Another possible solution is to influence prices to discourage tourists. The Eiffel Tower financed its renovation works by spiking its entrance tickets by 50%. Its twin tower in Dubai, the immense Burj Khalifa, proposes four different rates according to the time of the day, with the most expensive entry taking effect at sunset.

The technology also allows regulating flows, especially in Amsterdam where a website informs visitors of the waiting time in the queues in real-time. Soon, a new mobile application will indicate the places to avoid.

But the internet has also propelled the temporary rentals of the Airbnb type, which causes property prices to skyrocket, and attracts party tourists, provoking extreme rejection among the local population, as has happened in Barcelona. Thus, the movement of “tourism-phobia” has spread like wildfire.

According to the first study on excessive tourism, carried out by the McKinsey cabinet, 36% of the inhabitants of zones suffering from this phenomenon **consider that “international visitors” generate “excessive pressure”**. Six months ago, this figure was only 18%.

In short, now there are great hopes among tourists aged between 18 and 35. More adventurous than the baby-boomers, this generation “will disperse more, out of fear of being disappointed if you visit only one place,” or because of the panic that too many people may go to the same place at the same time, according to McKinsey's analysis.

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