

EUROPEAN CAPITALS FACE AIR POLLUTION PROBLEMS - PART II



Last week, Tourism-Review.com brought you the [first part](#) of an article focusing on the air pollution problems of many European capitals. Berlin, Brussels, London – they all have recently launched various projects to curb the air pollution and its impact on the lives of locals as well as the visitors. This week, part II presents three more cities where the air is not that clear any more.

Madrid

Since 2010, Madrid has been violating the limits of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂); right after the new regulations to limit pollution in cities came into effect. Only last year, 15 out of 24 monitoring stations in Madrid registered air pollution levels considered harmful for health, according to the EU (the annual limit value is set at 40 micrograms per cubic meter of NO₂ average). The City Council believes that Madrid's main pollution factor is the road traffic.

On May 10, Madrid City Council toughened the limitations set for high pollution scenarios. These limitations are in full effect when two monitoring stations report more than 180 micrograms of NO₂ (early warning phase) or 200 micrograms (warning). **The most polluting vehicles include old motorcycles, which cannot travel on the inside of the M-30 (the city's inner ring road).** Parking is also prohibited in that area. Vehicles of residents and those labeled with the DGT Zero emission and ECO sticker are exempted from these limitations.

The Consistory of the capital proposes to tackle air pollution through measures that can be considered “structural”. These include the creation of a large Residential Priority Area (APR, in Spanish) right in the center of Madrid, the heart of the city and the area with the highest pollution levels.

Additionally, the local Government has announced a new restriction of 70 kilometers per hour as the allowed speed limit on the M-30. No deadlines have been announced for those measures. At the same time, Madrid is launching cycle routes and has reduced the number of lanes for vehicles in several streets of the capital. Their project aims to create 130 kilometers of new cycling routes by 2019.

Paris

According to Paris City Council, 90% of Parisians live in a polluted environment and 2,500 people die every year in the capital due to illnesses and diseases linked to air pollution. About 48,000 premature deaths are reported every year throughout the country, identifying air pollution as the cause of death, the third cause in France, right after tobacco, and alcohol.

Since 2017, it's mandatory for vehicles to have an “air quality certificate” sticker, which classifies them into 5 categories, from the most polluting ones (category 5), who cannot be operated during weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., to the least polluting ones (category 1).

The classification is made according to the year of the vehicle's first registration, its energy efficiency and emission rates. A vehicle without the sticker may face fines between 65 and 135

euros, although this system's implementation has been quite deficient. When emissions reach its highest levels, the area is regarded as a "low emission zone" (or a 'ZRC'), that limits the operation of the most polluting vehicles, according to the classification of the air quality stickers. Currently, the authorities can also implement extraordinary measures, such as a unique charge of 3.80 euros for the use of public transport throughout the day in the entire territory, which costs the capital an average of 500,000 euros a day.

Paris is trying to move progressively towards the complete restriction of the most polluting vehicles, aiming to put older diesel cars out of circulation by 2024, and ban all heat engines by 2030. Vehicles with the Euro 4 sticker (diesel engines registered between 2001 and 2005) will be banned in the first semester of 2019, and those with the Euro 3 sticker (diesel engines registered until 2010, and petrol engines registered between 1997 and 2005) by 2022.

Rome

Out of the main European capitals, Rome is the only city not included on the list of 39 cities that exceeded last year's emission standards (set in the first 35 days of the year). The most polluted Italian cities include Turin (with 112 days above the limits for last year), followed by Milan (with 7 days) and Venice (with 8). The situation in Rome has improved over the past four years. It is estimated that 1,500 people die in the capital because of the poor air quality, according to the figures reported by the National Agency for Regional Health Services. About 91,000 premature deaths are registered all over Italy for the same cause of death.

Rome follows the European classification for vehicles, including motorcycles, according to their emission rates, year of registration and their specific characteristics. The most polluting ones are only allowed on weekends and holidays. **In the event of high pollution, restrictions and limitations are established at different time intervals, distinguishing between workdays and holidays, and starting from the third day.** The restrictions are enforced starting with the most polluting vehicles and gradually moving to the least polluting ones. To offset for the poor efficiency of public transport, the City Council also encourages the rental of vehicles and has recently launched a new bicycle rental system without fixed bases.

Rome announced last February its intention to completely ban private vehicles with diesel engines, and that its use in the heart of the city will be illegal by 2024.

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