

# THE UNESCOFICATION OF TRAVEL DESTINATIONS



Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* about his Mediterranean cruise was a bestseller in the U.S. With it came the modern, controlled tourism to Europe. Since then tourism has become the industry with the highest turnover, but at the same time a big issue in many senses.

In a view of being included in the World UNESCO Heritage List, travel destinations often do everything possible and impossible. **However, at the same time, they forget to take into account the possible negative aspects and transformation of the location once on the List.**

The mass tourism of the 21st century leads to concreted coasts, transformation of old towns into huge food stalls, to tormenting queues and to an avalanche of kitsch souvenirs. This can be proven with numbers. France receives 160 billion euros from tourism. In Spain, tourism accounts for 14% of the GDP. Venice welcomes around 10 million tourists every year. For example, in Italy Venice, Florence, even Rome have turned into tourist cities. In their cores tourists meet and these cities have adapted completely to the needs of visitors.

Some experts are giving travel destinations radical tips like "hands off UNESCO". Some even say that touching UNESCO is deadly and wherever it sticks its world heritage label, the city dies and literally ends up as a specimen. With it, destinations lose originality and authenticity.

The longing for authenticity, however, drives tourists to new discoveries. Thus, a tourism vortex arises. But the cities are to blame themselves. After the economic decline in the late 15th century, Venice began to promote its carnival as a magnet for visitors. As a result, the city has attracted a tourist stream that has almost stifled the city in recent decades. If one has followed the gradual transformation of Paris or New York, it must be feared that these metropolises will become gigantic Venice of the 22nd century.

Some examples of travel destinations struggling with over-tourism thanks to UNESCO and the unrest of residents are the obvious Venice or Barcelona. But there is also the Croatian city Dubrovnik, which is a part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. However, the organization is threatening to take away the status because of over-tourism.

**This threat has lead the city to limit the number of people visiting it to 4,000 per day.** It is also planned to decrease the number of cruise ships docking at the port. Almost 800,000 people arrived on cruise ships in the city in 2016 and the majority of these stayed in Dubrovnik for about three hours.

Another example of serious over-tourism is Machu Picchu, Peru's most visited site. In 2016, about 5,000 people per day visited the ancient ruins. This is twice more than UNESCO recommends. However, in 2017, the Peruvian government introduced timetable measures in order to restrict and reduce the number of visitors. Other destinations threatened by over-tourism are Cinque Terre in Italy or Santorini in Greece.

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