

EASTER ISLAND: CHILE FIGHTING MASS TOURISM



After Venice and Barcelona, Easter Island, the Chilean land in the Pacific that welcomed 110,000 tourists in 2017, starts regulating mass tourism. Since August, the duration of the stay is limited to thirty days, and quotas of visitors will be established, for foreigners and Chileans.

Airlines and shipping companies must also forward the list of passengers to the police, so that it can more easily curb illegal immigration attempts. The new law does not only target visitors but also the population of the island. **The Rapanuis, the first people who inhabited the land in the thirteenth century, can live on the spot, if they prove their origins.**

For other Chileans, it is more difficult: as long as they have a professional activity, there is no problem. But as soon as their employment contract ends or their business closes, they must return to the continent. Radical measures which can be explained by the worrying demography.

The population of the island has doubled since 2001, reaching 7,750 inhabitants in 2017. Attracted by the flourishing tourist activity, more and more Chileans come here to work in the hotels, bars or restaurants. If this growth rate would continue, the island would collapse by 2030.

“The main problem is waste management, which has become impossible with this influx,” says Ana Maria Gutierrez, Environmental Affairs Officer. The recycling plant which opened in 2011 is not enough to absorb everything. Nor are the two landfills, which promote the proliferation of rodents and mosquitoes carrying dengue fever. Water is also a puzzle, as it is impossible to build an underground sewage system with jeopardizing the archaeological treasures.

To further tackle the problem, Chile has created a new Demographic Load Council responsible for carrying out the pertinent corrections with a period of 60 days. With all resolved, this plan would come into effect on January 31 and would provide solutions to the most pressing problems of this territory, including mass tourism.

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