

INSTAGRAM TOURISTS: NETHERLANDS FACES THE SELFIE RAGE



More and more Instagram tourists are currently traveling to the Netherlands to shoot selfies in the tulip fields. When photographing, however, they carelessly trample flowers and now the gardeners are starting to defend themselves.

When a location becomes famous on Instagram, it will not be long before it is flooded with crowds of visitors - the Instagram tourists. **For this reason, for example, the Walker Canyon in California had to close for a short time in March because, in search of the perfect photo, people had literally trampled down the nature they had traveled to.**

Nurseries in the Netherlands are now forced to protect their tulip fields from such tourists. In some regions, the owners have erected fences around the flowers and set up signs saying "Enjoy the flowers, respect our pride" - in English and Chinese.

Simon Pennings was the first gardener to have fenced off his fields and issued warnings. Last year, one of his fields was damaged by the tourist groups, amounting to damage of 10,000 euros. "Everything was trampled but they still want to take a selfie," he said.

Pennings suspects ignorance is behind the careless behavior. "They don't think about it. People lost sight of how plants grow and how we work for them all year round. For them, milk comes from a factory and not from a cow. The same goes for tubers - they think it's a kind of plastic," he added.

That's what the gardener wants to change. Together with about 40 colleagues, he builds fences, posters, and signs. They welcome tourist groups and lead them to more suitable selfie spots.

Penning's campaign is also supported by the Dutch Tourist Office. The authority has created a 'dos and doesn't guide'. This is to show Instagram tourists how to take a selfie near a tulip field, without destroying the plants.

"We do not want to send the tourists away," says Van Lieshout from the Dutch Tourist Office. "The gardeners make the fields beautiful for the tourists, but pictures may only be taken on the edge, not in the middle of the field or on the flowers".

In recent years, the number of tourists in the Netherlands has risen sharply. The Keukenhof, a famous garden, is visited by about 1.4 million visitors per year. Six years ago, the number was 800,000.

A large number of visitors caused chaos last week during the Easter weekend. The streets to Keukenhof were completely blocked on both days because many visitors had left their cars to take pictures of the fields.

The situation of Dutch tulip fields is another example of how mass tourism can destroy places. Because often remote natural areas which are famous on Instagram are not designed for large numbers of visitors.

Those who want to spend their holidays in nature should not leave their travel plans to a social media platform. It is better to search online for suitable regions for a hiking holiday. Incidentally, the most sustainable way to travel is by train or by long-distance buses. Staying at campsites or hotels that operate in the form of so-called “sustainable tourism” is another way to travel responsibly.

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