

TOP 5 DESERTED ICONIC TRAVEL DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE



While last year many European metropolises were fighting the dire effects of over tourism and focusing much efforts on sustainability and green initiatives, everything is now different. Shops closed, restaurants closed, borders closed ... travelers are at home and what is left are amazing pictures of unusually deserted travel destinations. Tourism review presents five of the previously most visited European cities that turned to historical gems with no travelers coming to admire them.

Venice

With over 53,000 inhabitants in the island's historic center, not counting the metropolitan area, Venice was welcoming more than 30 million tourists a year before the pandemic. The city council was forced to place restrictions on visits, which weren't well received. They also decided to apply a 'landing tax' for tourists who do not spend the night at the destination and only make a day visit, like the thousands of cruise passengers who arrived every day.

The measure was strongly criticized by those who claimed that the city was being turned into a theme park, leaving it only for tourism purposes.

In less than six months, two disasters hit the city, exposing the cracks of an economy almost exclusively dependent on tourism. In mid-November 2019, an almost 2-meter tide paralyzed Venice and caused the first mass exodus of tourists. And by the first week of March, when the nationwide lockdown was placed in Italy, Venice already seemed like a ghost town.

The crowds disappeared, as did most of the motorized traffic from vaporettos (Venetian water bus), large ships, and water taxis. The waters were free of the constant movement that rowers and activists denounced on a daily basis.

The St. Mark's Square, for the first time in probably centuries, has been deserted for several weeks and all of its nearby cafes and restaurants remain closed.

Rome

Rome, a city with a population of 3 million that received between 15 and 16 million tourists every year is also among the deserted travel destinations. "Rome looks deserted, and it hurts our hearts but it's a sign that we have taken it seriously. In some areas, traffic has been reduced by up to 90%," said Virginia Raggi, the Mayor of the city.

According to Mayor Raggi, who spoke in a virtual press conference, she thinks that "in 2020, there will be no foreign tourists. I'm not saying it; the World Health Organization (WHO) itself has said that it will take months before borders are reopened."

Rome, like the rest of Italy, is on lockdown, adhering to self-isolation measures and the blocking of activities decreed by the Government to contain the coronavirus pandemic, which has already confirmed more than 180,000 cases and 23,000 deaths in this country.

In Rome, the contrast is quite dramatic. In the past, the Minister of Culture had been asked to “put a limit on tourist entries or a barrier to stop them from jumping in fountains.”

Even though tourism was a key industry for Rome’s economy the government had to enforce measures to restrict tourist access to historical monuments and sites.

As soon as the borders open, you should pick one of the Europe tour packages that include Rome, and see its beauty for yourself.

London

London, the capital of the United Kingdom, is one of the five most visited cities in the world: just in 2019, it welcomed more than 19.5 million international arrivals, without adding the several million Britons that visit the city as well.

The London Eye, Westminster Abbey, the often-photographed Big Ben and the Tower Bridge over the Thames that leads to the Tower of London, the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace, the Shakespeare’s Globe Theater, the British Museum, the National Gallery, Piccadilly Circus, Camden Town, Abbey Road, Notting Hill, the gardens, theaters, markets... Everything remains closed until further notice.

The British government ordered citizens to stay at home and only go out to buy food, for health issues, or for certain jobs (mostly health-related ones). Schools also closed in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus as well.

Paris

Does anyone remember the padlocks (love locks) at the Pont des Arts Bridge? 2015 almost feels like a distant past, when the mayor of Paris put an end to the couples’ ritual that involved attaching padlocks on the railings of the bridge and then throwing the key into the Seine river just below. Some 45 tons of locks were removed from the site on the basis of “degradation of property heritage and a risk to the safety of visitors.”

This fact alone serves as an example of how many tourists visited the capital of France every year, and of course, how romance isn’t dead.

From the Montmartre neighborhood and the Opera area to the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, the Tuileries Palace, the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre (the most visited museum in the world), just to name a few attractions... Everything is deserted since President Macron announced a nationwide lockdown in the country.

Barcelona

Just like in Venice, the inhabitants of Barcelona had been complaining about the arrival of large cruise ships for years, in which thousands of people, who did not spend much in the city, dipped in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

With the overall economy and tourism at a halt, nobody is in a rush to talk about the future since Spain is the second country (just behind the United States) with most cases in the world. There are more than 200,000 infected and the total number of deaths exceeds 20,500.

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