

FRENCH CITIES ARE TRYING TO LIMIT SEASONAL RENTALS



As more and more French mayors try to introduce stricter tourist accommodation rules, they face numerous legal hurdles and angry landlords.

When the high season is over, France's seaside towns become empty cities with a lot of shutters closed, while paradoxically, many students and low-income workers cannot find accommodation. This phenomenon is due to the proliferation of tourist rentals, which is unacceptable in most urban areas. In two years, the number of short-term rentals has increased by almost 33%. Facing the situation, many local councils are trying to curb the phenomenon, with varying degrees of success.

In the Basque Country, some municipalities have more than 40% of their housing stock rented out to tourists, such as Saint-Jean-de-Luz (45%) and Biarritz (40%). "It is a form of expropriation of our population," said Jean-René Etchegaray, president of the Pays Basque agglomeration. In March 2022, the agglomeration set up a compensation system: for each short-term rental space, an owner must offer a similar space for traditional renting. However, this decision was challenged in court, and the scheme was suspended before being reinstated on 1 March 2023.

Jean-René Etchegaray has recruited three people to perform the checks, with fines of up to 50,000 euros for offenders. "The countdown is on, and the situation can only improve," he says satisfactorily.

La Rochelle city council solution rejected by the courts

The city of La Rochelle, a popular tourist destination, wanted to go one step further. Last October, it introduced a measure stipulating that, from June 2023, owners would only be allowed to rent out one apartment to visitors, and only if it was larger than 35 square meters. "We have a shortage of properties that are neutralised by meublés de tourisme and unavailable for year-round rentals. As a result, rents are rising, and many people cannot rent or buy," told Marie Nédellec, deputy mayor of La Rochelle. Unfortunately for the mayor's office, the La Rochelle landlords' association challenged the decision in court, and the judges ruled in their favor.

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