

# END OF SUMMER TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN?



The prolonged and increasingly frequent heat waves could change and alter the flow of vacationers tomorrow - especially during the warmer months, people may prefer the Atlantic coast or the mountains.

The summer in Europe is extremely hot with each passing day. The Director of the WHO (World Health Organization), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has warned that heat waves threaten our health and lives. This alarm is particularly concerning in the Mediterranean region, where temperatures have reached record highs. According to the World Meteorological Organization, there may be areas where water temperatures reach over 30 degrees Celsius shortly. These are concerning developments.

## **Popular destinations, but...**

The question that arises now is whether it is still feasible to plan a summer vacation in the Mediterranean now and in the future. Those who enjoy city life may find it challenging as it requires much effort, and even Tom Cruise and his franchise cannot make it any easier. In Athens, for instance, the temperature is constantly above 40 degrees, making leaving your house or hotel tiring and hazardous. The local Red Cross is stationed at the base of the Acropolis to provide water bottles for tourists, many of whom are suffering from the heat. Additionally, the country has been affected by wildfires this year.

At present, Greece, France, Italy, and Spain continue to be popular vacation spots for the summer season. Media reports indicate that many individuals were willing to go to great lengths to witness the marvels of Rome, which has been dubbed "the infernal city" by the press. Local police officers have reported instances of fainting due to the intense heat. However, most guests have acclimated to the high temperatures and have kept their itineraries the same. They stay in shaded areas and remain hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Fortunately, there are numerous fountains located throughout Rome and other Mediterranean cities.

## **Rome as Marrakech**

But global warming will likely impact tourism in the coming years. At least, that is what the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) points out in its latest report. The Mediterranean region, for example, has warmed by 1.5 degrees compared to the pre-industrial era, which is 0.4 degrees more than the global average. That's not good at all. Beyond the cultural aspect, the region has always been popular for its pleasant temperatures. More than half of tourism is concentrated on the coast: beaches, the sun, and the sea. But these areas are on the front lines of climate change. It's already getting warmer, with temperature peaks predictable a few weeks or even days in advance. The risk of fire is greater. Places may become uninhabitable or unlivable, negatively impacting the quality of services offered to travelers.

Climatologist Wolfgang Cramer has studied climate change in the Mediterranean and found that

ozone pollution worsens in cities like Athens and Rome during high temperatures. This not only affects tourists but also causes a decline in air quality. The Mediterranean Sea is also undergoing "tropicalization" and "gelation" changes due to rising water temperatures. This results in the proliferation of toxic microalgae and jellyfish, making certain areas unsuitable for swimming. As a result, the water in some areas appears color green.

According to Cramer, there are concerns regarding the sustainability of current tourism practices in light of increasing temperatures. If greenhouse gas emissions are not significantly reduced, the heat will continue to intensify. A 2019 study suggests that summer temperatures in Madrid could increase by 6 degrees compared to the present day. In the words of Ezio Greggio in Yuppies, it will be like being in Marrakech. Additionally, Rome is projected to experience temperatures similar to those in Adana, Turkey, with an increase of 5.3 degrees.

The situation worsens due to decreased rainfall, which could limit water access in tourist areas during the summer. Spain's coast is facing a more desert-like climate.

### **The Summer Tourism of the Future**

Many tourist destinations have yet to adjust to the effects of climate change. However, some cities, such as Barcelona, have already recognized the difficulties to come in the next few years. Barcelona is a leading city in this regard and has established thermal shelters for visitors during heat waves. Public spaces and schools are open to provide water, shade, rest areas, and even air conditioning and vegetation. In contrast, other cities in Greece and Turkey are experiencing difficulties in dealing with the impacts of global warming.

In this sense, the extreme artificialization of the coast, now full of asphalt, which prevents reintroducing a bit of nature, is also to be weighed.

According to experts, tourists may avoid heat waves by exploring other regions. Rather than endure the sweltering temperatures of the Mediterranean coast, visitors are likely to opt for destinations such as the Atlantic coast or mountainous areas during July and August. These areas may experience Mediterranean-like climates in a few decades. Alternatively, the Mediterranean basin could be more appealing in spring or fall. The city of Barcelona anticipates a rise in visitors during June and September.

Visiting the Mediterranean during this time can be difficult due to the high temperatures, but it also contributes to the problem by emitting greenhouse gases through travel and tourism. If we want to address climate change seriously, we may need to reconsider our reliance on air travel for mass tourism or accept that we cannot achieve the goal of limiting climate change to 1.5 degrees.

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