

# FRANCE CAN HARDLY HANDLE SO MANY TOURISTS



France faces challenges in managing the large influx of international visitors, even though tourists contributed a staggering \$95 billion to the French economy last year. In 2020, France remained the most visited country in the world, with a total of 66.6 million visitors, and Paris alone will attract 44 million tourists, making it the most sought-after city globally.

However, the downside of being such a popular destination is the overcrowding it causes, particularly after lifting lockdown restrictions. French tourism minister Olivia Gregoire has acknowledged the issue and aims to develop a strategy to manage the number of visitors to protect the environment, maintain the quality of life for locals, and ensure a positive tourist experience. One idea is to enlist social media influencers to encourage their followers to avoid popular tourist sites such as Mont Saint-Michel at peak times.

To prevent over-tourism, it may seem drastic, but it's necessary. During the summer, visiting Mont Saint-Michel can result in hours of queueing in the heat, which detracts from the experience's enjoyment. The visitor center and large car park in front of the holy island are not frequently featured on Instagram.

Overcrowding problems exist in many cities, such as Venice, Barcelona, and Dubrovnik. Visitors can visit during the off-season or explore less popular destinations to avoid crowds. In France, there are many peaceful areas away from tourist hotspots. With a population of approximately 67 million and a land area twice the size of the UK, there is ample room for people to disperse.

Visitors can stay inland to avoid crowds or utilize the efficient French train network to explore more of the country. Additionally, traveling during the off-season can result in lower prices and fewer tourists. Experts point out that visiting France in October was a wise decision, as there were fewer crowds and prices were more affordable.

The recent outbreaks of violent protests in Paris and other cities have resulted in a decline in visitors. However, it is anticipated that this will be a temporary setback. As peace is restored and tourists return, France must establish a sustainable tourism plan that benefits foreign visitors and locals.

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