

SPAIN REVOLTS AGAINST MASS TOURISM



Tourism is vital for Spain's economy, but some people resent the increasing number of visitors and fight against mass tourism. In some places, groups gather on the beach promenade and insult tourists as they pass by. Some are even threatening violence. Videos posted by the media show posters with messages like "Tourists Go Home."

These actions, as well as anti-tourist graffiti and protests, are becoming more common in Spain. This trend is not limited to traditional "booze tourism" hotspots like Mallorca or Barcelona. Still, it is also happening in regions previously considered peaceful tourist destinations, such as the Way of St. James in Galicia.

Agitated Situation in the Canary Islands

The described demo scene took place in the southern part of Tenerife. **However, locals on other larger islands, such as Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, and La Palma, usually visited by British and German tourists, are becoming increasingly frustrated.** Environmental degradation, congestion, housing shortages, overcrowding, price increases, water shortages, an overload of the health sector, and waste disposal are all blamed on mass tourism. The Canary Islands are suffering from tourism phobia; some experts believe the Canary Islands are a ticking time bomb.

Around 20 citizens' initiatives are currently protesting together. Last week, a demonstration occurred in front of the parliament in Madrid, the country's capital city. Recently, a group of activists started an indefinite hunger strike in front of La Concepción church in La Laguna, located in the northern part of Tenerife. The number of activists participating in the hunger strike is initially about ten. On April 20, large demonstrations are scheduled to take place on the islands.

Traditionally, the Canary Islands were known for being a peaceful destination that attracted a smaller number of partygoers and tourists more interested in enjoying nature and outdoor activities such as hiking, diving, surfing, golfing, and cycling. It was also a popular destination for retirees and those seeking a peaceful place to soak up the sun.

However, the island's tourism industry has experienced significant changes in recent years. This can be attributed to the construction of large hotel complexes in protected natural areas, the increasing popularity of holiday apartments, and the rising number of island visitors.

Fernando Clavijo, the Canary Islands regional president, is attempting to mitigate the adverse effects of tourism. He recently called for a more equitable distribution of the industry's wealth, as it benefits from the natural resources that belong to everyone. These words are surprising coming from a conservative politician, but they are likely a response to the current volatile situation.

Warnings about Actions against Tourists

Clavijo welcomed the debate and suggested implementing measures. However, he cautioned against taking any actions that could negatively impact tourists. He emphasized that **tourists come to the Canary Islands to have a good time and leave their money, and therefore, should not be insulted.**

On the other hand, activists deny the existence of "turismofobia." They clarified that they are not against tourists or entrepreneurs in the industry. Instead, they are reacting to a tense situation in the region.

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