

# FRANCE'S TOURISM SECTOR IS A MAJOR CO2 POLLUTER



Backed by fresh data from the French national statistics office, travel-related spending led to 75 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions during 2023. These totals include every kind of greenhouse gas released to meet what tourists - both domestic and foreign - actually used on site.

Just over one-third of the overall impact came from visitors from abroad, accounting for 34%, whereas local travelers contributed the rest. The share of France's tourism linked to international guests was smaller compared to that generated within the country itself.

## Emissions Split Between France and Abroad

Most of the greenhouse gases tied to tourism - about 58 percent - are released within France. **Emissions come mainly from burning fuels for travel, as well as power used in hotels and restaurants.** Outside national borders, roughly 42 percent arises elsewhere. This portion links to digging up oil and making raw materials later burned or used by visitors staying in French establishments.

## Transport Drives Most of the Impact

Transportation is by far the largest contributor, accounting for two-thirds of the tourism sector's total GHG emissions.

Air travel alone represents a quarter (25%) of the entire carbon footprint, despite making up only 9% of tourist spending. This highlights the high carbon intensity of aviation.

Road fuels purchased by both French and foreign tourists account for 30% of the sector's GHG emissions. In contrast, other tourism-related activities have a comparatively smaller impact:

- Accommodation (hotels, campsites, second homes, etc.): 16%
- Food (catering and retail purchases): 11%
- Cultural, sports, and leisure services: 9%

Experts note that France's tourism consumption from other activities emits a much smaller share of GHGs than transport.

## High Carbon Intensity

Heavy transportation use pushes tourism's carbon footprint well above the national norm. At 0.35 kg CO<sub>2</sub> eq per euro, its emissions intensity climbs 75% beyond typical French spending patterns.

Still, the gap highlights how tourism reliant on constant movement strains ecosystems - prompting doubt over whether such patterns can continue without worsening climate impacts, especially as France pushes to lower national pollution levels.

## Implications

Despite its role in France's economy, tourism's full climate footprint emerges more clearly through INSEE's consumption-focused analysis. This approach captures emissions tied to global production networks, not just those released within national borders. **Insights like these could shape upcoming decisions about eco-friendly lodging, transport with lower emissions, or how people move across regions.** While often seen as local activity, travel's environmental reach spreads much farther than once assumed.

As global traveler counts rise, managing ecological impacts alongside financial gains becomes harder. Still, progress hinges on how well destinations adapt. Future success may depend less on attracting tourists, more on sustaining local ecosystems. Growth brings opportunity - yet pressure mounts where nature bears the cost.

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