



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

High temperatures will not deter tourists from the Mediterranean this year either



The forthcoming summer travel and holiday season will bring a final recovery from the historic decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the whole world stayed at home for several years.

Domestic and international tourism are already growing at high rates. A stable growth of 3% in domestic tourism is **expected** by the end of the decade, equivalent to 19 billion lodging nights, and a similar growth rate in international tourism, reaching 9 billion lodging nights in the same period.

Financial indicators are also set to break records this year, with almost \$9 trillion, or 9% of global GDP, expected to be spent by tourists around the world. Increased costs due to inflation and rising fuel and food prices will not significantly affect people's desire to travel and relax, given that people simply want to travel.

However, the post-Covid period will not bring back old habits and will slightly change tourist destinations. The high temperatures this summer will also be a factor that will significantly influence the distribution of the ever-increasing budget of global tourists.

Europe is in for another record-breaking hot summer, just like last year.

Heat this summer too

The continent has already experienced 11 consecutive hottest months on record, and according to long-term forecasts, this trend will continue.

Europe is the continent that is warming faster than the others. Since 1991, it has warmed twice as much as the global average, according to the World Meteorological Organisation and the EU Climate Agency.

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Its southern parts in the Mediterranean belt are the most exposed to this bad development, with frequent heat waves, forest fires, and a constant rise in average temperatures.

This is also the most important tourist area in Europe, which is facing another season in which guests will not only have to deal with the usual crowds but also with a heat that is statistically greater than ever before in history.

Similar images from last year will be repeated this summer, with long lines of tourists waiting to enter tourist attractions in Florence, Venice, Athens, or the south of France in temperatures above 40 degrees.

Tourists are not giving up

But how many of them will give up a holiday in the major tourist metropolises on the Mediterranean because of this?

Not many, given the persistently high demand for summer travel to Mediterranean destinations.

“The destinations are being booked again, and what really characterises people is how quickly they forget and push back negative experiences,” Stefan Gössling from Linnaeus University in Sweden **told** the New York Times.



This season, dozens of airlines from Europe and the USA have increased the number of seats on their flights by up to 30% - Santorini Airport

The forecasts for tourism revenue this year confirm Prof. Gössling's position. Italy, for example, **earned** around EUR 215 billion from tourism in 2023, which corresponds to 10.5% of total economic output. Estimates for this year are even higher, at EUR 223 billion, with the number of employees set to rise by a further 100,000 to a total of around 3.1 million.

The figures are also rising in Greece, one of the world's top 20 holiday destinations. Bookings for accommodation and transport so far herald an even higher number of tourists and financial income than in 2023, which has been a record year.

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This indicates that last year's extreme heat, which in Athens last summer, for example, made it challenging to visit some of the most popular sites, like the Acropolis, during the hottest part of the day, has not affected holiday plans.

Premature fears of a decline in visits

It seems premature to warn that the European Mediterranean belt is becoming less interesting for international tourists due to the increasingly warmer climate.

Tour operators mention a slight trend of tourists shifting their plans to cooler areas in the summer, or at least rescheduling them until the spring or autumn months, when temperatures are lower.

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Only places where there were forest fires or evacuations due to extreme heat last summer, such as northern Greece or some parts of Spain, saw a somewhat more significant drop in demand.

“A pattern has to be established when people expect it to be uncomfortably hot, rather than just hot. It is going to be a big shift for people to get the Mediterranean out of their holiday,” Tom Jenkins, head of the European Tourism Association, said earlier.

Until then, the hosts of millions of tourists will employ various strategies to alleviate the intense heat, expected to persist throughout the summer. They will arrange museum visits during the cooler hours, provide them with more air-conditioned rooms, and take them on popular tours.