# Jet2 CEO warns of UK tourists reconsidering Spain amid safety and housing crisis concerns



A recent warning from Steve Heapy, the CEO of airline Jet2, highlights troubling trends among British tourists regarding their willingness to visit Spain. According to Heapy, there is an increasing sense of unease among potential holidaymakers about their safety and welcome status in Spanish resorts. Reports indicate that inquiries at travel agents and the Jet2 call centre often reflect concerns such as "is Spain safe?" and "are we still welcome in the resort?" This emerging perception, he argues, is becoming a significant issue, turning subjective fears into broader truths that could impact tourism.

This apprehension follows a series of protests across Spain against overtourism, with notable demonstrations originating in April of this year. These protests, which have gained momentum, have been fueled by frustrations over the critical housing crisis exacerbated by the influx of tourists. Activists have even urged visitors to reconsider their travel plans, claiming, "the greed and avarice of hoteliers, politicians, and real estate investors have brought us to an emergency situation." Such sentiments underscore the growing disconnect between resident populations and the tourism industry that once flourished in the country.

The issue is starkly reflected in the housing market, where costs have surged dramatically. A report revealed that rents have risen over 20% in just five years, significantly impacting local residents. Spain's shortage of housing units is dire, with an estimated shortfall of 600,000, requiring a profound response from the government. Plans are underway to invest approximately €1.3 billion of European Union funding into industrialised construction approaches, which could create 15,000 new homes annually. This initiative is intended not only to expedite construction processes but also to address the deeply rooted problem of unaffordable housing that disproportionately affects younger generations and working families.

The multitude of protests indicates a broader discontent with structural inequalities in the housing market. According to estimates, rents in major cities like Madrid and Barcelona have almost doubled in the past decade, leaving many unable to afford independent living. The government’s measures, including rent controls and initiatives to limit short-term tourist rentals, are steps towards alleviating these concerns. However, public sentiment continues to reflect scepticism, with critics pointing out that these efforts may not adequately resolve the underlying housing crisis.

Barcelona's recent policy to phase out tourist rentals by 2029 has ignited controversy among property owners, leading many to view it as an expropriation of their income stream. In a response to these legislative changes, property owners have mobilised legal actions, arguing that such policies threaten their investments. Yet, this conflict has also received considerable support from local residents who see the move as vital for improving living conditions in their communities.

Against this backdrop, Spain has attracted record numbers of tourists, with approximately 94 million visitors recorded last year. However, the economic benefits of this tourism boom are not evenly felt among residents. Heapy’s concerns point towards a potential decline in visitor numbers if perceptions around safety and hospitality continue to worsen. He emphasises the necessity for legislative measures around unlicensed tourism, arguing that private lettings platforms contribute to dangerous situations for guests, where unregulated properties may pose significant risks.

As Spain grapples with these intertwined issues of housing affordability and its dependence on tourism, the future remains uncertain. The challenge lies in reconciling the booming economy driven by tourism with the pressing need for housing that caters to locals, thereby fostering a more sustainable coexistence between residents and the thriving tourism industry.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraph 3, 4
3. Paragraph 3, 4
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraph 4, 5
6. Paragraph 6, 7
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2053194/jet2-boss-british-tourists-spain-holiday-doubts> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/spain-speed-up-industrial-construction-social-housing-with-eu-funds-2025-04-24/> - Spain plans to invest approximately €1.3 billion of European Union funds over the next decade to boost the industrial construction of social housing. The initiative aims to create 15,000 new homes annually using industrialized methods that could cut construction time by up to 60%. This strategy is part of a broader effort to address the country's housing shortage, estimated at 600,000 units, amid skyrocketing rents and home prices, which have risen by 44% since 2020. Spain currently relies minimally on industrial construction—only 5% compared to Germany's 20%. The government is also implementing rent controls, limiting short-term tourist rentals, and encouraging the growth of social housing, which currently represents a mere 3% of total housing stock, significantly below the EU average of 9%. The city of Valencia, recently affected by severe flash floods, will be the initial hub for these industrial housing projects.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/9a4bc15ae2a0d1460950848ad2596d1b> - Tens of thousands of people across Spain protested on Saturday, April 5, 2025, against the nation's deepening housing crisis, voicing frustration over soaring rents and unaffordable property prices. In Madrid and Barcelona, official and organizer estimates differed widely, with authorities reporting tens of thousands of participants and organizers claiming numbers upwards of 100,000. The protest was led by housing activists and supported by major labor unions, highlighting a generational struggle where even well-employed young adults cannot afford to buy or rent homes independently. In the past decade, rents in Spain have nearly doubled, particularly in cities like Madrid and Barcelona, while wage growth has lagged, leaving many dependent on shared housing or family homes. Spain lacks sufficient public housing compared to other European countries, with only 2% of housing stock available as public rentals, far behind the OECD average. Protesters criticized property speculation and the impact of short-term tourist rentals, leading Barcelona to pledge a full ban on such permits by 2028. Despite government initiatives like rent caps, public dissatisfaction continues, and experts warn of prolonged unrest due to the severity of the crisis.
4. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/europe/article/2024/09/16/barcelona-property-owners-organize-against-tourist-rental-ban_6726220_143.html> - Property owners in Barcelona, represented by Apartur, are taking legal action against the Catalan government's decision to ban tourist rentals by 2029. The move, announced by Mayor Jaume Collboni, follows a November decree limiting tourist licenses to five years, after which municipalities can choose to renew them or not. Collboni argues that the ban will address housing crises and reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism, as rents have surged by 68% in the past decade. Many residents support the ban for similar reasons, valuing improved living conditions. However, property owners see it as an expropriation and a threat to their revenue and investments. The measure might shift demand to hotels, with plans to increase hotel capacity by 20,000 rooms, though critics believe this won't solve the underlying issues of overtourism.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/04c34f3c-862c-43e6-afb7-029b94cd1472> - Spain is grappling with a severe housing crisis, deeply entangled with the contentious issue of squatting. Daniel Esteve, a prominent and controversial figure, claims to have evicted squatters from over 9,000 properties through his company Desokupa. His aggressive approach garners both support and criticism, contributing to a wider political divide. The crisis reflects broader systemic issues—rising rents, lack of affordable housing, and a backlog in judicial eviction processes. The government has implemented laws to accelerate evictions and reduce illegal occupancy, but challenges persist, with many affected landlords citing a lack of protection. Squatting cases have risen, affecting small landlords and often involving informal mafias. Spain has 3.8 million empty homes, but few lie in high-demand areas. Protests advocating tenant rights and the end of eviction companies highlight the growing frustration. The debate extends across class and ideology, with the left emphasizing housing access and the right scapegoating immigration. The issue is exacerbated by international property investors and under-addressed housing shortages, leaving evictions as a temporary solution rather than a structural fix. As global interest in Spain's housing model rises, the crisis could have implications beyond national borders.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/spains-booming-economy-brings-cold-comfort-some-2025-02-21/> - Spain's economy is experiencing rapid growth, becoming Europe's fastest-growing economy with a 3.2% rise last year. However, this growth, driven by mass migration and tourism, has not improved living conditions for everyone. Many Spaniards, like Sara Huertas, struggle with housing affordability amid stagnant wages. House prices have increased by 44% in the last decade, while wages only grew by 19%. Spain faces a housing shortage, needing 225,000 new homes annually to meet demand. Migration, while essential for economic growth and filling job vacancies, also exacerbates housing issues and keeps wage growth low. The economic situation has fueled support for Spain's far-right Vox party. The government is focusing on managing migration and addressing housing shortages with planned construction requiring more foreign workers. The challenge remains balancing economic growth with social equity and affordable housing for locals.
7. <https://apnews.com/article/3769d10c07b918d532bda1fb2629cdbb> - Spain remains a popular tourist destination, attracting 94 million tourists last year. Despite complaints about overtourism and concerns over housing affordability, Spain is not banning tourists. The government has introduced regulations on short-term rental properties in certain cities, such as Malaga and Barcelona, to address the housing crisis. These measures aim to restrict new rental properties and not renew tourism apartment licenses to protect housing availability for residents. Tourists can still book hotels and other accommodations across Spain. Additionally, new laws require visitors renting cars or booking hotels to provide personal information for national security.