# British holiday bookings slump as Canary Islands face surge in anti-tourism protests



In recent weeks, a noticeable shift in British holidaymakers' preferences has emerged, with the Canary Islands experiencing a significant decline in hotel bookings, attributed largely to a resurgence of anti-tourism protests. This change has triggered urgent discussions among local officials and business leaders, as the islands—popular for their sun-soaked beaches and vibrant culture—grapple with the consequences of mass tourism on local life and resources.

According to Santiago Sese, president of the Tenerife Chamber of Commerce, British reservations have dropped by eight per cent compared to the previous year. He noted that competing destinations such as Turkey, Greece, and Morocco have seen an increase in tourism, which raises concerns about the effectiveness of promotional campaigns aimed at British visitors. Local authorities are now engaging in emergency talks to address these declining numbers and engage with protestors demanding reform.

The anti-tourism protests have drawn thousands of participants across the Canary Islands, with demonstrators rallying under the banner “Canarias tiene un límite” (The Canaries have a limit). Activists voice frustrations regarding the impacts of mass tourism, such as overcrowding, inflated housing prices, and environmental degradation. Reports suggest that local resources are increasingly strained as the islands, home to about 2.2 million residents, welcome approximately 18 million tourists each year. Observers note that infrastructure, including water and healthcare services, struggles to accommodate this influx, particularly during peak seasons.

The protests have highlighted varying grievances, including visible signs of dissent, with slogans calling for restrictions on tourist numbers and a halt to new hotel developments. One demonstrator held a placard reading, “My misery is your paradise,” encapsulating the sentiment of those who feel their homes and livelihoods are threatened by the tourism model that has prioritised visitor numbers over local well-being. Calls have also emerged for an eco-tax aimed at addressing the costs of tourism on natural landscapes.

Amidst the protests, key industry figures have voiced their concern about the repercussions of diminished trust in the Canary Islands as a destination. Pedro Alfonso, president of the federation of hotel owners in Tenerife, cautioned that “every small collapse has an echo in trust,” suggesting that the ongoing unrest could deter potential investments and further exacerbate the situation. The recent unrest is reflective of a broader trend across Spain, where anger towards overtourism has sparked demonstrations in various cities, including Barcelona and Mallorca.

As holidaymakers witnessed protests unfolding around them, some expressed confusion and frustration, caught in the tension between the local population's demands and their own vacation experiences. This juxtaposition has led to what some are calling “tourismphobia,” where tourists feel unwelcome amid growing frustrations from residents who perceive them as part of the problem rather than as guests engaged with the culture.

The call for balance between tourism and sustainable development is now louder than ever, echoing through the streets of the Canary Islands. Local leaders recognise the urgent need for action, with discussions centring on controlling housing sales to mitigate the economic pressures on residents and reconsidering the tourism model that has dominated for decades.

Nevertheless, the path forward remains fraught with challenges as officials and stakeholders navigate these complex dynamics, seeking solutions that honour both the rich tourist draw of the islands and the fundamental rights and needs of the local population.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-2: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14726769/Brits-reservations-plummet-anti-tourist-protests-Canary-Islands.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-against-overtourism-spains-canary-islands-2025-05-18/), [[4]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/04/24/locals-fear-tourism-is-consuming-the-canary-islands_6669398_4.html)
2. Paragraphs 3-4: [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-spains-canary-islands-over-mass-tourism-2024-04-20/), [[6]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/tui-offers-staff-housing-canary-islands-appease-anti-tourism-protests-2024-05-15/)
3. Paragraphs 5-6: [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/de15a5a3-941d-4da0-b928-3da70b6e31ac), [[7]](https://www.canarianweekly.com/posts/Business-leaders-are-concerned-over-protests-in-tourist-areas)
4. Paragraph 7: [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-against-overtourism-spains-canary-islands-2025-05-18/), [[4]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/04/24/locals-fear-tourism-is-consuming-the-canary-islands_6669398_4.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14726769/Brits-reservations-plummet-anti-tourist-protests-Canary-Islands.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-against-overtourism-spains-canary-islands-2025-05-18/> - Thousands of protesters took to the streets across Spain's Canary Islands and several mainland cities to demonstrate against the negative impacts of mass tourism. Organized under the banner "Canaries have a limit," the protests aim to pressure authorities to regulate tourist numbers, as the surge in visitors has significantly strained local infrastructure, raised housing costs, and burdened essential services. Over one million tourists arrive each month, overwhelming the islands' resident population of 2.2 million. Protesters highlighted issues such as water shortages, traffic congestion, and healthcare accessibility, particularly during peak tourist seasons. One hotel manager, Juan Francisco Galindo, described how escalating tourism has tripled hotel accommodations since the 1970s but also led to personal hardships, including a forced expropriation of his father's property for a luxury hotel project. Critics argue that government policies prioritize increasing tourist numbers over sustainable development and residents' well-being. In response, Canary Island officials visited Brussels to seek European Union funding for affordable housing. This protest joins earlier demonstrations in other Spanish hotspots like Mallorca, Barcelona, and Malaga, reflecting growing national concerns over overtourism.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/de15a5a3-941d-4da0-b928-3da70b6e31ac> - In Europe, the backlash against mass tourism has intensified, with protests erupting in cities like Barcelona, Venice, and Amsterdam. In Barcelona, anti-tourism demonstrators doused tourists with water pistols, drawing global media coverage. This incident highlights a broader frustration among locals who feel overwhelmed by the influx of tourists, which has led to unaffordable housing, strained public services, and environmental issues. Spain, the world's second-most visited country, has seen significant anti-tourism protests, particularly in the Canary Islands, Mallorca, and coastal cities. The tourism industry, a vital economic driver contributing 12-13% of Spain's GDP, faces challenges in balancing local needs and economic benefits. Proposed solutions include better regulatory oversight, promoting high-end tourism, expanding infrastructure, and implementing degrowth strategies to limit tourist numbers. While debates continue, the challenge remains in finding sustainable methods to manage tourism without harming local communities or the economy.
4. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/04/24/locals-fear-tourism-is-consuming-the-canary-islands_6669398_4.html> - As Spain welcomes increasing tourist numbers, locals in the Canary Islands express growing concerns over the unsustainable impact of tourism on their region. In 2023, 85 million international travelers visited Spain, with predictions for 91 million in 2024. The Canary Islands have particularly felt the strain, with tourism accounting for 35% of their GDP and 40% of jobs as nearly 16 million tourists visited in 2023 compared to a resident population of just 2.2 million. Rising rental prices, loss of agriculture, and environmental damage highlight the negative consequences. A significant demonstration took place on April 20, 2024, signaling widespread discontent. Local leaders acknowledge the need for change, pushing for regulated housing sales and introducing an eco-tax to preserve resources. The regional president calls for a tourism model overhaul, yet political leaders seem reluctant to take immediate action. Protests emphasize the urgency of protecting the islands' resources and ensuring sustainable development.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-spains-canary-islands-over-mass-tourism-2024-04-20/> - In Tenerife, Spain's Canary Islands, thousands protested on Saturday demanding limits on tourist arrivals to address rising housing costs due to the boom in short-term holiday rentals and hotel construction. Demonstrators highlighted the detrimental impact of mass tourism on local housing and the environment, accounting for 35% of the region's GDP. Organized by environmental groups, the protests occurred ahead of the peak holiday season, urging local authorities to curb visitor numbers and foreign property purchases. Canary Islands president Fernando Clavijo acknowledged the issue and emphasized the need for stricter controls. The archipelago, home to 2.2 million people, saw nearly 14 million foreign tourists in 2023, highlighting the pressure on infrastructure and resources.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/tui-offers-staff-housing-canary-islands-appease-anti-tourism-protests-2024-05-15/> - In response to anti-tourism protests in Spain's Canary Islands, European travel giant TUI has decided to invest in housing for its staff instead of hotels. Demonstrations in Tenerife and other islands have called for authorities to reduce tourist numbers to ease pressure on the environment, infrastructure, and housing availability. TUI's CEO Sebastian Ebel emphasized that the company proactively addressed the issue by offering to build employee housing, and he downplayed the extent of the protests reported in German media. Despite Ebel's claim that package tourism does not contribute to the housing crisis, TUI will not be investing in new hotels on the islands.
7. <https://www.canarianweekly.com/posts/Business-leaders-are-concerned-over-protests-in-tourist-areas> - Sunday’s protests in Playa Las Americas, the heart of tourism in the south of Tenerife, have sparked concern among business owners. The 20-O (October 20th) demonstration organised by the platform Canarias tiene un límite (Canary Islands Have a Limit) took place on the seafront, and although the march remained peaceful during its course, it culminated in a large group going onto the beach aiming to highlight the negative effects of mass tourism directly to holidaymakers. The protests only drew around 10,000 participants across various locations in the Canary Islands, a stark contrast to a previous demonstration in April, which saw over 57,000 people take to the streets. However, the drop in turnout has not lessened the impact on the views of local businesses, as images of confused and, in some cases, harassed tourists circulated worldwide, raising concerns about the rise of "tourismphobia."