# British holidaymakers face unprecedented anti-tourism protests across the Canary Islands



Amid growing discontent over mass tourism, British holidaymakers find themselves facing unprecedented anti-tourism protests throughout the Canary Islands this weekend. The demonstrations, set to take place under the slogan "Canarias tiene un limite" (The Canaries has a limit), are anticipated to attract hundreds of thousands of locals who are protesting against what they perceive as an untenable tourism model. The event will stretch across the islands of Tenerife, Gran Canaria, La Gomera, El Hierro, Lanzarote, and La Palma, with solidarity protests also scheduled in major Spanish cities like Madrid, Valencia, and Barcelona.

The roots of this unrest lie in a surge of visitors that has left local resources strained. In 2023, Spain welcomed a staggering 85 million international tourists, with projections for 91 million in 2024. The Canary Islands, home to a population of just 2.2 million, received nearly 16 million visitors last year alone. This heavy influx, making up a significant 35% share of the islands' GDP and 40% of employment, has led to increasing concerns about rising rental costs, environmental degradation, and the degradation of local agricultural sectors.

Demonstrators are fighting for a range of measures, including a cap on tourist numbers, a ban on new hotel construction, and a more substantial tourist tax to fund environmental preservation initiatives. Activists argue that the current model is not only unsustainable but is pushing the islands toward a demographic and ecological crisis. Notably, projects like the controversial Cuna del Alma and La Tejita hotels in Tenerife are being targeted for their perceived environmental impacts.

Amidst the backdrop of protests, British holidaymakers are expressing mixed feelings. Some visitors, like Dave Dott from Glasgow, contend that the island's economic stability is precarious without tourism. He voiced his concerns about the potential fallout from the protests, stating, "This island will collapse if the protesters get their way… without tourism the island has nothing." Likewise, Staffordshire resident Paul Nixon highlighted a perceived decline in bookings, suggesting that many tourists are already reconsidering their future trips in light of the protests.

The growing discontent with tourism is not isolated to the Canary Islands. Over the last year, Spain has seen a surge of protest actions in prominent tourist areas like Barcelona and Venice, where residents have expressed their frustration through creative demonstrations, including the use of water pistols to make a statement against overwhelming tourist numbers. This frustration mirrors a broader trend across Europe, where communities are seeking to balance the economic benefits of tourism with the preservation of local ways of life.

In a climate where many locals feel overwhelmed, even seasoned tourists like the Ross couple, who have visited Tenerife for years, are contemplating future holidays elsewhere, citing a growing unease due to the protests. They remark on their experience of being confronted by demonstrators advocating for tourists to "go home." As Michelle Ross noted, "It doesn't make you feel too welcome."

The high volume of tourists has been attributed, in part, to the proliferation of short-term rental properties, often blamed for driving up housing prices and limiting availability for local residents. Activists are calling for stricter regulations on these types of rentals to mitigate the housing crisis and ensure that home ownership remains accessible for locals. English couples like Olwyn and Dave Hughes agree that while they cherish their time in the Canary Islands, they will reconsider their destination if the protests intensify.

As the Canary Islands grapple with the ever-increasing pressures of mass tourism, residents and visitors alike reflect on the urgent need for a sustainable approach that protects local interests while simultaneously addressing the economic realities that make tourism a crucial part of life on the islands. With calls for an eco-tax and caps on visitor numbers gaining traction, the impending protests serve as a powerful reminder that while tourism is vital for the local economy, it must be managed carefully to ensure the longevity of both the landscape and the communities that call it home.

### Reference Map

1. Lead article
2. Articles 2, 7
3. Articles 3, 4, 5
4. Article 6

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14720303/Anti-tourist-protests-Tenerife-Brits-Spain.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/04/24/locals-fear-tourism-is-consuming-the-canary-islands_6669398_4.html> - In April 2024, residents of the Canary Islands expressed growing concerns over the unsustainable impact of tourism on their region. In 2023, Spain welcomed 85 million international travelers, with predictions for 91 million in 2024. The Canary Islands, with a population of 2.2 million, received nearly 16 million tourists in 2023, accounting for 35% of their GDP and 40% of jobs. Locals highlighted issues such as rising rental prices, loss of agriculture, and environmental damage. A significant demonstration took place on April 20, 2024, signaling widespread discontent. Local leaders acknowledged the need for change, advocating for regulated housing sales and the introduction of an eco-tax to preserve resources. However, political leaders appeared reluctant to take immediate action, emphasizing the urgency of protecting the islands' resources and ensuring sustainable development.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/de15a5a3-941d-4da0-b928-3da70b6e31ac> - In 2024, Europe witnessed an intensified backlash against mass tourism, 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 highlighted broader frustrations among locals who felt overwhelmed by the influx of tourists, leading to unaffordable housing, strained public services, and environmental issues. Spain, the world's second-most visited country, experienced 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, faced challenges in balancing local needs and economic benefits. Proposed solutions included better regulatory oversight, promoting high-end tourism, expanding infrastructure, and implementing degrowth strategies to limit tourist numbers. While debates continued, the challenge remained in finding sustainable methods to manage tourism without harming local communities or the economy.
4. <https://time.com/6995756/barcelona-protesters-water-pistols-tourists/> - In 2024, thousands of Barcelona residents protested against mass tourism, using water pistols to drench tourists in Las Ramblas and chanting 'tourists go home.' Protesters also cordoned off hotels and restaurants and displayed signs saying 'tourism kills the city.' The protests called for limiting tourism, claiming 19,600 participants compared to the police's estimate of 2,800. The city's Socialist mayor, Jaume Collboni, vowed to eliminate short-term rental properties and increase the tourist tax surcharge. The rise in tourism led to increased expenses for the city and issues like lack of affordable housing. Similar protests occurred across Spain, including demonstrations in the Canary Islands, Mallorca, and Málaga, where locals demanded action against overtourism and gentrification. Spain considered a nationwide ban on tourist rentals within residential buildings to address these concerns. Other countries, such as the Netherlands and Greece, also took measures to control the impact of mass tourism.
5. <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 decided to invest in housing for its staff instead of hotels. Demonstrations in Tenerife and other islands 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 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.
6. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/04/21/thousands-protest-in-spains-canary-islands-over-mass-tourism> - In April 2024, thousands protested in Tenerife, Canary Islands, calling for a temporary limit on tourist arrivals. Holding placards reading 'People live here' and 'We don't want to see our island die,' they urged a halt to short-term holiday rentals and hotel construction, which were driving up housing costs for locals. The protesters were backed by environmental groups including Greenpeace, WWF, Ecologists in Action, Friends of the Earth, and SEO/Birdlife. Demonstrators also assembled in Madrid and Barcelona to express solidarity with the protests in the Canary Islands. In 2023, the islands welcomed 13.9 million visitors, while their resident population stands at 2.2 million. Tourism contributes approximately 35 percent to the archipelago’s GDP, generating €16.9 billion in 2022 alone. However, locals argue that the industry is depleting natural resources and driving up rental prices, making them increasingly unaffordable.
7. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240420-mass-protests-in-canary-islands-decry-overtourism> - In April 2024, tens of thousands protested across the Canary Islands, demanding an urgent rethink of the Spanish archipelago’s tourism strategy and a freeze on visitor numbers. The protests, under the banner 'Canarias tiene un límite' – The Canaries have a limit – were backed by environmental groups including Greenpeace, WWF, Ecologists in Action, Friends of the Earth, and SEO/Birdlife. Demonstrators called for authorities to limit the number of visitors and proposed introducing an eco-tax to protect the environment, a moratorium on tourism, and a clampdown on the sale of properties to non-residents. Last year, 16 million people visited the Canary Islands, more than seven times its population of 2.2 million, which the collective says is unsustainable for the archipelago's limited resources.