# Southern Europe anti-tourism protestors warn British holidaymakers of potential disruptions amid housing crisis



A coalition of anti-tourism protestors from across southern Europe has issued a cautionary message to British holidaymakers planning summer visits to Spain, Italy, France, and Portugal, warning that measures could be taken to deter tourists, including potential actions targeting airport terminals.

The group, known as the SET European Network Against Touristification, represents 17 cities, islands, and communities and convened for a three-day summit in Barcelona to discuss the escalating impacts of mass tourism. According to the protestors, this influx has contributed to soaring rents, a shortage of affordable housing, and increased development geared towards resorts rather than residents.

Elena Boschi, a 46-year-old English language teacher and campaigner from Genoa on the Italian Riviera, spoke at the Barcelona summit. She stated, "We want tourists to have some level of fear about the situation – without fear there is no change." She further emphasised the urgency for a shift in tourism practices, saying, "Our cities and regions are not for sale and there is an urgent need to limit the growth of tourism, demand a change of course and decide on a path to tourism de-growth as a way out."

When questioned about the possibility of disruptive demonstrations at airports, SET network leader Daniel Pardo indicated that while such actions are considered a possibility, "it is difficult to say because each territory will decide how they want to take action, there is no one set strategy."

The protestors highlighted data reflecting the housing pressures in these regions. For example, average rents in Spain have doubled over the past decade, and house prices have risen by more than 44%. Additionally, since the pandemic in 2020, the supply of residential rentals has halved, while short-term holiday rentals have surged in large cities and coastal spots. These dynamics, the group argues, have resulted in locals being priced out of housing markets and have left natural areas and beaches visibly damaged.

The scale of discontent was evident during mass demonstrations held last summer across Spain, with hundreds of thousands participating in roughly 40 cities nationwide. Palma, Mallorca, saw more than 50,000 marchers between May and July, holding placards bearing slogans such as "Mallorca is not for sale" and "no houses without people, nor people without houses."

Maria Cardona, representing Ibiza within the SET network, described the worsening conditions on the island, sharing that hundreds of people live in tents or cars due to the housing crisis. She also noted, "On Ibiza, we also have a shortage of water and this is a problem in the winter, so you can imagine in the summer when there is triple the number of people on the island." Cardona warned that protest groups on Ibiza and elsewhere are prepared to escalate actions this summer.

Despite their strong stance against the effects of mass tourism, many protestors have clarified they are not anti-tourist per se. One unnamed participant explained, "We are not against tourists, but what we don’t welcome is a way of being in our cities and regions that turns it into a place that is no longer nice to live in for us." They called for greater awareness of tourism's impact on local communities, elaborating, "People need to think what it would feel like if this were happening in their hometown – we’re not interested in scaring anyone. It’s just about being mindful of the impact tourism can have on local communities."

Tourism remains a vital component of the economy in these countries. Spain recorded 94 million visitors last year, with approximately 17.5 million from the UK alone, making it the second most visited country worldwide after France.

In response to housing and tourism pressures, some local governments have enacted policies to regulate short-term rentals. Barcelona, for instance, has committed to phasing out its 10,000 permits for short-term accommodations, many listed on platforms such as Airbnb, by 2028.

The SET European Network Against Touristification was established in 2018. Its initial actions included releasing a manifesto that detailed the adverse effects of mass tourism, such as inflated rents, the disappearance of local shops, and the prevalence of low-wage employment. A leaflet distributed at the recent Barcelona summit states: "Early action aimed at imposing limits on tourism is an expression of a growing collective awareness that transcends borders. Each demonstration marks a moment, and perhaps, a turning point - we must push for the changes and policies that our cities and regions, the people who live in them and the whole planet need."

As millions of British travellers prepare for their summer holidays in southern Europe, residents and activist groups in popular destinations are signalling potential unrest and a determined push for more sustainable approaches to tourism.

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

## References

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