# Homelessness in Palma surges amid tourist boom and soaring rents



The allure of the Balearic Islands, especially Majorca, remains undiminished, drawing millions of tourists annually, predominantly from the UK. Last year, an impressive 18.7 million holidaymakers visited this Mediterranean paradise, with over 2.3 million British visitors. Palma, the capital, is particularly popular, celebrated for its stunning beaches and rich historical heritage. However, beneath the surface of this vibrant tourist destination lies a growing crisis that challenges the image of affluence and comfort.

Palma's city authorities are grappling with a significant increase in homelessness, exacerbated by the island's booming tourism industry and soaring property prices. Reports suggest that the number of makeshift shanty towns has increased by 10% over the past four years. While local officials claim that around 600 homeless individuals have been identified throughout these settlements, other estimates suggest the figure may be as high as 1,100. The mayor of Palma, Jaime Martínez, emphasised the need for accurate data, stating, “Only with objective data can we address this problem and be effective in responding,” highlighting the complexity of measuring the homelessness crisis in the context of ongoing urban development.

The spiralling rental costs are a primary driver of this homelessness. According to estimates, rental prices in Palma have surged by a staggering 158% over the past decade, pushing many residents into caravans or makeshift homes. This situation has provoked widespread unrest among locals, culminating in a significant protest in July 2024, where approximately 10,000 people gathered to demand action against mass tourism and its impact on housing affordability. Activists argued for more stringent regulations on property purchases by non-residents and called for a reduction in tourist numbers to alleviate pressure on local housing markets.

The housing crisis is further illustrated by the alarming statistic that the Balearic Islands boast the lowest homeownership rate in Spain, with only 62.6% of households owning their homes, significantly lower than the national average of 75.1%. This situation not only highlights the challenges faced by locals seeking stable accommodation but also poses ethical questions surrounding the impact of tourism in highly sought-after regions like Majorca. The proliferation of tourist accommodations, with over 154,000 beds dedicated specifically for tourists, continues to limit the availability of housing for residents, driving up rents and negatively affecting quality of life.

As the housing crisis deepens, the plight of the homeless has become a focal point for both local authorities and activists. Reports indicate the emergence of around 20 homeless settlements across Palma, some located in prime tourist areas like Can Pastilla and the city centre's Paseo Mallorca. These encampments highlight a stark contrast to the popular tourist attractions, exposing the underlying socio-economic issues that challenge the image of paradise that Majorca projects to the world.

In conclusion, while the Balearic Islands remain a top destination for tourists, the surge in visitor numbers is accompanied by rising concerns about housing affordability and homelessness. As local authorities strive to manage these dual challenges, the discussions around sustainable tourism practices and the protection of residents' rights are more critical than ever.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2066860/balearic-islands-majorca-palma-shanty-towns), [[4]](https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/09/30/127849/the-balearic-islands-the-region-with-the-fewest-households-living-their-own-homes.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2066860/balearic-islands-majorca-palma-shanty-towns), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/mallorcans-live-caravans-tourists-snap-up-housing-2024-07-23/), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-spains-mallorca-against-mass-tourism-2024-07-21/), [[6]](https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2025/02/13/homeless-crisis-hits-mallorcas-hotspots-and-will-only-get-worse-as-spains-tourist-season-approaches/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/09/30/127849/the-balearic-islands-the-region-with-the-fewest-households-living-their-own-homes.html), [[5]](https://klebergroup.com/blog/the-impact-of-overtourism-a-closer-look-at-the-case-of-mallorca/), [[7]](https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/12/25/129967/the-balearic-islands-become-nomadland-homelessness-swallows-the-working-class.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2066860/balearic-islands-majorca-palma-shanty-towns), [[6]](https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2025/02/13/homeless-crisis-hits-mallorcas-hotspots-and-will-only-get-worse-as-spains-tourist-season-approaches/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2066860/balearic-islands-majorca-palma-shanty-towns), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/mallorcans-live-caravans-tourists-snap-up-housing-2024-07-23/), [[6]](https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2025/02/13/homeless-crisis-hits-mallorcas-hotspots-and-will-only-get-worse-as-spains-tourist-season-approaches/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2066860/balearic-islands-majorca-palma-shanty-towns), [[4]](https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/09/30/127849/the-balearic-islands-the-region-with-the-fewest-households-living-their-own-homes.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2066860/balearic-islands-majorca-palma-shanty-towns> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/mallorcans-live-caravans-tourists-snap-up-housing-2024-07-23/> - In July 2024, Reuters reported that residents in Palma de Mallorca, such as Pilar Hernando, were living in caravans due to soaring rental prices driven by a booming tourism industry. Rental prices had surged by 158% over the past decade, making it unaffordable for locals. The trend led to protests across Mallorca, with about 10,000 participants in Palma demanding action against mass tourism. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/mallorcans-live-caravans-tourists-snap-up-housing-2024-07-23/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-spains-mallorca-against-mass-tourism-2024-07-21/> - In July 2024, Reuters reported that thousands of anti-tourism activists protested in Palma de Mallorca against mass tourism, citing increased housing costs and unaffordability for locals. The protest, organised by Menys Turisme, Mas Vida, attracted about 10,000 participants, with demands for less tourism and restrictions on property purchases by non-residents. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-spains-mallorca-against-mass-tourism-2024-07-21/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/09/30/127849/the-balearic-islands-the-region-with-the-fewest-households-living-their-own-homes.html> - In September 2024, the Majorca Daily Bulletin highlighted that the Balearic Islands had the lowest percentage of homeowners in Spain, with only 62.6% of households owning their homes. This low rate, compared to the national average of 75.1%, underscores the region's housing crisis, exacerbated by rising property prices and limited affordable housing options. ([majorcadailybulletin.com](https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/09/30/127849/the-balearic-islands-the-region-with-the-fewest-households-living-their-own-homes.html?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://klebergroup.com/blog/the-impact-of-overtourism-a-closer-look-at-the-case-of-mallorca/> - Kleber Group's blog discusses the impact of overtourism in Mallorca, noting that the proliferation of tourist flats has become a significant concern, with over 154,000 beds available for tourists. In Pollença, for example, there are 16,865 tourist vacancies in a town with just 17,279 residents. This trend severely limits available housing for locals, driving up rents and diminishing the quality of life for residents. ([klebergroup.com](https://klebergroup.com/blog/the-impact-of-overtourism-a-closer-look-at-the-case-of-mallorca/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2025/02/13/homeless-crisis-hits-mallorcas-hotspots-and-will-only-get-worse-as-spains-tourist-season-approaches/> - In February 2025, the Olive Press reported that the Balearic Islands' ongoing housing crisis was causing homeless people to seek shelter in makeshift homes around the islands, including Palma Airport terminal and abandoned hotels in tourist areas. The capital Palma had seen around 20 homeless settlements emerge, with camps appearing in prime locations including Can Pastilla beachfront and Paseo Mallorca in the city centre. ([theolivepress.es](https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2025/02/13/homeless-crisis-hits-mallorcas-hotspots-and-will-only-get-worse-as-spains-tourist-season-approaches/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/12/25/129967/the-balearic-islands-become-nomadland-homelessness-swallows-the-working-class.html> - In December 2024, the Majorca Daily Bulletin reported that the Balearic Islands had become 'Nomadland', with homelessness affecting the working class. The majority of homeless people were European, with 40% being native to the region. The housing crisis was exacerbated by rising property prices and limited affordable housing options, leading to an increasing number of residents living in caravans, settlements, or even outdoors. ([majorcadailybulletin.com](https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2024/12/25/129967/the-balearic-islands-become-nomadland-homelessness-swallows-the-working-class.html?utm_source=openai))