# European anti-tourism protests may disrupt UK holidaymakers this summer



British tourists planning holidays to popular European destinations this summer may encounter organised anti-tourism protests, with demonstrators expressing growing frustration over the impacts of mass tourism on local communities. These protests, potentially including demonstrations at airport terminals, are being coordinated by groups across Spain, Italy, France and Portugal, where rising living costs and housing shortages have fuelled tensions between residents and visitors.

The gatherings come as millions of UK holidaymakers prepare to travel to the continent, with Spain, France, and Italy among the most frequented destinations. At a recent summit held in Barcelona, Elena Boschi, a 46-year-old English teacher and campaigner from Genoa on the Italian Riviera, spoke to the Mirror about the movement's aims. She said, “We want tourists to have some level of fear about the situation – without fear there is no change.” Boschi emphasised that the campaign is not against tourists themselves but rather against “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.”

The organisation behind the protests, the SET European Network Against Touristification, represents activist groups from 17 cities, islands, and communities across Southern Europe. Their message focuses on issuing a call to “demand a change of course and decide on a path to tourism de-growth as a way out,” according to Boschi. Daniel Pardo, another network leader, indicated that protests at airports were under consideration, stating, “It is a possibility – but, it is difficult to say because each territory will decide how they want to take action, there is no one set strategy.”

The concerns raised by protesters centre on the rapid increase in short-term holiday lettings, which they blame for sharply rising rents and house prices, pushing local people out of the housing market. Data cited at the summit highlights that in Spain alone, average rents have doubled over the past decade, while house prices have risen by over 44%. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the availability of residential rentals has halved in many cities and coastal regions, as landlords increasingly prefer short-term tourist accommodation. Protesters argue this has made it difficult for “hardworking Spanish families” to secure housing.

The movement has seen substantial public demonstrations already, with last summer witnessing hundreds of thousands marching in 40 Spanish cities. Palma, Mallorca’s capital, saw over 50,000 protesters rally with slogans like “Mallorca is not for sale” and “no houses without people, nor people without houses.” More recently, over 150,000 people marched through Madrid’s streets, organised by the local tenants’ union.

Maria Cardona, representing Ibiza’s campaign group within the SET network, warned that this summer’s protests could intensify. She said to the Mirror, “The housing situation is really dramatic, there are hundreds of people living in tents and in cars so I think a lot of protest groups will be prepared to take more decisive action. 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.”

Local authorities have begun responding to these issues, with Barcelona, for example, pledging to phase out its 10,000 permits for short-term rentals by 2028, many of which have been widely advertised on platforms like Airbnb. However, the SET network argues these measures have yet to sufficiently address the broader impacts of “predatory tourism,” which includes damage to beaches and natural areas, the disappearance of local shops, and the persistence of low-wage jobs reliant on seasonal tourism.

Formed in 2018, the SET European Network Against Touristification aims to unite communities impacted by mass tourism and promote sustainable approaches. A leaflet distributed at the summit in Barcelona highlighted, “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.”

The network plans to initiate protests from 15 June, with participation from Spanish destinations including the Canary Islands, Ibiza, Mallorca, Barcelona and San Sebastian, alongside representatives from Santander, Genoa, Pamplona, Lisbon, Marseille, Milan, Naples, Palermo, the Pyrenees, Rimini, Valence and Venice.

Europe remains the world’s leading region for international tourism, attracting approximately 747 million visitors last year. Spain alone received 94 million tourists, with British visitors comprising at least 17.5 million of that total, making it the second most visited country globally after France.

As the summer holiday season approaches, British travellers are being advised to stay informed about potential disruptions related to these protests, which seek to draw attention to the challenges mass tourism poses for local communities across Southern Europe.

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

## Bibliography

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