

HEAT WAVES HARM SPANISH TOURISM



The impact of climate change on tourism is significant. Research conducted by CaixaBank reveals that extreme heat waves reduce the likelihood of international tourists, mainly British and Americans, revisiting Spain. Despite this, the report forecasts a 5% growth in Spanish tourism GDP for 2024, more than double the overall economic growth.

The number of international tourist visits is expected to exceed 90 million. This growth, though lower than the previous year, is still higher than the forecasts for the following year. This is attributed to the recovery of Europeans' purchasing power due to lower inflation and the **perception of stability and security in Spain** amidst geopolitical instability in the eastern Mediterranean. The exceptional performance of the tourism sector in 2023, with record levels of foreign tourists and spending, has set the stage for a solid start to 2024.

The Impact of Heat Waves

The research on climate change has yielded significant findings. It has examined the impact of the heat waves during the past two summers on international tourism in Spain. The most striking result is that international tourists who experienced a heat wave in 2022 were significantly less likely to return to Spain the following summer.

In particular, the desire to return to Spain decreased by 13.8% for tourists who experienced a heat wave when the temperature was 8°C higher than the historical average for 1961-1990. This decline represents the difference in the desire to return between tourists who did not experience a heat wave (14%) and those who did (12%). For British and American tourists, the likelihood of returning decreased by 34% and 42%, respectively, significantly higher than that of visitors from other nationalities, such as the French (-7.4%) or the Portuguese (-8.7%).

The report has compared the average temperature during summer days in 2022 in the area with the highest card spending to the average temperature between 1961 and 1990 on the same days. Using the temperature data for each card, the report examined the likelihood of returning in the summer of 2023 based on the heat experience of 2022.

Investment and Deseasonalization

The impact of heat waves on Spanish tourism is a clear call to action. It underscores the sector's vulnerability to climate change and the urgent need for the tourism industry to minimize its adverse effects. To address this, experts strongly advocate investing in infrastructure that ensures tourists' comfort in extreme weather conditions, such as upgrading hotels and creating shaded areas and green spaces in tourist destinations.

Furthermore, there is a need for deseasonalization. **The likelihood of heat waves varies between August and January.** The report also indicates that hotel occupancy has increased during non-peak months, particularly when comparing October, November, and December 2023 to the 2017, 2018, and 2019 averages.

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