

SPANISH BEACHES ARE DRAMATICALLY SHRINKING



Coastal erosion is a significant issue on Spanish beaches, especially on the Costa Brava, where beaches are shrinking.

The data confirm the scale of the crisis. On average, the main beach of a popular seaside resort in Catalonia is now only about 50 meters wide. In the 1980s, it was three times wider. The powerless inhabitants have been observing this decrease for several decades.

More Construction Means Fewer Dunes

Experts attribute the erosion of the coastline to urban development and the accompanying artificialization of the land. Private housing, hotels, and marinas have replaced the dunes that once protected the coastline. These structures now prevent the beaches from naturally expanding inland.

Francesca Ribas, an associate professor at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, explains that natural beaches can adapt to climate change by receding and rising as sea levels change. However, she warns that these beaches will eventually disappear if buildings obstruct the movement of sand inland. The disappearance of the dunes has also increased the risk of storm surges.

Impact on Tourism

In Barcelona, the local government estimates that 30,000 cubic meters of sand are lost from the beaches each year, about 10% of the city's total beach area.

According to experts, the beach in Montgat, a town north of Barcelona, has lost nearly 75% of its sand since July 2023, going from 25,000 square meters to 6,400 square meters. Tania González, a city councilor in charge of environmental affairs, stated, "We barely have enough room to install a lifeguard chair."

The coastal erosion has disastrous consequences for the Spanish tourism industry. It significantly affects the seaside resorts of the Costa Brava, which are a primary source of income.

Measures to Combat Coastal Erosion

The problem of coastal erosion is not limited to Spain. Beaches are also shrinking in Florida, California, Turkey, Tunisia, Brazil, and Australia. In Brittany, erosion is threatening Chateaubriand's tomb on his islet opposite the ramparts of Saint-Malo. In Gironde, the Cap Ferret peninsula is also steadily eroding.

Rising sea levels, worsened by climate change and coastal urbanization, could lead to the disappearance of nearly half of the Earth's sandy beaches by the end of the century, according to a detailed study published in the journal *Nature Climate Change* in 2020.

People are organizing resistance to address the issue. Recently, a group formed a human chain in Valencia to raise awareness about the disappearance of beaches. SOS Costa Brava also put on an open-air play near Aro Beach to illustrate the ecological consequences of uncontrolled urban development. Attitudes are changing, not only in Spain but worldwide.

The Spanish government has also responded by implementing stricter construction regulations, and these efforts are yielding results. A plan to protect several coastal areas from destruction has been approved in Catalonia. However, a project for 40,000 new homes and hotel complexes in 22 municipalities on the Costa Brava is still underway. Undoubtedly, this project will have a very negative impact on the coastline and the sea.

Date: 2024-09-22

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/coastal-erosion-threatens-spanish-beaches-news14600>