

# Coronavirus in Europe: Tourism sector 'hardest hit' by COVID-19

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Sites across Paris, including the Eiffel Tower, have been deserted since a lockdown was introduced on March 17. - Copyright AP Photo/Michel Euler (#)

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The tourism industry is "one of the hardest-hit by the outbreak of COVID-19" as lockdowns have all but ground the sector to a halt, the UN's World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has warned.

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The organisation estimated earlier this week (https://www.unwto.org/tourism-covid-19) the pandemic, which has already killed more than 137,000 worldwide, would result in global international tourist arrivals declining by between 20-30 per cent this year, down from an estimated growth of 3-4 per cent forecast in early January.

This would then translate into a loss of between \$30-\$50 billion (€27.5-€46 billion) in spending by international visitors.

In Europe the pandemic should, for instance, see airlines' passenger revenue drop by \$76 billion (€70 billion) year-on-year, second only to the Asia Pacific region.

The World Travel & Tourism Council has warned that 75 million jobs worldwide are at risks.

Several European countries are particularly reliant on tourism. Italy, Spain and France — the three member states most heavily impacted by COVID-19 — together accounted for half of the total nights spent by non-residents in the EU in 2018, according to Eurostat.

They're also at the top of the EU's league table ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_statistics)) when it comes to the number of enterprises in tourism industries and are home, with Germany, to more than half of the bloc's tourism-reliant businesses.

Greece is also vulnerable as over a third of the business economy workforce was employed by the tourism sector in 2017. It was followed by the Mediterranean island of Cyprus (20 per cent) and Ireland (14 per cent).

According to the International Monetary Fund (<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020>) the world economy is on track to record one of its worst years since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Eurozone economies will be among the hardest-hit with the combined GDP for the 19 countries expected to contract by 7.5 per cent.

The three most heavily-impacted EU countries will be Italy, Spain and France, which are expected to contract by 9.1 per cent, 8.0 per cent and 7.2 per cent respectively.

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