

Suffering the strain of tourism

With 'overtourism' the talk of the town at WTM London, *Dave Richardson* looks at the effect it is having on Europe and the Mediterranean coastline

A new buzzword can be heard at WTM London this year and it is one to take notice of, especially in Europe - "overtourism". Europe might receive about half of all international tourists - 615 million overnights in 2016, according to UNWTO - but some cities in particular are feeling the strain.

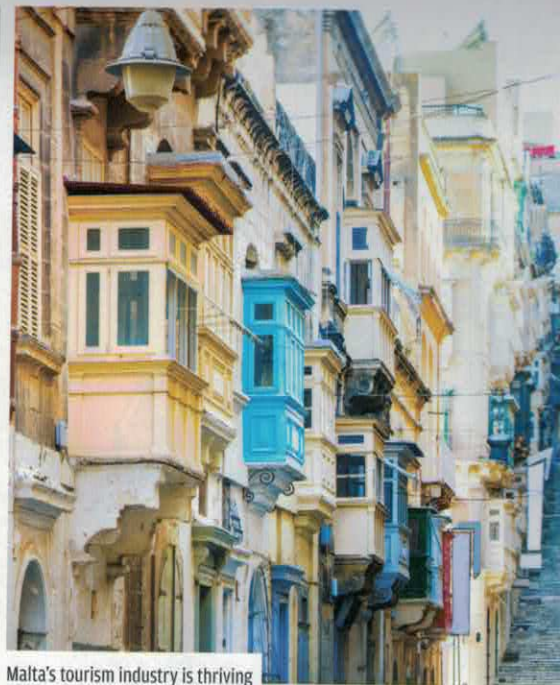
Protests against tourism have erupted in Barcelona (**EU1800**) and other Spanish cities, while Venice, Dubrovnik (**EU1350**) and the Greek island of Santorini are three more tourist centres being overwhelmed by visitors. Two conference sessions are running at WTM London to explore the problem, with UNWTO warning of "tourism-phobia".

Ministers of leading countries came together yesterday to debate this issue, while the European Tour Operators Association (Etoa) spoke at another session on Monday. It says overtourism has become "a major issue in the mainstream media, on the streets in Europe and around the world".

Etoa head of strategy and policy Tim Fairhurst spoke on this subject. "The violent actions of a minority are not representative and should not prevent normal life continuing for residents and visitors, and those that provide services to them," he said.

"But what is 'normal' for Europe's premier city tourism destinations? Recent restrictions on new hotel capacity and efforts to control the growth of the peer-to-peer accommodation market in Barcelona were a response to tourism's impact on the city. Long-term success will require a more holistic approach."

Airbnb and other peer-to-peer accommodation portals are accused of pricing out local people as landlords switch from long-term rentals to tourism, while another problem facing parts of Europe is the number of visits by cruise ships. Venice was the first to raise this issue, while Santorini has now set a limit of 8,000 cruise ship passengers per day after numbers swelled to 18,000 on peak dates.



Malta's tourism industry is thriving

SMALL COUNTRIES TOP MARKETING INDEX

Iceland (**EU840a**) and Malta (**EU1450**) are the top performers in Europe in the Tourism Board Marketing Index produced by GlobalData, a market leader in providing business information and analysis.

The index measures both the direct and indirect marketing efforts of 100 national tourist boards around the world, finding that Iceland was the top performer in Europe and fourth worldwide, while Malta was second best in Europe and seventh worldwide.

Sara Grady, managing analyst and tourism specialist at GlobalData, said: "Iceland scored highly despite its size. The country has done so well due to the disparity between its spending on travel and tourism, versus its economic gains. Iceland spends only 1.52% of its GDP on tourism, while the industry

contributes over

"Malta has a media presence. Despite neither for its marketing effective body. the World Econ

up by a strong international-a Iceland ranked countries in Glo Potential Index impressive growth despite the high purchases. Iceland Wow Air (**EU84** in 2016.

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Santorini has set a daily limit of 8,000 cruise ship passengers



Ireland scores highly despite its size



Venice has seen a decline