Spain warming faster than rest of northern hemisphere: study

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Tourists lie on the beach in Mallorca. Spain has warmed at a faster rate than the rest of the northern hemisphere over the past three decades, according to a study.

Spain has warmed at a faster rate than the rest of the northern hemisphere over the past three decades, according to a study prepared for the environment ministry that was published Tuesday.

The country has experienced average temperature increases of 0.5 degrees Celsius per decade since 1975, a rate that is "50 percent superior to the average of nations in the northern hemisphere", the study by the Spanish branch of the Clivar research network found.

The study predicts average temperatures in Spain will be 6.0 degrees Celsius higher in summer and between 2.0 and 3.0 degrees Celsius higher in winter by the end of the 21st century while rainfall will drop.

Sea levels along Spain's Atlantic coast have risen 2.0 millimetres per year during the second half of the 20th century and by 1.2 millimetres along the country's Mediterranean coast, according to the study.

Spain's secretary of state for climate change, Teresa Ribera, called the study's predictions "impressive".

Desertification is threatening one-third of the land mass of Spain, Europe's most arid country, according to experts.

Climate change has already forced some grape growers in Spain to shade vineyards, develop heat-resistant crops and move to cooler mountainside locations in what is one of Europe's largest grape-growing nations.

It has also caused glaciers in the Pyrenees to shrink and wetlands and lagoons to be destroyed, according to environmental groups like Greenpeace.

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