

## Belgian resorts riled over gloomy summer forecasts

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Two young women enjoy their ice cream on the first sunny spring day of 2001 in Brussels. Belgium's seaside resorts are threatening to sue a top weather site they say is dissuading tourists with coastal forecasts of a gloomy summer, the Belgian press reported Friday.

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The resorts slammed [MeteoBelgique.be](http://MeteoBelgique.be), one of Belgium's most consulted weather pages, for posting a general weather overview for the three summer months, when most sites only offer a ten-day forecast

"It's very hard to predict the weather so far in advance. So why make people panic?" said Hoorens Geert, in charge of tourism for the Belgian

coast, quoted by the Belgian daily La Meuse.

The [site](#) said in a June blog post the weather would remain erratic over the coming months, especially in late July and early August, after an early summer marked by little sunshine and heavy rainfall.

The post included a reminder that "a dry, hot [summer](#) in Belgium, if that happens, like in 2003 and 2006, remains an exception that proves the rule."

"No, we are not in a [Mediterranean climate](#) where the summers are warm and rainfall is minor. It's important to remember..." the weather site wrote in June.

But Belgian resorts say the forecast is chasing away their customers, with the head of tourism at Knokke confirming there had already been cancellations.

"The damage could be significant" on an economic level, Daniel Despiegelaer said in an interview with the public television station RTBF, adding that the coastal resorts plan to talk over the possibility of filing a complaint.

"Our daily tourism totals about 200,000 people who each spend 35 euros (\$43). If they don't come, that'll mean a loss of five to seven million" euros, Geert said.

Meteo Belgique addressed the criticism on its site, explaining that its seasonal trends "are not set-in-stone forecasts: we could never predict the [weather](#) Ostend will experience in one month and three days at 7:20 pm!"

"That said, it's possible to identify [weather trends](#) for that period," they

added.

The site estimates that the reliability of its forecasts "is now close to 70 percent" for the first month and "between 60 and 55 percent" for the second and third months.

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