

Airbnb imposes limits on rentals in Barcelona

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A banner reading, "No tourist flats" hangs from a balcony to protest against holiday rental apartments for tourists in Barcelona in 2016

Homeowners in central Barcelona will only be able to rent out one place on Airbnb as part of new rules announced Tuesday by the home rentals website, at loggerheads with local authorities.

The new limits come as the popular Mediterranean resort struggles with

ever-increasing numbers of tourists that are exasperating locals, threatening to drive out poorer residents due to a spike in rental prices and spoil the charm of Spain's second-largest city.

As such, the city hall, led by former anti-eviction activist Ada Colau, has been on the warpath against the US company, fining it 600,000 euros (\$640,000) last year for marketing lodgings that lack permits to host tourists.

On Tuesday, Airbnb announced that those who have property in the city centre will only be allowed to post one rental listing on the website.

Travellers will automatically have to pay a tourist tax when they book a flat or house, it added.

Airbnb has already introduced such a system in 220 places around the world, allowing it to collect more than 170 million euros in taxes which it then passes on to [local authorities](#), the group said in a statement.

The measures will be implemented in May, a spokeswoman for the company told AFP.

But Agusti Colom, head of tourism at Barcelona's [city](#) hall, described Airbnb's measures as a "joke", calling on the company to respect the law and stop allowing lodgings that lack the necessary permits to be listed on the website.

Airbnb has come under mounting criticism in a number of cities around the world, with critics arguing that such services exacerbate local housing shortages, squeeze the long-term rental sector and lack the legal and tax constraints of commercial enterprises.

New York, Miami and Berlin are just some of the cities that have

cracked down recently

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