

# Athens fires among the deadliest in Europe this century

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The wildfires raging near Athens, which have claimed at least 50 lives, are among the deadliest in Europe this century, with Portugal and Russia

also suffering heavy losses.

Here is a recap of the worst.

## **Portugal in 2017**

Sixty-four people were killed and 250 injured in the deadliest wildfires in Portugal's history in June 2017.

The fires burned for five days in the central Leiria region, breaking out at the height of a summer heatwave. Many of the victims died trapped in their cars by the flames while trying to escape.

Violent winds fanned the fires, ravaging some 460 square kilometres (around 180 square miles) of hillsides covered with pine and eucalyptus.

In 2003 gigantic fires caused by a heatwave left 20 dead between July and September in central and southern Portugal.

The summer of 2003 remains the most disastrous in terms of surface destroyed, with nearly 4,250 square kilometres going up in smoke.

In 1966 a blaze in the forest of Sintra, west of Lisbon, killed 25 soldiers trying to battle the flames.

## **Russia in 2015, 2010**

In April 2015 huge fires that started in the Khakassia region of southeastern Siberia killed 34 people as well as hundreds of cattle and thousands of sheep.

The blaze, which spread as far as Mongolia and practically up to the

Chinese border, also destroyed 2,000 homes and 10,000 square kilometres of land.

Five years earlier, vast swathes of western Russia were ravaged by fires for weeks during an unprecedented heatwave and drought.

The blazes between July and August 2010 tore through 10,000 square kilometres of forest, bogs and brushwood, burning entire villages.

Some of the fires came dangerously close to Russia's top nuclear research centre in Sarov.

## **Greece in 2007**

Forest fires killed 77 people at the end of August 2007 in Greece, ravaging 2,500 square kilometres in the southern Peloponnese and the island of Evia, northeast of Athens.

The fires raged for around 12 days, but most of the victims were killed early on in the disaster when they became trapped in villages cut off by the flames, some ignoring orders to evacuate.

## **France, worst ever in 1949**

In the heaviest loss of life in wildfires in France, 82 people were killed battling flames in the southwest Landes region in August 1949.

The victims—firemen, volunteers and soldiers—were caught in a ball of fire after the winds suddenly changed direction.

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