

Cool reprieve for parts of Europe as Germany roasts

June 30 2019



Six days of intense heat fuelled huge blazes and pollution peaks

A welcome dip in temperatures came to parts of Europe on Sunday, bringing relief to areas which have sweltered through a widespread, deadly heatwave for nearly a week.

Hot-weather warnings were lifted across north and west France, days after the country posted all-time [high temperatures](#) as it sizzled along with Italy, Spain and some central European nations.

Six days of intense heat fuelled huge blazes and pollution peaks, and officially claimed four lives in France, two in Italy and another two in Spain, including a 17-year-old harvest worker, a 33-year-old roofer and a 72-year-old homeless man.

The mercury was set to start dropping for France and Spain from Sunday, but still rise in Germany, with temperatures as high as 39 degrees Celsius (102 degrees Fahrenheit) in some places before cooling down from Monday.

On Saturday night in Spain, firefighters were battling high flames in [strong winds](#) and blistering heat soon after they managed to contain another inferno in nearly 72 hours.

A fire that started Friday in the central Spanish town of Almorox burnt at least 1,600 hectares (4,000 acres), spilling over into the Madrid region and forcing the evacuation of a village, emergency services said.



Montpellier, southern France, has witnessed some of the hottest weather in France this year

In France, fires have razed about 600 hectares and dozens of houses in the Gard department in the country's south.

Like a 'blowtorch'

This is the same region where a new French record of 45.9 degrees Celsius was set Friday, prompting the Meteo France weather service to issue its highest alert level of red for the first time.

Winegrowers in the south of France said their precious crops have been

badly burnt.

"Some vines seem to have been hit with a blowtorch," Jerome Despey said, while Catherine Bernard likened it to the effects of a hairdryer.



Firefighters in Spain battled high flames in strong winds and blistering heat just after they managed to contain another inferno after nearly 72 hours.

"I've been a winegrower for 30 years. I have never seen a vine burnt by a sudden onset of heat like yesterday," Despey added.

France is the seventh European country to ever register a plus 45-degree temperature, along with Bulgaria, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Greece and

North Macedonia, Meteo France said.

'Avoidable deaths'

France remains haunted by the memory of the devastating heatwave of August 2003 in which nearly 15,000 people were estimated to have died.

"I want to appeal to the sense of responsibility of citizens—there are [avoidable deaths](#) in every heatwave," French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said.



"Umbrellas" by Greek sculptor George Zongolopoulos provide little respite from sizzling June temperatures



Festival-goers were enjoying the heatwave at the Glastonbury festival in southwestern England

Meteorologists point to a blast of hot air from northern Africa for the scorching early European summer.

Scientists warn that [global warming](#) linked to human fossil fuel use could make such heatwaves more frequent.

In Germany, the [national weather service](#) said temperatures were more than four degrees higher in June than an international reference period of 1981-2010.

The stifling heat caused air quality to nosedive in some European cities, prompting local authorities to take anti-pollution measures.

In Paris, Lyon and Marseille, authorities have banned the most polluting cars from the roads in recent days.

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