

Europeans on alert as heatwave intensifies (Update)

June 26 2019, by Ryland James



Parisians, like many across Europe, cooled off in public pools

Europe's record-breaking heatwave was forecast to intensify Thursday, with authorities on alert as temperatures threaten to surpass 40 degrees Celsius in some regions.

The stifling heat has prompted traffic restrictions in France, sparked forest fires in Spain and fanned debate in Germany over public nudity as sweltering residents stripped off.

Meteorologists blame a blast of hot air from northern Africa for the heat this week, which has already set new records in Europe for June.

Exceptional for arriving so early in summer, the heatwave will on Thursday and Friday likely send thermometers above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in France, Spain and Greece.

In Spain, hundreds of firefighters and soldiers, backed by water-dropping aircraft, battled on Wednesday to put out a wind-fuelled forest fire that erupted in Torre del Espanol in the northeastern region of Catalonia.

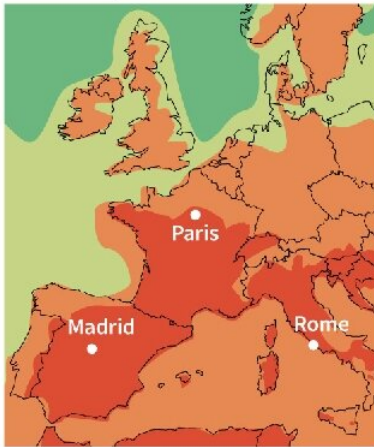
The worst is expected Friday when 33 of the 50 Spanish provinces face extreme temperatures, which could reach 44 degrees in Girona.

"Hell is coming," one Spanish TV weather presenter tweeted Wednesday.

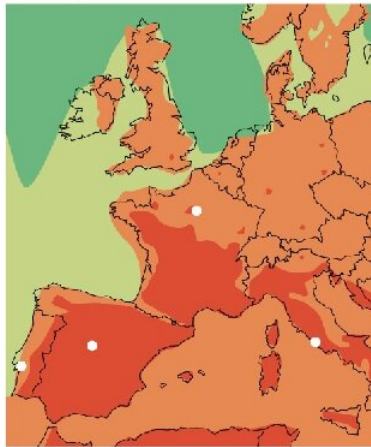
In France, temperatures "unprecedented" for their timing and intensity—since 1947 when detailed surveys started—were expected to reach at least 39 degrees over two-thirds of the country, said weather service Meteo-France.

European heatwave

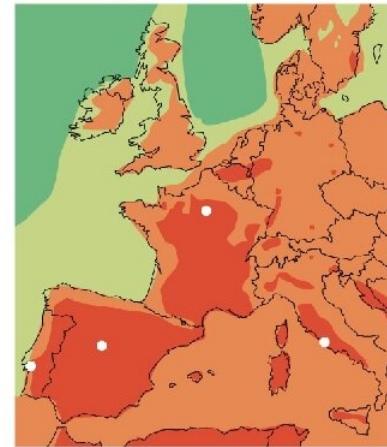
Thursday June 27



Friday June 28



Saturday June 29



Temperature forecast at 1500 GMT

+ 30°C 20-30 10-20 0-10

Sources: Sat24.com, Meteo France © AFP

Forecast temperatures in western Europe at 1500 GMT on June 27 to 29

Health official Jerome Saloman said the impact of the extreme heat was starting to be felt in France, with an increase in weather-related calls to emergency medical services.

Some schools are expected to close Thursday and Friday, while several cities—including Paris and Lyon—restricted traffic to limit a build-up of air pollution.

French authorities were taking no chances after the August 2003 heatwave was blamed for 15,000 deaths in the country, with television and radio broadcasts issuing warnings.

In Greece, where around 100 people died in last year's deadly fires at the Mati coastal resort, hospitals and officials were on red alert with

temperatures of around 45 degrees nationwide.

Vintage wine year

Scientists warn that global warming linked to human fossil fuel use could make such scorchers more frequent.



Several regions of Spain were warned of temperatures in the 40s Celsius

"Global temperatures are increasing due to climate change," said Len Shaffrey, professor of climate science at the University of Reading.

"The global rise in temperatures means the probability that an extreme heatwave will occur is also increasing."

But French winemakers said the hot weather was more than welcome as it could produce a superior vintage.

"Two of three days of heatwave in Bordeaux at this time, it's magic!" Philippe Bardet, head of the Bordeaux Wine Council, told AFP.

Temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius would help burn off any of the mildew caused by residual damp, which is "very, very good for quality", Bardet said.

The 70-year-old record for the highest temperature recorded for June was beaten in Germany as 38.6 degrees Celsius was recorded in Brandenburg, the German Weather Service (DWD) confirmed Wednesday.



A polar bear at Hanover's zoo took to the water in the heatwave

Meanwhile, police in Brandenburg cautioned a naked man for driving his moped wearing only his helmet and sandals.

And in Munich, security guards ordered a group of women sunbathing topless on the banks of the river Isar to cover up.

The move backfired, according to the Munich daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung, which quoted another sunbather as saying that she and others took their tops off "out of solidarity".

It said an urgent motion was introduced in a city council meeting

Wednesday to allow topless bathing.

Scores of people have drowned in Poland and Lithuania as they tried to cool off in lakes and rivers, authorities said.

The Polish weather institute IMGW said the country's highest ever June temperature was recorded on Wednesday in the southwest: 38.2 degrees Celsius.



Temperatures topped 38 degrees Celsius in Germany

The Czech Hydrometeorological Institute also recorded the country's

highest June temperature: 38.9 degrees Celsius in the northern town of Doksany.

In Belgium, vastly different temperatures were expected with 19 degrees Celsius on the north coast and 33 degrees in the south, according to broadcaster RTBF.

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