

Thousands seek refuge as high heat slams Britain, France

August 7 2020, by Danica Kirka



People sunbathe on the steps near Granary Square, King's Cross, as the warm weather continues, in London, Friday, Aug. 7, 2020. The UK could see record-breaking temperatures with forecasters predicting Friday could be the hottest day of the year. (Jonathan Brady/PA via AP)

Residents and visitors in Britain sought refuge from searing heat Friday,

with thousands mobbing beaches and parks despite warnings to maintain social distance and other precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the U.K.'s infection rate limiting the ability of its citizens to travel abroad, temperatures that rose to 36.4 degrees Celsius (97.5 degrees Fahrenheit) at London's Heathrow Airport and Kew Gardens produced a larger than normal August population seeking places to cool off.

Her Majesty's Coastguard responded to 70 calls by midday, a number above normal for this time of year.

"The beaches across the whole of the southwest are extremely busy at the moment with both locals who are holidaying at home this year and an influx of visitors to the region," said Kitty Norman, a water safety expert at the the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. "The sheer volume of people making social distancing tricky is one thing to be conscious of before planning your trip to the beach."

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers said it expects a surge of passengers to the beaches from Blackpool to Southend and Brighton to Bournemouth this weekend as the heatwave continues.

"It is important that the Public Health England COVID-19 safety standards are maintained at all times," union senior assistant general secretary Mick Lynch said. "The combination of sun and alcohol is a clear threat to that."



A man sits on a bench during a hot day in Marseille's Old Port, southern France, Friday Aug. 7, 2020. France has warned the public to prepare for a heatwave as temperatures were set to rise to 42 degrees Celsius (107 Fahrenheit) in parts of the country. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)



A boy walks along the roof of Marseille's MUCEUM during a hot day in Marseille, southern France, Friday Aug 7, 2020. France has warned the public to prepare for a heatwave as temperatures were set to rise to 42 degrees Celsius (107 Fahrenheit) in parts of the country. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)



People relax on the beach at Bournemouth, Southern England, Friday Aug. 7, 2020. The UK could see record-breaking temperatures with forecasters predicting Friday could be the hottest day of the year. (Andrew Matthews/PA via AP)



A person on a water skis off the the beach at Bournemouth, Southern England, Friday Aug. 7, 2020. The UK could see record-breaking temperatures with forecasters predicting Friday could be the hottest day of the year. (Andrew Matthews/PA via AP)



A woman walks along Marseille's Old Port, southern France, Friday Aug 7, 2020. France has warned the public to prepare for a heatwave as temperatures were set to rise to 42 degrees Celsius (107 Fahrenheit) in parts of the country. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)

The mercury was also on the rise in France, where the national meteorological service Meteo-France placed 45 departments, including Paris and its inner suburbs, on orange alert warning the public should be vigilant for a heatwave. Temperatures were set to rise to 42 degrees Celsius (107 F) in parts of the country.

Britain's Met Office warned the public to take precautions against dehydration and sunburn and be ready for a dramatic rise in temperatures following a rather cool week.

Public Health England issued a heat-health warning and advised people sheltering indoors to close curtains on windows facing the sun.

"This summer, many of us are spending more time at home due to COVID-19," said Ishani Kar-Purkayastha, a consultant at Public Health England. "A lot of homes can overheat, so it's important we continue to check on older people and those with underlying health conditions, particularly if they're living alone and may be socially isolated."

Britain's 10 warmest years have occurred since 2002, with last year producing the hottest day on record at 38.7 Celsius (101.6 F) at Cambridge Botanic Garden on July 25, 2019.

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