

# Days of hot weather grip Southern Europe, North Africa

August 12 2021, by Frances D'emilio

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People find comfort in sea breeze at the Scala dei Turchi (Stair of the Turks), a rocky cliff on the coast of Realmonte, near Porto Empedocle, southern Sicily, Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. The ongoing heatwave will last up until the weekend with temperatures expected to reach well over 40 degrees Celsius in many parts of Italy. Credit: AP Photo/Salvatore Cavalli

Stifling heat kept its grip on much of Southern Europe on Thursday, driving people indoors at midday, spoiling crops, triggering drinking water restrictions, turning public libraries into cooling "climate shelters" and complicating the already difficult challenge firefighters faced battling wildfires.

In many places, forecasters said [worse was expected](#) to come.

In Italy, 15 cities received warnings from the health ministry about high temperatures and humidity with peaks predicted for Friday. The cities included Rome, Florence and Palermo, but also Bolzano, which is usually a refreshing hot-weather escape in the Alps,

The local National Health Service offices in Rome and Bologna telephoned older residents who live alone to see if they needed groceries or medicines delivered so they wouldn't venture out in the searing heat.

The Italian air force, which oversees the national weather service, said the interior parts of the islands of Sardinia and Sicily could expect to see temperatures upwards of 40 degrees Celsius (104 F) by Friday. By early afternoon on Thursday in Rome, the city famous for its ornamental as well as strategically placed sidewalk drinking fountains sizzled in 38 C (100 F) heat.

"I drink a lot of water, more water, more water and more water," said Hank Heerat, a tourist from the Netherlands cycling down the broad boulevard flanking the Roman Forum.



Two tourists shelter from sun with hats as they visit the Valley of the Temples, near Agrigento, Sicily, Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. The ongoing heatwave will last up until the weekend with temperatures expected to reach well over 40 degrees Celsius in many parts of Italy. Credit: AP Photo/Salvatore Cavalli

At the ancient Colosseum, Civil Protection volunteers distributed hundreds of bottles of water to visitors.

In Serbia, the spell of hot, dry weather prompted four municipalities to declare an emergency after Rzav River levels plummeted, endangering water supplies. Authorities imposed drinking water restrictions affecting some 250,000 people, while the army brought in water tanks for public use.

"We have a period of severe drought, we cannot take any more water from the river," Zoran Barac, the head of a local water supply utility, told state broadcaster RTS.

In Spain, the national weather service warned temperatures could hit 44 C (111 F) in some areas in coming days. Parts of the northeastern Catalonia region were forecast to reach 42 C (107.6 F) on Thursday.

Authorities in Barcelona, the Catalan capital, designated 162 museums, libraries, schools and other public places around the city as "climate shelters." The sites offered an escape from the heat, cool drinking water and staff trained in dealing with heatstroke.



People try to keep cool in a fountain in Madrid, Spain, Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. Madrid registered around 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 Fahrenheit)

Wednesday as Spain and Portugal brace for temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in coming days, as a mass of hot, dry air from Africa moves north into the Iberian peninsula. Credit: AP Photo/Paul White

The surge in temperatures, due to a mass of hot, dry air from Africa, was expected to ease starting on Monday on the Iberian peninsula.

While Southern Europe is known for sunny, hot summers, [climate scientists](#) say there's little doubt climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving extreme events such as heat waves, droughts and wildfires, which they say are likely to happen more frequently as Earth warms.

A German tourist in Rome concurred.

Because of climate change, "temperatures are very high. So I think it's a better option is to reduce the carbon dioxide from the cars and travel more with the metro," said Philippe Kutaski near the Colosseum in Rome.

As in past years, Croatia's Adriatic Sea resorts were hosting hundreds of thousands of tourists. But those stepping out of the sea sweltered as temperatures reached 39 C (102 F) on the coast on Wednesday.



People refreshes with fans nebulizing water at the Colosseum in Rome, Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. The ongoing heatwave will last up until the weekend with temperatures expected to reach over 40 degrees Celsius in many parts of Italy. Credit: Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP

Crops and farm animals were suffering from days of extremely high temperature, too.

The Italian agriculture lobby Coldiretti said Thursday that 20% of the tomato crop in Italy's south was lost due to torrid heat and humidity. Italy exports nearly 2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) worth of tomatoes and tomato products like canned or bottled sauce throughout the world.

Dairy farmers in southern Italy estimated that the heat wave meant cows

were eating less, producing 20% less milk and drinking double the usual amount of water.

While much attention has focused on southern Europe's heat crisis, it was even hotter on the North African shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Temperatures hit 50 C (122 F) in Tunisia, a record high for the country. The last previous high was 48.2 C (nearly 119 F) in 1968.

In Algeria, most of the regions of the north of the country have been placed on alert for heat waves. Fires ravaging mountain forests and villages in Algeria's Berber region have killed at least 65 people, including 28 soldiers.



A civil protection volunteer distributes free bottles of water to tourists next to the Colosseum in Rome, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. The ongoing heatwave will last

up until the weekend with temperatures expected to reach over 40 degrees Celsius in many parts of Italy. Credit: Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP



A dog takes a dip to cool down in Madrid, Spain, Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. Madrid registered around 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 Fahrenheit) Wednesday as Spain and Portugal brace for temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in coming days, as a mass of hot, dry air from Africa moves north into the Iberian peninsula. Credit: AP Photo/Paul White





In this photo released by the Italian Firefighters, a view of a fire near Mandas, in the south of Sardinia, Italy, in the early hours of Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021, as wildfires continue plaguing the region. Sicily, Sardinia, Calabria and also central Italy, as temperatures reached a record high in Florida, Sicily, were badly hit by wildfires. Climate scientists say there is little doubt that climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving extreme events, such as heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods and storms. Credit: Italian Firefighters via AP



A couple pours water on their dogs during a hot day, in Rome, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. In Italy, 15 cities received warnings from the health ministry about high temperatures and humidity with peaks predicted for Friday. The cities included Rome, Florence and Palermo, but also Bolzano, which is usually a refreshing hot-weather escape in the Alps, Credit: AP Photo/Andrew Medichini



In this photo released by the Italian Firefighters, a view of a fire near Mandas, in the south of Sardinia, Italy, in the early hours of Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021, as wildfires continue plaguing the region. Sicily, Sardinia, Calabria and also central Italy, as temperatures reached a record high in Florida, Sicily, were badly hit by wildfires. Climate scientists say there is little doubt that climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving extreme events, such as heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods and storms. Credit: Italian Firefighters via AP



A couple sit in the shade at a beach in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, Aug.12, 2021. In Spain, the national weather service warned temperatures could hit 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) in some areas in coming days. Parts of northeastern Spain, in the Catalonia region, were forecast to reach 42 degrees Celsius on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Joan Mateu Parra



A man lies in the shade under some trees in Madrid, Spain, Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. Madrid registered around 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 Fahrenheit) Wednesday as Spain and Portugal brace for temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in coming days, as a mass of hot, dry air from Africa moves north into the Iberian peninsula. Credit: AP Photo/Paul White



A woman reads a magazine on a beach promenade in front of a Red Cross building in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. In Spain, the national weather service warned temperatures could hit 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) in some areas in coming days. Parts of northeastern Spain, in the Catalonia region, were forecast to reach 42 degrees Celsius on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Joan Mateu Parra



A woman protects herself with an umbrella to the sun during a hot summer day in Pamplona, northern Spain, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos



A youth jumps into the sea at a beach in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, Aug.12, 2021. In Spain, the national weather service warned temperatures could hit 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) in some areas in coming days. Parts of northeastern Spain, in the Catalonia region, were forecast to reach 42 degrees Celsius on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Joan Mateu Parra





A youth dives into the sea at a beach in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. In Spain, the national weather service warned temperatures could hit 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) in some areas in coming days. Parts of northeastern Spain, in the Catalonia region, were forecast to reach 42 degrees Celsius on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Joan Mateu Parra



A woman cools off with a fan during a hot summer day in Pamplona, northern Spain, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos



A elderly man seated on an electric wheelchair, left, protects himself to the sun with the shadow of a tree during a hot summer day in Pamplona, northern Spain, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos

Blazes have devoured forest and brush areas in Greece and in southern Italy for days.

In Italy, temperatures in the mid-40s C (over 110 F) in inland parts of Sardinia, Calabria and Sicily made for ripe fire conditions. But long spells of drought also were blamed. By the start of summer in Italy, vegetation had already withered from lack of rain and "essentially became fuel" for wildfires, Italian Civil Protection official Luigi D'Angelo told Italian state TV.

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Citation: Days of hot weather grip Southern Europe, North Africa (2021, August 12) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-08-days-hot-weather-southern-europe.html>

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