

High heat: Spain clocks prelim record of 47.2 C (116.96 F)

August 14 2021, by Jennifer O'mahony



People enjoy a day at the beach, in Ostia, in the outskirts of Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP

Spain set a new provisional heat record of 47.2 degrees Celsius (116.96 Fahrenheit) on Saturday as Southern Europe sweltered under a relentless summer sun. Italy put 16 cities on red alert for health risks and Portugal warned 75% of its regions that they faced a "significantly increased risk" of wildfires.

Data from Spain's State Meteorological Agency said the potential new record was recorded at Montoro, Cordoba, at 5:10 p.m. If confirmed, that would exceed the country's previous record of 46.9 degrees Celsius (116.42 F), set nearby in July 2017.

The [high heat](#) comes only days after Sicily reported a temperature of 48.8 degrees Celsius (119.84 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday, which is also awaiting verification and would be the highest ever recorded in Europe.

Europe's current heat record came in 1977 when Athens hit 48.0 Celsius (118.4 F).

In the southern Spanish province of Granada, where the mercury rose to 45.4 Celsius (113.7 F), few people ventured outside. Those who did sought shade and stopped to take photos of public thermometers displaying the rocketing temperatures. Ice cream parlors did a brisk trade and some restaurants installed sprinklers to spray mists of water over their guests.

Miriam García, a student, wished she hadn't braved the heat.

"It is very hot, we have to drink water and put on sun cream all the time, stopping to have a drink at a bar every so often," she said. "It would be better to be at home than in the street, it's so hot!"



A man and a girl cool off in a fountain in a park during a heatwave in Madrid, Spain, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Temperatures were set to hit a maximum of 46 degrees Celsius in Spain on Saturday, as the country sweltered on the hottest day of the year so far. Almost the entire nation was on red alert for fire risk, the state weather agency said. Credit: AP Photo/Andrea Comas

Dominic Royé, a climate scientist at the University of Santiago de Compostela, said the hot air from the Sahara Desert that has brought days of heat and fueled hundreds of wildfires across Mediterranean nations shows no signs of ending anytime soon.

"The heat wave we are experiencing now is very extreme and a lot of people are saying that it's normal, as we are in summer. But it's not, not this hot," Royé said.

The World Meteorological Organization said temperatures being recorded in the Mediterranean region go well beyond the typical hot, dry August weather and instead "are extreme, and what we might expect [from climate change.](#) "

With night-time temperatures forecast to exceed 25 degrees Celsius (77 F) in much of Spain, Royé worried about residents who cannot afford [air conditioning](#) and other vulnerable people, like the homeless or outdoor workers.



Children cool off in a fountain in a park during a heatwave in Madrid, Spain, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Temperatures were set to hit a maximum of 46 degrees Celsius in Spain on Saturday, as the country sweltered on the hottest day of the year so far. Almost the entire nation was on red alert for fire risk, the state weather agency said. Credit: AP Photo/Andrea Comas

Spain's State Meteorological Agency noted that 24 heat waves have been recorded over the last decade, twice the number in each of the previous three decades.

"It is important to stay in cool places and to stay hydrated, and to special attention to babies and elderly, vulnerable or otherwise dependent people. Extreme precautions should be taken to avoid starting forest fires," said Rubén del Campo, spokesman for the Spanish meteorological service.

Elsewhere on the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal's government placed 14 of the country's 18 districts on a state of alert through Monday night due to the "significantly increased risk" of wildfires, as temperatures were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius. That would still fall short of Portugal's highest ever recorded temperature of 47.3 degrees Celsius (117.1 F) in the inland Alentejo region in 2003.



A man sunbathes in a park during a heatwave in Madrid, Spain, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Temperatures were set to hit a maximum of 46 degrees Celsius in Spain on Saturday, as the country sweltered on the hottest day of the year so far. Credit: AP Photo/Andrea Comas

Italians sought respite at the sea and in the mountains from the aptly named Lucifer anti-cyclone that was bringing hot air from Africa during Italy's peak summer holiday weekend. Authorities raised concerns about older adults and other people at risk as they expanded heat warnings to 16 cities.

Temperatures in Italy rose as high as 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 F) in Rome, Florence and Bologna, all places that the Health Ministry put on red alert.

High temperatures were forecast to continue through Sunday, the traditional Ferragosto holiday on the religious feast of the Assumption of Mary, which marks the annual summer holiday exodus from Italian cities.

In Rome, drinking fountains provided relief, while authorities kept tourists away from ornamental fountains like the famed Trevi Fountain, fearing imitators of Anita Ekberg's soaking in "La Dolce Vita."



An Icelandic horse grazes on a field at a stud farm in Wehrheim near Frankfurt, Germany, as the sun rises Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Michael Probst



Passengers wait and relax in the botanical garden inside the Atocha rail station in Madrid, Spain, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Temperatures were set to hit a maximum of 46 degrees Celsius in Spain on Saturday, as the country sweltered on the hottest day of the year so far. Almost the entire nation was on red alert for fire risk, the state weather agency said. Credit: AP Photo/Paul White



People enjoy a day at the beach, in Ostia, in the outskirts of Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP



People enjoy a walk along the beach, in Ostia, in the outskirts of Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP



A lifeguard dog sits on the beach in Ostia, in the outskirts of Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP



Lifeguard dogs are on the watch along the beach of Ostia, in the outskirts of Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP



The sun shines over the obelisk in Rome's central Piazza del Popolo square, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: AP Photo/Andrew Medichini



Two women take a selfie photo on the empty Spanish Steps, in Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: AP Photo/Andrew Medichini



People refresh at a fountain, in Bologna, Italy, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: Guido Calamosca/LaPresse via AP



A woman leaves Carcavelos beach in Carcavelos, outside Lisbon, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Portugal's government placed 14 of the country's 18 districts on a state of alert from midday Friday to Monday night due to the "significantly increased risk" of wildfires, as temperatures were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius in some areas. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



People refresh at a fountain, in Bologna, Italy, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: Guido Calamosca/LaPresse via AP



People enjoy the water at Carcavelos beach in Carcavelos, outside Lisbon, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Portugal's government placed 14 of the country's 18 districts on a state of alert from midday Friday to Monday night due to the "significantly increased risk" of wildfires, as temperatures were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius in some areas. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



A woman arrives at Carcavelos beach in Carcavelos, outside Lisbon, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Portugal's government placed 14 of the country's 18 districts on a state of alert from midday Friday to Monday night due to the "significantly increased risk" of wildfires, as temperatures were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius in some areas. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



A couple arrive at Carcavelos beach in Carcavelos, outside Lisbon, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. Portugal's government placed 14 of the country's 18 districts on a state of alert from midday Friday to Monday night due to the "significantly increased risk" of wildfires, as temperatures were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius in some areas. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



A man refreshes himself at the Barcaccia fountain, built between 1627 and 1629 by Pietro Bernini, in Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: AP Photo/Andrew Medichini



A couple use an umbrella to shelter from the sun as they sit next to the Barcaccia fountain, built between 1627 and 1629 by Pietro Bernini, in Rome, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021. A heat wave settled over southern Europe threatened temperatures topping 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula on Saturday while Italian authorities expanded to 16 the number of cities on red alert for conditions that can pose a health risk to the elderly and vulnerable. Credit: AP Photo/Andrew Medichini

"I put my head under the water at each fountain, drinking a lot, staying in the shade as much as I can," said Alessia Pagani, who was visiting from the northern city of Brescia.

Storms in the north were forecast to bring the first signs of relief starting Monday.

"More than anything else, fresh air from the Atlantic will bring a coolness and greater ventilation that will sweep away the humidity and make the air much more breathable," Lt. Col. Filippo Petrucci of the Italian air force's weather service told RAI state TV.

The [heat wave](#) has aggravated wildfires that have consumed forests in southern Italy, Greece, Turkey and North Africa.

Across the Mediterranean Sea, North Africa has been sizzling for days. Algeria's National Office of Meteorology issued a special bulletin on Saturday saying temperatures in numerous regions across the north were above 44 C (115 F) with spikes up to 47 C (116.6 F), the online TSA news agency reported.

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.

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