

Heatwave grips Spain as UK readies for soaring temperatures

July 11 2022, by Mathieu GORSE



Firefighters brought Portugal's largest blaze in the central area of Ourem under control on Monday.

Spain and Portugal were sweltering in their second heatwave in a month on Monday, with scorching temperatures also expected in France and

Britain in the coming days.

People in Spain baked with the temperature in the central town of Candeleda hitting a stifling 43.3 degrees Celsius (110 degrees Fahrenheit) shortly after 6 pm (1600 GMT), according to Spain's meteorological agency AEMET.

The mercury meanwhile hit 42.4C in the southern city of Seville.

The southwestern cities of Badajoz and Merida also saw temperatures of 42C.

AEMET forecast 46C in Badajoz on Thursday and Friday with Seville predicted to swelter in 45C on Wednesday and Thursday.

"This heatwave really has the potential to be exceptional," said AEMET spokesman Ruben del Campo.

The current temperature surge began Sunday and could "last nine or ten days, which would make it one of the three longest heat waves Spain has seen since 1975," he told AFP.

Heatwaves have become more frequent due to climate change, scientists say. As global temperatures rise over time, heatwaves are expected to become more intense.

June had already seen Spain grapple with temperatures above 40C in swathes of the country.

The previous month was Spain's hottest May since the beginning of the century.

In August 2021 Spain recorded its highest ever temperature when the

mercury reached 47.4C in the small southern town of Montoro.

Meteorologists did not rule out the prospect of that record being broken in the coming days.

The heightened temperatures have been accompanied by a lack of rainfall.

Reservoirs in Spain stood at 45.3 percent of capacity on Monday, well below the average of 65.7 percent recorded during the same period over the past decade.

In neighbouring Portugal temperatures topped 44C over the weekend, fuelling wildfires and vast smoke clouds which were visible in the capital Lisbon.

Firefighters brought the largest blaze under control on Monday after it had burned through swathes of the central municipality of Ourem, local officials said.

—'Maximum risk'—

While temperatures eased somewhat in Portugal on Monday they were expected to soar again in the coming days with 44C forecast for the southeastern city of Evora.

"In the coming days we will experience conditions of maximum risk," Prime Minister Antonio Costa said.

"The slightest lapse in vigilance could result in a fire of significant proportions."

A front of hot air began pushing into France on Monday, with the mercury rising above 30C across much of the country, according to

national weather forecaster Meteo-France.

Temperatures could hit 39C in some parts of France on Tuesday, it added.

The heat wave should reach its peak between Saturday and next Tuesday, said Sebastien Leas of Meteo-France.

Britain on Monday issued an extreme heat warning, with temperatures predicted to hit more than 30C across large parts of England and Wales.

The extreme heat warning was classified as "amber", the second-highest alert level, indicating a "high impact" on daily life and people.

Met Office deputy chief meteorologist Rebekah Sherwin said the UK highs would continue into early next week.

"From Sunday and into Monday, temperatures are likely to be in excess of 35C in the southeast (of England), although the details still remain uncertain," she said.

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