

Venice gives green light to ticket 'experiment' for tourists

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Day visitors will now face a five euro charge for entry into the historic center.

Venice officials agreed Tuesday to test a fee on day tourists to the overcrowded historic center, weeks after UNESCO warned it could list the city as an at-risk world heritage site.

The Venice [city](#) council voted in favor of a limited test, to begin next spring, of a long-debated ticketing system that critics say will nevertheless do little to stem the hordes of tourists who descend each year.

Day visitors will face a five euro (\$5.40) charge for entry into the historic center.

Authorities have debated for years—without taking concrete action—over how best to regulate the millions of visitors to the famous watery city, who come anxious to see sights including St Mark's Square, the Rialto Bridge and its countless picturesque canals.

But the ticketing plan has been repeatedly postponed over concerns it will seriously dent [tourist](#) revenue and compromise freedom of movement.

UNESCO, the cultural arm of the United Nations, warned in July that Venice risked "irreversible" damage due to a string of issues ranging from mass tourism to [climate change](#), and recommended it be put on its [endangered list](#).

"It's a first step," said Mayor Luigi Brugnaro, who engaged in a shouting match with a crowd of a few dozen people in the council chambers ahead of the vote, calling them "violent and fascist".

His administration—which he said had shown "courage and practicality"—agreed last week to what he described as an "experiment".

But the opposition cast the tax as a hastily arranged concession to UNESCO, while accusing the administration of failing to conduct studies over whether the fee would even work to keep tourists away.



The test will be spread out over up to 30 days during 2024.

"This won't disincentivize people in the slightest from coming to Venice," said council member Alessandro Baglioni.

"Fifty euros might have done something," said another council member, Gianfranco Bettin.

Mass tourism

Last year, some 3.2 million tourists stayed overnight in Venice's historic center, according to official data—a number that does not include the

thousands of daily visitors who visit just for the day.

The five-euro tax will exempt those tourists who stay at least one night in a hotel, as well as children 14 years old and younger.

The test will be spread out over up to 30 days during 2024, on particularly crowded days such as long weekends and public holidays.

Two years ago, Venice imposed a ban on massive cruise ships from which thousands of day-trippers emerge daily, rerouting them to a more distant industrial port.

The aim—which helped the city avoid being placed on UNESCO's at-risk list—was to reduce damage from the [large waves](#) caused by the ships that are eroding Venice's foundations and harming the lagoon's fragile ecosystem.

UNESCO put Venice on its heritage list in 1987 as an "extraordinary architectural masterpiece", but has repeatedly warned that the city needs to better manage tourism.

The recommendation that the city be added to its list of world heritage in danger will be discussed at a meeting of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in Riyadh this month.

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