



# Overtourism: a complex global challenge with far-reaching consequences

## Introduction

*What do you think?*

1. In what ways can overtourism disrupt local communities and economies in the long term?
2. Do you think that travel restrictions, such as tourist caps or seasonal bans, could be effective in reducing overtourism? Why or why not?
3. How can tourists strike a balance between enjoying a destination and minimizing their impact on the environment and local culture?

## Vocabulary

*Match the words from the text with their definitions.*

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Overtourism               | A. Harmful effects on nature and ecosystems due to human activity                  |
| 2. Saturation                | B. The number of visitors to a place exceeds its capacity, creating discomfort     |
| 3. Exploitation              | C. Traveling in a way that protects the environment and supports local communities |
| 4. Carrying capacity         | D. Using resources in a way that leads to damage or depletion                      |
| 5. Regenerative tourism      | E. The income and employment that comes from businesses in a local area            |
| 6. Mass tourism              | F. The act of visiting natural areas with an emphasis on conservation              |
| 7. Displacement              | G. The history, traditions, and cultural assets of a place                         |
| 8. Environmental degradation | H. Rules or laws that control or manage activities, especially tourism             |
| 9. Cultural homogenization   | I. A place where people go for travel or leisure                                   |
| 10. Resilience               | J. The release of harmful substances into the air, water, or land                  |



## Speaking

*Look at the photos, what can you tell about them? Use the vocabulary from the previous exercise (additional file).*

## Reading

*Complete the text with the words below.*

tourists   loss   awareness   niche   environmental   consequences  
concern   fragile   overwhelmed   mass   regenerative   responsible  
booming   pressing   satisfaction

Overtourism has emerged as one of the most (1) ..... challenges facing global tourism today. While tourism undeniably brings economic benefits, including job creation and increased revenue, it also creates substantial challenges that affect everything from local economies to (2) ..... sustainability. Popular cities like Barcelona, Venice, and Amsterdam are among the most heavily impacted, as their historic sites, natural resources, and infrastructures strain under the weight of millions of visitors each year.

One of the primary (3) ..... of overtourism is the saturation of both urban and rural environments. Cities once celebrated for their rich cultural offerings and architectural beauty are increasingly becoming (4) ..... by the sheer number of tourists. This saturation often leads to the displacement of residents, as housing prices rise to unsustainable levels and communities are forced out by the influx of temporary visitors. (5) ..... tourism not only drives up the cost of living but also degrades the very essence of the places tourists come to experience. In some cases, local businesses shift their focus from serving the needs of residents to catering exclusively to (6) ....., thereby altering the character of neighbourhoods.

The environmental degradation resulting from overtourism is another critical (7) ..... In areas where nature is a central draw, such as national parks, beaches,



## Reading

and mountain regions, tourism contributes to the destruction of (8) ..... ecosystems. Waste generation, pollution, and resource depletion are among the most immediate issues, with some destinations struggling to manage the environmental impact of their (9) ..... visitor numbers. Beyond the physical destruction, overtourism can also undermine the resilience of ecosystems, leaving them less able to recover from natural disruptions.

Cultural homogenization is another insidious effect of overtourism. As tourist demand drives local economies to prioritize visitor (10) ....., traditional practices, languages, and lifestyles are often diluted or altered to fit the expectations of outsiders. This shift toward creating experiences tailored to international tourists often leads to the (11) ..... of authenticity and local flavour. Moreover, the commodification of culture can result in the exploitation of local communities, reducing their cultural heritage to a marketable product for global consumption.

To mitigate these negative consequences, a shift toward (12) ..... tourism is gaining momentum. Unlike traditional mass tourism, regenerative tourism focuses on restoring and enhancing the environment and local culture, ensuring that tourism is a force for good. By promoting (13) ..... travel, limiting tourist numbers, and supporting local initiatives, regenerative tourism seeks to create a more sustainable future for both destinations and the people who live there.

Despite its potential, regenerative tourism remains a relatively (14) ..... concept. The global tourism industry still largely operates on a model that prioritizes growth and profit over sustainability. However, there is hope that as (15) ..... of overtourism's far-reaching impacts grows, both travellers and industry leaders will adopt more sustainable and regenerative practices, ensuring that future generations can continue to experience the world's most treasured destinations without compromising their integrity.



## Comprehension

*True or False? Read the statements and decide if they are true or false.*

1. Overtourism benefits only the local economy and has no negative consequences.
2. Mass tourism causes a shift in local economies, often prioritizing tourism over local needs.
3. The environmental degradation caused by overtourism primarily affects cities, not rural areas.
4. The displacement of local residents is a common result of the saturation caused by overtourism.
5. Regenerative tourism focuses on enhancing the environment and local cultures, rather than exploiting them.
6. Local businesses always benefit from overtourism, as they cater to the needs of tourists.
7. The tourism industry largely prioritizes sustainability and responsible travel practices.

## Speaking

*Here are 8 opinions about tourism. What do you think?*

1. Overtourism is a direct consequence of the tourism industry's focus on growth and profit.
2. Displacing local residents to make way for tourists can never be justified.
3. Cultural homogenization makes travel less meaningful and authentic.
4. Travelers should be responsible for minimizing their environmental impact by supporting sustainable tourism.
5. The rise of overtourism has made certain destinations less enjoyable for both tourists and locals.
6. Tourist destinations should implement stricter regulations to control visitor numbers.
7. Overtourism affects not only popular tourist sites but also rural and less-visited areas.
8. The tourism industry needs to rethink its approach and prioritize the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.