



CO-EVOLVE

Promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems for the development of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism

FACTSHEET #13

Environmental threats from Mediterranean coastal tourism

Sea-side recreation is a major driver for the local and regional economy of many Mediterranean touristic areas. On the other hand, coastal tourism can affect ecosystems through manifold pressures, which can contaminate air and water, cause noise and light pollution, and alter the health of wildlife populations. The implementation of environmental legislation and good practices represent a precious means to make coastal tourism sustainable and to minimize the threats to our coastal environment.

		COASTAL TOURISM TYPOLOGIES				
		CRUISE	BEACH	URBAN	ECO	BOATING
T H R E A T S	Air pollution					
	Solid waste					
	Ecosystem degradation and fragmentation					
	Water pollution					
	Noise pollution					
	Light pollution					
	wildlife disturbance and exploitation					
	Alien species					

The matrix shows the threats generated by each coastal tourism typology and impinging on Mediterranean coastal ecosystems. The colours indicate the level of relevance of each threat according to each tourism typology, while the symbols indicate the expected trend of the threat in the near future.



Five are the major coastal touristic typologies in the Mediterranean: **cruise tourism**, **beach tourism**, **urban tourism**, **eco-tourism** and **recreational boating**. If on the ground vehicles on crowded roads generate the highest air emissions, at sea level cruise and yachts are not only responsible for air quality degradation, but they can also heavily contaminate water and interfere with marine fauna. Each coastal tourism typology can therefore damage Mediterranean coastal ecosystems if appropriate mitigation measures are not taken.

Cruises represent the most worrying type of coastal tourism, as they can substantially pollute air and water and can be an important vector for alien species introduction. Cruise industry is projected to increase steadily in the Mediterranean, and so do air and noise emissions. However, we expect a negative trend in the level of water pollution, thanks to the implementation of the most recent environmental legislation, like for instance the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive** and the **Water Framework Directive**.

Beach and urban tourism have major responsibility for the production of solid waste (especially marine litter) and of air emissions. In fact, the main Mediterranean coastal cities can generate enormous amounts of solid waste, which, if not properly treated and recycled, can end up in the sea forming huge marine litter islands or turning into microscopic particles. While there is considerable effort in minimizing solid waste production in beaches and coastal cities, the Mediterranean countries have not yet drawn up their marine litter monitoring programmes in a coherent manner via the use of harmonized monitoring methods across the region. As a result, this threat is unlikely to be effectively minimized in the near future.

Recreational boating produces underestimate impacts on the coastal environment, due to its diffuse and subtle presence. It can decrease bathing water quality and impact the sea through oil spills. Plus, recreational boating can cause

damage to marine habitat and animals such as coral and seagrass beds by running aground or dragging anchor over the habitats. The noise made by these boat engines and propellers are also thought to interfere with the whales' communications systems. New marinas are built every year in the Mediterranean, making this coastal tourism form one of the most impacting in the near future.

Eco-tourism has the lowest environmental impact, as it develops tourism facilities in an environmentally responsible manner. However, eco-tourism can adversely impact the environment in the same way as mass tourism, when performed in a careless way. For instance, ecotour operators sometimes get too close to rare species to order to satisfy visitors' expectations.

Many Conventions and Directives have the potential to facilitate a sustainable development in Mediterranean tourism. Some examples are:

- **Convention on Biological Diversity**
- **Ramsar Convention**
- **Quality of Bathing Water Directive**
- **Directive on Environmental Quality of Shellfish Waters**
- **Water Framework Directive**
- **Marine Strategy Framework Directive**
- **Maritime Spatial Planning Directive**
- **Habitats Directive**
- **Birds Directive**



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