

Traveling During a Heat Wave: Tips and Precautions

It's summer and the temperature is rising. Here's what you need to know to protect yourself and your vacation dollars.

By Ceylan Yeğinsu

Published June 17, 2024 Updated June 30, 2025

It's set to be another scorching summer, with extreme and prolonged heat waves forecast across many parts of the United States and Europe.

The stifling conditions could impact millions of travelers and wreak havoc on vacations at some of the world's most popular tourist destinations. In Spain, where temperatures reached 114.8 degrees in June, a tourist died of heat stroke and wildfires have prompted evacuations in France, Greece and Turkey. Even those who have booked trips in traditionally cooler places may not be spared from the summer heat because of the growing unpredictability of weather patterns.

Here are some tips on how to manage high temperatures when traveling in a heat zone.

Check government guidance

If a heat wave has been forecast at your destination, check government websites before embarking on your trip to give yourself plenty of time to plan and adapt. In extreme temperatures, governments often issue heat advisories warning people to stay indoors during peak heat hours and provide resources to help residents and visitors stay cool. In the United States, the National Integrated Heat Health Information System has a website with information and tools to help prevent illness and death during excessive heat.

Tourist attractions also provide important updates about the conditions at the sights, including any scheduled closures, as a precaution against high temperatures. Some cities grappling with intensive heat, like Los Angeles, Miami, Athens and London, have assigned chief heat officers to prepare for the heat waves and lead emergency responses.

Avoid peak sun hours

It may seem obvious, but staying outdoors for prolonged periods of time when the sun is at its peak can put many at risk of heat exhaustion. Even if the temperature does not read exceptionally high, excessive dry heat or humidity can make an environment feel hotter than it is.

Travel advisers are adapting itineraries, putting sightseeing in the cooler early morning and evening hours and prebooking tickets for their clients so they do not have to wait in long lines.

“We tend to do activities and tours in the morning, then stop for lunch, and in the mid- to late afternoon you either go back to the hotel to sit by the pool or go to the beach,” said Gary Portuesi, a co-managing partner at Authentic Explorations, a New York-based travel company that specializes in Europe.

Hiking in the middle of the day is also not advised. Last year, Dr. Michael Mosley, a British medical journalist, died during an afternoon hike in a 104-degree heat wave on the Greek island of Symi. Four more tourists, including an American man, died in Greece as temperatures soared.

“I would always recommend going hiking with a certified local guide and under no circumstances alone,” said Franziska Basso, a Milan-based travel adviser for Dreamsteam Exclusive Travel. “Of course, avoid the hottest hours of the day. Go hiking very early in the morning. And always stick to official hiking trails.”

In some European cities, including Paris and London, air conditioning is not a given, so check if it is available before booking a hotel, restaurant or transportation to ensure you have a cool place to find respite from the scorching heat. Visiting a museum or other indoor sightseeing is another good option, but expect crowds at peak hours.

Some accommodations stay cool naturally, like old stone and brick buildings. “Look for accommodations in rustic farmhouses, historic villas or traditional village homes built with stone, brick or terra-cotta,” said Andrea Moradei, an Italy travel expert at the slow travel agency Vinarium.

“These older structures use thick walls with natural thermal mass that absorb heat during the day and release it slowly, helping to keep interiors cooler even during heat waves,” he added.

Stay hydrated and take a siesta

Dehydration and heatstroke are among the most common causes of hospitalization during heat waves and can be prevented by staying hydrated and limiting alcohol consumption. During meals, consider eating foods like melons, cucumbers and celery as it can help to sustain hydration throughout the day. Always carry a water bottle with you and consider a parasol and portable fan to help keep you cool and shaded when outdoors.

While your itinerary may be packed with activities and tours, the heat can take a toll on stamina, so consider following the European siesta ritual by breaking up your day with a short nap.

“I’m telling my clients to adapt their itineraries and take advantage of the after-lunch siesta and then push their tours to later in the day when it’s cooler,” said Sarah Johnson, who owns Paper Ink & Passports Travel, a luxury travel company based in Pennsylvania. “There’s a reason they’ve been doing it in Spain and Italy for generations. Walking around in the midday heat and waiting in line could really hurt some people.”

Wear cool clothing

The National Weather Service recommends lightweight, loosefitting, light-colored clothing for outdoor use as it reflects heat and sunlight. Hats and sunscreen are also recommended to protect the face and scalp from harmful UV rays.

Just because it’s hot, doesn’t mean it will be dry. Heat waves can bring torrential rainfall, so be prepared.

“My biggest advice to travelers is to be prepared — for hot or cold, dry or wet weather since one never knows,” said Laurel Brunvoll, the owner of Unforgettable Trips, a Maryland-based travel agency. “Pack layers.”

For more travel advice, visit our collection of [Travel 101](#) tips and hacks.

Ceylan Yeğinsu is a travel reporter for The Times who frequently writes about the cruise industry and Europe, where she is based.