**The protesters and residents pushing back on tourism in Barcelona**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp8d87l6lp1o>

As protesters marched through central Barcelona on Sunday, they shouted at the tourists who were filming them to "Go Home!".

**Bemused** couples sitting in street cafés got squirted with water pistols and a luxury clothes store was pasted with stickers declaring the tourists who'd shut themselves inside unwelcome.

Tourism is hugely important to Spain and Barcelona is a top destination for visitors. But the crowds are growing so fast that many locals complain they're being squeezed out of their own cities.

Here and in popular spots across southern Europe, residents are pushing back.

**The protesters**

"We cannot live in this city. The rents are super high because of BnBs and also the expats who come and live here for the weather," Marina explained, holding her own banner as the crowd gathered.

It declared "Your AirBnB used to be my home".

Other signs called for a ban on the giant cruise ships that dock here, with one announcing that over-tourism is "killing" the city.

"Our goal is not to stop tourism, because it's also good, but to have it at a normal rate," Marina said.

The protesters' route wound towards one of Barcelona's biggest attractions, the towering Sagrada Familia church designed by Catalan architect, Gaudi.

A combination of stunning architecture, sea and sun drew more than 15 million visitors to the city last year, almost ten times the local population. No wonder it's feeling the strain.

"We're not against individual tourists, it's about how we're managing this," Elena, a young marine biologist, said.

"Young people can't afford living here or even normal things like coffee that are all really expensive for our salaries."

**The residents**

It's not only the young who are struggling.

At 80 years old, Pepi Viu has just been evicted from her home of almost a decade, in a popular neighbourhood. She thinks the owner wanted to earn more rent than the pensioner could pay.

Pepi is now in a hostel, and searching for somewhere more suitable, but prices have soared almost 70% since she last rented.

"I can't find anything – and there's no support. I feel like I have no protection and it's upsetting," she says, frail and leaning on a stick. "There's only tourist flats now, but we residents need somewhere to live!"

In some areas of town, almost all locals like Pepi have already been pushed out.

But in a narrow, paved street of the Gothic quarter, right in the tourist heart of Barcelona, Joan Alvarez is fighting to hold on to the flat his family have rented for 25 years, and at a price he can afford.

His landlord has terminated the contract, but Joan refuses to leave.

Most of the apartments in his building have already been divided into single rooms to bring in more rent.

Joan's little oasis, with tiled floors and a terrace that looks towards the cathedral, is one of the few still intact.

"It's not just about the money, it's the principle," he explains, cats winding through potted plants as he talks. "This is central Barcelona and there's hardly any of us residents left. It shouldn't be like that."

"Housing shouldn't be big business. Yes, this is his property, but it's my house."

**The landlords**

Under pressure from the protests, the authorities in Barcelona have already taken the radical step of announcing a complete ban on short-term rentals to tourists from 2028.

Some 10 thousand licences for tourist apartments will be cancelled.

But Jesus Pereda, who owns two popular tourist flats not far from the Sagrada Familia, thinks that's the wrong response.

"They stopped giving out new licences 10 years ago, but rents have still gone up. So how are we to blame? We're just an easy enemy," he insists.

Managing the flats is his job, providing an income for himself and his wife. "Now we have anxiety."

Jesus believes it's the 'nomad' workers moving from elsewhere in Europe who are pushing rents up, rather than tourists. "They earn and pay more. You can't stop that."

He argues that tourist flats like his help spread the crowds, and the cash, to other areas of the city. Without tourism he believes Barcelona would have an "existential crisis" - it represents up to 15% of Spain's gross domestic product (GDP) as a whole.

If he loses his tourist licence, Jesus won't take on local tenants in any case: a price-cap means long-term rental is barely profitable so he plans to sell both the flats.

**Chants and firecrackers**

The protest in Barcelona culminated in chants of "You're all guiris!" – local slang for foreigners – and a burst of firecrackers. Red smoke billowed up in front of rows of police officers blocking all routes to the Sagrada Familia.

A little earlier, the crowd had targeted a busy hotel, kicking a flare into the lobby. Tourists inside, including children, were clearly shaken.

There were similar protests elsewhere in Spain and more crowds in Portugal and Italy: not huge, but loud and insistent.

The concerns are the same and there's no consensus on how best to tackle it. But Spain is expecting more tourists this summer than ever.