Cruise ships carrying 4,000 travelers, all-inclusive beachfront resorts – increasing global tourism places an ever-greater strain on the ocean and coastal populations.

Tourism has become one of the most important economic drivers in the world. For some islands and coastal regions, it is actually the number one economic driver. In 2015 nearly 1.2 billion people traveled abroad. And that number is no longer made up only of travelers from North America and Europe. More and more international guests come from Southeast Asia, China, Russia, India, and Brazil. The whole world is looking abroad, and those who can afford to do so take their vacations on foreign shores. The number of those who vacation in their own countries amounts to 5 to 6 billion.

As a result, the number of overseas travelers has risen forty-fold since 1950. According to estimates from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the global total may rise to 1.8 billion by 2030. In 2015 608 million people traveled to Europe alone. 343 million visited the Mediterranean in 2014 alone. That’s around a third of all international travelers!

One destination: the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean is the most popular destination for tourists from around the world. This causes a number of problems for the region that individual tourists don’t see. Air travel and increased traffic increase CO2 emissions in the region. The expansion of infrastructure, like hotel complexes and marinas, reduces available open space and leads to the urbanization of the regions around the Mediterranean. The tourism industry has become one of the most important economic drivers in the world. For some islands and coastal regions, it is actually the number one economic driver. In 2015 nearly 1.2 billion people traveled abroad. And that number is no longer made up only of travelers from North America and Europe. More and more international guests come from Southeast Asia, China, Russia, India, and Brazil. The whole world is looking abroad, and those who can afford to do so take their vacations on foreign shores. The number of those who vacation in their own countries amounts to 5 to 6 billion.

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A holiday by the sea—for many people, it is the ideal image of a relaxing vacation. But many tourist hotspots and coastal populations.

The Mediterranean Sea

Of Mediterranean tourists, 38% visit Spain, 34% visit Italy, and 85% visit France. The rest of the Mediterranean country divides between Turkey, Greece, Portugal, Monaco, and others.

The United Nations named 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. They will tell how seriously the international community and cities adopt Agenda 2030 and if they can initiate measures that effectively stem the tide.

Controlling the flow of tourism with capacity limits is an effective instrument for ensuring that future generations will also be able to visit dream destinations. Imagining and communicating this reality is the responsibility of each individual government and of the tourism industry as a whole. And tourists themselves have the power to demand sustainable tourism.

A profound change in tourism demands new thinking on the part of politicians as well as among companies and travelers: the strategy that is adopted should not be simply to support tourism but rather to support strategies that enable sustainable, future-proof tourism while also discouraging non-sustainable practices in the industry.