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Coastal tourism and climate change in Tunisia

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Tunisia is a major tourist destination on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The tourism sector occupies an important place in the Tunisian economy with 816 hotels, 229,873 beds and a more than six million tourists at the end of the first decade of the 21th century, i.e. , more than half of the population. It offers a large number of direct and indirect jobs: One out of five people work in the tourism sector.

The 1960s tourism boom was caused by a number of factors including long days of sunshine, 1,300 km of sandy coast, and a location close to Europe. Tunisian tourism is fundamentally based on two natural determinants: the sun and the sea. The coastline accounts for 95% of tourism investments and functional beds. The high season extends from April to October and it records 73% of nonresident tourists. This results in a homogenous growth of the "product" and its "consumers". This standardization is an important factor in the vulnerability of the Tunisian tourism to climate change.

Global warming may affect the comfort level of the swimming season as well as its structure.
An estimation of air and water temperature evolution near the Tunisian coasts was conducted under the CLIM-RUN project "Climate Local Information in the Mediterranean Region: Responding to User Needs" funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Program (FP7). The University of Tunis research unit "GREVACHOT", project partner in charge of the case study of Tunisian tourism, has made the study of comfort indices of the present climate.

This paper presents:
- The climate comfort indices for seaside tourism in Tunisia,
- The approach and results of the future evolution of air and water temperatures by the Tunisian coasts,
- The future evolution of climate seaside comfort indices of Tunisia as well as the evolution of the swimming season in relation to global warming.