

# France records all-time highest temperature of 45.9C

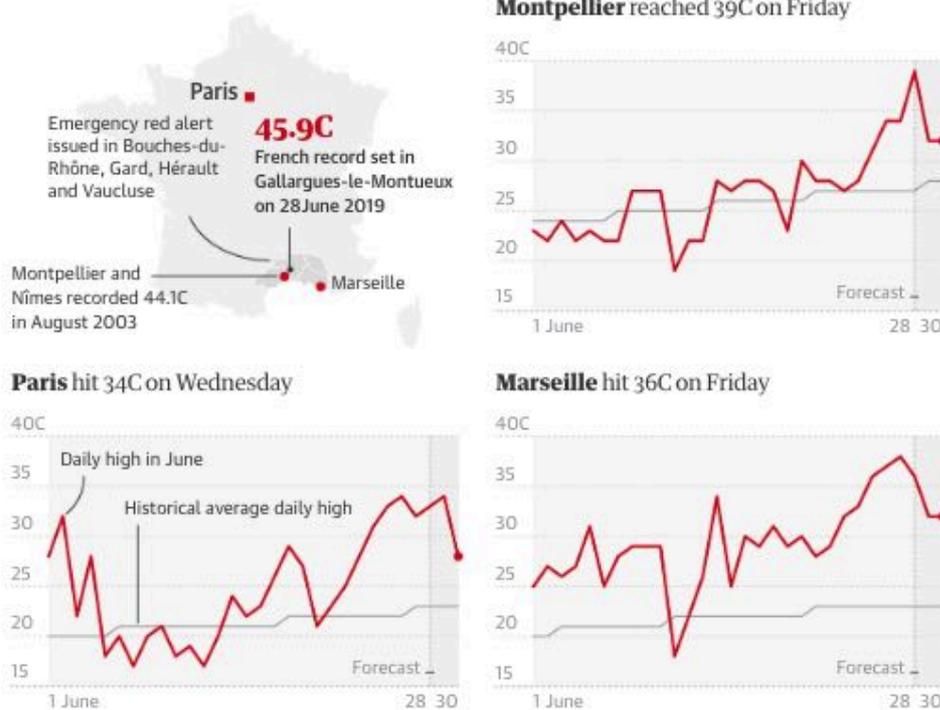
Record for mainland France falls in southern commune of Gallargues-le-Montueux as Europe swelters in heatwave

Jon Henley and Angelique Chrisafis in Paris and Sam Jones in Madrid

Fri 28 Jun 2019 17.14 BST

First published on Fri 28 Jun 2019 09.13 BST

## France recorded its highest ever temperature on Friday



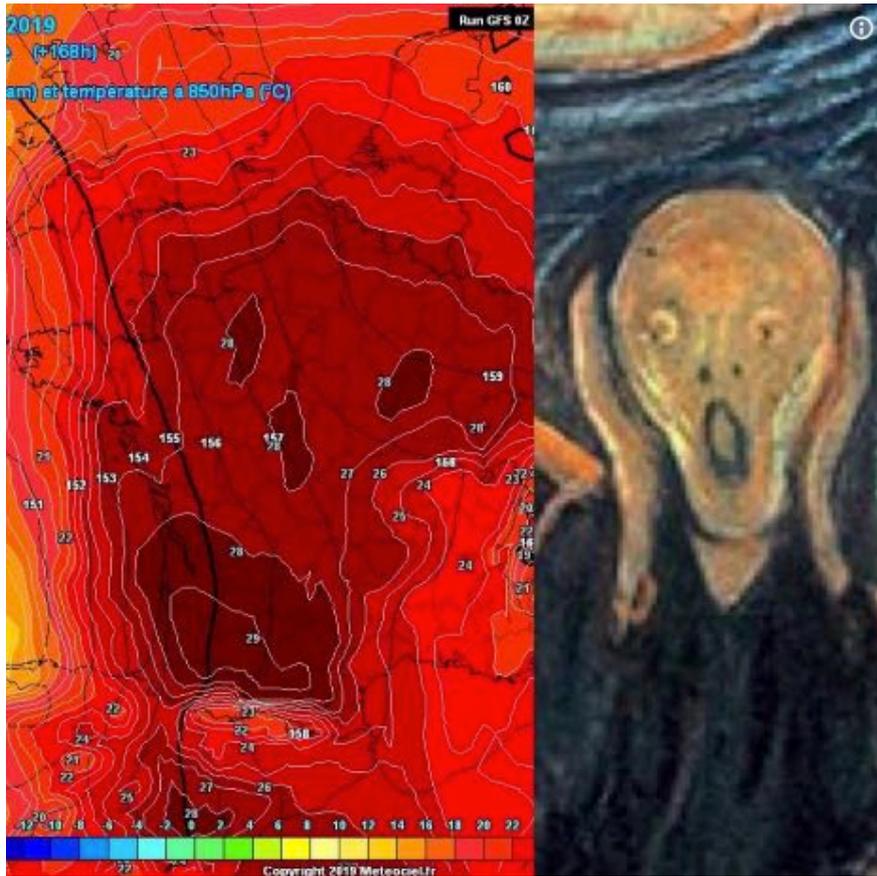
Guardian graphic. Source: AccuWeather

France recorded temperatures nearly two degrees higher than its previous record and firefighters continued to battle historic wildfires in Spain as much of western Europe remained in the grip of an extreme early-summer heatwave on Friday.

The French state weather forecaster, Météo-France, said the temperature in Gallargues-le-Montueux in the Gard *département* hit 45.9C at 4.20pm on Friday.

The previous 2003 record of 44.1C was beaten twice before on Friday: first when the southeastern town of Carpentras reached 44.3C, then hours later when Villevieille, in Provence, hit 45.1C.

“This is historic,” a Météo-France meteorologist, Etienne Kapikian, said. “It’s the first time a temperature in excess of 45C has ever been recorded in France.”



In Germany, the national DWD weather service said overall June temperatures were more than four degrees higher than historic averages for the month and 0.4C higher than the 2003 June average, the warmest since records began in 1881.

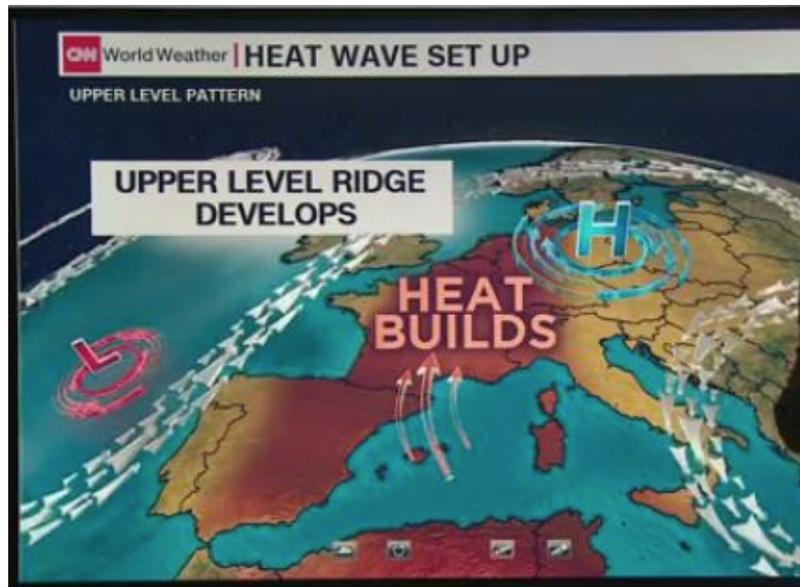
The World Meteorological Organisation in Geneva said 2019 was now firmly on course to be among the world's hottest ever years and that 2015-2019 would then become the hottest five-year period on record.

While it was too soon to definitely attribute the Europe's current blistering heatwave, which began on Monday, to climate change, it was "absolutely consistent" with extremes linked to the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, the UN agency said.



“Heatwaves will become more intense, they will become more drawn out, they will become more extreme, they will start earlier and they will finish later,” the WMO spokeswoman, Clare Nullis, told journalists.

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, said extreme weather would become more frequent as a result of global warming. “We will need to change our set-up, our way of working, build differently,” he said, stressing a necessary “adaptation of society and its habits”.



## Spain battles biggest wildfires in 20 years as heatwave grips Europe

Health officials warn ‘the worst is still to come’, with temperatures expected to exceed 44C in some areas

**Jon Henley in Paris and Sam Jones in Madrid**

Thu 27 Jun 2019 17.22 BST

First published on Thu 27 Jun 2019 12.08 BST



The forest fire burning in the municipality of Ribera d'Ebre, in Tarragona, Catalonia. Photograph: Jaume Sellart/EPA

Firefighters battled wildfires at a scale not seen for 20 years in Spain and southern France was placed on unprecedented red alert as much of western Europe sweltered in an extreme early-summer heatwave on Thursday.

With temperatures in northern Spain and southern France set to exceed 44C, governments urged their citizens to

take the utmost precaution, warning that in some areas the worst was yet to come.

The conditions led officials to raise the French extreme heat alert to red. The alert, signifying a “dangerous weather phenomenon”, was the first since the system was introduced in 2004 following a 2003 heatwave that led to 15,000 premature deaths.



A helicopter reloads a monsoon bucket near Bovera, west of Tarragona. Photograph: Albert Gea/Reuters

It was issued for the four southern *départements* of Hérault, Gard, Vaucluse and Bouches-du-Rhône. “All members of the public should be concerned, even those who are in good health,” the interior ministry warned.

In Spain, more than 500 firefighters and soldiers struggled to bring a huge forest fire under control in the Catalan province of Tarragona that has so far burned across 5,500 hectares (12,355 acres) of land.

Fifty-three people have been evacuated from their homes, five roads remain cut off and the civil protection authorities have advised people not to enter the area unless absolutely necessary. Hundreds of sheep have died in the smoke and flames.

“We’re facing a serious fire on a scale not seen for 20 years,” the region’s interior minister, Miquel Buch, **said in a tweet**. “It could burn through 20,000 hectares. Let’s be very aware that any carelessness could lead to a catastrophe.”

The head of the regional fire service said it was hard to be optimistic. “The terrain is complicated, which causes a lot of problems, and the weather conditions aren’t favourable,” David Borrell **told Catalunya Ràdio**. “That’s tiring us out and meaning we have to work hard to achieve our objectives.”



A burnt digger on a farm near the village of La Torre de l'Espanyol, in Tarragona, Catalonia. Photograph: Jaume Sellart/EPA

The 350 local firefighters battling the blaze have been joined by 221 specialists from Spain's military emergency unit, as well as planes, helicopters, tractors and other heavy machinery.

As people across Europe sought out rivers, lakes, fountains and swimming pools to stay cool, authorities in Milan, in northern Italy, said a 72-year-old homeless man had died at the city's main train station after falling ill due to the heatwave.

The French health minister, Agnès Buzyn, said the peak of the heatwave would not hit the south of the country before Friday and expressed irritation that despite an increase in the number of calls to emergency services, some people did not appear to be heeding health warnings.

"We see citizens who are quite irresponsible and continue to go jogging between midday and 2pm," Buzyn said, also complaining of parents leaving their children in the car while shopping.



Guardian graphic. Source: Nasa. Map shows fires for the past 48 hours

The average high of 39.4C on Wednesday broke France's previous June record, Météo-France said, adding that the country's all-time highest temperature of 44.1C – recorded on 12 August 2003 at two spots in the Gard département – would probably be surpassed.

Germany also broke its June temperature record, which dated back to 1947, with a 38.6C reading in Coschen near the Polish border. At least four people died in bathing accidents in different parts of the country on Wednesday, authorities said.

Water restrictions were imposed in North Rhine Westphalia, although there was some relief in northern Germany on Thursday as temperatures fell to levels more typical for June. In Berlin the temperature was 26C on Thursday afternoon, down from about 37C on Wednesday.

Parts of northern France were also put on drought alert, with water supplies to businesses, farmers and ordinary residents restricted. The agriculture minister, Didier Guillaume, banned the transportation of all animals until the heatwave has ended.

Most schools in Paris will stay open until the summer holidays start on Friday afternoon, authorities said, but many childcare facilities were closed and 59 primary schools were shut in the Essonne département outside the capital.



Red Cross workers hand out water to homeless people in Tours amid sweltering conditions. Photograph: Guillaume Souvant/AFP/Getty Images

In Paris, Lyon, Marseille and Strasbourg, authorities banned older cars with higher emissions levels from the roads in an attempt to offset a peak in air pollution, while the French hotel group Accor opened its air-conditioned lobbies to elderly people until Saturday.

“Calls to the emergency services are on the rise nationwide. We are seeing the beginning of a clear impact of the heatwave,” Jérôme Salomon, head of public health in France, said. “For us, the worst is still to come.”

Parts of Britain are also expected to experience hot temperatures on Saturday, with a high of 32C forecast in London.

Scientists have said Europe’s 2019 heatwave, like last year’s, is closely linked to the climate emergency and that such extreme weather events will be many times more likely over the coming decades.