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UK Skies Turn Hazy from Spain Wildfire Smoke

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Parts of the United Kingdom are experiencing hazy skies and vivid sunsets as smoke from large wildfires in Spain and Portugal drifts northwards.

Sky weather producer Kirsty McCabe explained that the recent spell of very hot weather is easing, with a strengthening easterly wind and cloudier skies contributing to the change. However, she noted that the haze is the result of “the terrible wildfires that have been raging across Spain and Portugal, and the smoke has made its way to our shores, along with some Saharan dust.”

According to McCabe, the smoke particles are unlikely to significantly affect air quality in the UK, but they will alter the appearance of the sky. She said the haze will enhance the deep orange and red colours seen at sunrise and sunset.

The effect is linked to two natural processes, Rayleigh scattering and Mie scattering, which describe how light interacts with particles in the atmosphere. McCabe explained that Mie scattering occurs when smoke particles are larger than the wavelengths of light, producing a hazy or milky appearance in the sky. Rayleigh scattering, by contrast, scatters shorter wavelengths such as blue and violet light more strongly, allowing reds and oranges to dominate at dusk and dawn.

Met Office meteorologist Greg Dewhurst added that the haze “will hang around for the next few days.” He forecast temperatures in the mid to high 20s Celsius, reaching up to 28 °C in some areas. Hazy sunshine is expected to spread from southwest England into Wales and Northern Ireland over the weekend.

The unusual skies follow a series of severe wildfires across southern Europe. At least seven people have died in Spain, where firefighters are tackling 14 major blazes, fanned by strong winds and high temperatures during a prolonged heatwave. Authorities report that an area equivalent in size to London has been destroyed by fire so far this year, with western Spain particularly badly affected.

Extensive fires have also hit neighbouring Portugal, while France, Greece, Turkey, and Albania continue to battle some of their worst summer blazes in two decades.

Despite the devastation in southern Europe, forecasters stress that the main impact on the UK will be limited to atmospheric changes, with haze and vivid skies expected rather than direct health risks.

For now, much of Britain can expect settled but hazy conditions, with bright sunsets continuing into the week as the smoke and Saharan dust gradually disperse.