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As temperatures soar, a group of Swedish tourists wearing shorts sits in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican.

Bare tourists cool their heels outside Vatican

VICTOR L. SIMPSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

VATICAN CITY - Tempers are flaring as the Vatican's dress police turn back tourists in shorts and bare shoulders trying to get into St. Peter's Basilica.

Vendors are doing a brisk business selling paper pants and shirts - turning St. Peter's Square into an open-air changing room.

"I am born naked and the church

wants me to be wearing pants," Danish tourist Kenneth Bergen, 53, complained to a throng of would-be visitors who had been turned back. Bergen had just bought a pair of paper pants.

Enforcement of the Vatican dress code turns into a battle each summer, but the verbal skirmishes have been heightened this July because Rome is in the grips of a relentless heat wave.

For weeks, temperatures have reached into the 30s and the thousands

of tourists trudging the streets seem dressed more for a day at the beach - shorts, miniskirts, tank tops for both men and women. The city's police officers have been out in force to ensure tourists don't cool their feet in the Trevi Fountain and other landmarks.

At the Vatican, authorities have erected signs showing no one can enter the basilica with bare legs and bare shoulders. Guards - neatly dressed in shirts and ties - patrol the entrances.

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