



A Joint Bulletin of the CTO, the CHTA and the CIMH

CARIBBEAN TOURISM CLIMATIC BULLETIN

for Tourism Businesses and Policymakers

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Photo Credit: Anguilla Tourist Board



Purpose

This Bulletin is a joint effort between the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA) and the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) to help tourism businesses and policymakers identify and prepare for favourable or inclement climate conditions in the Caribbean and source markets, before they occur. It is recommended that industry stakeholders use the seasonal climate forecast information for the upcoming period (December 2018 - February 2019) presented in this Bulletin in tandem with weather forecasts (1-7 days). This suite of information can inform strategic and operational decisions related to the use of environmental resources, marketing, and enhancement of the visitor experience.

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Looking back: August - October 2018



Parts of the region observed less than the usual rainfall, leading to **short term drought** in the northern parts of The Bahamas, Dominica, Hispaniola and Martinique, and contributing to continued **long term drought** in Antigua, northern Belize and southern Hispaniola. By contrast, **flooding** rains in mid-October in Trinidad have led to above-normal rainfall totals over the three months.



Although **temperatures were as hot as usual** for the hotter half-year (i.e. May to October), they still felt uncomfortably hot in August and September because the high temperatures were combined with **high humidity**.

The 2018 Atlantic Hurricane Season has officially drawn to a close and, fortunately, **tropical cyclone activity** (i.e. due to tropical depressions, tropical storms and hurricanes) was muted in the Caribbean when compared to the 2017 Season.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean

December through February marks: 1) the early dry season in Belize and the Caribbean Islands, except for the ABC Islands which transition into the long dry season; and 2) the secondary wet season in the coastal Guianas. What should you do?



The **2018 Hurricane Season** officially ended **November 30th**, but storms and hurricanes can occur beyond the official end date. **Severe weather systems**, which can come with a range of hazards, including high winds, landslides, flash floods, among others, are expected to affect Caribbean territories. Tourism operators are advised to monitor weather advisories issued by the National Meteorological Services and other information provided by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (<http://cdema.org/>) and the US National Hurricane Center (<https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>). At all times, tourism operators should maintain a state of readiness, including communication plans and response protocols to deal with sudden eventualities.



Climatically, December to February forms the first half of the **Caribbean Dry Season**, characterised by a steady decrease in the frequency of wet days and longer wet spells, and an increasing number of dry days and dry spells. That said, up to one **extreme wet spell** occurs in December in Belize and the Caribbean Islands. By contrast, up to two extreme wet spells can occur in the coastal Guianas until the end of February, as this area experiences its secondary wet season. Extreme wet spells may coincide with thunderstorms and high winds, and may result in flash floods, land slippage, power outages and possible contamination of food and water supplies. Therefore, tourism stakeholders are encouraged to engage in proper planning for these possible scenarios.



After 2 years without significant drought throughout the region, **an expected weak to moderate El Niño event is set to increase the chances of drought** across much of the Caribbean. Shorter term drought is currently evolving in the ABC Islands, Antigua, the northern parts of The Bahamas, Dominica and Guadeloupe.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean Cont'd



Long term drought, which affects the largest water reservoirs, is evolving in the ABC Islands, Grand Cayman and Dominica. Long term drought may possibly develop in any of the other islands apart from Trinidad. That said, extreme to exceptional drought such as that experienced by many territories between 2014 and early 2016, when there was a particularly strong El Niño, is unlikely. Tourism facilities should seek to enhance/upgrade their water conservation practices (e.g. rainwater harvesting and repairs to leaky pipes) ahead of the peak of the dry season (between February and April), and advise guests of these measures on an ongoing basis.



Night-time and day-time **temperatures** in the Caribbean are forecast to feel seasonably comfortable, though evidence suggests it will probably be slightly warmer than usual for the winter. Tourism practitioners may experience a very slight increase in demand for cooling/hydration services (e.g. AC use and drinking water) in the upcoming period as compared to the same period in the previous two years.



The **UV index** will initially be moderately high on sunny days, but will increase in February. There is a moderate to high risk of skin damage on sunny days due to intense UV radiation. Visitors should be encouraged to apply high SPF sunscreen lotion regularly (preferably reef safe), and seek shaded areas between the hours of 10 AM and 3 PM. Outdoor tourism operators and staff should also be mindful to minimise skin exposure during these times, and to wear sunscreen when they work outdoors.



Ocean temperatures are expected to cool towards the end of February, with **virtually no coral bleaching expected throughout the period**. This is a good season to engage in coral reef restoration activities, especially in destinations where there is an on-going standalone program or partnership between tourism practitioners and coastal managers.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean Source Markets

December to February marks the winter season in the source markets.
What should you do?



Most source markets will experience cold weather throughout the winter, with prolonged episodes of dull and cloudy skies. Tourism operators are therefore recommended to focus on enhanced marketing efforts to attract visitors to the generally sunny, warm and breezy weather in the Caribbean Islands, as well as, in the coastal areas of Belize and the Guianas. Tourism operators can seek to differentiate themselves through package offers, memorable customer service, and activities that take advantage of the pristine natural environments on offer.

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Photo Credit: cia.gov

Climate Outlook for the Caribbean and Source Markets

Except in the Guianas, it is the dry season. What do we expect for the Caribbean?

How wet?

Rainfall totals from December to February are likely to be the usual or drier across the ABC Islands, eastern Guianas, Hispaniola, Lesser Antilles, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (medium confidence). By contrast, The Bahamas is forecast to be at least as wet as usual (medium confidence).

How hot?

Night-time and day-time temperatures in the Caribbean are forecast to be at least as warm as in most recent years, by remaining seasonably comfortable (high confidence).

Sargassum Outlook

Tourism operators may consult the University of South Florida/NASA Sargassum Outlook Bulletin before planning activities. Click here to access this product: <https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/SaWS.html>

How dry?

Drought is forecast to become a concern by the end of this period in the ABC Islands, the Cayman Islands and Dominica (medium to high confidence), and should be monitored closely in Belize and the remainder of the Caribbean Islands.

Surf's Up

Surfers, divers, fishers and marine craft operators should consult the 7-day wave forecast before planning activities. Click here to access this product: <http://ww3.cimh.edu.bb/>

What do we expect in the source markets?

There are no distinct climate patterns currently emerging for the winter season in the source markets for the upcoming period.

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Upcoming Events

- **December 6-7, 2018: 2nd Regional Tourism and Health Stakeholder Workshop, Port of Spain, Trinidad**
- **January 29-31, 2019: Caribbean Travel Market Place, Montego Bay, Jamaica**



Photo Courtesy of the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism & Aviation

Websites

Caribbean Tourism Organization:
www.onecaribbean.org

Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association:
www.caribbeanhotelassociation.com

Regional Climate Centre:
<http://rcc.cimh.edu.bb>

Disclaimer

This Bulletin provides a broad overview of climate conditions up to 3 months in advance. It is based on insights drawn from CIMH's suite of technical climate information products and industry insights from the CTO and the CHTA. The information contained herein is provided with the understanding that the CTO, the CHTA, and the CIMH make no warranties, either expressed or implied, concerning the accuracy, completeness, reliability or suitability of said information. The Bulletin may be freely used and distributed by the public with appropriate acknowledgement of its source but shall not be modified in content and then presented as original material.

Glossary

Definition of technical terms

Seasonal climate forecast - the guidance offered by a forecaster or forecast centre on the climate conditions during the coming months.

NB: This forecast information pertains to the 3 months highlighted in the Issue.

Short-term drought – A rainfall deficit over a total period of 6 months.

Long-term drought – A rainfall deficit over a total period of 12 months.

Dry day - A 24 hour period during which the rainfall total is less than 1 mm.

Dry spell - A succession of at least 7 consecutive dry days.

Wet Day – A 24 hour period during which the rainfall total is at least 1 mm.

Wet Spell – A multi-day period during which the rainfall total is large enough to cross a certain threshold.

Extreme wet spell – 3 consecutive days of which the total rainfall is extremely high, with increased flash flood potential.

The Guianas – French Guiana, Guyana and Suriname.

US Caribbean Territories – Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Leeward Islands – Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Saba, St. Barthélemy, St. Eustatius, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Maarten and St. Martin.

Windward Islands – Dominica, Grenada, Martinique, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Lesser Antilles – Leeward and Windward Islands along with, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.

Greater Antilles – Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

ABC Islands – Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao

Lucayan Islands – The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands.