



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: Cayman Islands Department of Tourism



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 forecast climate information for the upcoming period (Dec 2017- Feb 2018) 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 : A note on the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season



The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season has been assessed to be among the top ten most active seasons in history, with September 2017 being one of the months with the most Atlantic tropical cyclone activity.

This unprecedented season featured for the first time in history, three simultaneous hurricanes churning in the Atlantic Basin (i.e. Irma at Category 5, José at Category 4 and Katia at Category 2 strength).

With Irma and Maria making landfall at Category 5 or 4 strength in 10 Caribbean territories, damage and losses from these systems to the Caribbean and its mainstay tourism industry are likely to be the most costly in the region's history. Badly affected territories include Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Sint Maarten, St. Martin, Puerto Rico, Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and the US Virgin Islands.

However, recovery is already underway in these hard hit territories, and another 20+ Caribbean destinations remain fully open for business in the upcoming winter season, and beyond.



Photo Credit: Discover Dominica Authority

Climate Advisories: Caribbean

We are in the early dry season in the Caribbean islands. At the same time, the coastal areas in the Guianas, as well as, the ABC Islands are experiencing their short wet season. What should you do?



Tourism operators in Haïti and central and northern parts of The Bahamas should monitor water resources in view of evolving **drought**. Hotels in these territories should take precautionary measures such as rainwater harvesting and advise guests of these measures.



Outdoor activities may be disrupted by a higher number of **wet days and wet spells** in the ABC islands and the coastal Guianas, as well as an associated potential for **flash floods and long-term flooding** in these territories. In the event of flash floods, contamination of food and water supplies might occur. Tourism operators in these territories are advised to organize more indoor activities for tourists, up until February, when a decrease in wet days and wet spells is expected.



Night-time and day-time **temperatures** in the Caribbean are forecast to be comfortable, with an associated decrease in the risk of heat stress and dehydration when compared to last season (Aug-Oct 2017). Tourism practitioners may experience a decrease in demand for cooling services in the upcoming period.



During December and January, the **UV index** on sunny days will be at its lowest, and will then quickly increase during February, which tends to also be the sunniest month of the three month period. Although there is a decreased risk of skin damage on sunny days due to reduced UV radiation up until February, tourists should still be encouraged to apply high SPF sunscreen lotion (preferably reef safe), and seek shaded areas between the hours of 10 AM and 3 PM. Encouraging frequent sunscreen application should be a priority for guests in the month of February.



Although there has been cooling in the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic around the Caribbean Islands in October, unusually warm sea surface temperatures have been observed in the southern Caribbean with widespread **coral bleaching** expected there until the end of November. However, expected continued cooling should end bleaching in December.



Though we have come to the end of the 2017 Hurricane Season, tropical cyclones can still occur in December. This has been observed especially during very active seasons not unlike the 2017 season. Most commonly, such **late-season cyclones** occur either in the western Caribbean Sea, affecting surrounding territories, or in the open Atlantic where they usually do not affect land.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean Source Markets

December through February marks the winter season in the North American and European source markets. What should you do?



The winter tourism season is historically a busy one for Caribbean tourism. Vacationers are very likely to book a sunny vacation during December to February to escape harsh winter temperatures. This may especially be the case for potential visitors from cities in the US Northern Plains and MidWest which are forecast to likely be as cold, or colder than usual.

Forecasted warmer than usual temperatures in markets such as Florida might make this destination more competitive than in other years. Finally, forecasted warmer temperatures for New England, Québec and the Nordic Countries may translate into lower booking volumes from these markets.

Tourism practitioners are encouraged to bolster their marketing efforts to attract those seeking refuge from the cold, while taking care to promote their unique attributes so as to favourably position themselves against warmer source market destinations. Again, the messaging that the Caribbean is open for business is key to the region's success during the upcoming winter season.

USA & CANADA



EUROPE



Photo Credit: cia.gov

Climate Outlook for the Caribbean

The Caribbean enters the dry season between December and February. What do we expect for the Caribbean?

How wet?

The period December to February typically marks the **early dry season** in the Caribbean islands, whereas coastal areas in the Guianas, as well as, the ABC Islands would experience their **short wet season**, up until the end of January.

Rainfall totals over this three-month period are forecast to be at least as high as usual in the Guianas, the ABC Islands and Trinidad & Tobago (high confidence), the rest of the Lesser Antilles, southern Hispaniola and the US Caribbean Territories (medium confidence). By contrast, The Bahamas are likely to see less or no more than the usual amount of rainfall (medium confidence).

While still in their short wet season, the ABC Islands and coastal Guianas are forecast to see a higher number of **wet days and wet spells** (medium to high confidence). This number is expected to decrease towards February. Until then, **flash floods and long-term flooding** are a concern due to the possibility of extremely wet spells. In other areas, there is still the small chance for extreme wet spells and, therefore, associated flash flood potential remains a concern until the end of December.

How dry?

With the exception of Haïti and parts of The Bahamas where **drought** is evolving, drought or excessive dryness is not forecast to be a major concern during this period (high confidence).

How hot?

Night-time and day-time temperatures in the Caribbean are forecast to be comfortable (high confidence), i.e. without much heat stress, in spite of daytime temperatures being at least as high as usual during this coolest time of the year (high confidence).

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/>

Climate Outlook for Caribbean Source Markets

A weak La Niña will affect global climate. What do we expect in the source markets?

December through February marks the winter season in the North American and European source markets.

For the North American markets, it is relevant to note that the ongoing weak La Niña conditions would increase chances of the Southeastern US being warmer and drier than usual. Forecasts are fairly confident of such a scenario for Florida. In addition, there is a reasonable chance that New England and Québec could see warmer than usual temperatures (medium confidence), while the US Northern Plains and MidWest, as well as southernmost Ontario may be cooler than usual (low to medium confidence).

Looking at European source markets, the northern parts of Scotland and Ireland may see more rain and snow than usual (low to medium confidence), while the Nordic Countries are forecast to be warmer than usual (medium confidence).

Contact Us



Amanda Charles
Sustainable Tourism Specialist, CTO
Email: acharles@caribtourism.com



Loreto Duffy-Mayers
Regional Project Manager,
CHENACT, CHTA
Email: chenactproject@gmail.com



Denaye Hinds
Chair, CHTA/CAST
Email: dhinds@obmi.com



Dr. Roché Mahon
Social Scientist, CIMH
Email: rmahon@cimh.edu.bb



Dr. Cédric Van Meerbeeck
Climatologist, CIMH
Email: cmeerbeeck@cimh.edu.bb

Upcoming Events

- **December 12-14, 2017: Climate Smart Sustainable Tourism Forum (CTO), St. Kitts and Nevis**
- **January 29 - February 1, 2018: CHTA Marketplace (CHTA), Puerto Rico**



Photo Credit: Antigua & Barbuda Tourism

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

Dry Spells – A period of a number of days to weeks during which rainfall is insignificant or far below the usual amounts for the time of year.

Heat Stress – A body exposed to excessive heat to such extent that it can no longer regulate its temperature and cool itself down, experiences heat stress. Heat Stress can take the form of discomfort, injuries and illnesses (e.g. including heatstroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps or heat rashes).

Heat wave – A multi-day period of continuous extremely high temperatures or feel like temperatures. Such heat waves tend to cause acute heat stress.

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

Short-term (meteorological) drought – A rainfall deficit over a total period of 3 to 6 months.

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 and can increase the potential for flash flooding.

La Niña - unusual cooling of the sea surface temperature of the eastern equatorial Pacific for a period of several months.

Definition of sub-regions

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.