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

CARIBBEAN TOURISM CLIMATIC BULLETIN

for Tourism Businesses and Policymakers

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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 (September - November 2026) 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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EL NINO - A WARNING!

Over the past few months, a *very strong* - and possibly record-breaking - El Niño has been developing in the Pacific Ocean, with major implications for climate risk in the Caribbean. Strong El Niños are associated with increased occurrence of climate-related extremes. Therefore, it is paramount that the Caribbean tourism sector works along with its stakeholders to prepare for reduced water availability and intense heat stress that is *likely* to *significantly* impact its workforce, the tourists and tourism business revenue in coming months. This may potentially become more challenging in early to mid-2027.

Climate risk management linked to enhancing visitor health and safety, remains a critical factor in ensuring tourism sector resilience and managing the overall visitor experience. Tourism interests across the region should be prepared to deal with weather and climate emergencies in addition to ongoing concerns related to managing respiratory issues and dengue, chikungunya as well as other possible health threats as they arise.

The CTO, CHTA, and CIMH will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean

September through November marks: 1) the late wet season in the Caribbean Islands and Belize, 2) the transition to the wet season in the ABC Islands, and 3) the hot, dry season in the Guianas. What should you do?

The 2026 **Hurricane Season** officially lasts until November 30th - with the peak of tropical cyclone activity typically lasting until around mid-October -, but storms and hurricanes have occurred after the official end date. The appearance and rapid strengthening of a - now very strong - El Niño this summer has led to a lackluster first half of the Hurricane Season, with only 5 tropical storms having formed and causing minimal, if any, negative impact on the Caribbean. If anything, the rainfall associated with minimal storms can be beneficial in drought-stricken areas. Strong winds blowing in different directions at different heights (i.e., strong vertical wind shear) were and are forecast to continue to be inhibitive to tropical cyclone development most of the time. As such, September to November is predicted to feature fewer storms than usual, i.e., 3 to 8 more named storms of which 2 to 5 or so may develop into a hurricane, and 1 or 2 becoming a major hurricane (medium confidence). However, while low numbers mean a lower chance of any given location to be impacted, one strong event can be enough to cause catastrophic impacts.

The aforementioned El Niño conditions mean less frequent rainshowers, wet spells and heavy rain than is typical during the peak of the **Caribbean Wet Season** (medium confidence), with increasing drought risk. Despite that the upcoming period may not produce the usual amount of rainfall, excessive rainfall events and very wet spells will still lead to high (i.e., at least once every other year) to extremely high (i.e., at least once in most years) potential for **flooding, flash floods, cascading hazards & impacts** throughout the region.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean

Severe weather systems related to tropical cyclones, as well as heavy showers may affect Caribbean territories repeatedly. Severe weather events such as tropical cyclones are a recurrent feature of our climate through November and come with a range of hazards, including high winds, landslides, long-term flooding, flash floods, coastal flooding, among others. Tourism operators are advised to **constantly monitor and abide by weather advisories** issued by National Meteorological Services, National Disaster Management Offices 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.

The frequency of light showers and **seasonal rainfall totals** is *likely* to be unusually low during the peak of the Wet Season throughout the region, with the highest chances for rainfall deficits in coming months in Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, the Lesser Antilles, and the ABC Islands (*high confidence*). More uncertainty exists in Cuba, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica and Guyana, but the forecast still suggests a *possibility* of unusually low rainfall there (*medium confidence*).

Climate Advisories: Caribbean

Most islands in the Caribbean are already faced with cumulative rainfall deficits during the first half of the 2026 Wet Season. In view of pre-existing and forecasted rainfall deficits, *severe* **long-term drought** at the end of November 2026 is *imminent* in Saint Lucia (*high confidence*), is *evolving* in the ABC Islands, Antigua, the Northern and Northwest Bahamas and Tobago, and *might possibly develop or continue* in Grenada, Martinique, St. Vincent, and the US Virgin Islands. Long-term drought impacting those areas may affect natural freshwater availability across a multitude of sectors where unmitigated by desalination. Be further advised that long-term drought concerns are *likely* to further expand and intensify into a significant regional drought event from December onwards, i.e., into the 2026-2027 Dry Season. Tourism facilities *must* continue to enhance/upgrade their water conservation practices, as well as rainwater harvesting and repairs to leaky pipes, etc., and advise staff and guests of the need to reduce water wastage on an ongoing basis.

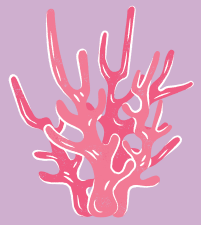
While preparing for hurricanes and other severe weather events remains a priority in any year, and drought will likely be a regional priority in early to mid 2027, an additional priority for climate risk management should be on heat and associated impacts (especially on public health), at least through October. Because the region expects more clement, sunny weather than usual associated with the El Niño, the Tropical North Atlantic and Caribbean Sea will store unusually large amounts of heat in coming months, and release some of that heat to the overlying atmosphere. Hence, even as trade winds slacken and humidity rises, there are strong indications that the level of **excessive heat** during the last two months of the **Caribbean Heat Season** – i.e., September and October – will exceed the norm.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean Cont'd

The forecast suggests unusually warm daytime and nighttime temperatures, increased humidity, as well as a higher frequency/longer duration of hot spells (*high confidence*) and the possibility of full-blown **heat waves** (*medium confidence*). **Heat stress** is, therefore, a particular concern in the Lesser Antilles and the Guianas, where the Heat Season typically peaks in September or October, respectively. Moreover, in the aftermath of a debilitating severe weather event, exposure to the combination of humid heat and recurrent heat waves can become severely dangerous to human life if unmitigated. Tourism practitioners should expect an **increase in demand for cooling/hydration services** (e.g., AC use and refrigeration use, use of pools and showers, and drinking water) and should advise their guests accordingly in the upcoming period. Tourism practitioners should be encouraged to acquire more energy and water efficient equipment, especially because the year 2027 may become a record warm year.

Notwithstanding that it is the wettest part of the year in the Caribbean Islands and Belize, there remains a high risk of skin damage due to **harmful ultraviolet (UV) light** emitted by the sun. The UV index will progressively decrease from *extremely high* to *very high* on sunny days towards November. Visitors should be encouraged to apply protective clothing and, where appropriate, high SPF sunscreen lotion regularly (preferably mineral sunscreen), 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 and protective clothing when they work outdoors.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean Cont'd



In view of long-lasting marine heatwaves developing from September to November, excessive heat in the waters surrounding the Caribbean may trigger **coral bleaching** in The Bahamas and most of Cuba in September, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, and most of the Windward Islands from late September through to November. Though a portion of the recently bleached corals may recover in cooler, clear and clean water, the forecasted sea surface temperatures will *very likely* produce a long period of heat stress in the corals, ultimately reducing their chance of recovery. Therefore, it is imperative to minimise runoff of pollutants into coastal waters by guests and locals alike. This can increase the survival chances of coral reefs.

The frequency of **Saharan dust** incursions into the Caribbean tends to decrease during this period. Similarly, local dust levels should be on the low end throughout the remainder of the Wet Season in the Caribbean Islands and Belize. However, local dust levels are expected to increase in the Guianas during their long dry season, potentially impacting on respiratory health and reducing visibility.

Climate Advisories: Caribbean Source Markets

September to November marks the Autumn season in the source markets. What should you do?

Northern source markets will experience less sunny and cooler weather in the Autumn season despite that temperatures are *very likely* to be at least as warm as usual in North America and Europe (*high confidence*). Tourism operators are recommended to focus on enhanced marketing efforts to attract visitors. Additionally, they should differentiate themselves through innovative package offers, memorable customer service (bearing in mind appropriate health protocols where applicable), and activities that take advantage of the pristine natural environments on offer. Furthermore, Tour Operators should monitor the weather forecasts in the source markets.

In addition, some competing markets in the Sunbelt states of the United States are expected to *likely* see wetter, but warmer than usual conditions, increasing the potential for undesirable weather conditions. Marketing efforts could focus on attracting visitors to the generally sunny, warm, breezy weather even in the wet season, as well as the usual excellent air quality in this season, and general health and safety in the Caribbean region.

Surf and Sargassum Outlook

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/

Sargassum Outlook

Tourism operators may consult the University of the West Indies / Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI/CERMES)'s Sargassum sub-regional Outlook Bulletin for the Eastern Caribbean or the monthly University of South Florida (USF)/NASA Sargassum Outlook Bulletin for the entire Caribbean before planning activities. Click here to access the latest UWI/CERMES product: https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/cermes/projects/sargassum/outlook-bulletin.aspx.

Click here to access the USF/NASA product: https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/SaWS.html.

A visually easy to interpret forecast for the next one to six months is offered by The Sargassum group at the Laboratoire d'Études en Géophysique et Océanographie Spatiales (LEGOS) and can be found at: https://www.legos.omp.eu/sargassum/sargassum-old-viewer/.

Several Sargassum resources are available from the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) and can be accessed here: https://cast.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/resource-hub/sargassum

Additional resources and publications for Sargassum management are also available from CTO here: https://www.onecaribbean.org/our-work/sustainable-tourism-dept/sargassum-resources/

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Upcoming Events

CTO:

- **September 9, 2026: Sustainable Tourism in Action webinar focussing on Sargassum https://www.onecaribbean.org/sustainable-tourism-in-action-webinar-series/**
- **October 5-9: SOTIC https://www.onecaribbean.org/sotic-2026/**
- **All November 2026: Caribbean Tourism Month**

CHTA:

- **November 16-18, 2026: Caribbean Hospitality Industry Education Forum (CHIEF), Wyndham Barbados**

CIMH:

- **Late November, 2026: Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF)**

Websites

Caribbean Tourism Organization:
www.onecaribbean.org

Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association:
www.caribbeanhotelassociation.com

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

Glossary

Seasonal climate forecast - the guidance offered by a forecaster or forecast centre on climate conditions during the coming months. Forecast information in this Bulletin pertains to the 3 months highlighted in the Issue.

El Niño - a naturally occurring climate pattern associated with large-scale weakening of the trade winds and warming of the ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

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.

Caribbean Heat Season - most heatwaves and the associated spikes in heat stress occur between April or May and October in the Caribbean

Caribbean Cool Season - occurs between December and February or March when the Caribbean experiences comfortably cool weather

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.

For more technical climate terms: https://rcc.cimh.edu.bb/glossary-of-terms/