# Irish summer heat breaks records but raises questions over lasting change



As the sun blazes down this summer, it’s hard not to feel that we’ve been granted a rare gift. The historical patterns of Irish weather, however, often prompt a more cautious optimism. Many remember when prolonged dry spells in May and June would typically lead to a damp, disheartening July and August. This tendency fuels a collective hesitation: will this brilliant weather endure, or is it a fleeting joy, soon to be replaced by the customary rain?

Interestingly, the juxtaposition of sunny days and exam season often evokes bitter-sweet feelings. Students, too, seem to receive their share of this climatic irony as academic pressures coincide with glorious weather. Parents often joke that the sun will disappear just as the school year ends, leaving behind a landscape more synonymous with grey than green.

While the allure of ideal summer days spent picnicking, barbecuing, and basking in the sun is undeniable, the reality brings its own complexities. For some, the heat might be a nuisance—exacerbating allergies as pollen counts surge and attracting unwelcome insects. Furthermore, the Irish public faces unique challenges when adapting to warmer temperatures. Unlike many nations accustomed to sustained heat, Ireland is ill-prepared for these conditions; our buildings are often designed to retain heat rather than provide relief, and we lack widespread air conditioning.

Recent discussions surrounding heatwaves have reignited historical reflections, notably highlighted in John L Williams’s book *Heatwave: The Summer of 1976 – Britain at Boiling Point*. This account vividly illustrates how a searing summer can act as a catalyst for social unrest, with the intense heat in 1976 provoking a cultural and political pressure cooker. It remarkably mirrors contemporary concerns; experiencing warmer weather can amplify social tensions, even if the correlation is not straightforward.

The Irish climate has been increasingly shifting, with June 2023 setting a record high, averaging temperatures above 16°C for the first time since records began in 1940. This trend of rising temperatures is not isolated—2023 is projected to surpass previous years as the warmest on record in Ireland. Such climatic changes, according to Met Éireann, are indicative of a broader pattern of warming, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Notably, with summer heat becoming more frequent, Ireland could transform from a traditionally cooler destination into a more appealing option for tourists seeking respite from extreme Mediterranean heat.

Moreover, while tourism may benefit from a more temperate Irish summer, it is essential to consider the health implications of these warmer conditions. Research indicates that sudden exposure to excessive heat can increase mortality rates among a population largely unfamiliar with such extremes. The Irish are known for their fair skin, which renders them particularly susceptible to sunburn and heat-related illnesses. Widespread education around sun safety, including the importance of high-factor sunscreens and seeking shade, is paramount as weather becomes more unpredictable.

While the prospect of blistering summers is alarming, the evolution of Ireland's climate also invites a reevaluation of how we perceive our weather. The unpredictability that comes with a temperate climate may well offer more advantages than we acknowledge—ranging from enhanced biodiversity to more manageable summer heat. Instead of lamenting the occasional sunless summer, perhaps it’s time to appreciate the varied experiences that our climate affords.

As we navigate these shifts, embracing both the fragrant blooms of summer and the cooling rains that follow may be the key. After all, in a world increasingly shaped by climate change, celebrating the richness of our weather might just enrich our lives more than we realise.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5
3. Paragraphs 2, 5, 6
4. Paragraph 5, 6
5. Paragraphs 5, 6
6. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 6
7. Paragraph 3, 6

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/is-a-heatwave-really-what-we-want-why-the-irish-weather-may-be-better-than-we-think-PILPL7HFFJFN5IZV5HAYNNRCR4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/b7076-hottest-june-on-record-for-ireland-as-average-temperatures-of-16c-break-83-year-old-record/> - In June 2023, Ireland experienced its hottest June on record, with average temperatures exceeding 16°C, surpassing the previous record set in 1940. The highest temperature recorded was 28.8°C in Co Carlow on June 13, marking the third consecutive year with temperatures at or above this level. Met Éireann's climatologist, Paul Moore, noted that this warming trend is part of an observed pattern and is expected to continue, highlighting the impact of climate change on Ireland's climate.
3. <https://www.met.ie/state-of-the-irish-climate-report-2023> - Met Éireann's Provisional State of the Irish Climate Report 2023 indicates that 2023 is expected to be the warmest year on record for Ireland, with an annual average temperature exceeding 11°C for the first time. This surpasses the previous record set in 2022. The report emphasizes the unprecedented levels of warming and rainfall, noting that past weather events are no longer reliable indicators of future conditions, underscoring the need for adaptation to a changing climate.
4. <https://www.hospitalityireland.com/general-industry/irelands-tourism-sector-benefits-from-europes-sweltering-summer-199614> - The European heatwave in 2023 led to a shift in tourist habits, with travelers opting for cooler destinations or planning holidays in spring and autumn to avoid extreme heat. This trend benefited countries like Ireland, which saw a spike in interest from tourists seeking milder climates. The European Travel Commission reported a 10% decrease in travelers planning to visit the Mediterranean between June and November, while destinations such as Ireland experienced increased attention.
5. <https://www.askaboutireland.ie/enfo/irelands-environment/Change/impacts-of-climate-change/health/> - Research indicates that heatwave conditions in Ireland can lead to increased mortality rates. The Irish population, unaccustomed to strong sun and heat, faces risks such as sunburn, sunstroke, and skin cancer as global warming escalates. The typically fair Irish skin tone is susceptible to burning before tanning, necessitating the use of high-factor sunscreen and caution during peak sun hours around midday.
6. <https://www.met.ie/annual-climate-statement-for-2023> - Met Éireann's Annual Climate Statement for 2023 highlights that Ireland's warming trend continued, with 2023 being the second consecutive warmest year on record. The report attributes this to record-high sea surface temperatures across the North Atlantic since April and a severe marine heatwave off the west coast in June. These factors contributed to increased mean temperatures and atmospheric moisture, leading to numerous flooding events, especially in the latter half of the year.
7. <https://www.irishtimes.com/environment/climate-crisis/2023/11/22/severe-marine-heatwave-of-june-2023-off-irish-coast-likely-to-become-common-study-finds/> - A study led by Dr. Gerard McCarthy of ICARUS in Maynooth University and a UK Met Office research found that the severe marine heatwave off the west and north coasts of Ireland in June 2023, which saw sea surface temperatures rise by up to 5 degrees, is likely to become common in a warming world. The study warns of the potential strain such marine heatwaves could place on marine ecosystems and their role in exacerbating extreme weather events in Europe.