

## The Climate

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There are two seasons in the Maldives: a dry northeast monsoon (called Iruvai by the Maldivians) and a wet southwest monsoon (hulhagu). From May to November the prevailing winds are from the southwest and bring an average of 215mm of rainfall and 208 hours of sunshine per month. Around mid December the winds veer to the northeast and, with the change in direction, bring a much drier climate. Rainfall averages 75mm (3in) per month in this season, the average monthly sunshine is 256 hours.

Maldivian days are hot and humid throughout the year, with temperatures of about 25-30° C (72-80° F) and humidities of 60-80%. There is not much difference in terms of sunshine between the seasons but a huge difference in the amount of rainfall &ndash; just as in any tropical country. When it rains in the Maldives it rains hard and usually for just a short time.

The Maldives is sometimes affected by cyclones passing through the Bay of Bengal; the most likely times for these are April/May and again in October/November. However, these storms seldom pass close to the Maldives and, when they do, the effects are generally short-lived. The area either side of the equator is well known to mariners as the Doldrums on account of its weak winds.

The weather pattern has a strong influence on the currents. During the northeast monsoon, ocean currents are driven through the atoll channels from the northeast; conversely, during the southwest monsoon, they flow into the atolls from the southwest. These patterns have enormous significance for the diving.