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Hurricane Season To Fish Or Not To Fish

Should you trade predictable weather and consistent fishing for cheaper rates, un-pressured flats, and fish that just want to eat?

By Will Robins | August 2021

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Hurricanes and a relaxing Caribbean getaway don't mix well. High winds, low light and lashings of rain are hardly the idyllic combination you may have pictured when you booked your flats-fishing trip.

Guides don't like those conditions either. If nothing else, a guide's duty is to make your vacation

memorable and passionately share the environment with you. Trying conditions make this an uphill battle. However, I can tell you that some of the best fishing of the year takes place between early July and the end of November, right in the heart of hurricane season.

The Caribbean hurricane season

spans six months, beginning in June and ending in November. Practically, half the year we have chance of incurring hurricanes and/or tropical storms. In recent years several hurricanes have caused significant damage to parts of the Caribbean, along with Louisiana, Florida and Texas. Over in the western Caribbean, we don't usually see destructive



storm systems passing through. This is due to our geographic location. Most storms tend to curve away from the Yucatan Peninsula, as opposed to crossing right over it. In addition, the western Caribbean usually doesn't see a shift in weather patterns until September, and those systems are usually gone by the end of November. Essentially, that makes our hurricane season about half as long as you might find elsewhere

in the Caribbean.

We can't predict the future, so there's now way to guarantee a storm won't influence your trip during hurricane season, but those who roll the dice often find significant reward. I often quote Delboy's classic line from the British sit-com *Only Fools and Horses*, that being, "He who dares wins, Rodders". Although comical, the sentiment rings true. I

would warn against booking a trip during hurricane season months in advance. But, if you monitor the weather patterns and can book a trip a couple weeks to a month in advance of your arrival date, you limit the risks.

What makes the risk worth the reward?

It all comes down to shifting pressure systems that arrive during hurricane season. We see the



occasional storm and low pressure band during the first half of the year, but between early September and the end of November an active cycle of mixed pressure systems and weather patterns arrives, and this creates some intense fishing widows.

Flats species, like bonefish, permit and tarpon, are very keyed into their environment and can sense these subtle changes well before a storm arrives. I believe this powerful ability—as if they can predict the future—creates our red-letter fishing days. When fish sense these changes they quickly move onto the flats in increased numbers, possibly stay for longer spells and, more often than not, throw caution to the wind when it comes to feeding.

I am reminded of a day not long ago when I landed seven permit in three hours, along with the obliging bonefish and a micro-tarpon, which completed my slam. The day was gray and overcast, with a fast approaching band of low pressure, and the fish were keyed into this. We saw significant numbers of fish, and they were hungry.

Lo and behold, a few days later, the band of low pressure released heavy rains and strong winds before moving north. We headed out a day or two after the storm, on a beautiful bluebird



sky morning, avoiding blown-out spots and colored water, in the hopes of another great day. While we weren't able to fish our usual permit spots, due to water color and clarity, we did have a very memorable afternoon chasing bonefish on the beach. At one point it seemed like every bonefish in Mexico was cruising that beach, looking for a post-storm snack. We quickly lost count of numbers and just called it a great day.

We also see this behavior with Chetumal Bay's tarpon. Pressure

changes can send these fish into chaotic feeding spells, before they go deep. Sometime they'll move closer to Xcalak and over the reef to feed in deeper water. When the pressure equalizes and calm returns, the fish are back on the flats within a few days, rolling high and on the feed.

As you can see, the fishing can be off-the-charts good later in the year. And by rolling the dice you can take advantage of some good deals, paying off-season rates. You'll find fewer boats and anglers

on the water and if you hit it just right, you'll have the chance to enjoy your most memorable day on the water.

So, it's up to you. Take the high-traffic season and more predictable weather, or take a swing at some of the most productive flats fishing of your life, with fewer boats and anglers on the water, less pressured fish that are willing to eat, and cheaper rates for your experience.



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Will Robins started his adventure into the world of fly fishing on the chalk streams and freestone spate rivers of his home county of Yorkshire in England. He quickly progressed to the large reservoirs and lakes, competing regularly in the competition circuit. Will hit his peak in the competitive world, being promoted to team captain for England fly fishing. Here, Will led the team to a gold medal at the international level. Following his competition success, Will started guiding on his home rivers for trout and grayling. As well as working at the world-renowned Farlows of Pall Mall fly store in London. Will eventually made the switch to the salt and has not looked back. He started his first saltwater operation, Precision Fly Charters, out of Ambergris Caye, Belize in 2018. Currently, Will owns and operates Fly Fishing Costa Maya, a fly shop and guiding service based in Quintana Roo, Mexico.

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