



A Guide to Climate and Rainfall for Kenya

CLIMATE AND RAINFALL

Except for unusual circumstances, such as the El Nino event back in 1997/8, the weather here is fairly predictable year by year with the only significant variable being rainfall. Even this, balanced out over a number of years, shows a surprising consistency. The rainfall figures quoted below have been recorded over a period of 11 years by one of our local horticultural experts. It is worth pointing out that we are almost an “island” here as far as the clouds are concerned, with Mida Creek extending behind much of Watamu. This causes us to have much less than locations fairly close by, such as Gede, and even the north of Watamu gets more rain than the south.

Incidentally, we LIKE rain here – it is not the nasty, cold and miserable kind you get in northern countries. Here it is cool, refreshing, clears the air and causes plants to grow and birds to sing.

Temperatures vary relatively little throughout the year compared with northern climes. During the hottest times, it can reach 34c, but even during the cold, wet nights of June it rarely drops below 20c. This compares with a range of up to 40 degrees in UK and even more on continental Europe.

During the period (April – September) of the south-eastern monsoon, the “Kusi”, strong winds, rougher water and tidal flows cause deposits of sea-grass in some areas, notably those bays which face that direction. These deposits are highly beneficial and, combined with blown sand and the action of ghost crabs dragging strands down into their holes, create stability of the foreshore. Although the large deposits in some areas can be a nuisance, it is always possible to find an area of beach not far away that is clear. The practice of clearing this sea-grass from the beach by some hotels should be condemned as it is highly detrimental and will cause excessive erosion in the longer term.

JANUARY

Rainfall averages 10mm., and often is zero. This month is hot, with temperatures sometimes reaching 34c during the day and seldom dropping below 28c at night. Nights are hot and humid and fans are necessary. Winds are light, from the north-east, and seas are usually calm. Extreme care should be taken from effects of the sun.

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FEBRUARY

Pretty much the same as January, with slightly less average rainfall.

MARCH

Showers start to occur this month, with rain occurring every year, but average only 40mm., just enough to settle the dust. Seas usually calm, with the wind still from the north-east. Temperatures are hot, with daytimes maximums of 35c and nights around 30c.

APRIL

Rain more frequent and the wind is trying to veer to the south-east. Sometimes the onset of the heavy rains (Kusi) can begin towards the end of the month. Seas become steadily rougher as the month goes on. Average rainfall is 160mm. Daytime temperatures are dropping, especially when the wind veers southwards. Sea grass deposits start to accumulate on south facing areas of beach.

MAY

Usually the wettest month of the year, with 250mm the norm. Rain can be continuous for several days at a time and winds are strong, with rough seas. All deep sea fishing ceases now. Nights are pleasantly cool, with bed-covers used for the first time during our typical year.

JUNE

Only half the rainfall of May, but can be in very heavy squally showers. Seas can be very rough. Daytime temperatures a relatively chilly 25c and nights can drop to 19c. Bed-covers on at night, especially towards dawn. The sun is at its furthest point north.

JULY

65mm is the average for this month, with consequently more sunshine and slightly higher daytime temperatures, getting up to 28c.

AUGUST

Brief showers, usually at night, give only 35mm of rain. Lighter winds and calmer seas enable boating activities such as diving and fishing to recommence. With more sunlight hours, yet cooler than the hot season, many regard this as the ideal time of year.

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SEPTEMBER

Slightly less rainfall and again usually at night. Temperatures starting to pick up a bit, hitting 30c in the day and 25c at night. Winds can take an occasional turn northwards as the north-east monsoon (Kaskasi) approaches.

OCTOBER

It is normal for the winds to change during this month. When they do, the “short rains” begin, giving rainfall of 70mm on average. The change in wind and tide also causes the dispersal of the sea-grass which can occur surprisingly quickly. Temperatures remain around the same as September.

NOVEMBER

Temperatures are starting to climb again as the sun nears overhead at mid-day, going up to 32c in the day and 27c at night. A little less rain this month, often in quite heavy bursts. Beaches are quite clear by now.

DECEMBER

Still a little rain around, but down to 55mm. Getting towards the hottest time of year, with 33c common. Care should be taken when out in the sun from 11.00am to 4.00pm. Bed-covers can now be safely put away until next May.

Although not strictly under the heading of “weather”, it is worth mentioning the daylight hours. We are within the tropics, slightly south of the equator, and so when the sun is directly overhead at mid-day we have precisely 12 hours between sunrise and sunset. This varies very slightly during the course of the year, but not by more than a quarter of an hour or so. The times at which dawn breaks also varies by up to half an hour, but all year round it starts to get light between 5.30 and 6.00am and darkness falls between 6.30 and 7.00pm. We have a very short “twilight” period of only 15 minutes or so.

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