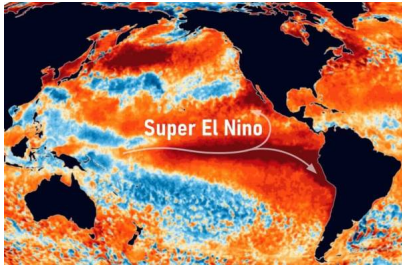


# TRAVEL DESTINATIONS MOST AFFECTED BY THE EL NIÑO PHENOMENON



El Niño is a climatic phenomenon that arises every three to five years when the surface waters of the Pacific Ocean heat up abnormally. This modifies the distribution of heat and humidity around the world, thus provoking droughts, floods, fires or heat waves depending on the region.

In 2026, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the US agency in charge of monitoring the oceans and the atmosphere, expects a 90% chance that the current episode becomes "very strong", and a 69% probability that it breaks the records since 1950.

The El Niño phenomenon has already started: officially triggered in June 2026 according to Météo-France and NOAA, it reinforces itself by the week and the first consequences are visible. **Violent storms swept across Chile and Brazil in July and, in Rio de Janeiro, the rainfall is at a record high in September.** The peak of the phenomenon is expected between November 2026 and January 2027.

While the El Niño phenomenon disrupts the balance of the world's climate, certain areas of the world bear the brunt of the impact. Among these, we find travel destinations which are particularly popular with tourists. Droughts that parch the landscape, floods that cut off roads, fires which devour the forests, bleaching which ravages coral reefs: everywhere, the tourism sector is on the front line. Let us discover travel destinations which are the most affected by the next El Niño.

## Peru (Machu Picchu & North Coast)

Peru is one of the first victims of El Niño in history. The phenomenon triggers torrential rains, floods and landslides on the Peruvian coast, regularly cutting off access to Machu Picchu. The Inca Trail was closed in August 2026 after flash floods. In 1983, El Niño caused a 10% drop in the national GDP (National Institutes of Health). The state of emergency was declared in 40% of the territory in July 2026. Increased vigilance is therefore advised for all travel to Peru in the coming months.

## The Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

Since 2016, the Great Barrier Reef has been hit by six great bleaching episodes, including two consecutive ones in 2024 and 2025. El Niño heats up the waters of Australia beyond the tolerance threshold of the corals which expel their symbiotic algae, causing their bleaching (and sometimes death). In 2024, 73% of the reefs monitored were affected (Australian Institute of Marine Science). The attractiveness of this jewel, generating six billion Australian dollars a year, is somewhat compromised by each episode.

## Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines)

The El Niño phenomenon has dried up Southeast Asia, triggering devastating forest fires. In 2026, 800,000 hectares have burned in Indonesia between January and August. The smoke from the fires choked Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. This poses a double problem for tourists: the unbreathable air and the blackened landscape. Bali, Phuket and Boracay, which welcome millions of

tourists every year, are directly impacted.

### **The Galapagos Islands & Ecuador**

El Niño heats the Galapagos waters and stops the rich cold current which feeds all the Galapagos species: marine iguanas, sea lions, penguins, gannets, etc. During the episode of 1997-1998, the penguin population dropped by 77% and the sea lion population by 50%. However, the vast majority of the 300,000 tourists who visit the archipelago per year do so to admire these flagship species. With every similar episode, the operators, ecotourism cruises in particular, witness a collapse in their bookings.

### **Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe & Zambia)**

The phenomenon also deprives southern Africa of rain. As a result, the Zambezi River, the lifeblood of Victoria Falls, is witnessing a significant decrease in its flow. In 2019, the falls were reduced to a trickle, and pictures of this phenomenon broadcast around the world caused a significant drop in bookings. The episode of 2023-2024 caused the worst drought ever recorded in the region. A new alert has been issued for the period 2026-2027, which threatens the tourism economy of Zimbabwe and Zambia.

### **The Amazon & the Pantanal (Brazil, Bolivia, Peru)**

El Niño disrupts the Amazon monsoon and extends the dry season, transforming the forest into a conflagration. A strong statistical correlation has been established by the Monitoring of the Andes Amazon Program: the stronger the El Niño, the more devastating the next fire season. In 2024, 2.79 million hectares of primary forest have burned: an absolute record. On the occasion of the "very strong" episode of 2026-2027, the forecasts are worrying, wildlife being again the target (jaguar, jabiru, caiman, etc.). River lodges, Amazon cruises and Pantanal safaris are all directly impacted.

### **Hawaii & the Pacific Islands**

Hawaii enters the 2026 season weakened: 2025 was the second driest year on record and the driest on record for Maui. El Niño accentuates this drought and increases the risk of wildfires in the coming season. In the Pacific atolls (Micronesia, Marshall Islands), the drought could destroy the thin layer of underground fresh water on which the populations and the tourism infrastructure rely.

### **Sri Lanka**

The El Niño phenomenon has brought drought to Sri Lanka. In August 2026, the authorities organized an emergency water supply for 72,000 people in seven districts. The iconic national parks, such as Yala (capital of the leopards), are at risk of temporary closure due to the scarcity of water. Heatwaves are making cultural tours (Sigiriya, Anuradhapura) difficult, even dangerous. This island, which receives 2.5 million tourists per year, fears a severely disrupted tourist season, with possible water shortages (Mongabay).

### **East Africa (Kenya & Tanzania)**

The El Niño paradox: in East Africa, the phenomenon does not cause a drought but, on the contrary, too much rain between October and December. In 2023-2024, these rains destroyed 63 bridges and over 800 km of roads in Tanzania (NOAA). The bush tracks of the Masai Mara and the Serengeti become impassable, the airstrips are closed and the air taxi transfers are canceled. High-end lodges, unable to accommodate their guests, suffer major financial losses.

## India (Rajasthan, Kerala & Goa)

El Niño weakens the Indian monsoon, **depriving large areas of rain and causing extreme heatwaves**. As of 2026, India has identified 300 districts particularly vulnerable to drought. The consequences for tourism are numerous: temperatures of more than 47°C in Rajasthan make visits to Jaipur or Jodhpur dangerous, while the backwaters of Kerala and the beaches of Goa suffer from chronic shortages of water which degrade the landscapes and the accommodation conditions.

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