

Hurricane Irma path: Forecast map warns Florida, New York and Washington - cities at RISK

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[Hurricane Irma](#) forecasters warn the Category 5 hurricane, which is the largest ever formed in the Atlantic, could reach the US mainland by Friday before continuing up the country's eastern seaboard.

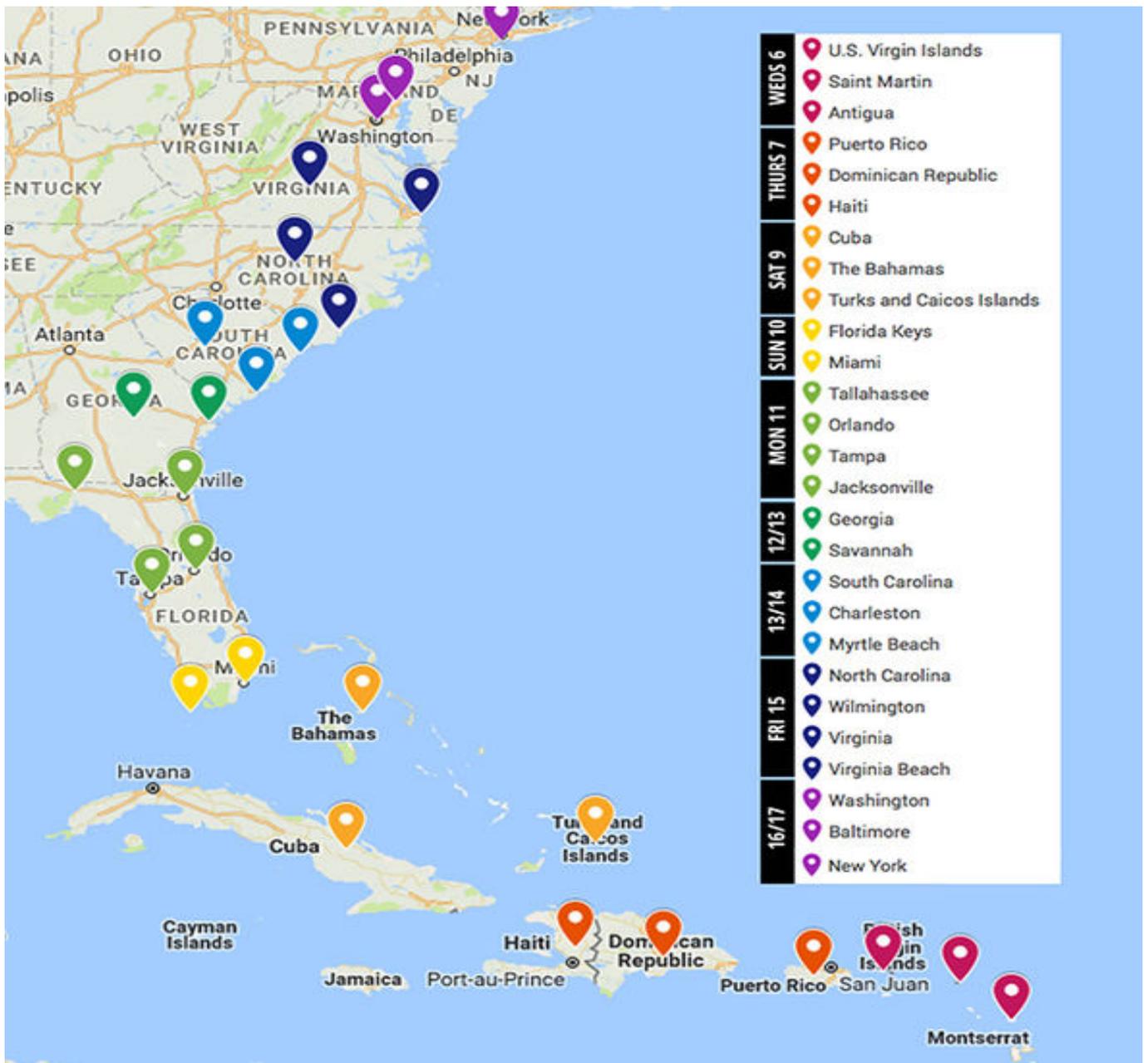
The hurricane has already hit Barbuda and St Barts and St Martin, causing "major damage" and leaving a trail of destruction, according to early reports from officials. Irma is now heading straight for the Virgin Islands and Richard Branson's own Necker Island.

Low-lying areas on the French territorial islands have been flooded and widespread damage is expected, according to France's interior minister Gerard Collomb.

Sea level rises have been recorded of more than 2 metres.

Mr Collomb said: "We know that the four most solid buildings on the island have been destroyed which means that more rustic structures have probably been completely or partially destroyed."

And forecasts predict Hurricane Irma, which is the size of France, will continue to crash through the Caribbean before tearing through the US, as portrayed by this new map.



EXPRESS

Hurricane Irma could hit US cities stretching from Florida to New York

The Virgin Islands are next to be hit but billionaire Richard Branson has refused to leave the islands and is among those preparing for the worst with landfall expected today.

While those that can are evacuating the area, billionaire Branson is refusing to leave his private Necker Island.

The Virgin mogul said he is going to ride out the Category 5 hurricane on his luxury island, using a “concrete wine cellar” as a hideaway.

Tomorrow the US territory of Puerto Rico, as well as Haiti and Puerto Rico, two states which share the divided island of Hispaniola, could be hit.

On Saturday the Turks and Caicos Islands are predicted to be in the firing line, along with tourist hotspots Cuba and the Bahamas.

And it is predicted Hurricane Irma will first hit the American mainland, with Miami in the firing

line, along with the Florida Keys island string on Sunday, through to Monday morning.

Hurricane Irma: Damage in the Caribbean



Hurricane Irma flooding in St Martin



Hurricane Irma hits Saint Martin -latest damage



Hurricane Irma flooding in Saint Martin -latest damage

Florida governor Rick Scott has already declared a state of emergency amid widespread evacuations across the state, with residents rushing to supermarkets for vital supplies.

Early next week the forecast becomes more patchy with meteorologists split over whether Hurricane Irma will continue northwards through America.

But if Irma does continue on this route, as many as 10 US states could suffer from the hurricane's severe wind, rain and flooding.

On Monday, other Florida cities including Orlando, Tampa, Jacksonville and Tallahassee could be hit by Hurricane Irma, which has sustained winds of 185 mpg and gusts of 225mph.

Some forecasts predict Georgia will be hit by midweek, with the historic city of Savannah in danger from life-threatening winds and ferocious rain.

Late next week the hurricane is expected to push even further north through South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia.

And the weekend of Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 September could see Hurricane Irma hit major US cities in the north-east of the country.

Washington DC, Baltimore and New York cities, with their total population of tens of millions of

people, could be the hurricane's final targets before it finally dies out.

Some experts warn Irma's characteristics mirror those of 1960's Hurricane Donna which left a death toll of almost 400 and destroyed tens of thousands of homes as it swept along the Atlantic coast from the southern tip of Florida to New England in the north.

And as Hurricane Irma threatens to bring devastation to huge swathes of the US East Coast, it's feared Irma could be even worse than Donna.

Deadly Donna was only a Category 4 storm with maximum wind speeds of around 160mph whereas Irma has already a potentially catastrophic Category 5 hurricane packing sustained winds of 185mph and more.

- [Hurricane Irma sparks mass Florida Keys EVACUATION](#)
 - [Hurricane Irma facts: 10 reasons to fear the HUGE Category 5 storm](#)
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