

Re: Weather And Latitude Are Not Allies

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On Jan 28, 4:32 am, xiko...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

There is a popular assumption that if you move to higher latitudes (toward the poles) you can escape the heat, and that by moving to lower latitudes (toward the equator) you can escape the cold.

And it is basically true if all other things are equal but there are some notable exceptions. Continental climates are much hotter in summer and colder in winter, maritime climates are moderated by the influence of the sea.

Ireland and the West coast of Scotland are in addition warmed by the North Atlantic drift (or Gulf Stream Current) and there are hardy palm trees in Plockton Scotland (lat 57.5 N).

http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/features/understanding/scotland_02.shtml
http://lyncooper.fotki.com/highland-scenery/palm_trees_at_plockton_2.html

You can grow astonishingly tender plants on the right sheltered parts of the UK and Irish west coast.

The equation is simple. But is it real? If it was, then the most northerly capital, Reykjavík, would also be the coldest...at least until they establish a country on Antarctica. Yes, it appears that latitude is slacking off and failing to keep temperatures in line.

Reykjavik also has an abundance of geothermal energy too with the pavements (footpaths) in town heated by waste hot water. But it is a small island in a big ocean and so has a maritime climate in the inhabited coastal zone.

This was brought home to me when preparing for a radio interview in Dublin, Ireland. February had just roiled in and I was sitting back comfortably in my good old Ottawa weather, scraping icicles off my toes. I was giddy with excitement over our warm spell, which it was

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reaching a high of minus-5 (that's about 20-degrees American). I always ask questions the day before an interview, to learn a bit about my audience, so I asked the producer, "So what's the weather forecast in Dublin?" asked.

I am at latitude 54.5N in the UK and so far this winter we have hardly had any frosts at all.

"Oh it's horrible," she told me. "People are bracing for a deep winter freeze that's supposed to hit tonight. It might even get as cold as minus-5!"

This blew me away, that the folks in Dublin would be worried about the thermometer dips as low as ours spikes high. After all, isn't Dublin about the same latitude as Ottawa?

I whipped out my trusty atlas. We live almost exactly on the 45th parallel. If we lived exactly on it, we would have to share our bed with a cow and a dozen chickens across the road – that's how close we are.

I turned the pages to find Ireland. Could I have been mistaken? Is Dublin really quite south of us? No, it turns out that Dublin lies at the 53rd parallel. Hey! They should

Continental climate vs maritime. But there is more to it than that. The Falkland Islands are at a similar southern latitude to the UK but are much closer to the maritime weather conditions expected for their latitude.

Regards,
Martin Brown