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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER .

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RAIN DAYS IN THE BRITISH ISLES AND UNITED STATES

American tourists in the British Isles sometimes complain that they can't go anywhere without an umbrella and raincoat. And, yet, the total rainfall over much of central England is less than 30 inches, an average exceeded almost everywhere in the United States east of the Mississippi. Even in a large part of the Emerald Isle, the rainfall is no greater than that expected in Boston or New York. Yet the pessimistic tourist will tell you that it rains almost every day in the year.

And sure enough, statistics confirm this impression to a certain extent. In Ireland, the average number of "rain" days in the year is 224, if by rain day we mean a day with at least .01 inch precipitation. Scotland has 217 such days on the average, and England and Wales 189. In the United States, on the other hand, only a very small strip of the north Pacific coast has over 180 rainy days in the year. Over a large part of the eastern half of the country, the number ranges from 80 to 120, rising to 130 along the immediate Atlantic coast and to 150 and 170 in the Lake region. In the western United States less than 80 "rain" days a year is the rule, with as few as 20 in southern California and Arizona.

Evidently, the rain in the British Isles is more frequent and less concentrated than in the northeastern United States. The relative humidity is higher with the prevailing wind off the Gulf Stream drift, and lows control the weather much of the time. It rains very easily in the British Isles but, on account of the relatively low average temperatures, it does not usually rain so heavily as with us.

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