

What is behind the record-breaking heat in Kashmir

After the hottest June in nearly 50 years in Kashmir, both Srinagar and the resort town of Pahalgam recently witnessed record-high temperatures. What is causing this?

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A man walks on a dry stretch of the Jhelum River, caused by prolonged dry weather and heatwave, in Srinagar, Wednesday, July 2, 2025. (PTI Photo)

The Kashmir Valley witnessed its **highest day temperature in over seven decades** on Saturday (July 5), while the popular health resort of Pahalgam recorded its **highest-ever daytime temperature**. These record-breaking temperatures come on the heels of the valley experiencing its hottest June in nearly five decades.

Kashmir's climate

The Kashmir Valley generally has a temperate climate with four distinct seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. While spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) are usually pleasant, winter (December to February) sees temperatures dropping well below freezing, with heavy snowfall in high-altitude areas and moderate snowfall in the plains.

Summers (June to August) are mild, with daytime temperatures reaching up to 36 degree Celsius in urban areas and around 30 degree Celsius in resorts like Gulmarg and Pahalgam. Regular western disturbances bring intermittent rainfall, helping cool temperatures. July and August are typically the hottest months of the year.

What has changed?

In recent years, Kashmir's weather has become increasingly erratic. The valley has seen extended dry spells, and temperatures have steadily risen. This year, it recorded the hottest June in nearly 50 years, with daytime temperatures hovering about three degrees above normal.

On Saturday (July 5), Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 37.4 degree Celsius — the highest in over seven decades and the third-highest ever recorded in the city. On the same date in 1953, Srinagar saw a slightly higher temperature of 37.7 degree Celsius. The all-time record stands at 38.3 degree Celsius, recorded on July 10, 1946.

Meanwhile, Pahalgam recorded its highest-ever temperature at 31.6 degree Celsius, breaking its previous record of 31.5 degree set in July last year.

Is this worrying?

Independent weather forecaster Faizan Arif said the worrisome part is that the Valley has seen consistently high mercury readings this year. "We have had higher temperatures in the past, but those were isolated incidents," Arif said. "This year,

temperatures have consistently stayed above normal. Both maximum and minimum temperatures have remained elevated.”

Reasons for the increase in Kashmir’s temperatures

Director of the India Meteorological Department in Srinagar, Mukhtar Ahmad, attributed the temperature rise to a combination of factors.

“First, global warming is causing temperatures to rise worldwide,” Ahmad said. “in Kashmir, in the past, whenever temperatures crossed 35 degree Celsius, rainfall would follow, bringing relief. But now we’re seeing extended dry spells.”

He explained that one of the main reasons for this is the reduced availability of water vapour. “There’s been very little snowfall in the mountains, and whatever snow falls melts by March, leaving the mountains bare.”

Ahmad also pointed to the role of Urban Heat Islands (UHIs), which intensify the heat.

What are Urban Heat Islands, and how do they affect temperatures?

An Urban Heat Island (UHI) is a metropolitan or urban area significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas. UHIs are created by rapid urbanisation, concretisation, macadamisation, fewer water bodies, and reduced vegetation.

Urban areas in the valley — especially Srinagar — are planned in ways that leave little room for green cover compared with the surrounding rural regions. The concertised urban surfaces retain more heat, causing temperatures to rise. Vehicular traffic and industrial activity further worsen the situation.



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