

4 Reasons March Is Still a Winter Month

By [Jonathan Erdman](#) March 01 2019 02:30 PM EDT [weather.com](#)



Snow covers budding cherry blossom trees, Wednesday, March 21, 2018, at the tidal basin in Washington D.C. during a snowstorm on the second day of spring. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

At a Glance

- You might think spring when you hear March, but the weather frequently doesn't cooperate.
- March snowstorms are typical along the East Coast, Midwest, Plains and West.
- On rare occasions, it can even snow in parts of the South in March.
- Much of the nation can still experience a freeze in March.
- The extent of March subzero cold in the past may surprise you.

March brings thoughts of spring to many, particularly the winter-weary in the northern United States.

Baseball's spring training is in full swing. The kids are nearing spring break. Minutes of daylight are added each day and, as a result, the [coldest time of year](#) is usually in the rear-view mirror.

But March weather can be [frustrating](#) to some, squashing spring fever in favor of more cabin fever.

Here are four reasons why you might consider March more of a winter month.

1. Spring Doesn't 'Officially' Arrive For Weeks

While meteorologists mark the start of spring on March 1, the vernal equinox, marking the arrival of spring, occurs around March 20 each year.

So, astronomically speaking, we still have roughly three weeks of winter left as March begins.



On both the vernal (spring) and autumnal (fall) equinoxes, the sun's most direct rays shine on the equator.

2. Notorious March Snowstorms

With lingering cold air in place – yet an increasing contrast in temperature as more southern locations warm up and, therefore, a powerhouse jet stream – March snowstorms can be the stuff of legend.

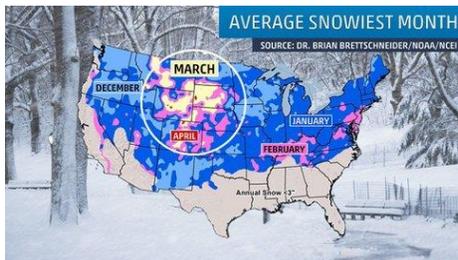
(MORE: [5 Reasons Spring Is the Most Dynamic Weather Season](#))

Along the East Coast, nor'easters can produce feet of snow, high winds and coastal flooding in March. In 2018, [four such nor'easters](#) buffeted the coast in the first three weeks of March.

In recent history, the signature March storm was the infamous [Superstorm of 1993](#), which wrung out snow from the Florida Panhandle to Maine, not to mention driving a squall line with hurricane-like storm surge flooding into Florida.

Strong March winter storms also plague parts of the Midwest, Plains, Rockies, Cascades and Sierra. Last March, roughly [16 feet of snow fell](#) in the Sierra of California in just 18 days.

March is the snowiest month of the year, on average, in parts of the High Plains and Rockies, including Denver, Colorado, and Billings, Montana.



March is typically the snowiest month of the year in locations contoured in light yellow on this map. (Dr. Brian Brettschneider)

3. March Freezes Are Common

With the exception of typically warm areas, such as the Florida Peninsula, South Texas and the Lower Colorado River Valley, at least one March freeze is typical for much of the Lower 48 states.

In fact, a majority of the U.S. has to wait until at least April to get the last spring freeze out of the way. The farther north you live, and the higher the elevation, the more likely you usually must wait until at least May before morning temperatures stay above freezing for the season.



4. March Cold Outbreaks Can Be Surprisingly Frigid

As this article was being written, one of the [coldest March outbreaks in the Plains and Midwest in years](#) was taking shape.

Subzero cold isn't just a feature in winter's peak months of December, January or February. All-time March record lows have been below zero as far south as the Texas Panhandle.

Temperatures as frigid as the minus 30s have happened in March in Marquette, Michigan; Minneapolis-St. Paul; Bismarck, North Dakota; and Great Falls, Montana.

A rather shocking March low of 2 degrees was recorded in Birmingham, Alabama, after Superstorm 1993 dumped 13 inches of snow on the city. That March record might stand for a while – it was 9 degrees colder than any other March low in Birmingham.

It can even get chilly in some typically warm places in March.

Miami's only March freeze was on March 3, 1980, and downtown Los Angeles once had a freeze on March 9, 1893.

Lows in the 20s have been recorded in March in central Florida, far southern Texas and Phoenix.



A sampling of all-time March record low

temperatures. (Data: NOAA/NWS)

Average Snow, Cold By Region

Northeast

As one might expect, average March snowfall is generally lower near the Eastern Seaboard, as the typical warming influence from the Atlantic Ocean may have a greater influence as the month goes on.

The exception is Boston, where nor'easters can pummel southern New England with March snow.

MARCH IN THE NORTHEAST			
	AVERAGE MARCH SNOWFALL	AVERAGE MARCH LOWS	AVERAGE LAST FREEZE
BOSTON	7.8"	Upper 20s-Mid 30s	APRIL 5
BURLINGTON	15.4"	Mid Teens-20s	MAY 7
NEW YORK CITY	3.9"	30s	MARCH 29
SYRACUSE	18.0"	20s-Low 30s	APRIL 30
PITTSBURGH	7.4"	Mid 20s-Mid 30s	APRIL 27
WASHINGTON D.C.	1.3"	Low 30s-Low 40s	MARCH 27

Midwest

There are no real surprises here: March snow is the norm in the Midwest, with freezes over the entire month.

In fact, combining March and April, the Twin Cities usually pick up 13.3 inches of snow.

	AVERAGE MARCH SNOWFALL	AVERAGE MARCH LOWS	AVERAGE LAST FREEZE
DETROIT	6.8"	20s-Low 30s	APRIL 22
CINCINNATI	3.1"	Upper 20s-30s	APRIL 20
CHICAGO	5.6"	Mid 20s-Low 30s	APRIL 23
MINNEAPOLIS	10.5"	Teens-Low 30s	APRIL 25
KANSAS CITY	2.0"	Upper 20s-Upper 30s	APRIL 11
BISMARCK	9.1"	Teens-Mid 20s	MAY 15

South

As previously mentioned, it can snow in the South in March, but usually not every year.

The best chance of this is in either the southern Appalachians or the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas.

	AVERAGE MARCH SNOWFALL	AVERAGE MARCH LOWS	AVERAGE LAST FREEZE
RALEIGH	0.5"	Mid 30s-Low 40s	APRIL 6
ATLANTA	0.6"	40s	MARCH 21
NASHVILLE	0.5"	Mid 30s-Low 40s	APRIL 3
LITTLE ROCK	0.4"	Upper 30s-Mid 40s	MARCH 19
DALLAS-FT. WORTH	0.2"	40s to Low 50s	MARCH 10
AMARILLO	2.9"	Upper 20s-Mid 30s	APRIL 17

West

Tahoe City is in California's Sierra near Lake Tahoe, notorious for atmospheric river events with feet of Sierra cement snowfall.

Otherwise, cities along the Front Range of the Rockies – including Great Falls, Montana, and Denver – can get significant March snowstorms.

	AVERAGE MARCH SNOWFALL	AVERAGE MARCH LOWS	AVERAGE LAST FREEZE
DENVER	10.7"	20s	MAY 4
GREAT FALLS	11.9"	Upper Teens-20s	MAY 21
SALT LAKE CITY	6.5"	Upper 20s-Mid 30s	APRIL 17
TAHOE CITY	31.5"	Low-Mid 20s	JUNE 14
SEATTLE	0.7"	Upper 30s-Low 40s	MARCH 10
ANCHORAGE	9.9"	Mid Teens-Low 20s	MAY 7