

Hurricane Grace lashes Mexico's Caribbean coast

August 19 2021, by Alejandro Castro



Fishermen and tour operators haul their boats onto dry land as a hurricane approaches Mexico's Caribbean coast.

Hurricane Grace unleashed strong winds and heavy rain on Mexico's Caribbean coastline Thursday, grounding flights and forcing some

tourists to spend the night in storm shelters.

The Category One hurricane—the lowest on the five-level Saffir-Simpson scale—made landfall before dawn on the Yucatan Peninsula near the town of Tulum.

It was clocking maximum sustained winds of 80 miles (130 kilometers) per hour but weakened slightly as it moved inland, the US National Hurricane Center in Miami said, warning of a "dangerous storm surge" in the area.

On Wednesday, as the hurricane approached Mexico more than 100 flights to or from the major resort of Cancun were cancelled and tourists in Tulum were told to leave their hotel rooms.

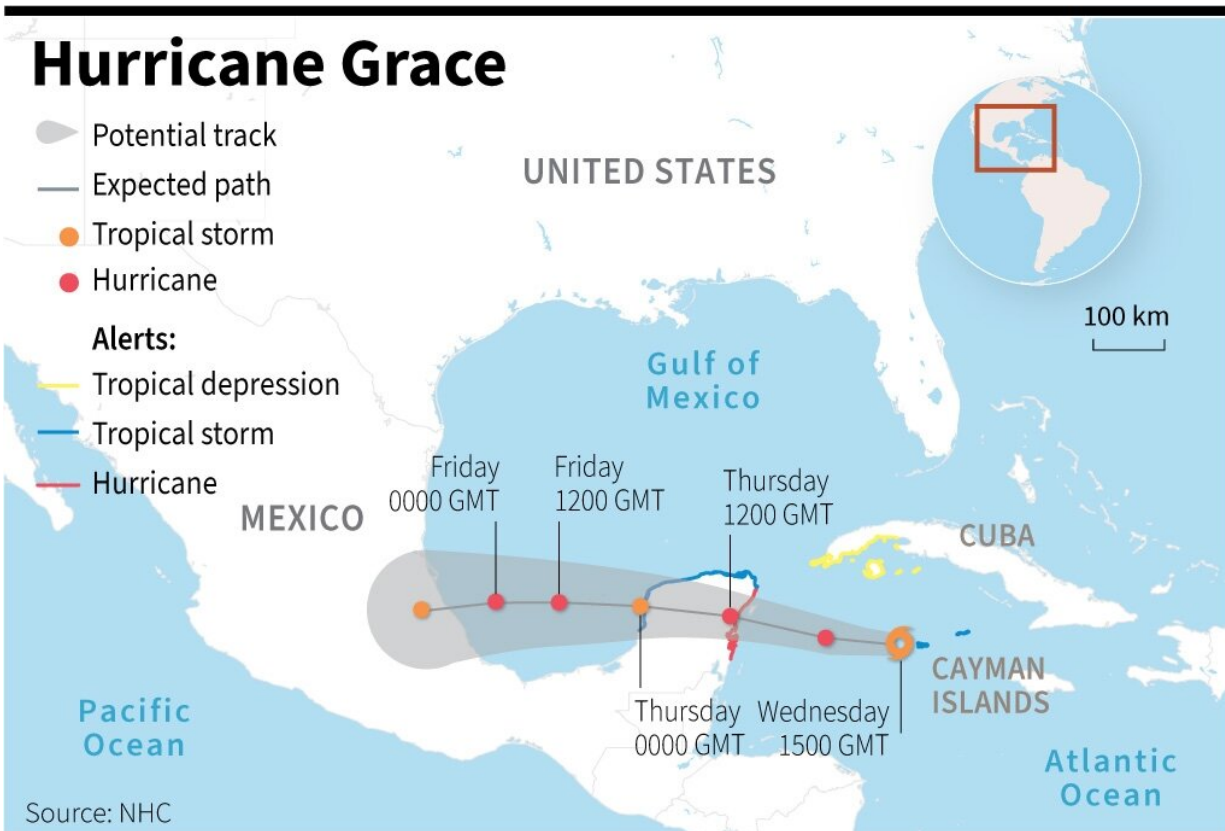
"Hotels in Tulum have been evacuated and the tourists taken to various hotel shelters," said Carlos Joaquin, governor of the southeastern state of Quintana Roo.

Another 125 people were evacuated in small communities in the sparsely populated area that bore the brunt of the storm.

Sea crossings to nearby islands were suspended and ports were closed, Joaquin said on Twitter.

Blackouts, minor damage

Electricity was cut off as a precaution, affecting almost 150,000 people, but as soon as the storm passes repairs will be carried out to restore supply, Joaquin added.



Location and projected path of Hurricane Grace.

Cancun's hotel zone was largely deserted at dawn as intense wind and rain caused some damage to structures on the beach, which was pounded by strong waves.

After it crosses the Yucatan, the storm is expected to move over the southwest Gulf of Mexico before lashing the eastern states of Veracruz and Tamaulipas late Friday or early Saturday.

"Grace is expected to continue to weaken as it crosses Yucatan, but re-intensification is expected when the center reaches the Gulf of Mexico," the NHC said.

Strong winds and heavy rains would continue to buffet the Yucatan Peninsula on Thursday, forecasters said.

"Heavy rainfall from Grace will likely result in areas of flash and urban flooding, and will also be capable of producing mudslides," it said.

The storm surge will be accompanied by "large and destructive waves" near the coast, the NHC warned.

On Wednesday businesses on the Riviera Maya had boarded up windows, while fishermen and tour operators hauled their boats onto land in preparation for the storm's arrival.



Grace, a Category One hurricane, was packing maximum sustained winds of 130 kilometers per hour, the US National Hurricane Center said.

At supermarkets in Cancun, some residents had stocked up on food, although the authorities called on people to avoid panic buying.

"We don't know what it will be like," said 41-year-old housewife Hortencia Rodriguez.

"With Wilma we didn't prepare and we were hit hard," she said, referring to a Category 5 hurricane that pummeled Cancun in 2005.

Authorities in Quintana Roo declared a red alert and opened 85 shelters for people who needed refuge from the storm.

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