

Changes in Precipitation: Climatograms of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from 1886 – 2018

Michelle Valkanas
NCSE Science Ambassador Fellow
Duquesne University



NCSE National Center for
Science Education

The information collected here was obtained from The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (https://www.weather.gov/pbz/pit_records).

The climatographs were created using a template obtained from NASA's Precipitation Education Online Center: <https://pmm.nasa.gov/education/lesson-plans/geographical-influences>

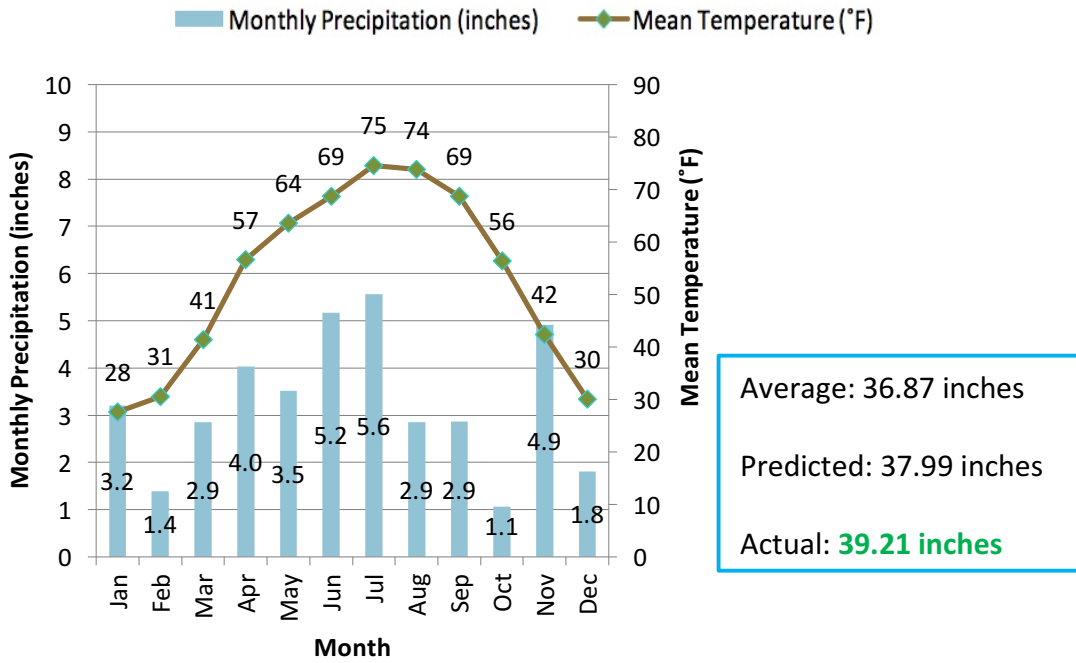
This project was funded by a NCSE Science Communication Fellowship received by Michelle Valkanas, as well as support by her graduate institution Duquesne University

© 2019

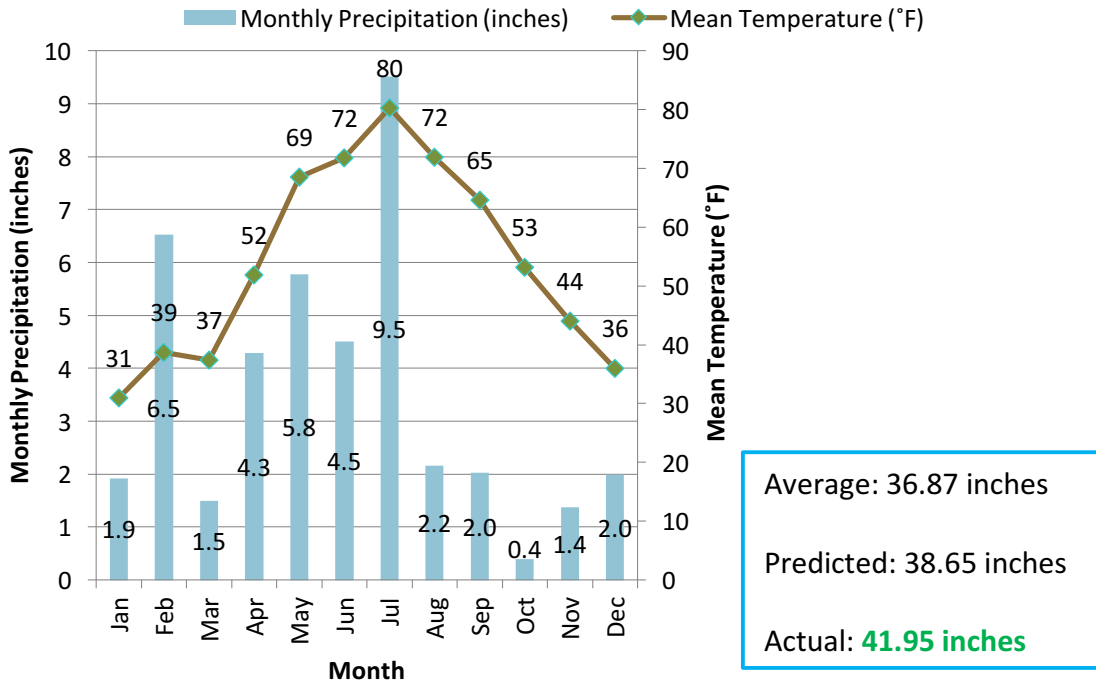
Purpose:

This book serves to provide a visual tool for observing changes in temperature and precipitation data overtime (climate). This is accomplished by taking the median temperature (°F) and precipitation (inches) for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from 1886 – 2018 and graphing it on the same graph, called a climatogram graph. All data was collected from NOAA (www.weather.gov). This allows the user to access any given year and visualize the relationship between temperature and precipitation. An additional precipitation box is present on each graph, which provides the average precipitation, the predicted precipitation, and the actual precipitation for that year. The average precipitation across the 132 years was determined to be 36.87 inches and remains constant for each box. The predicted precipitation was calculated based off the previous 5 years precipitation values using a moving average, this value changes for every year. The actual precipitation for the year is recorded in green, red, or black signifying that the precipitation was higher, lower, or the same as the predicted, respectively. The end of the booklet provides graphs of the precipitation and temperature over the 132 years, as well as a graph with the precipitation and temperature coupled with the moving averages, i.e. predicted values (pages 72-73).

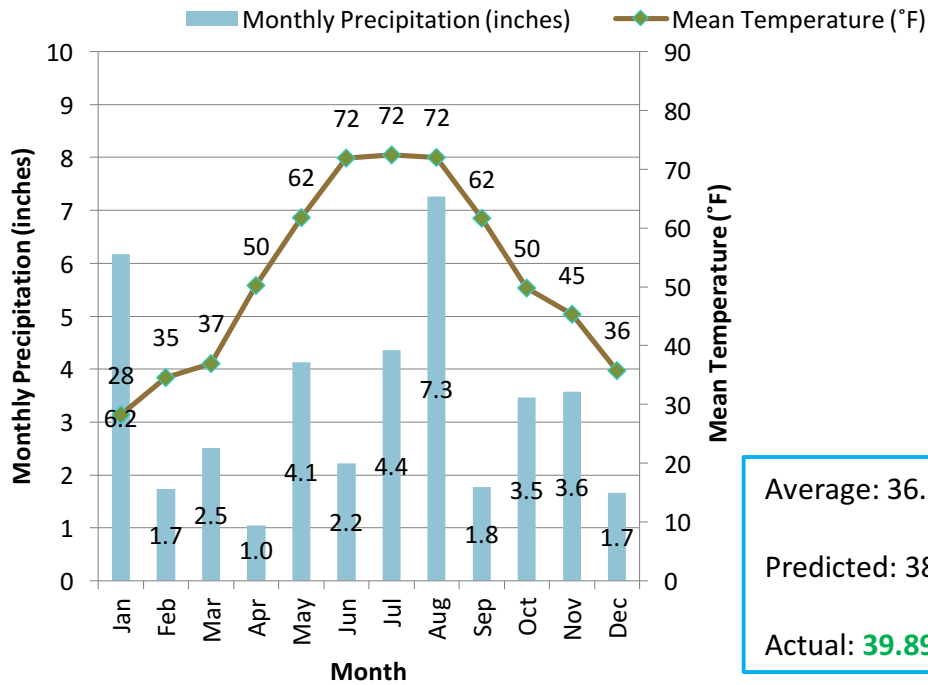
1886 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



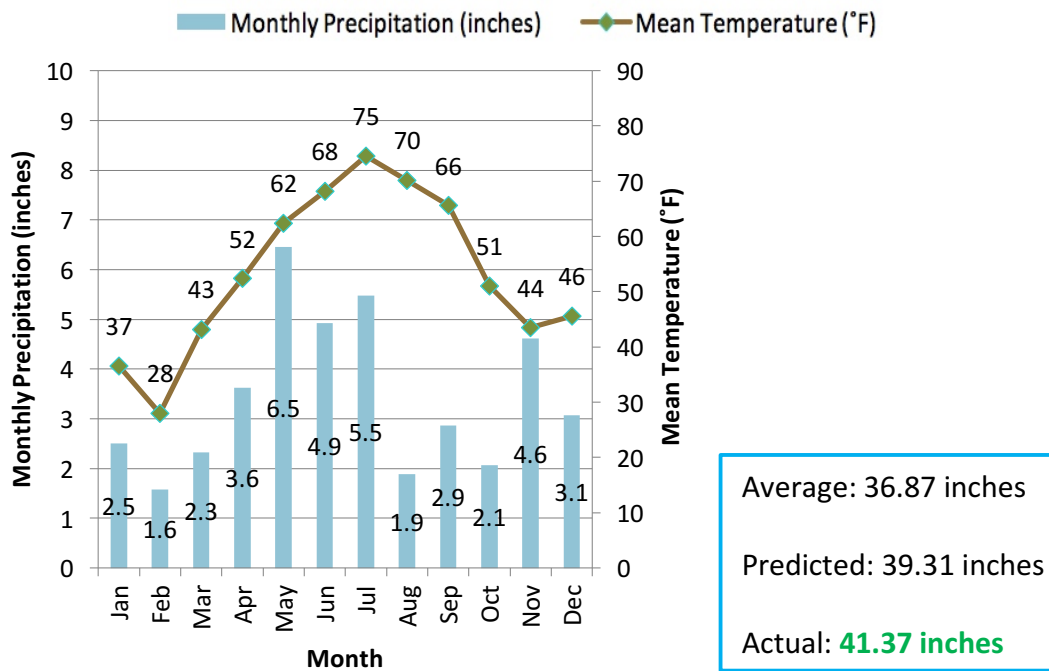
1887 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



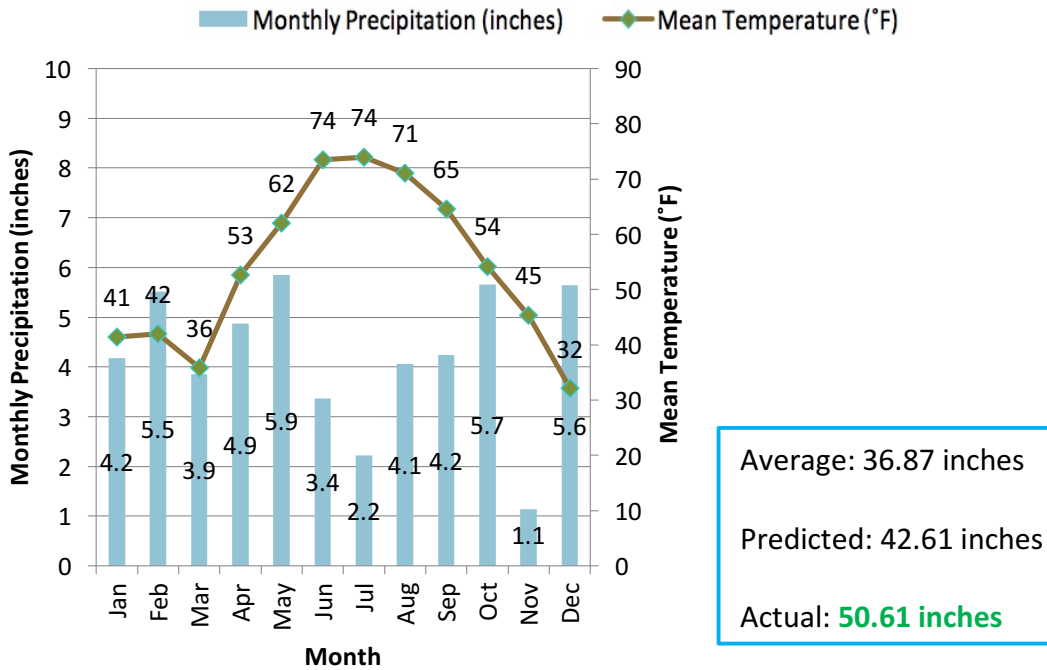
1888 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



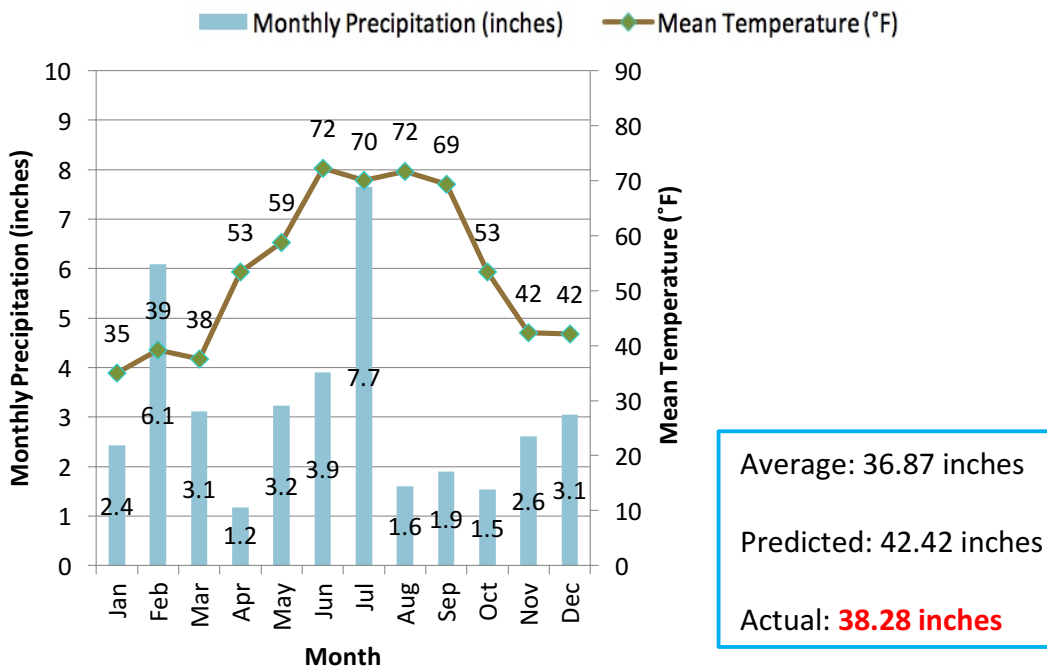
1889 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



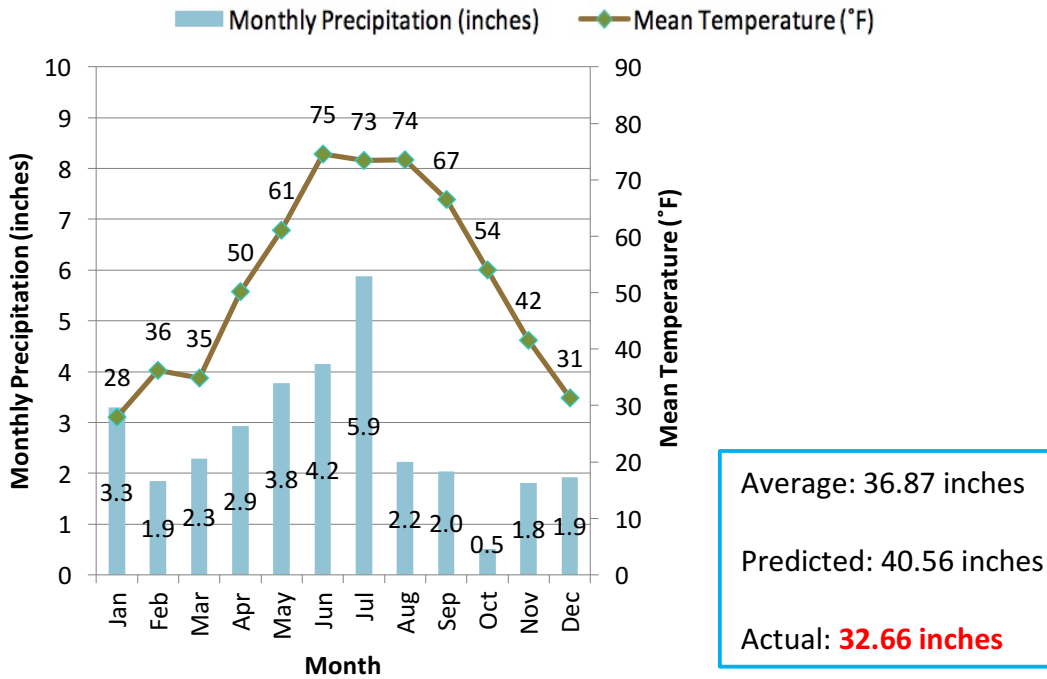
1890 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



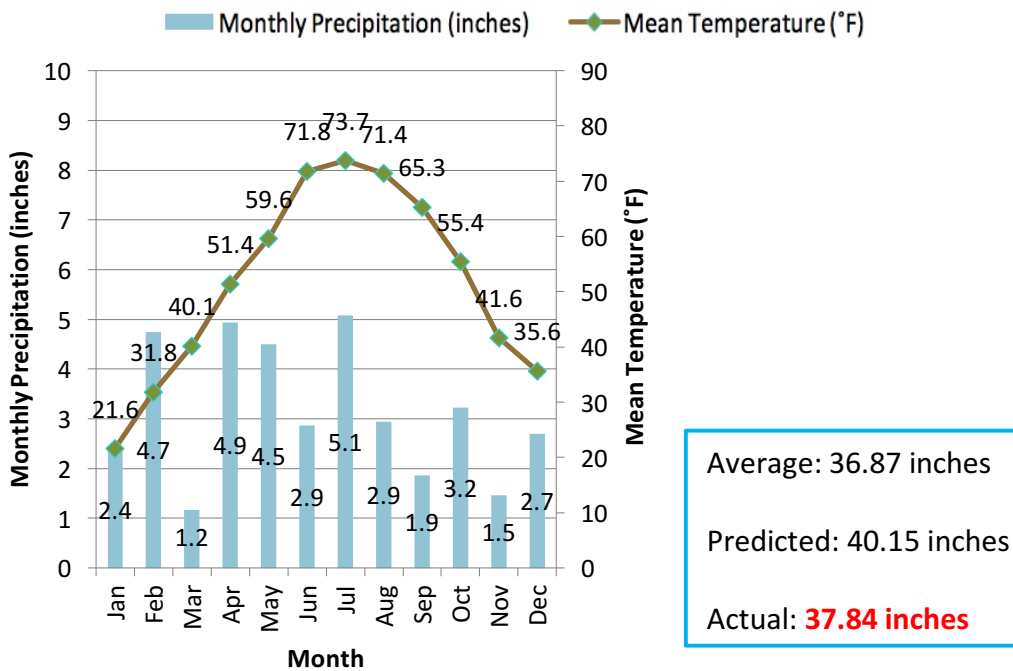
1891 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



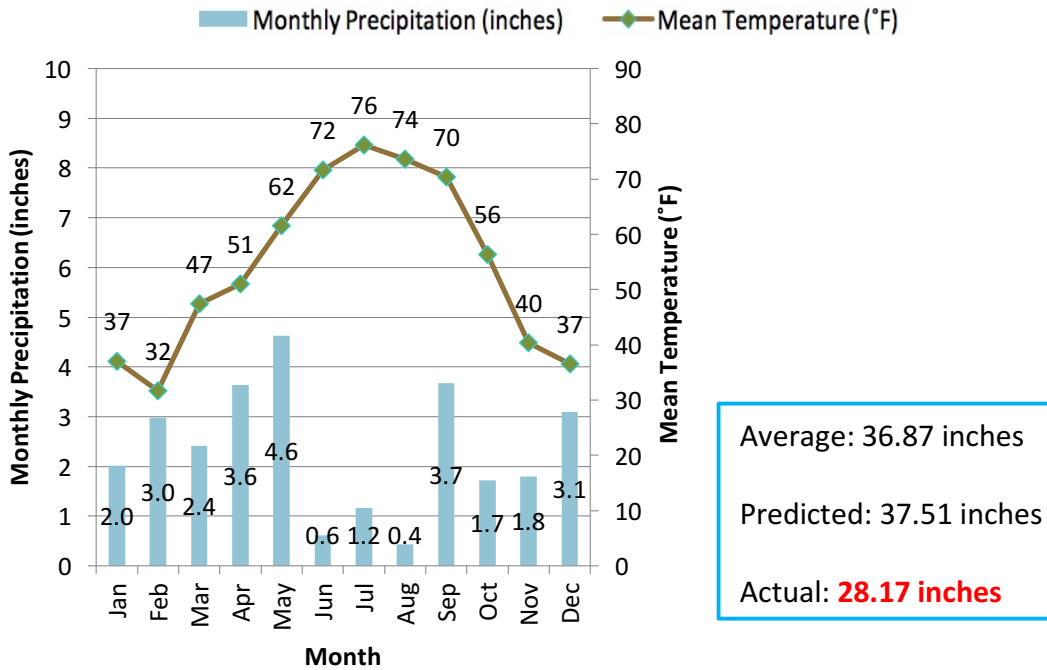
1892 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



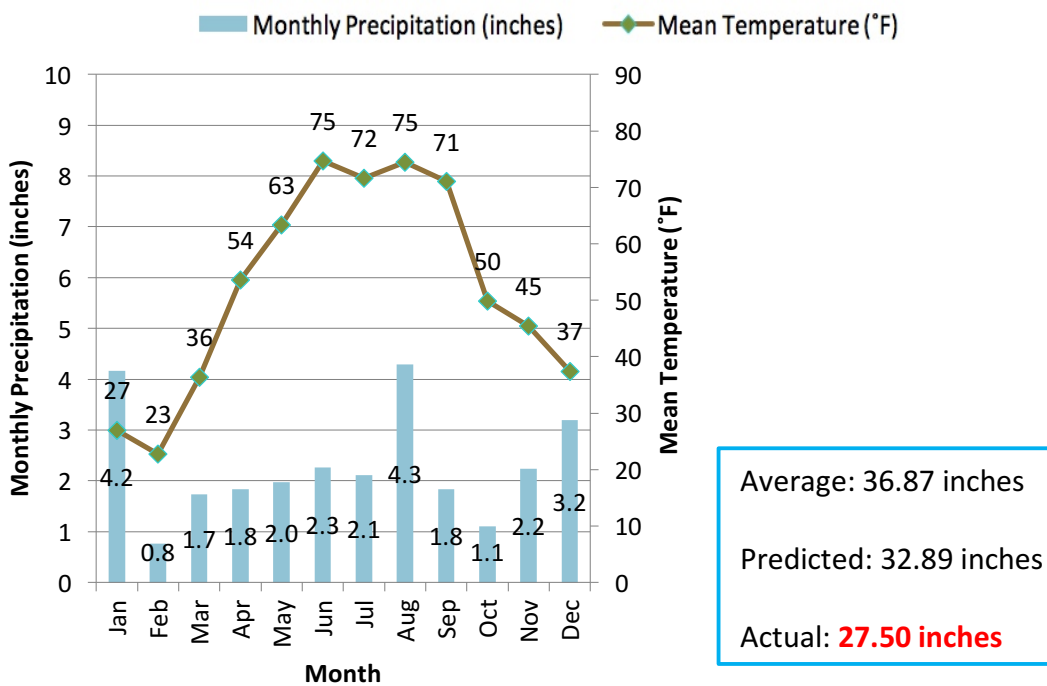
1893 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



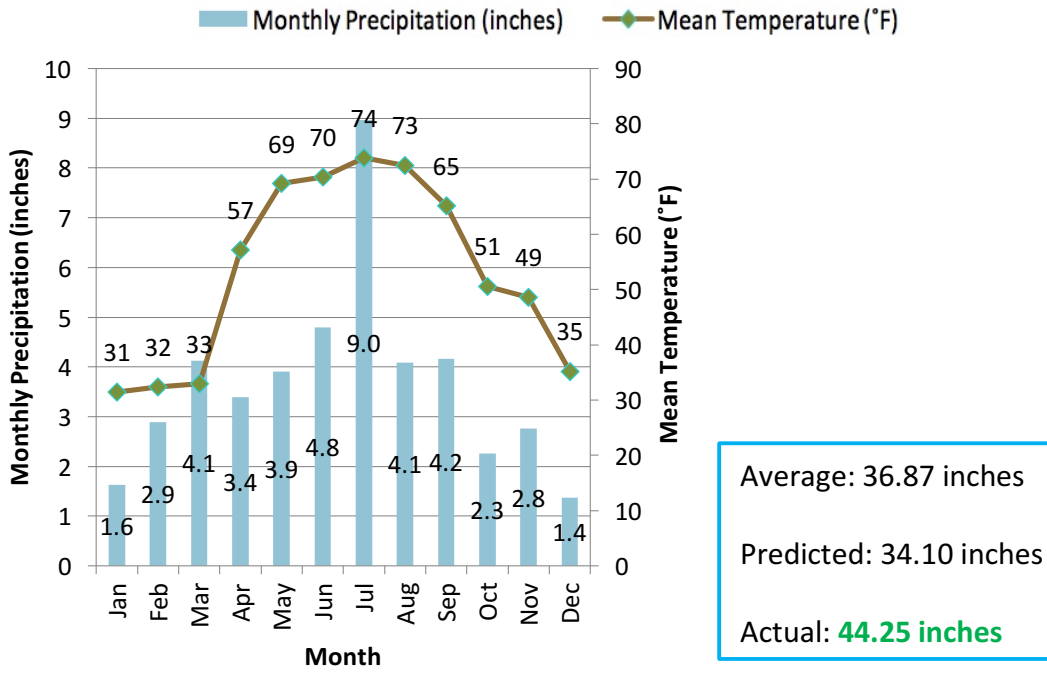
1894 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



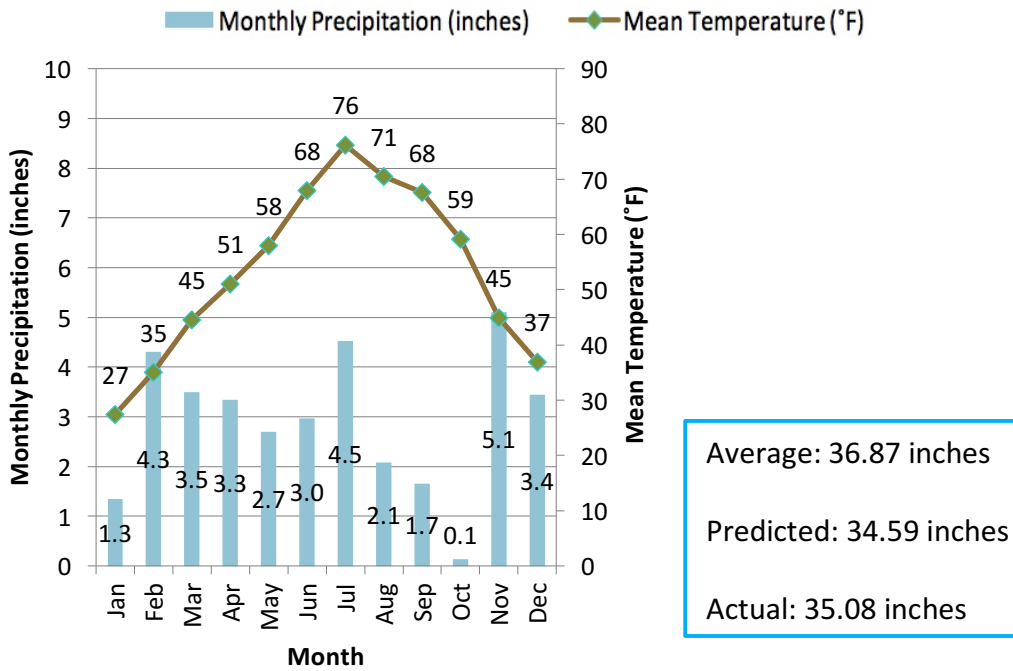
1895 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



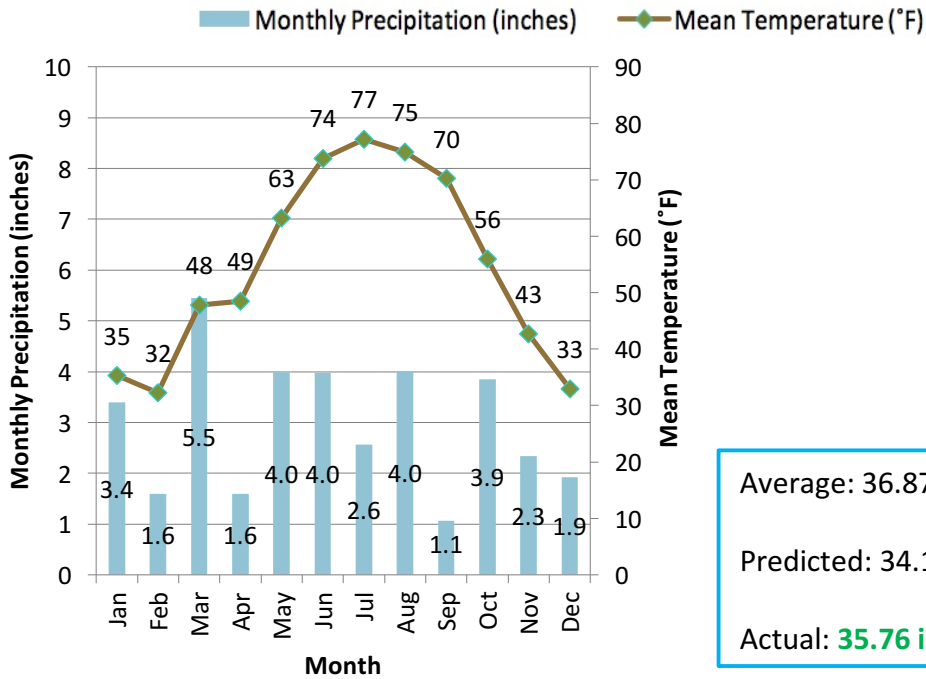
1896 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



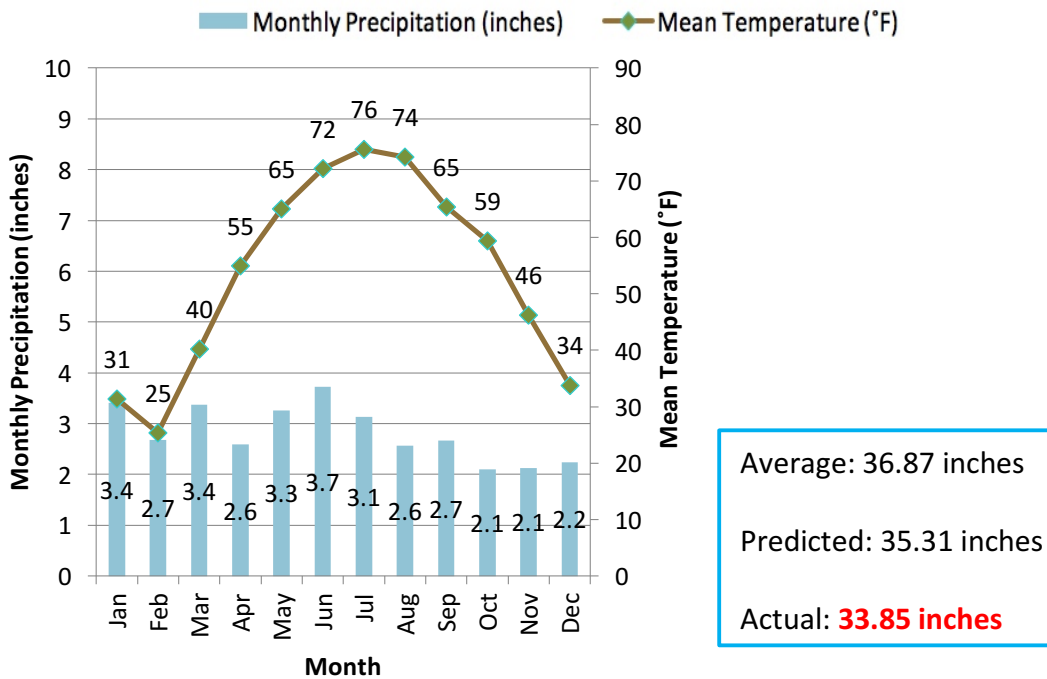
1897 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



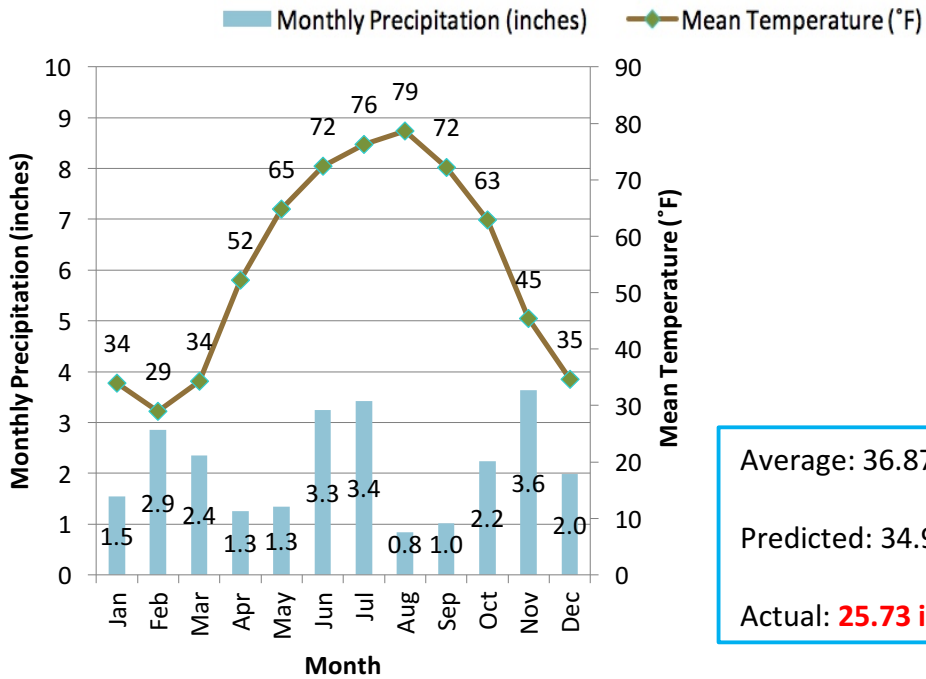
1898 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



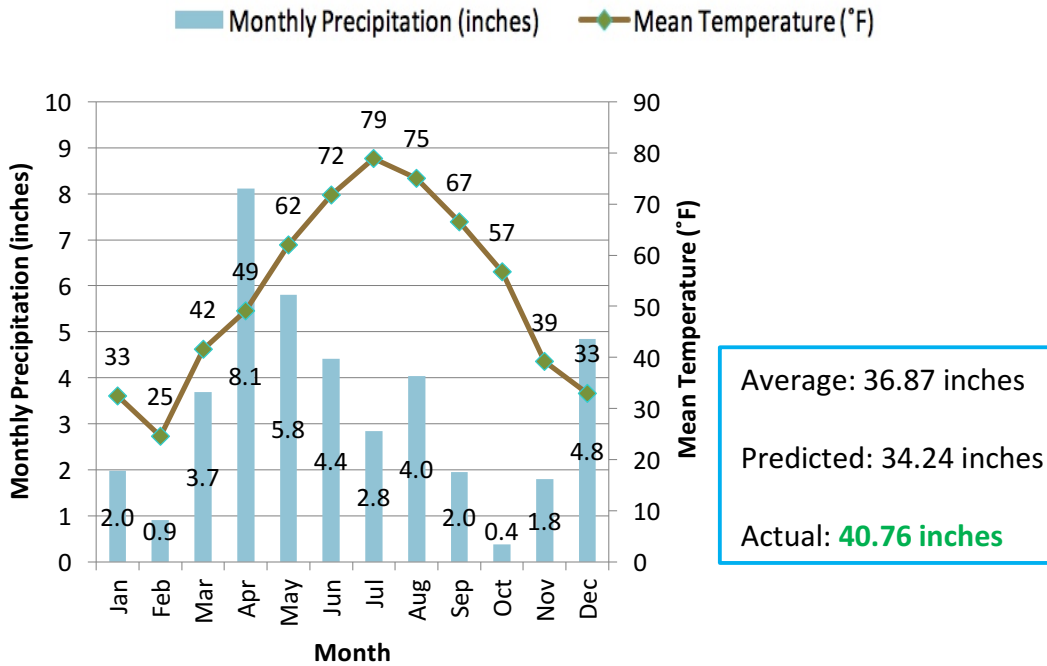
1899 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



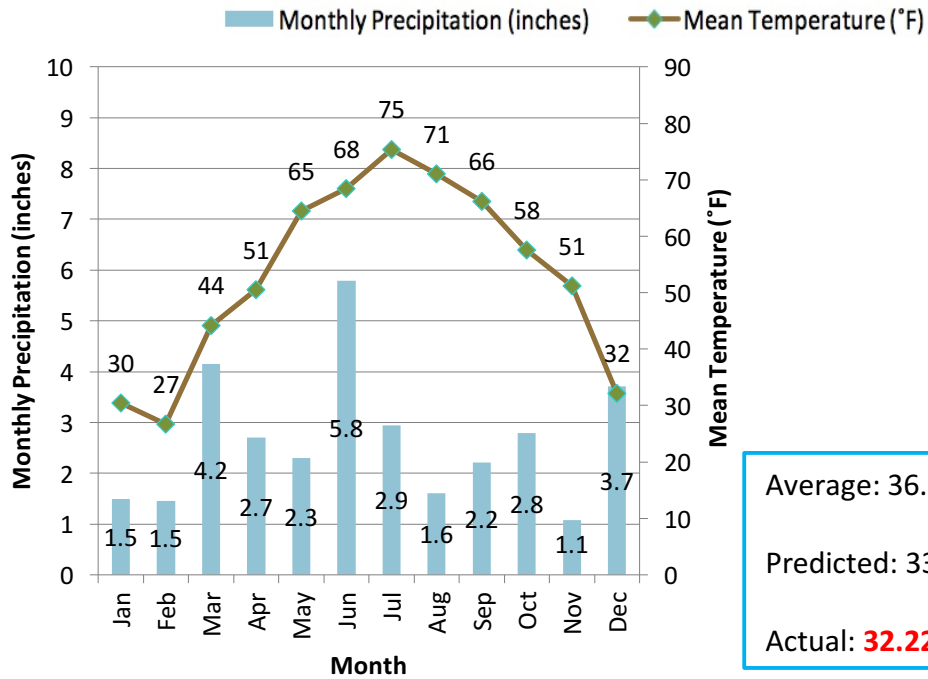
1900 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



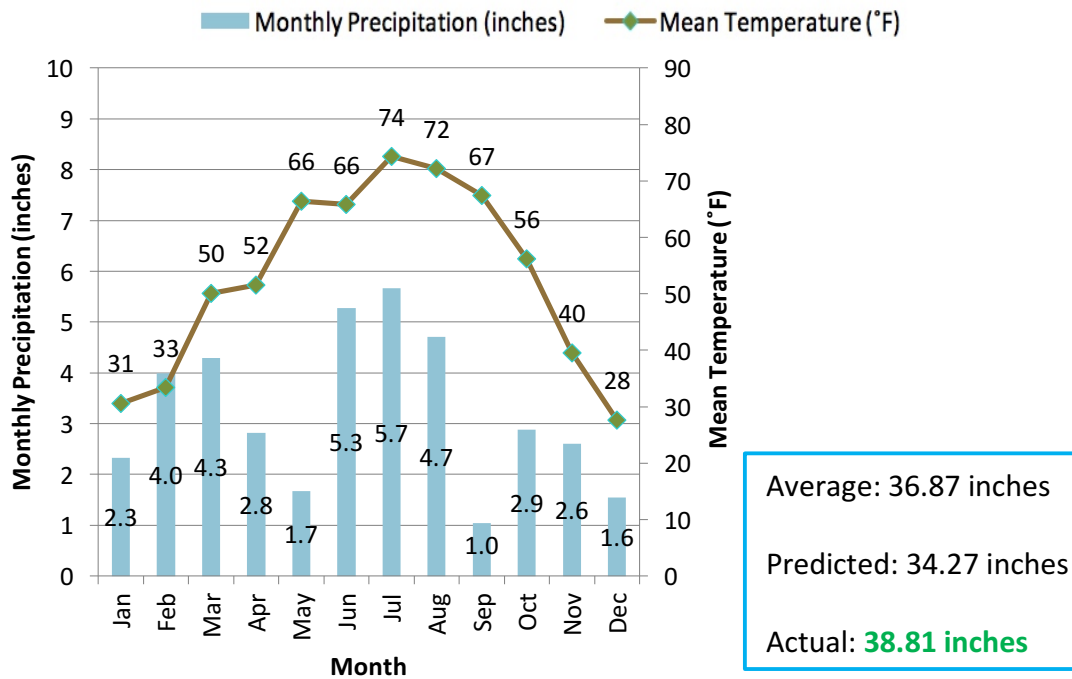
1901 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



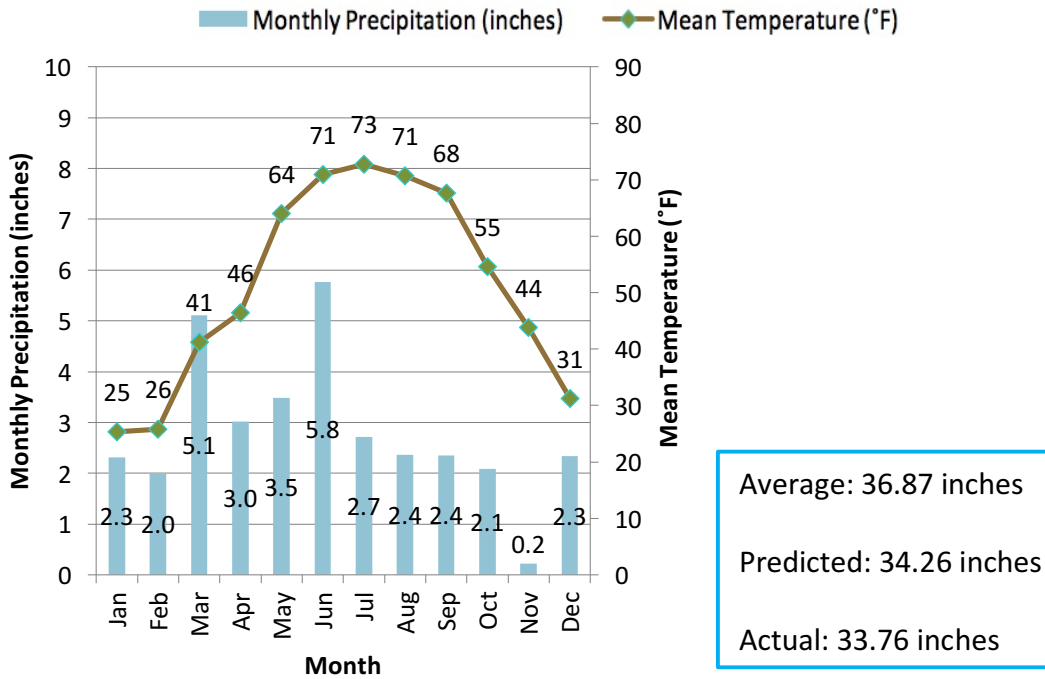
1902 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



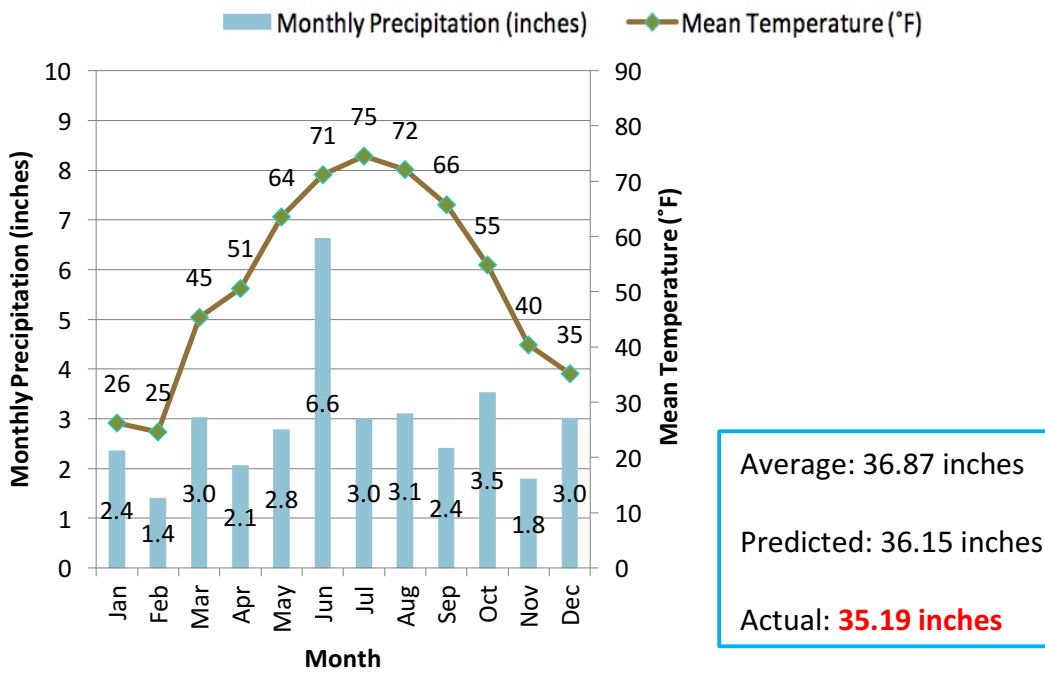
1903 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



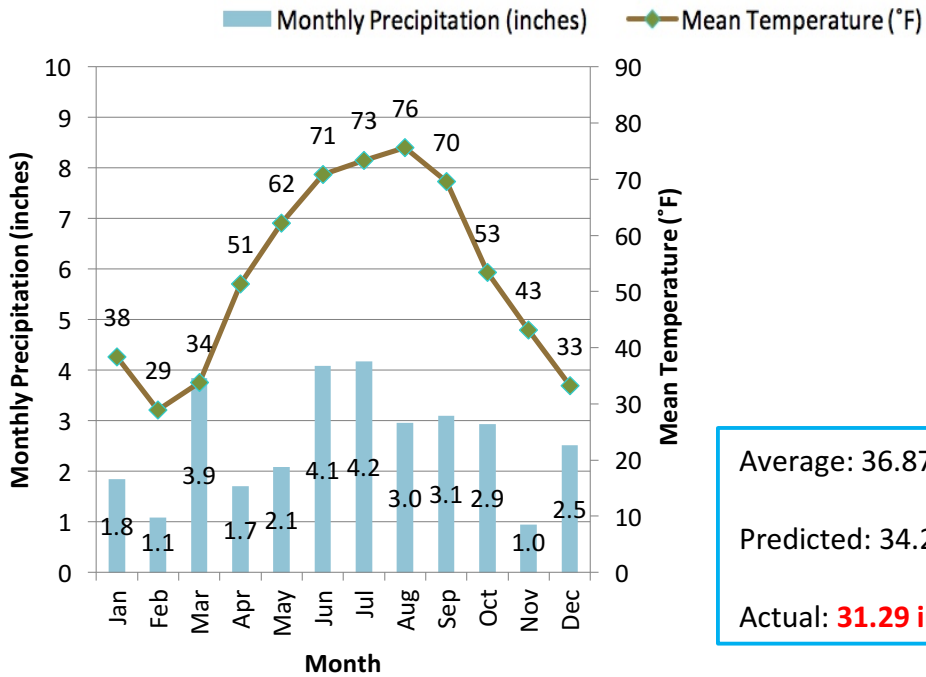
1904 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1905 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1906 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

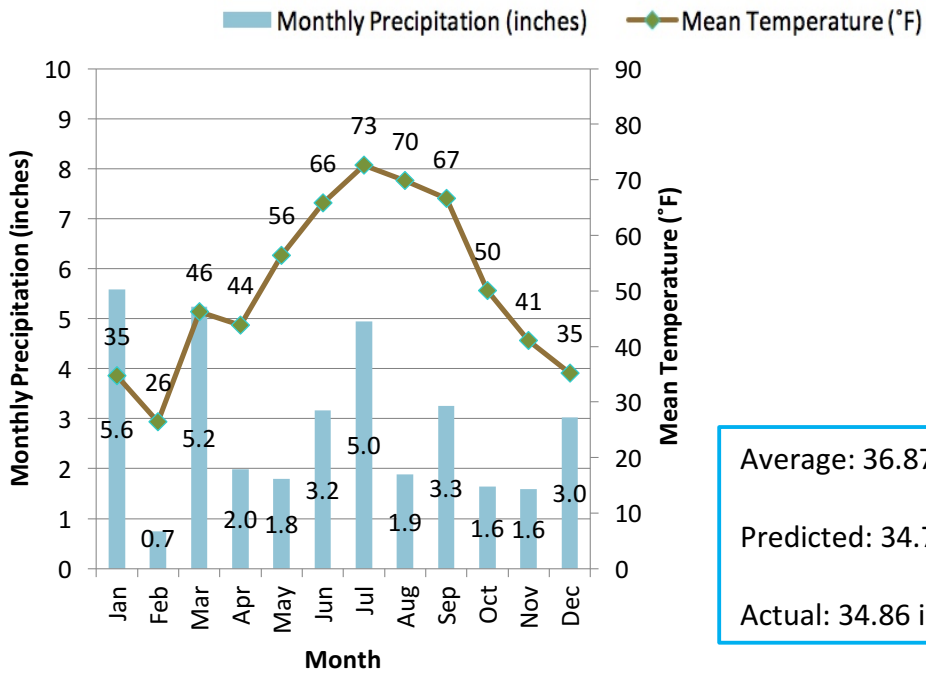


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 34.25 inches

Actual: **31.29 inches**

1907 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

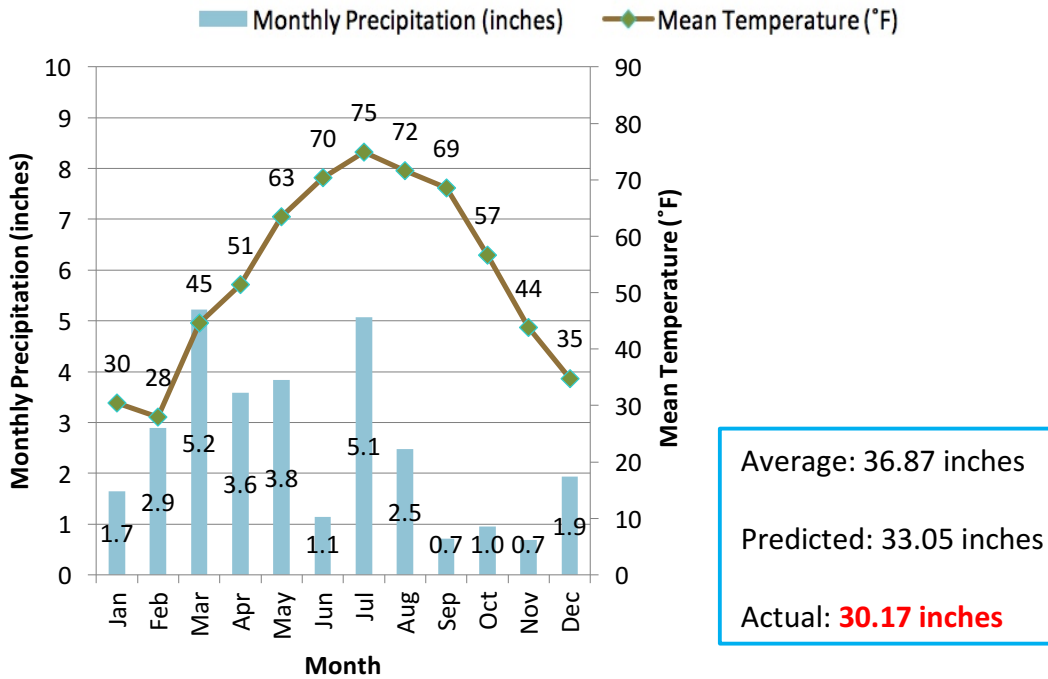


Average: 36.87 inches

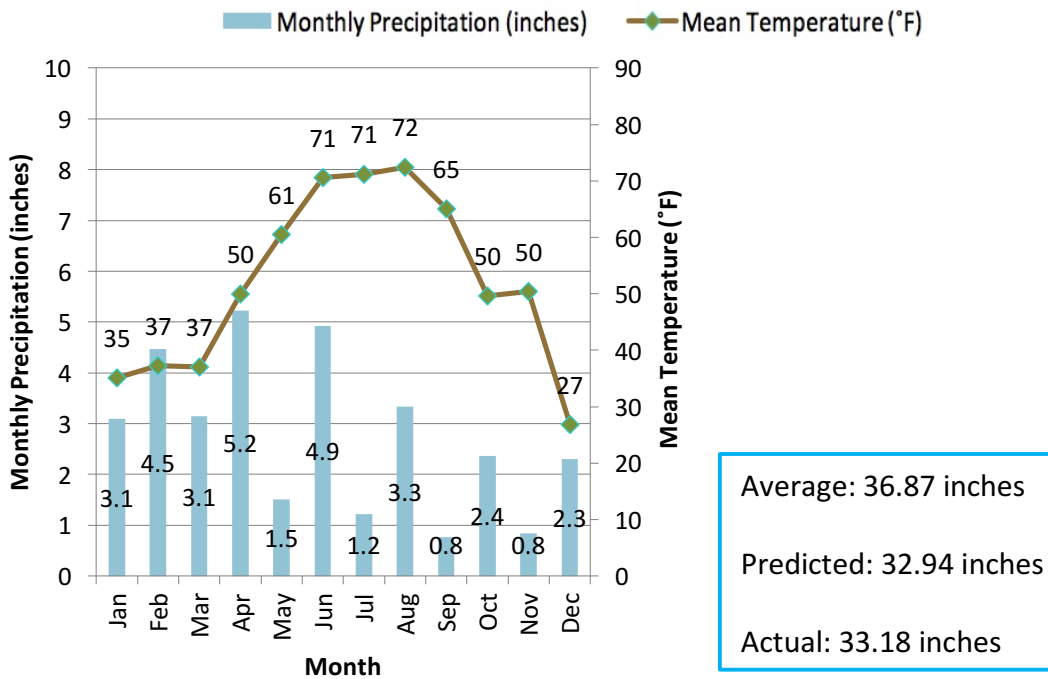
Predicted: 34.78 inches

Actual: 34.86 inches

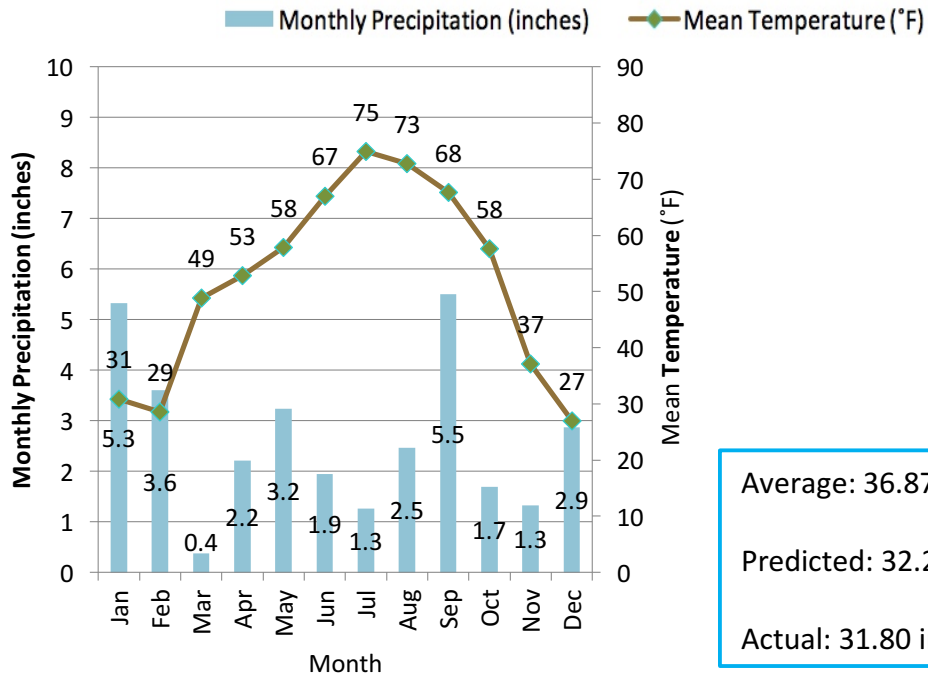
1908 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



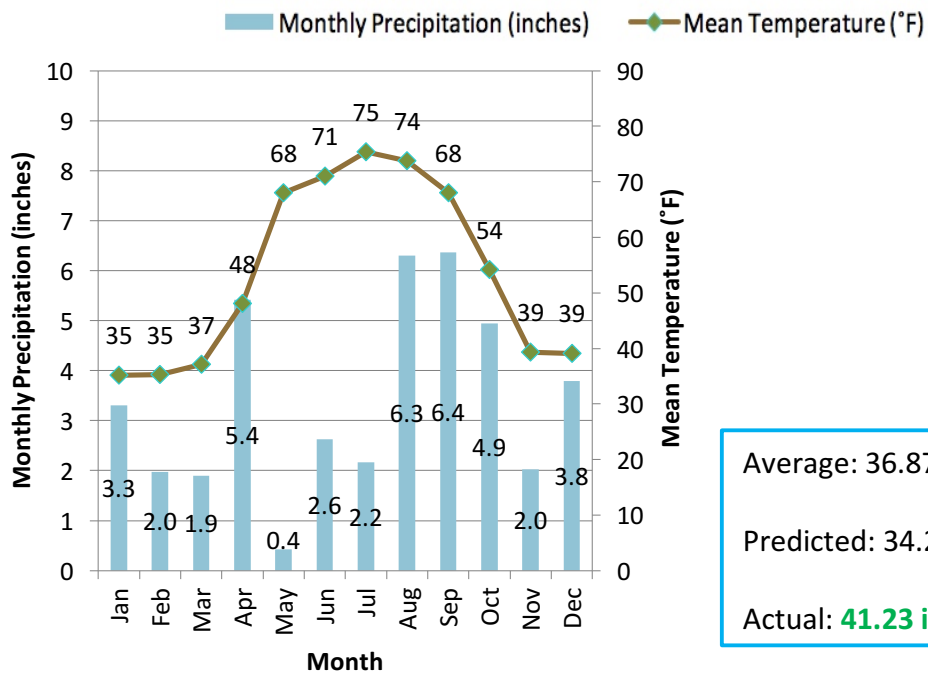
1909 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



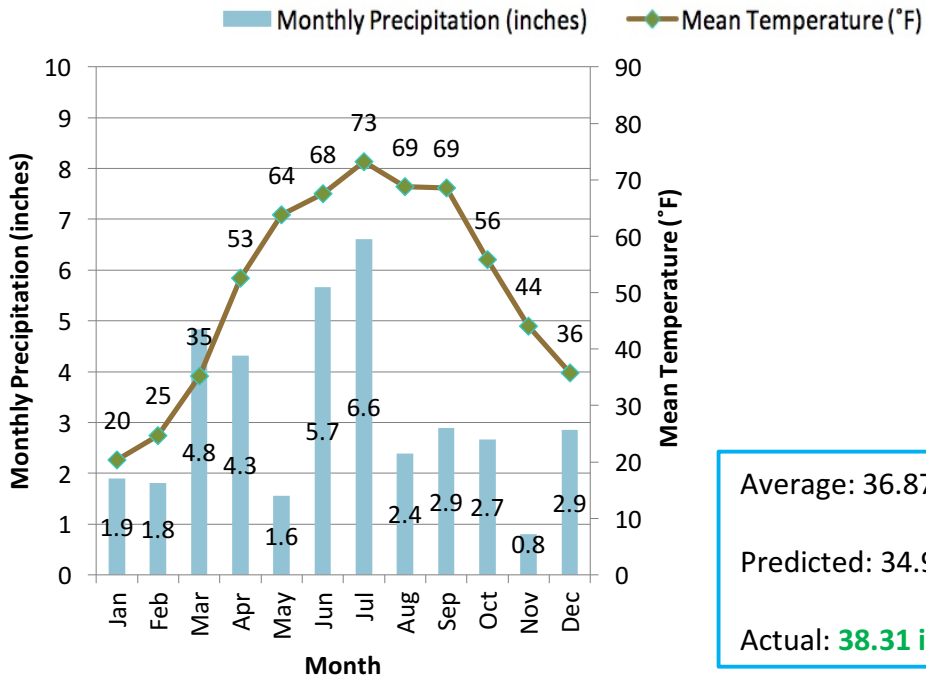
1910 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



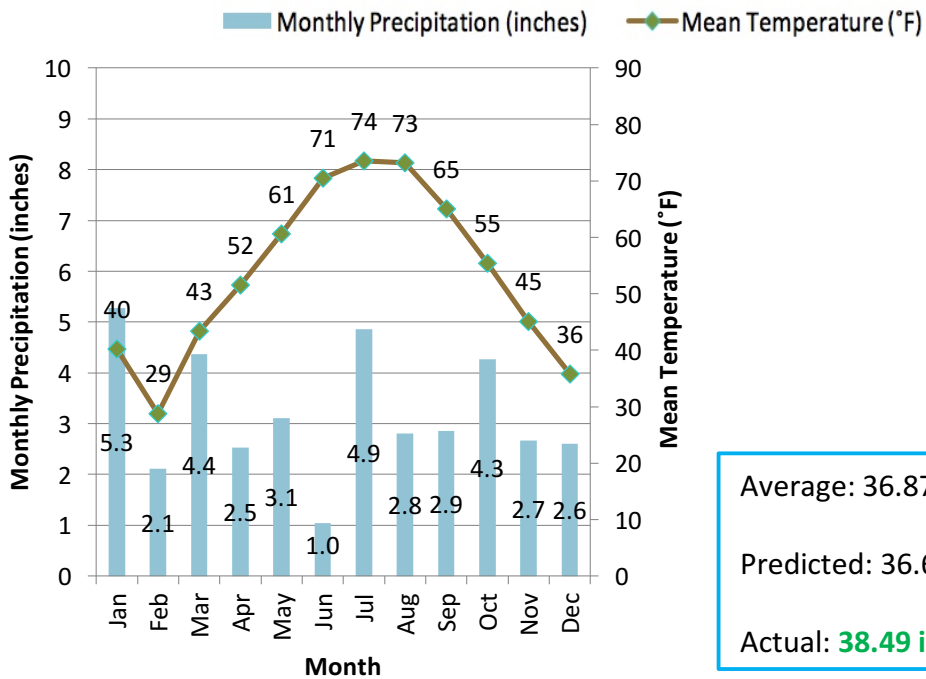
1911 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



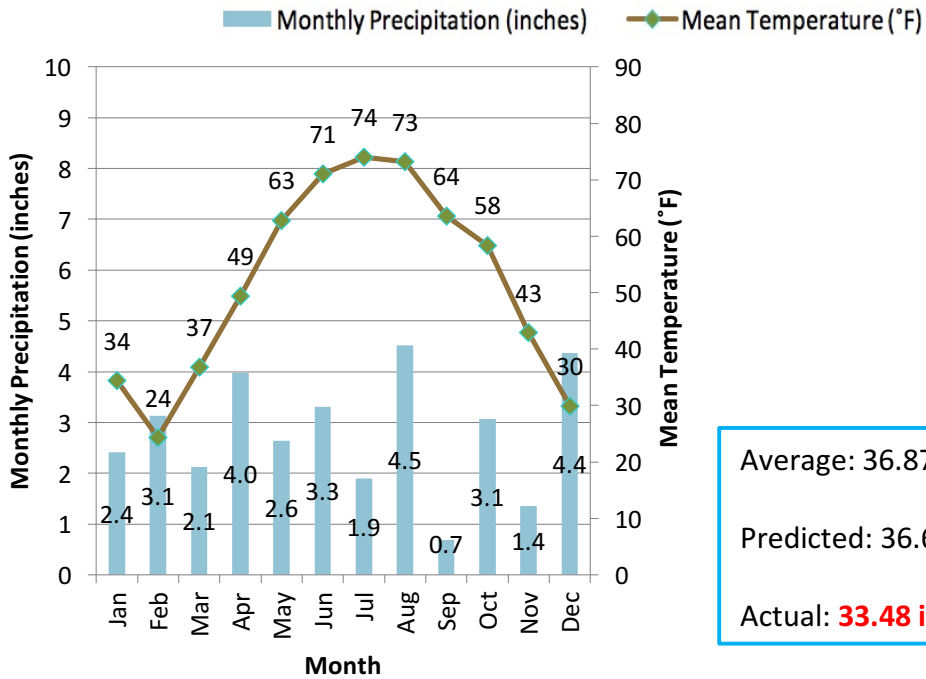
1912 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1913 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1914 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

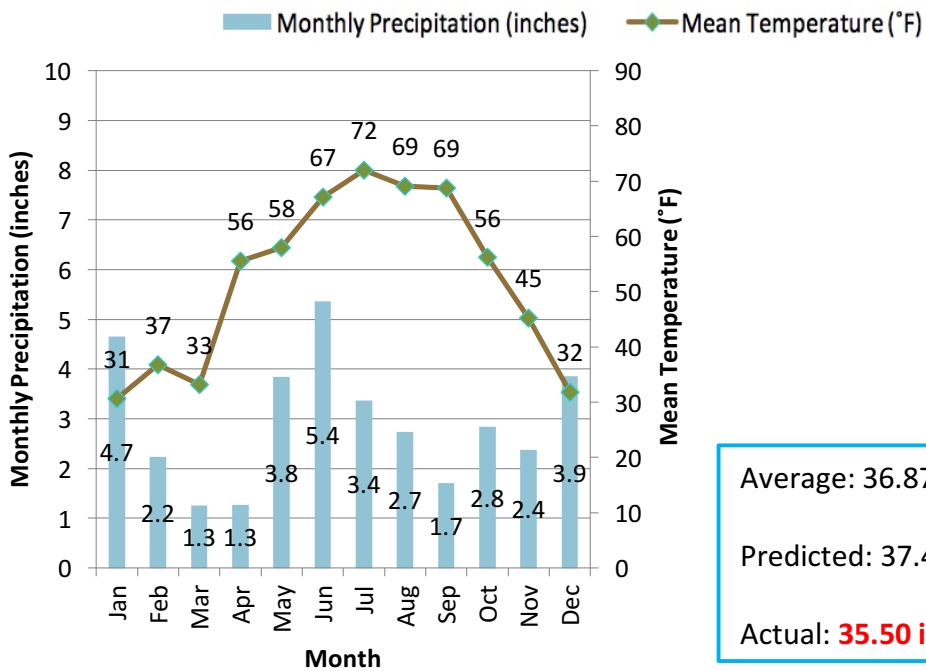


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 36.66 inches

Actual: **33.48 inches**

1915 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

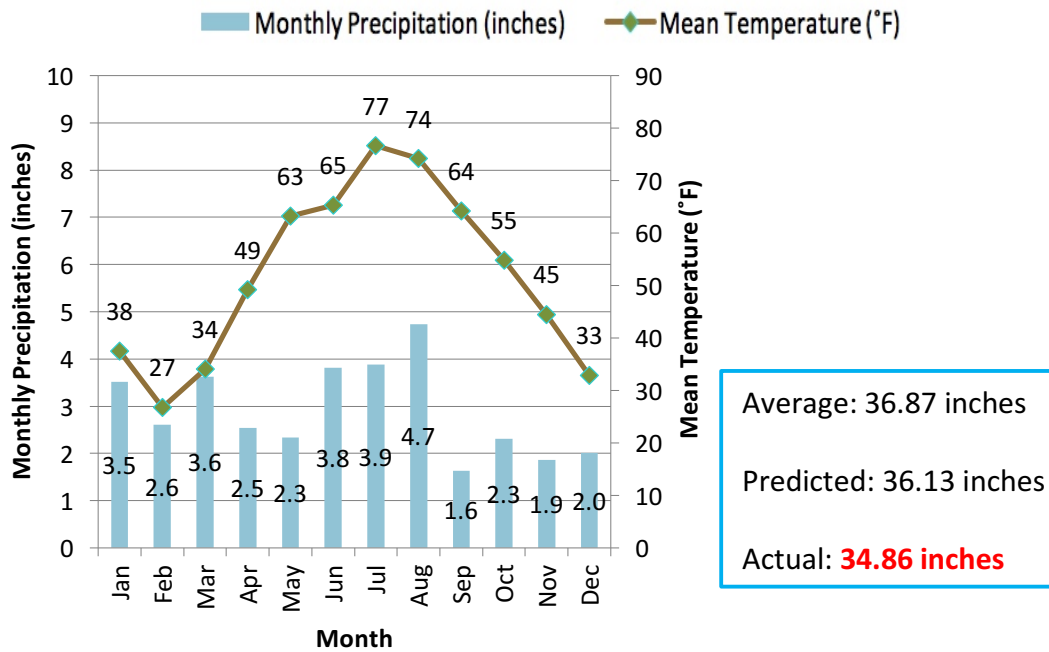


Average: 36.87 inches

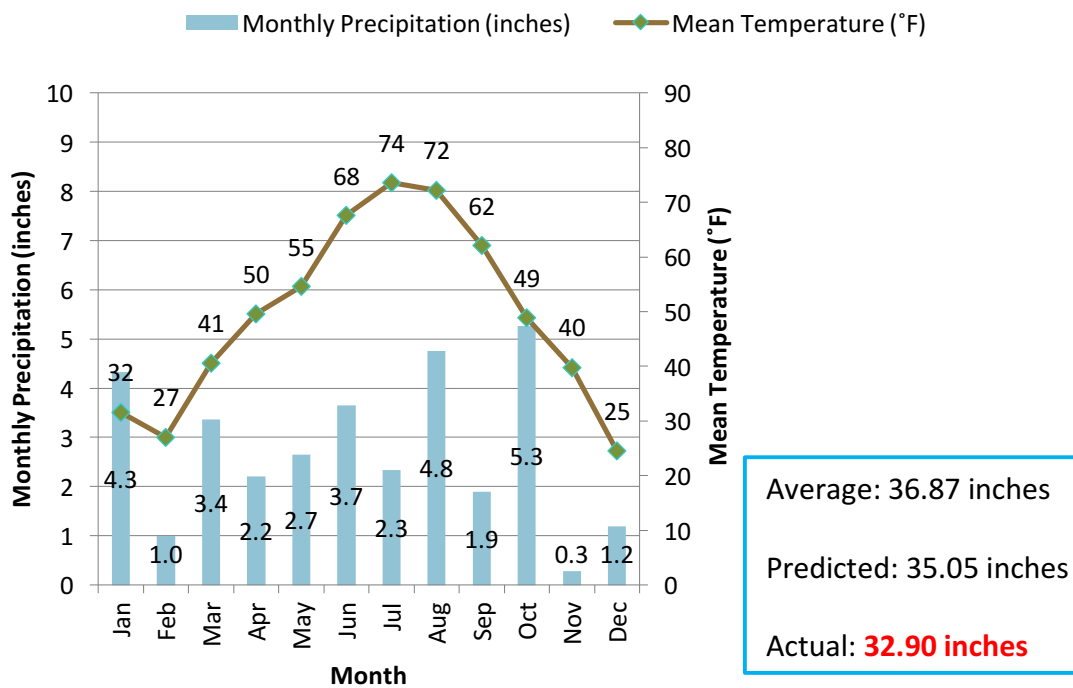
Predicted: 37.40 inches

Actual: **35.50 inches**

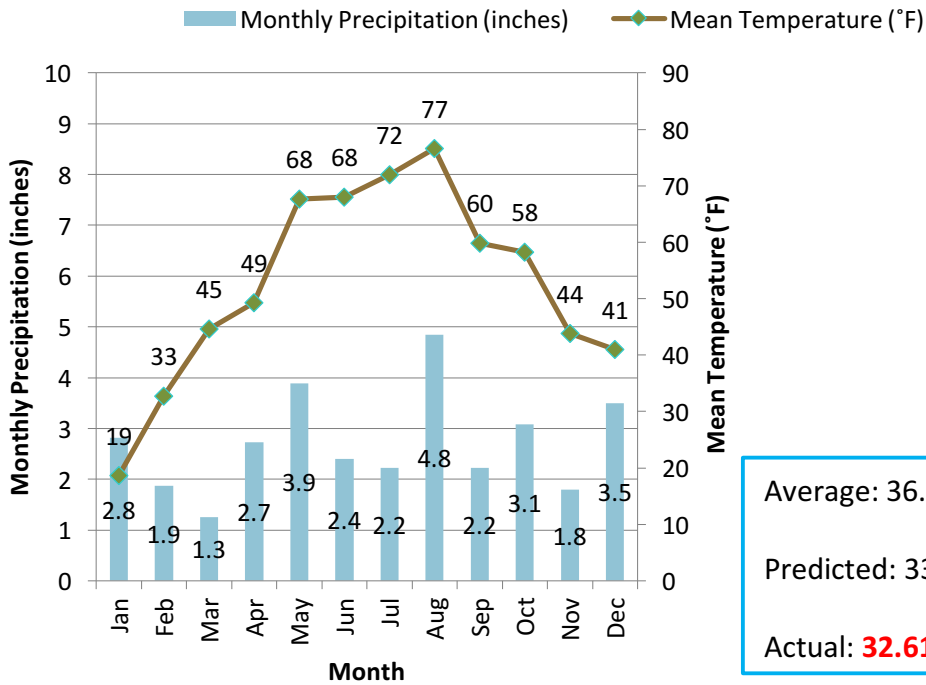
1916 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



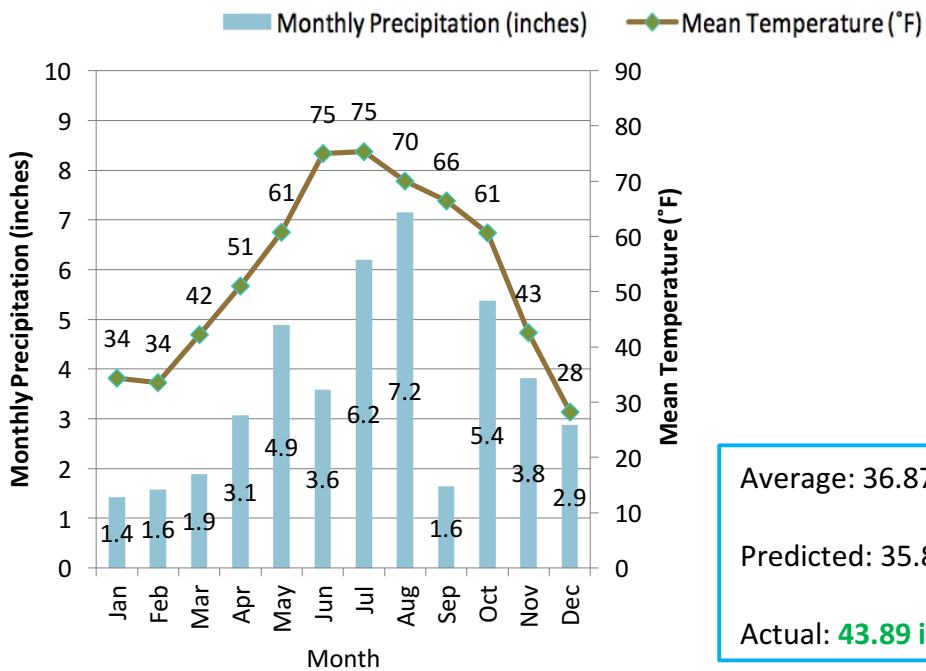
1917 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



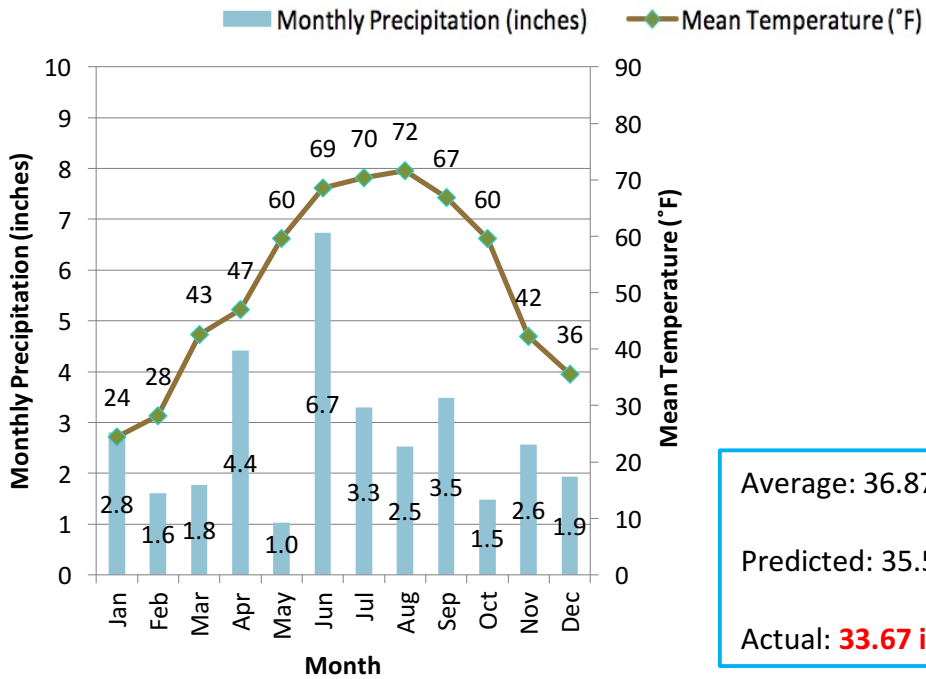
1918 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



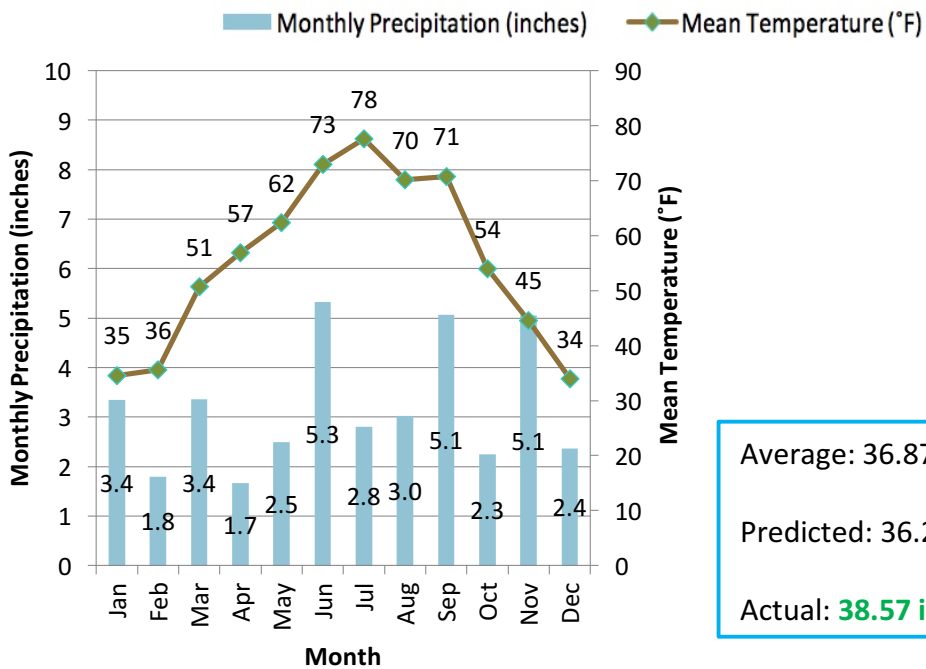
1919 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



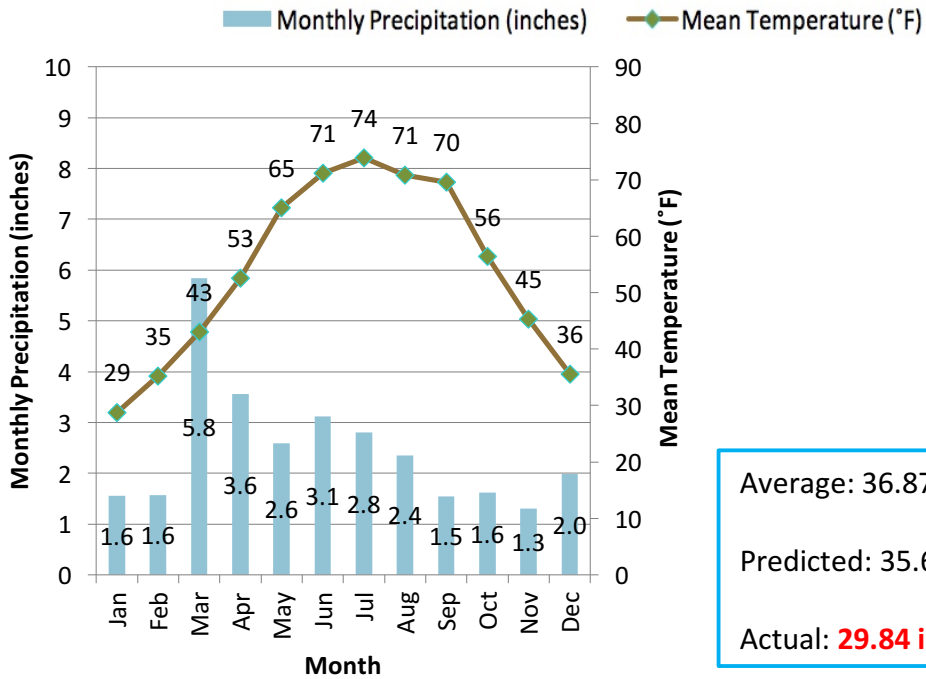
1920 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



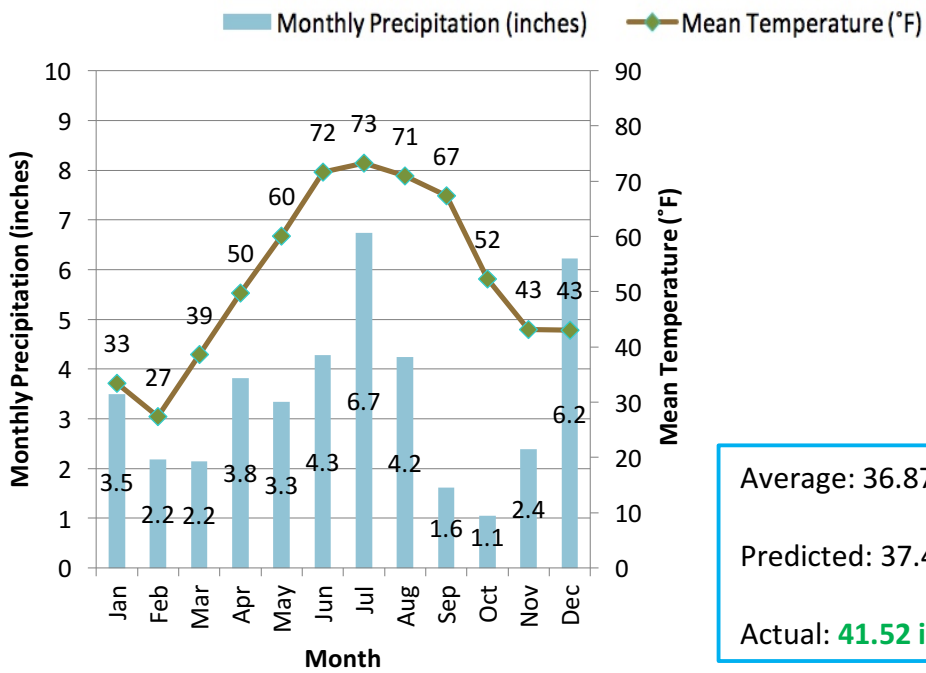
1921 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



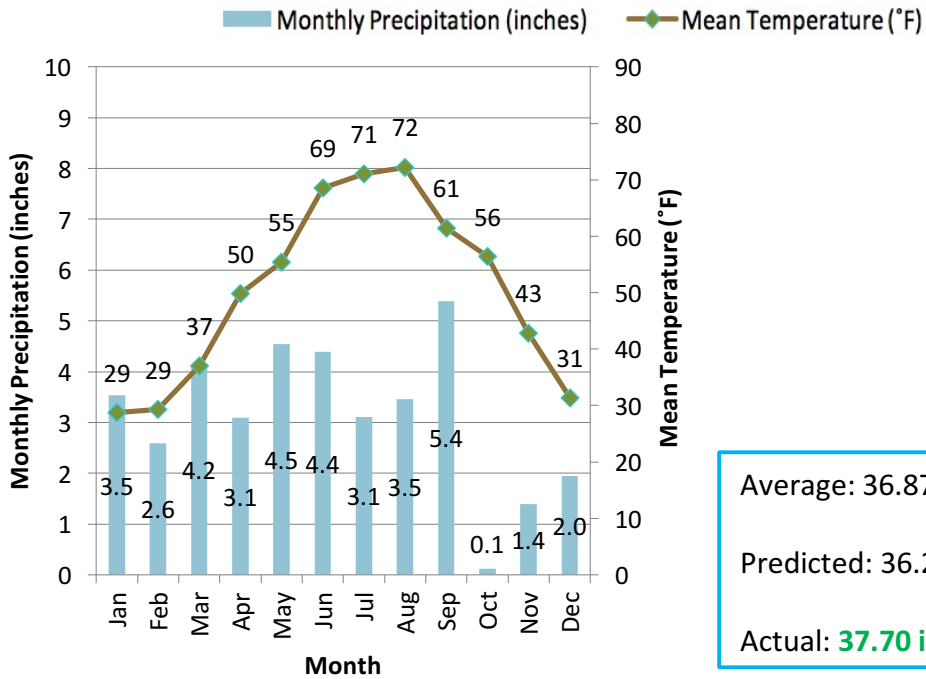
1922 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



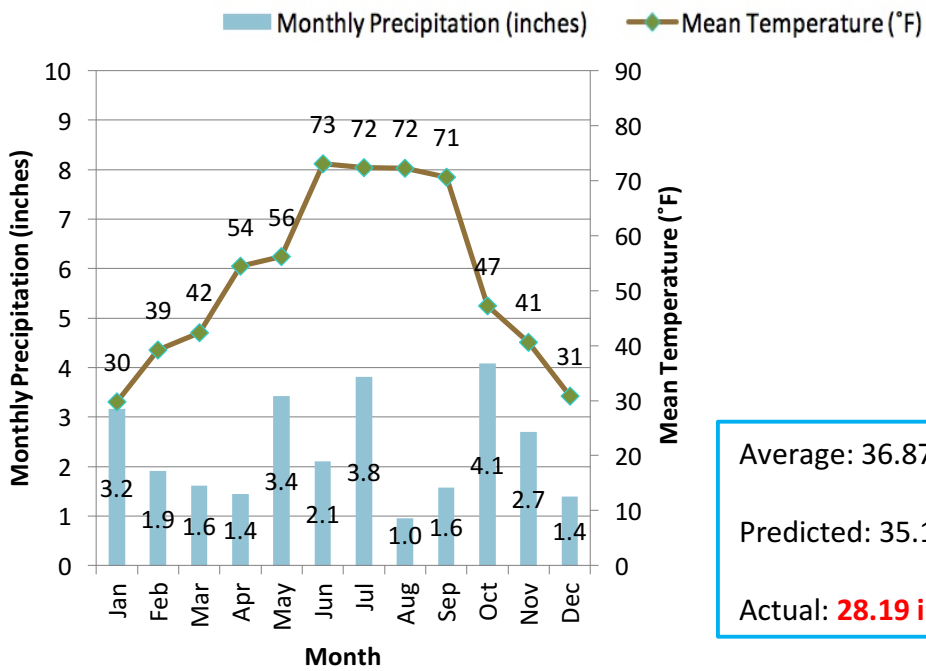
1923 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



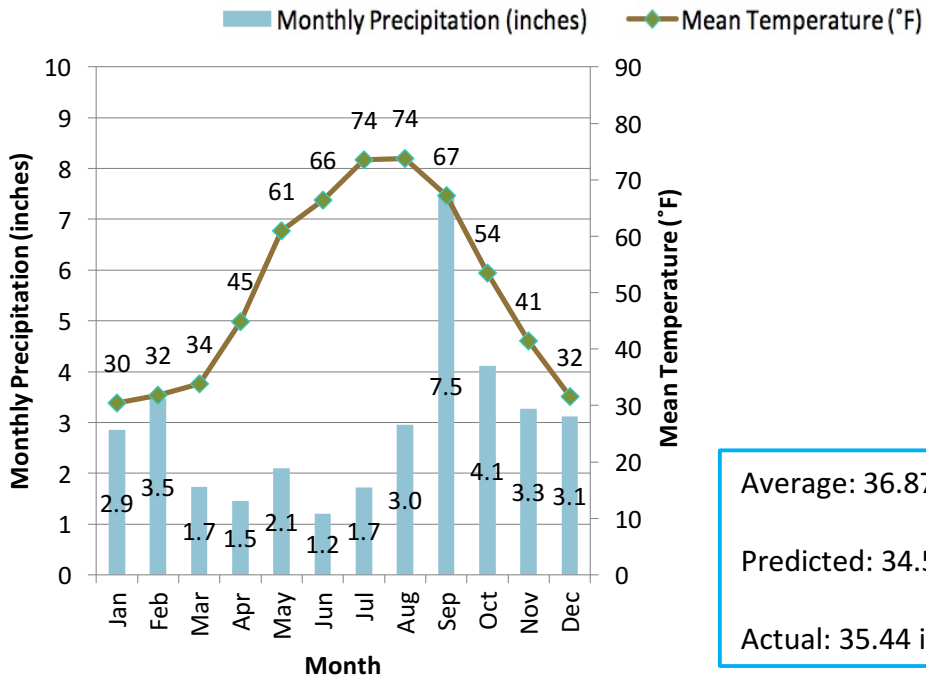
1924 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



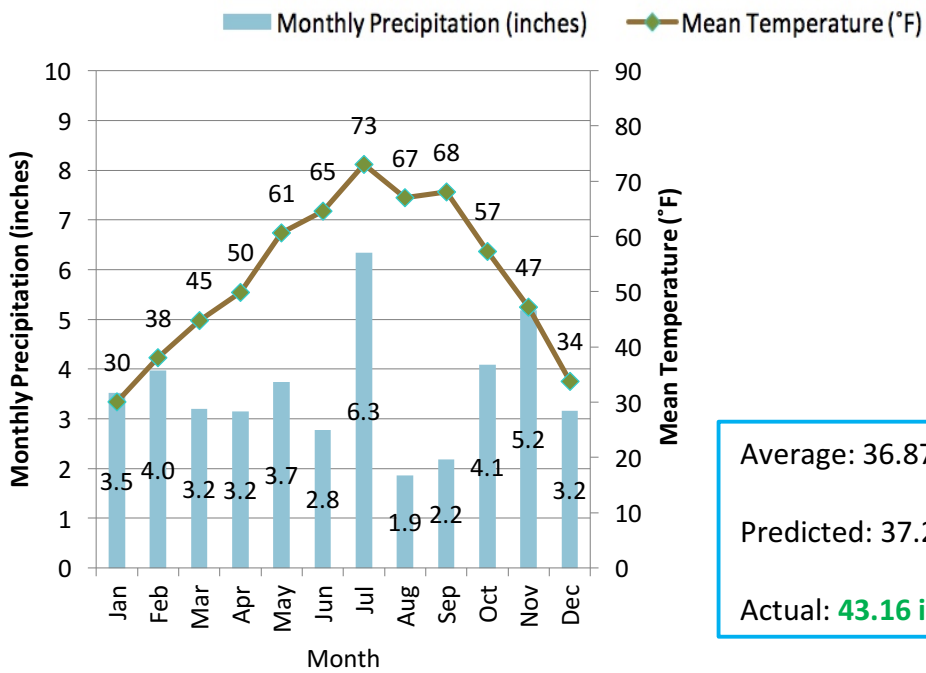
1925 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



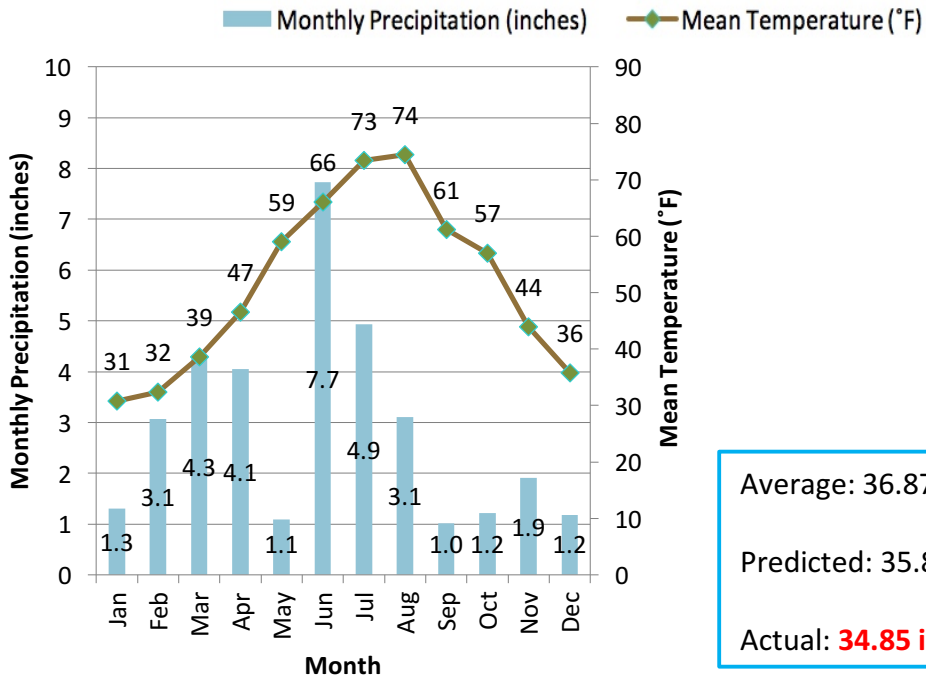
1926 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



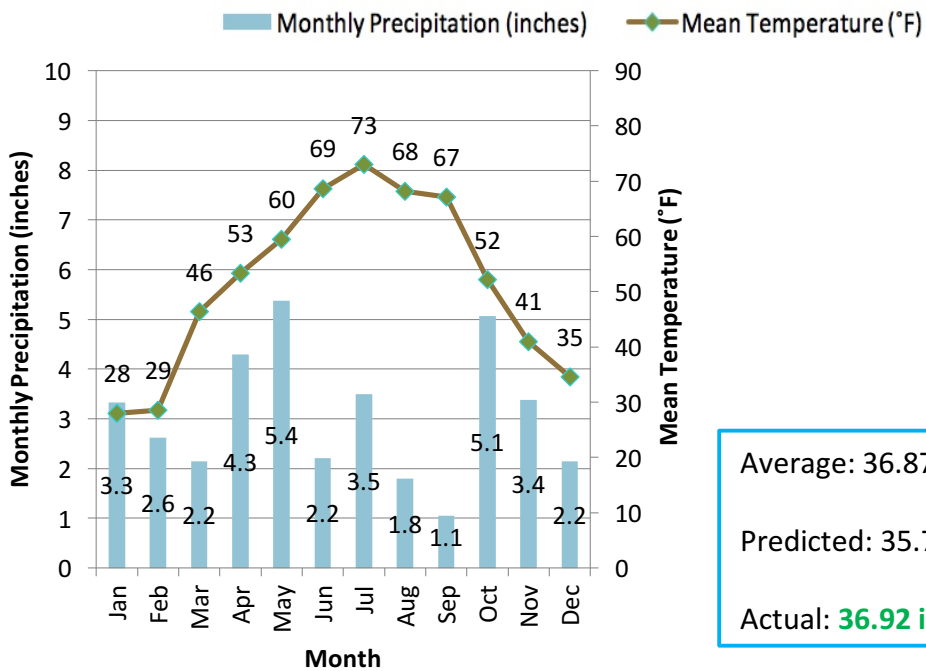
1927 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



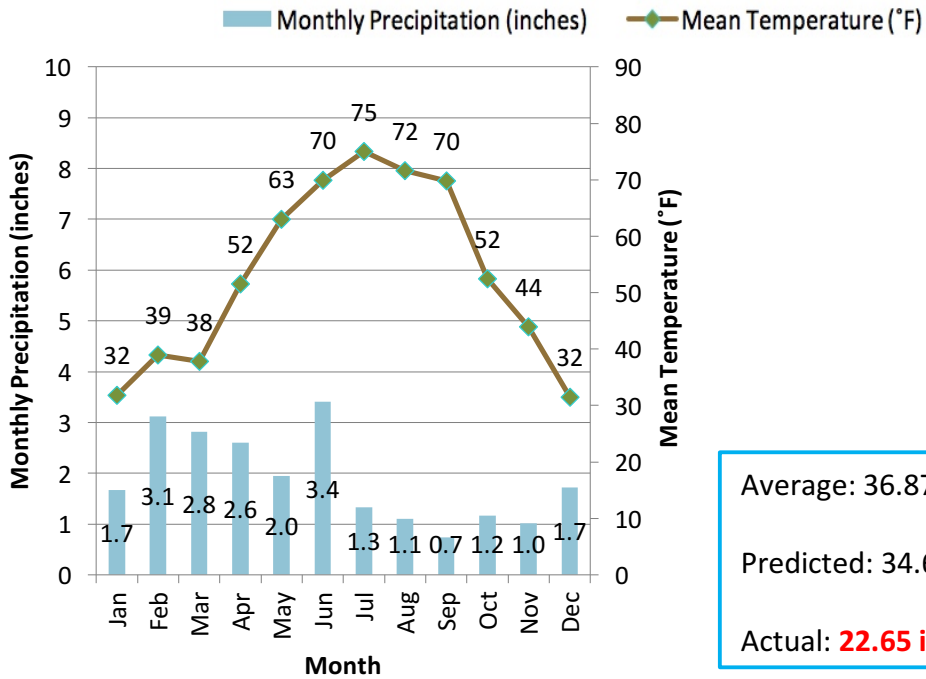
1928 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



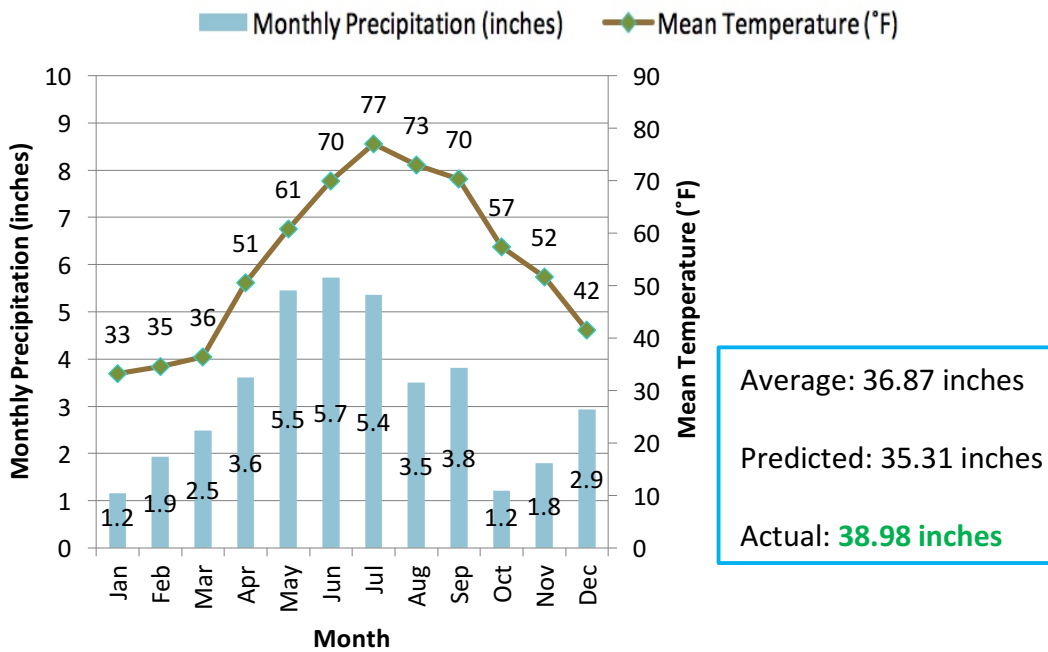
1929 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



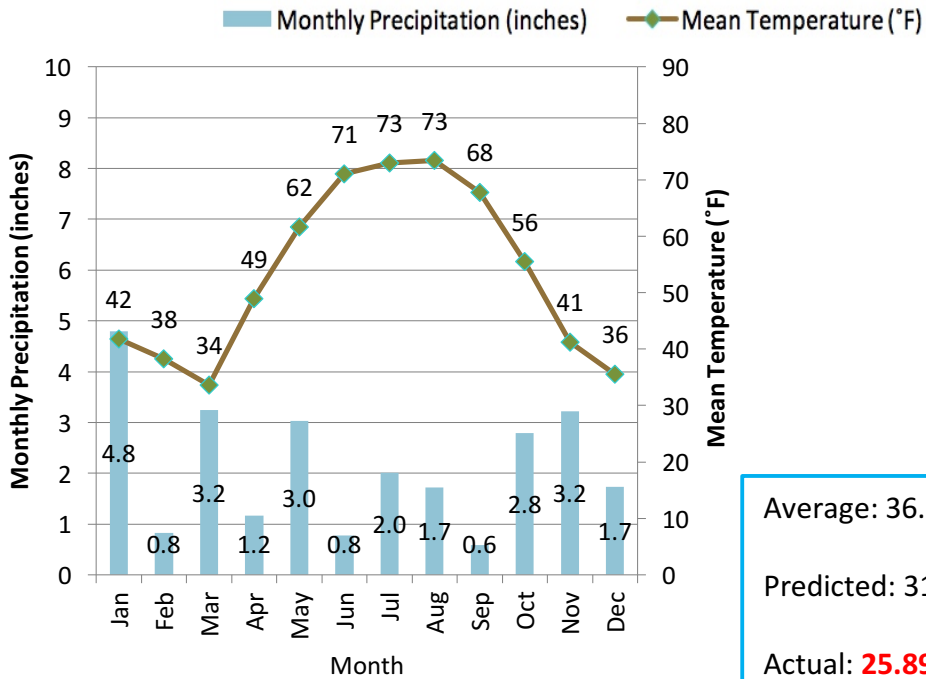
1930 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



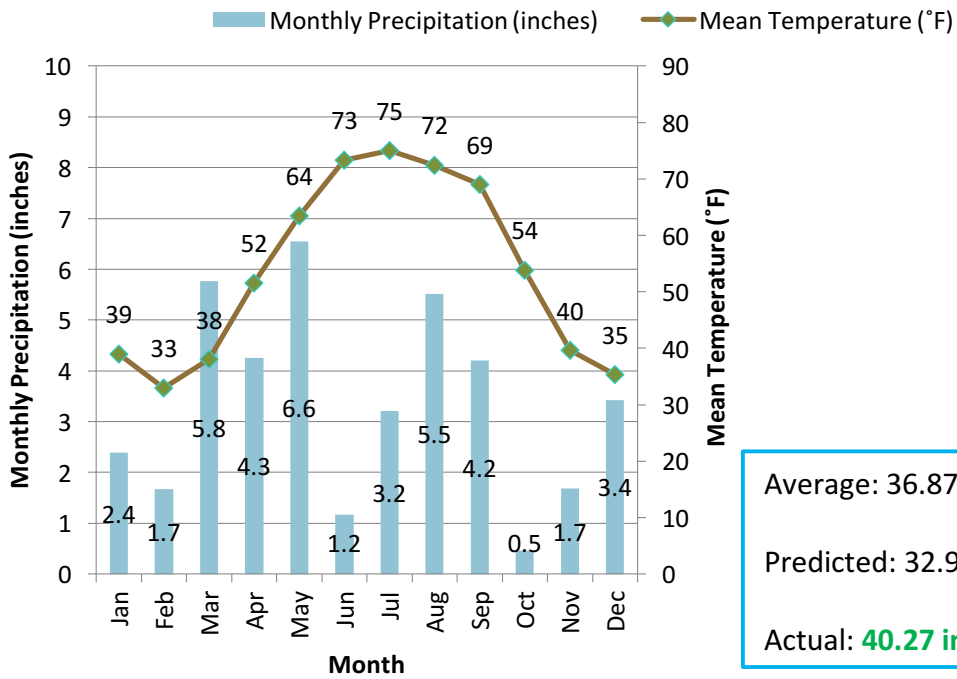
1931 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



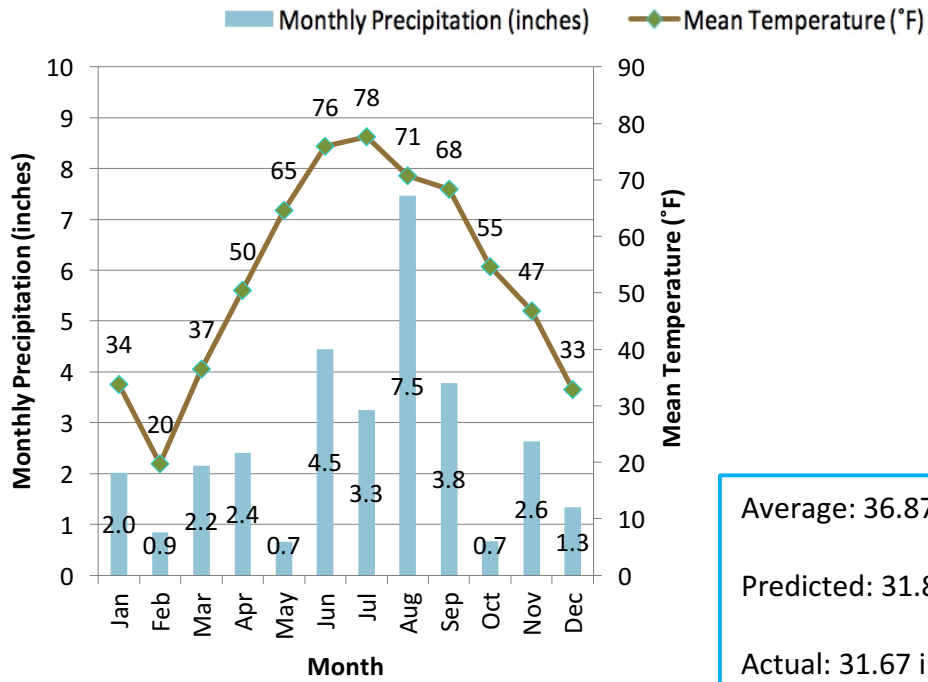
1932 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



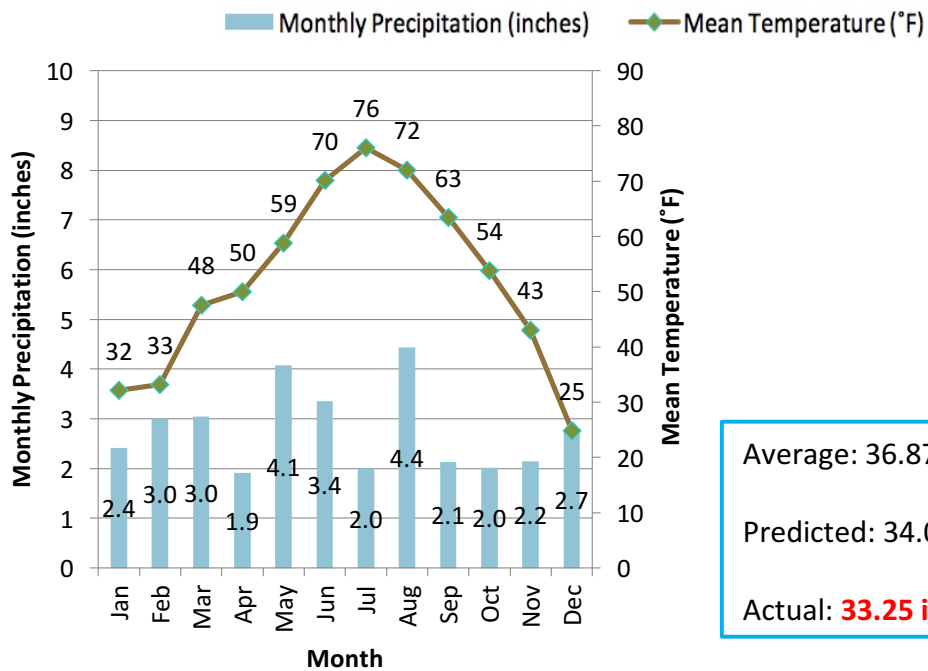
1933 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



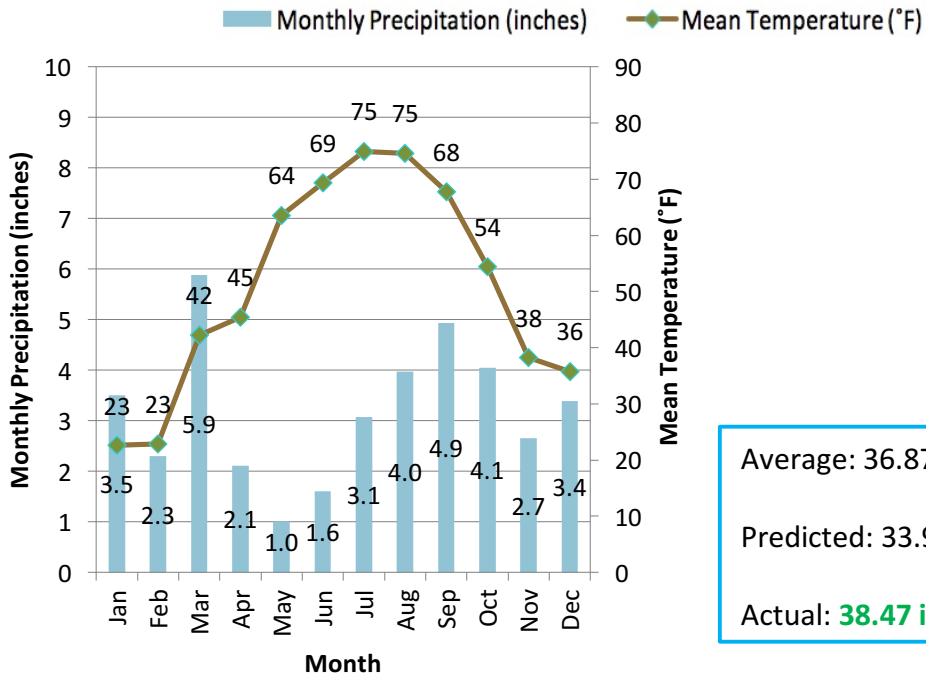
1934 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1935 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1936 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

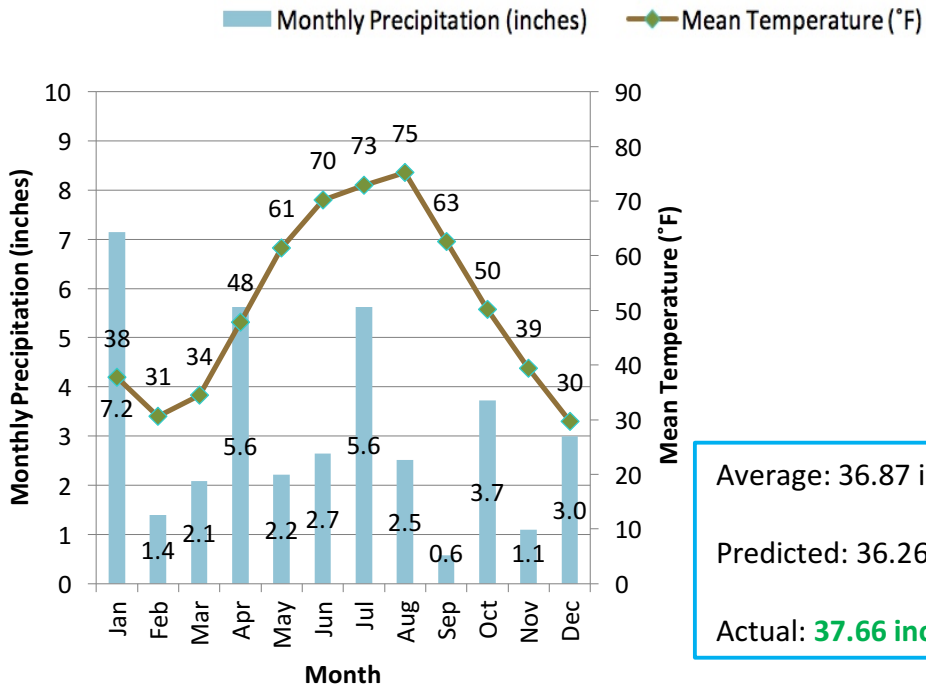


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 33.91 inches

Actual: **38.47 inches**

1937 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

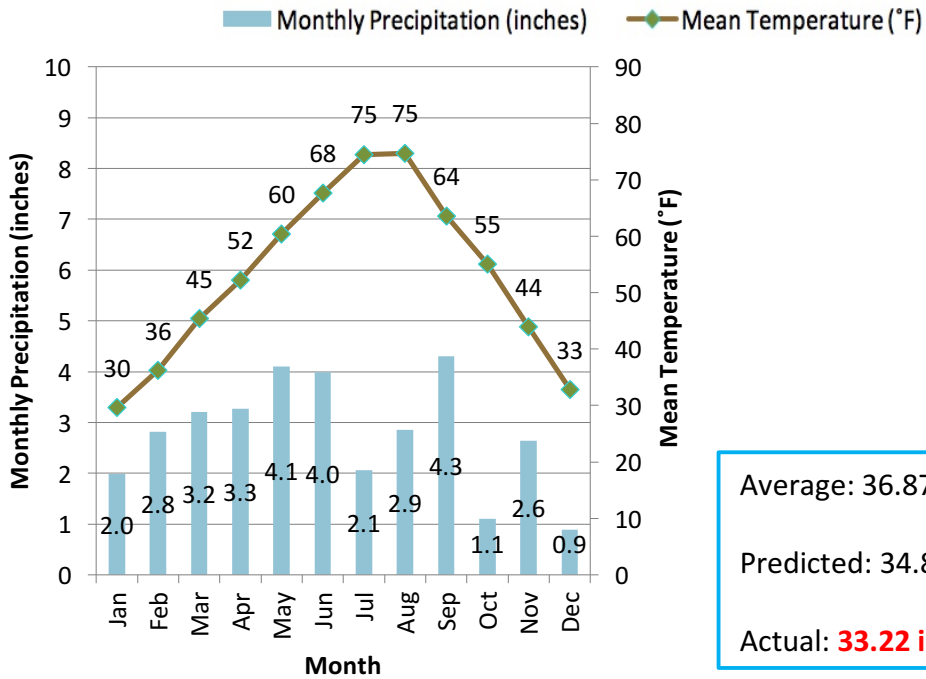


Average: 36.87 inches

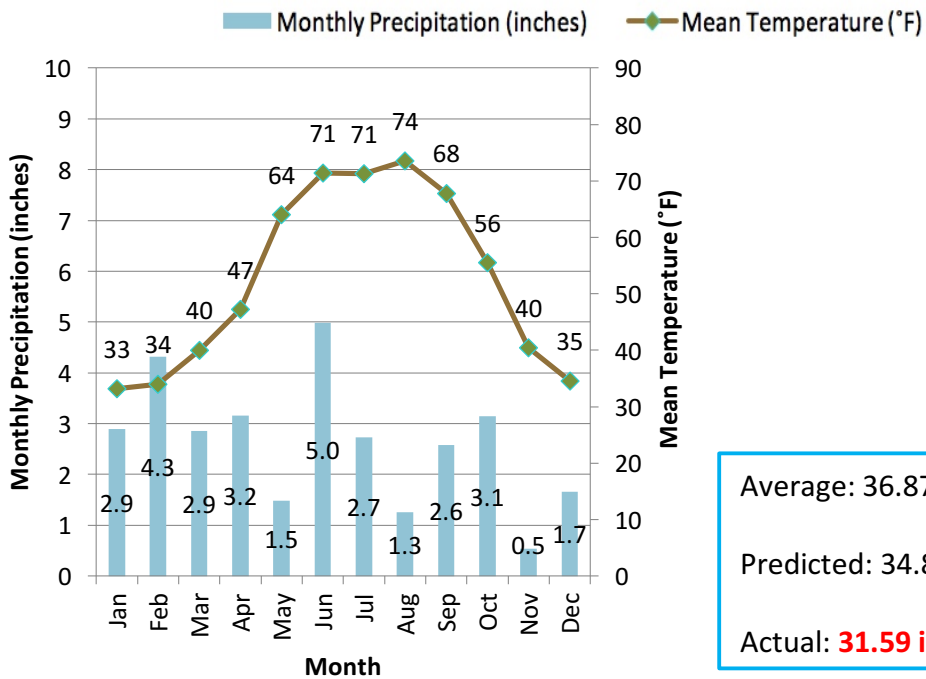
Predicted: 36.26 inches

Actual: **37.66 inches**

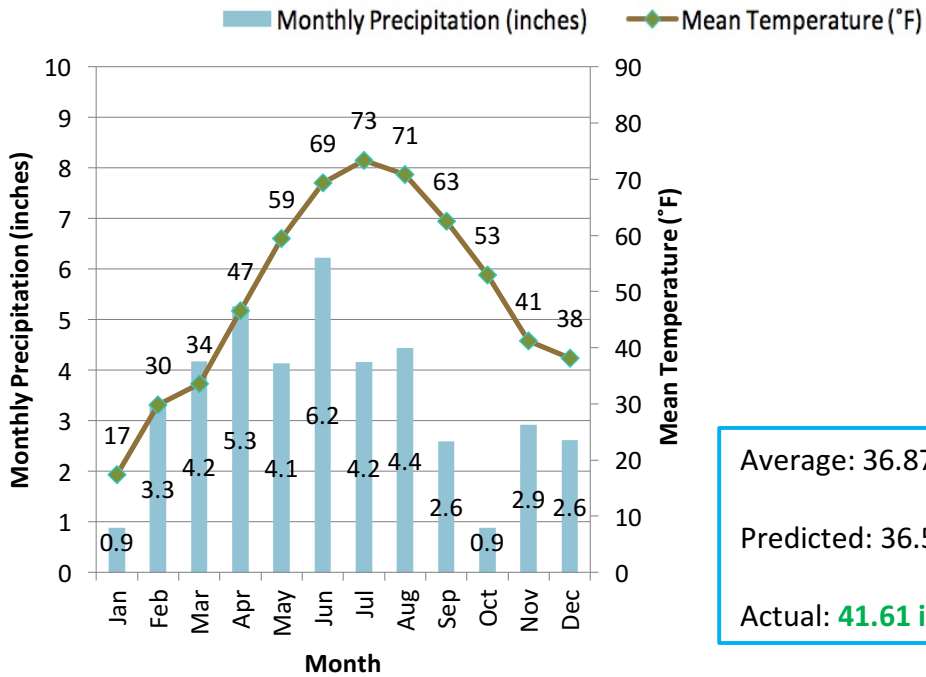
1938 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1939 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1940 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

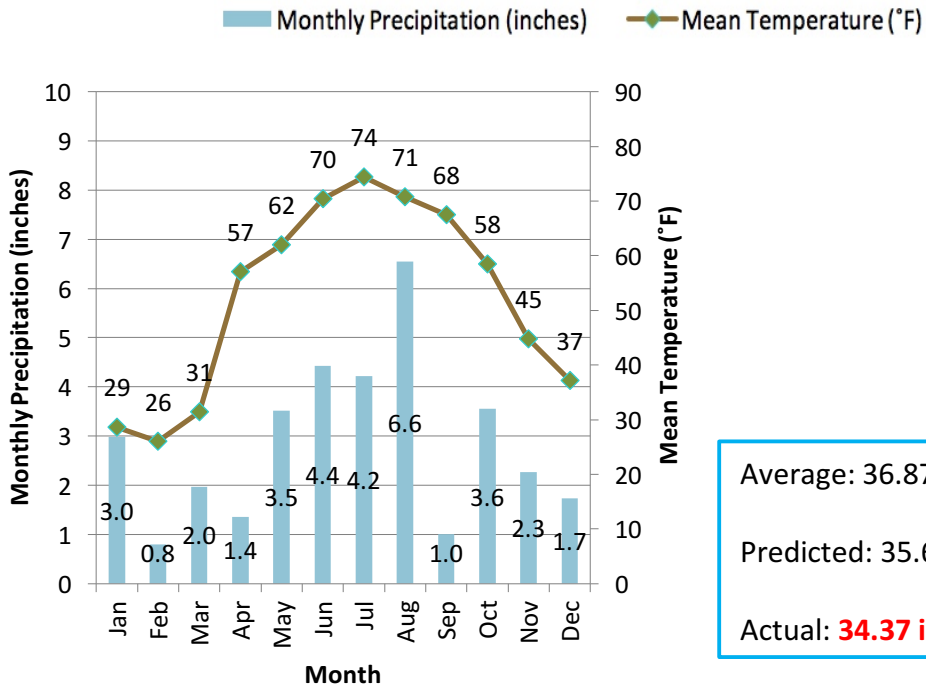


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 36.51 inches

Actual: **41.61 inches**

1941 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

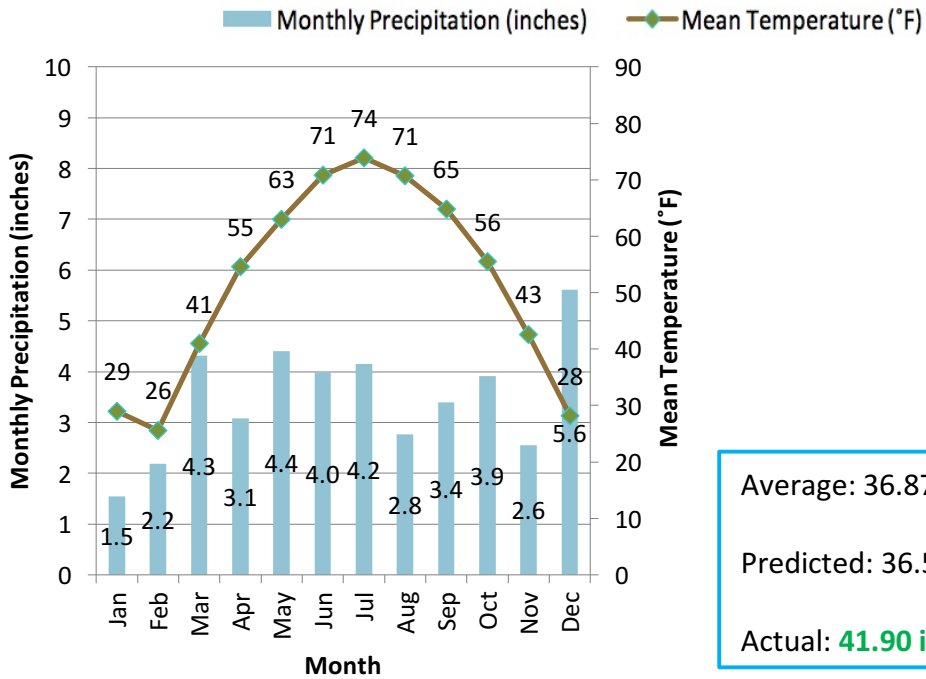


Average: 36.87 inches

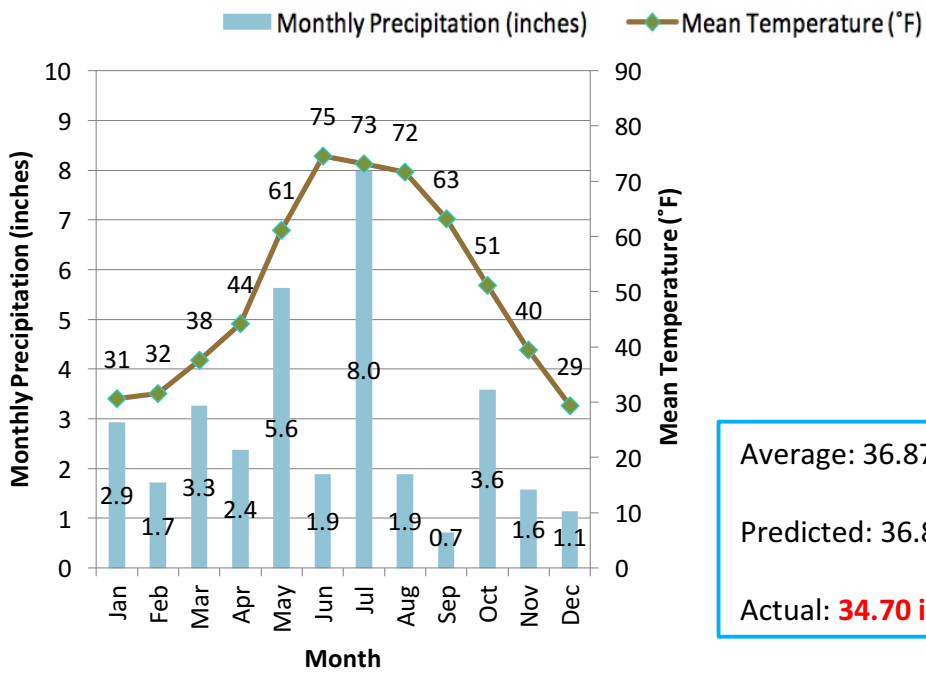
Predicted: 35.69 inches

Actual: **34.37 inches**

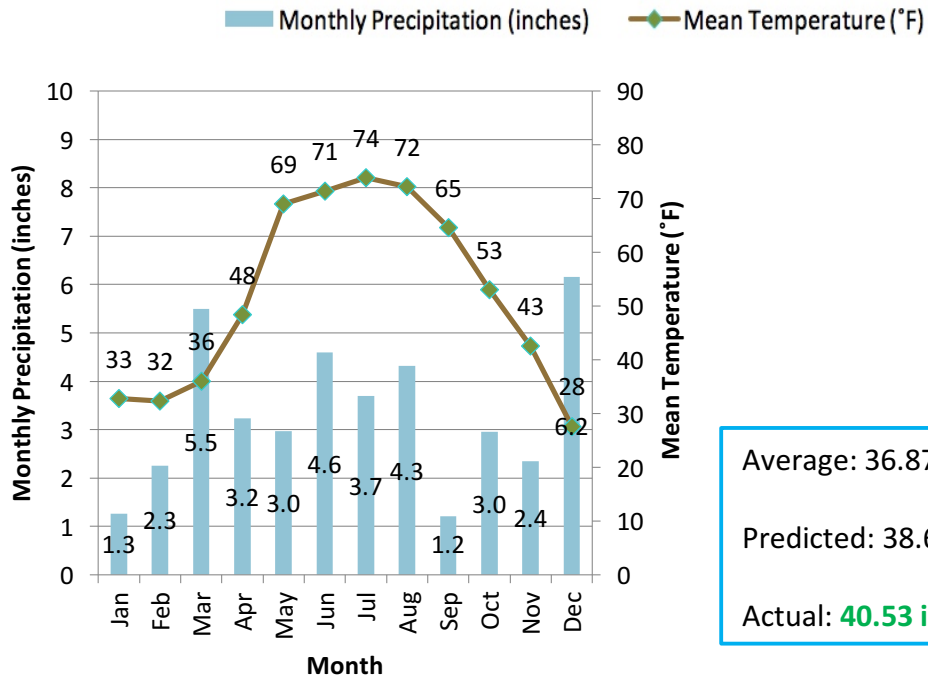
1942 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



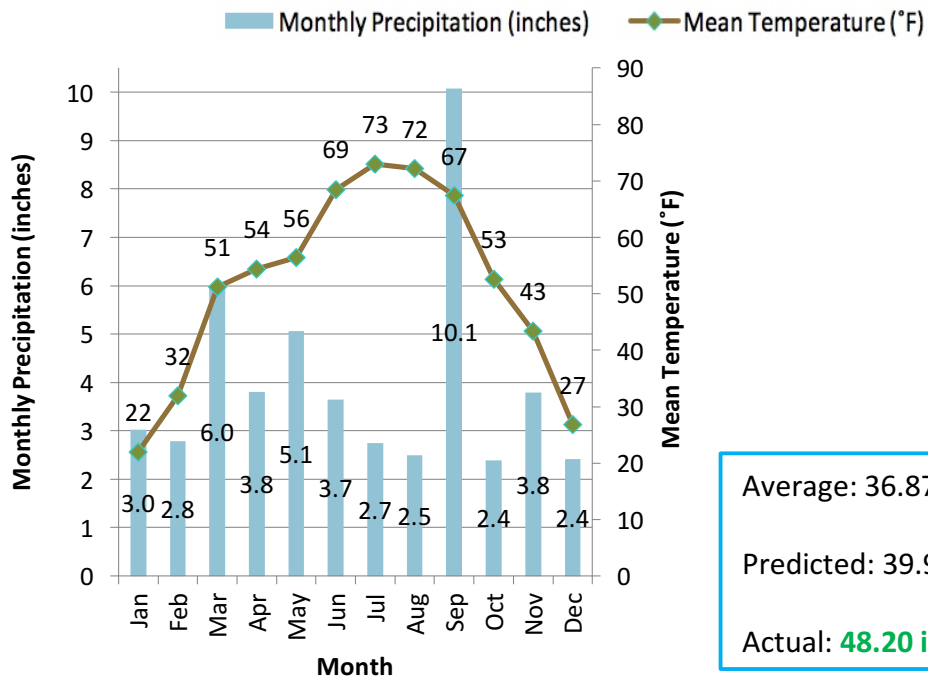
1943 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



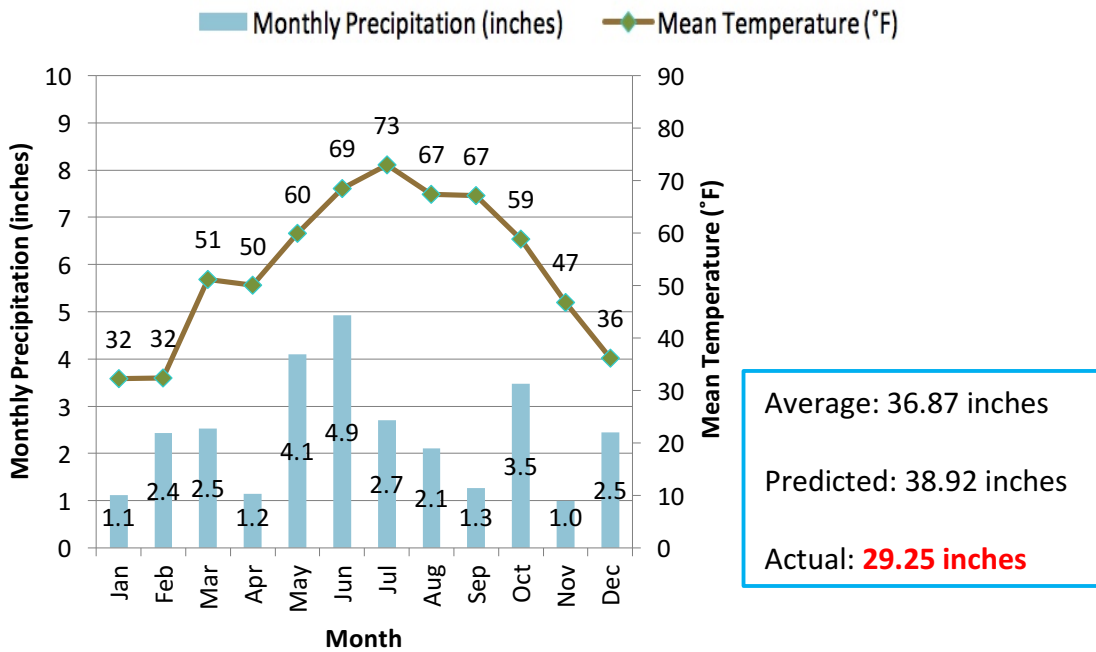
1944 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



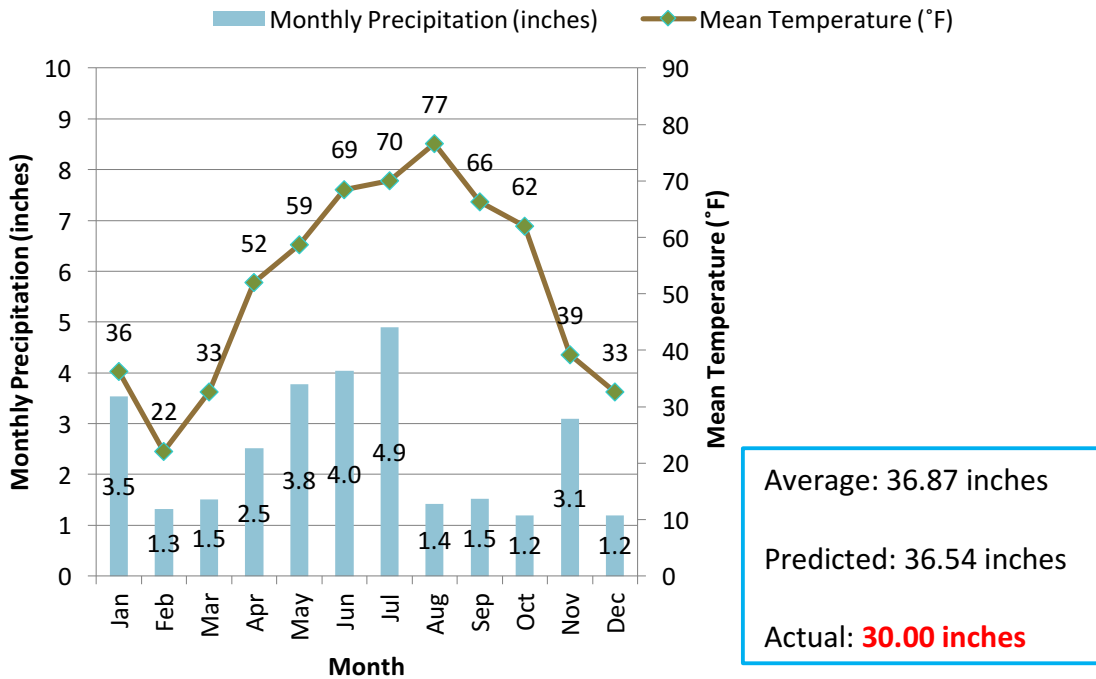
1945 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



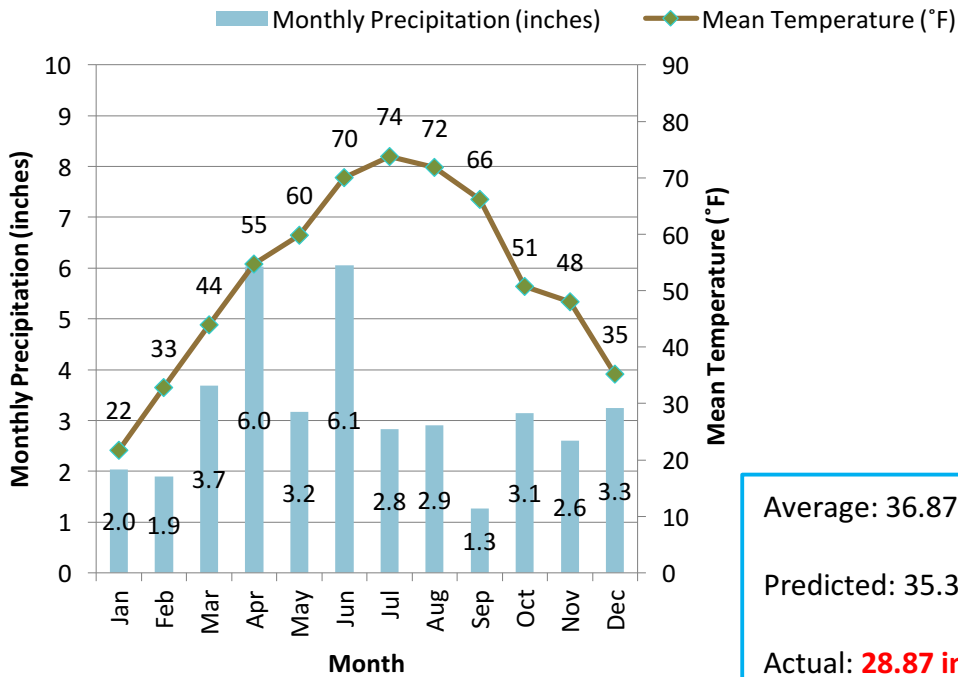
1946 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



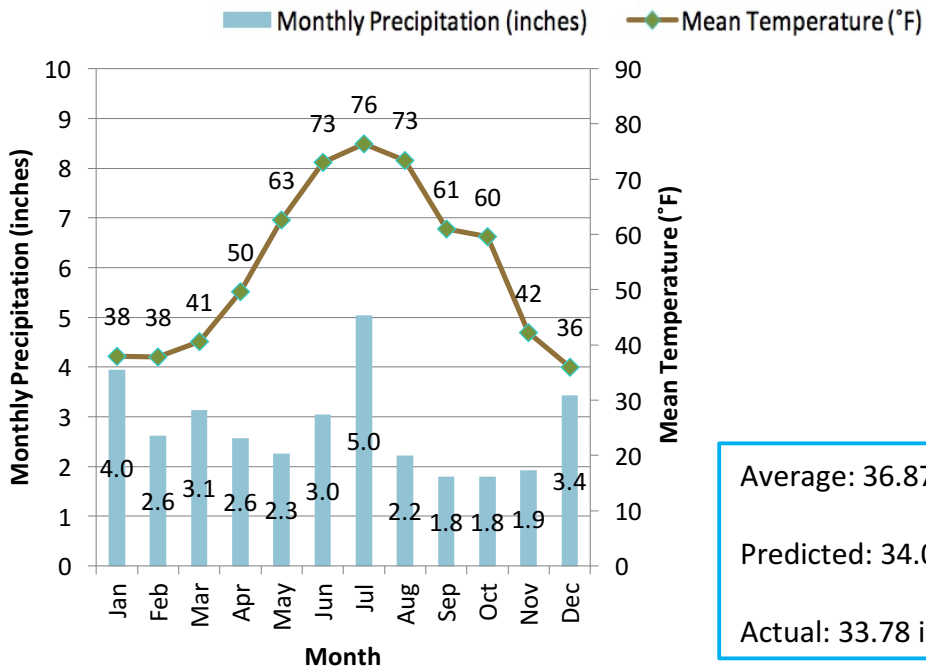
1947 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



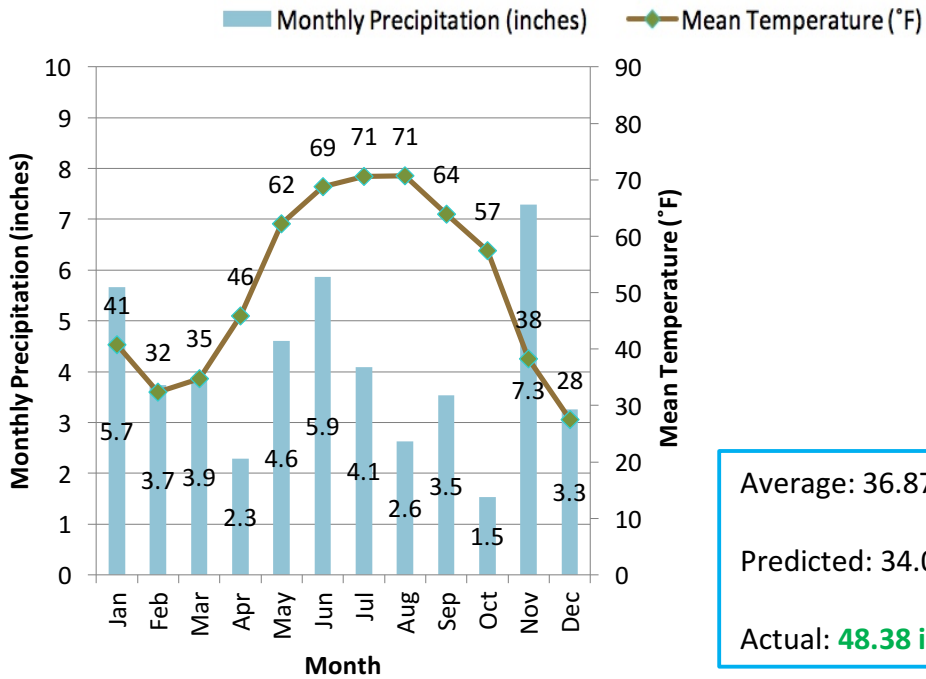
1948 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



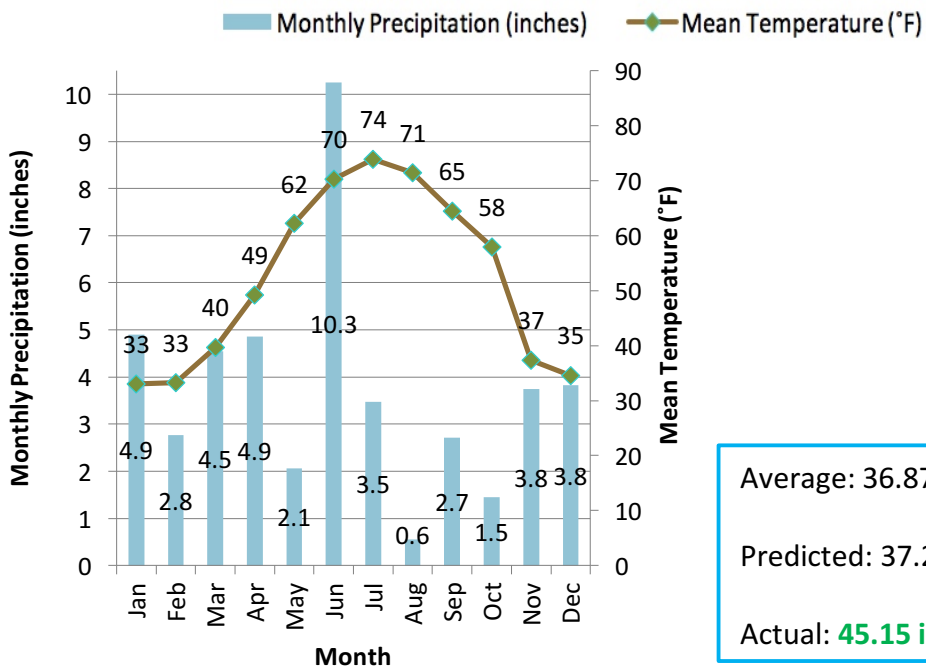
1949 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



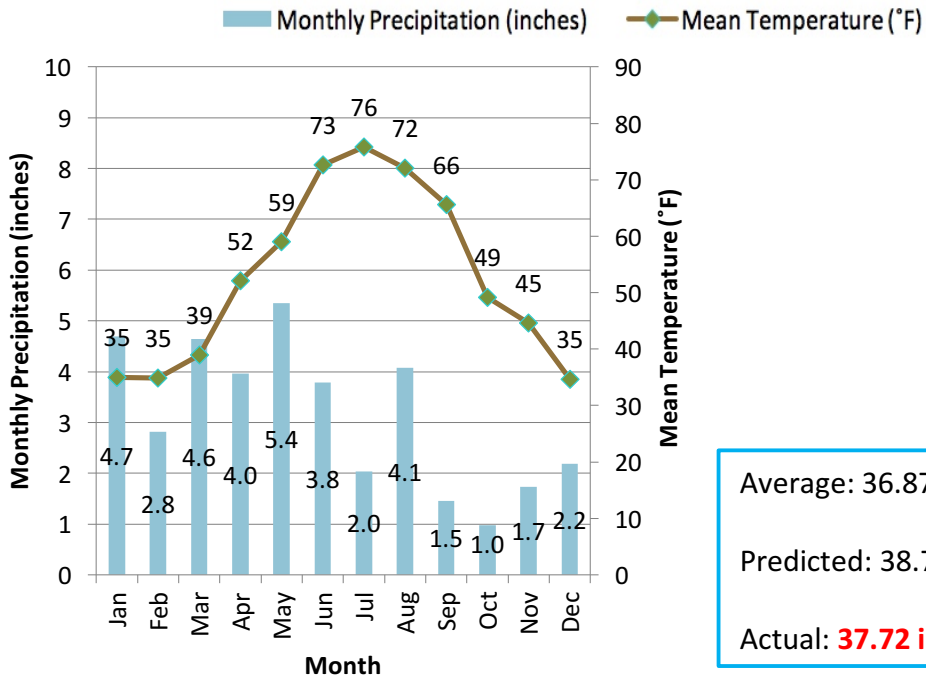
1950 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



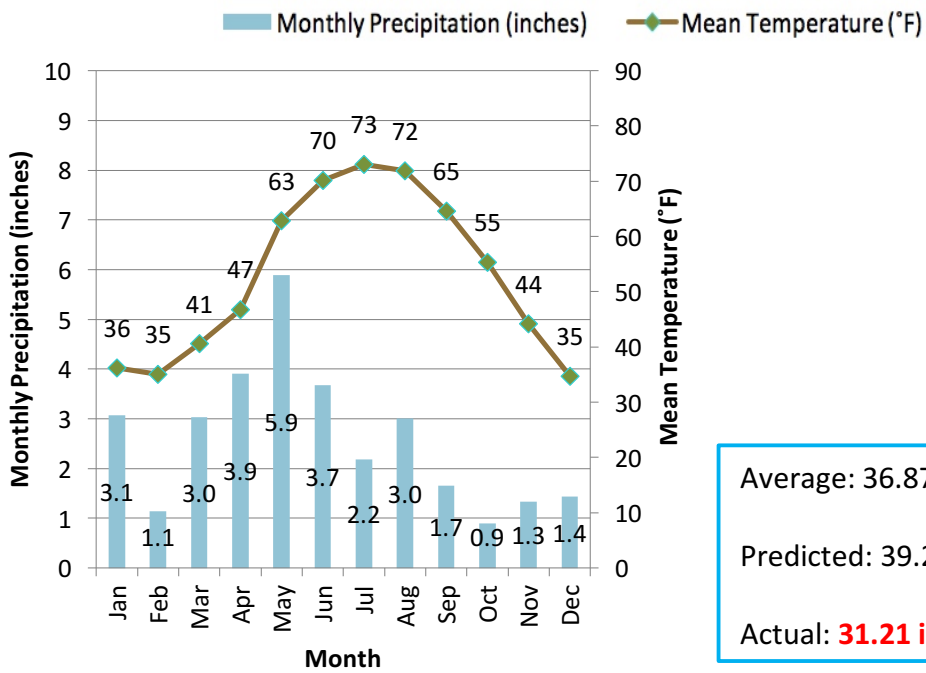
1951 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



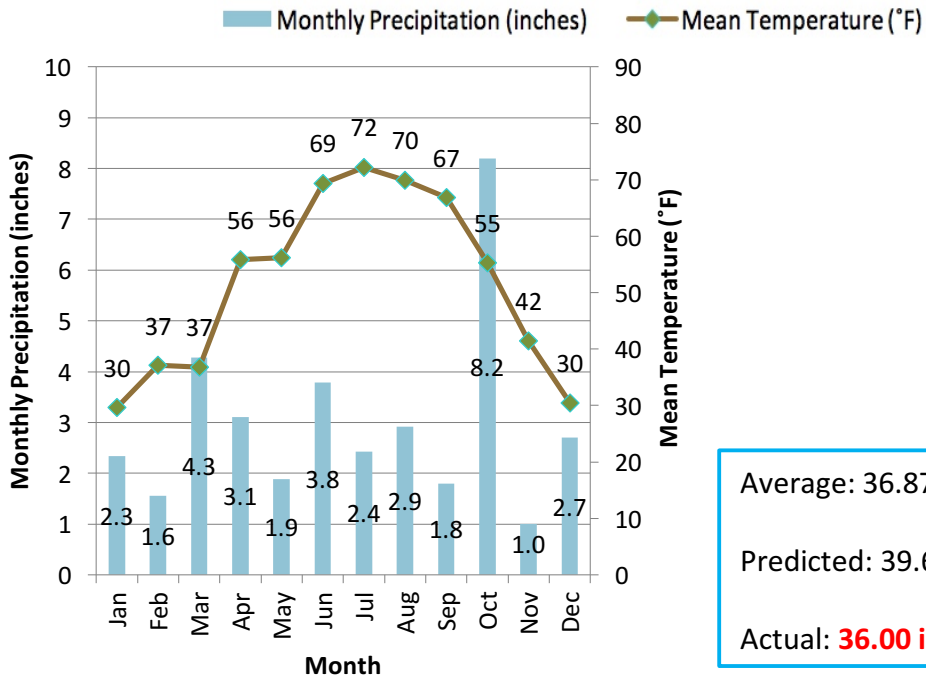
1952 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



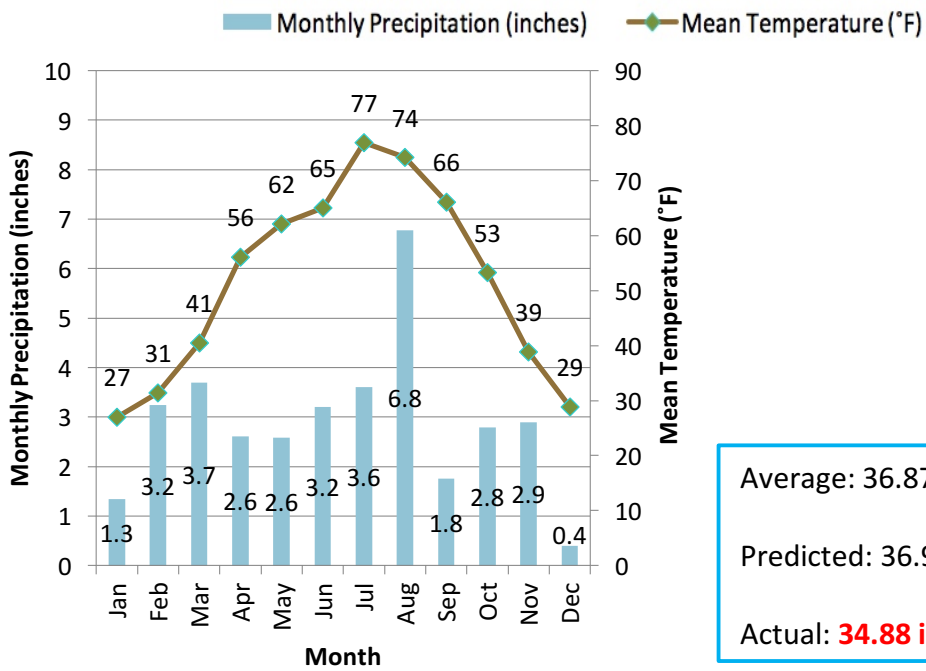
1953 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



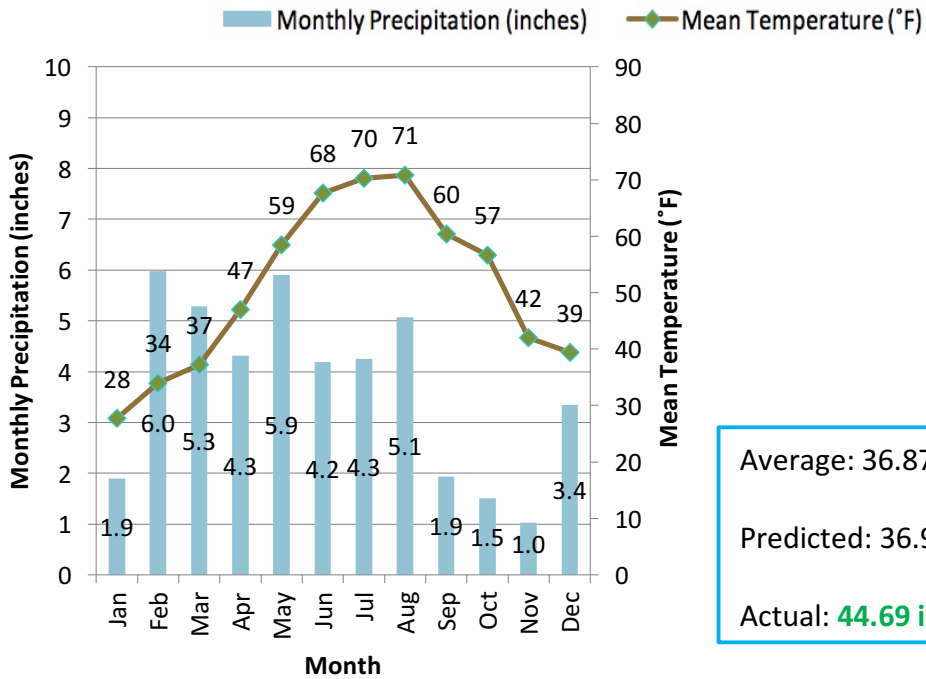
1954 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1955 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1956 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

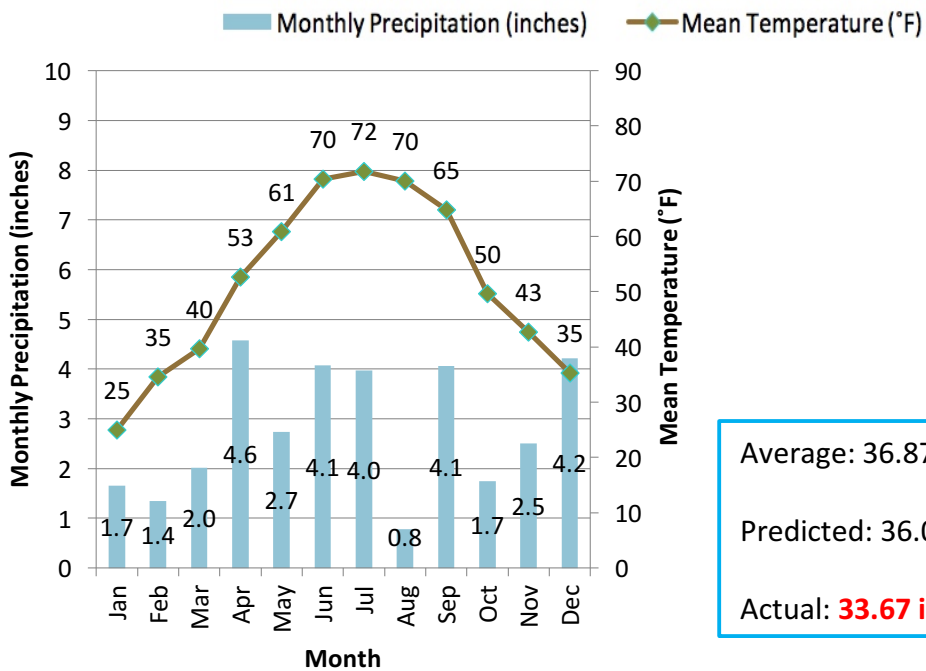


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 36.90 inches

Actual: **44.69 inches**

1957 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

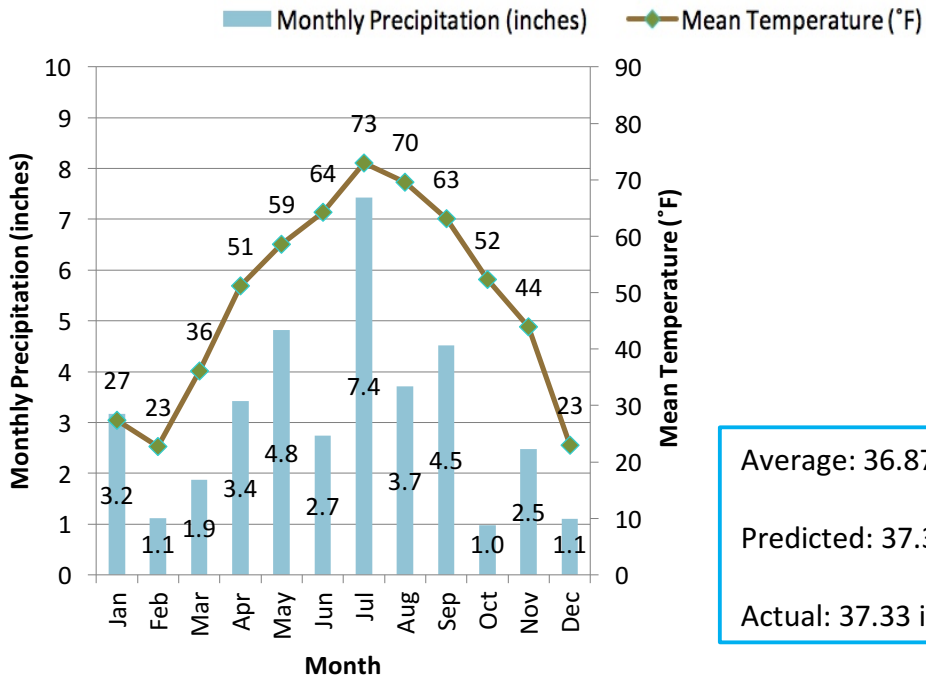


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 36.09 inches

Actual: **33.67 inches**

1958 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

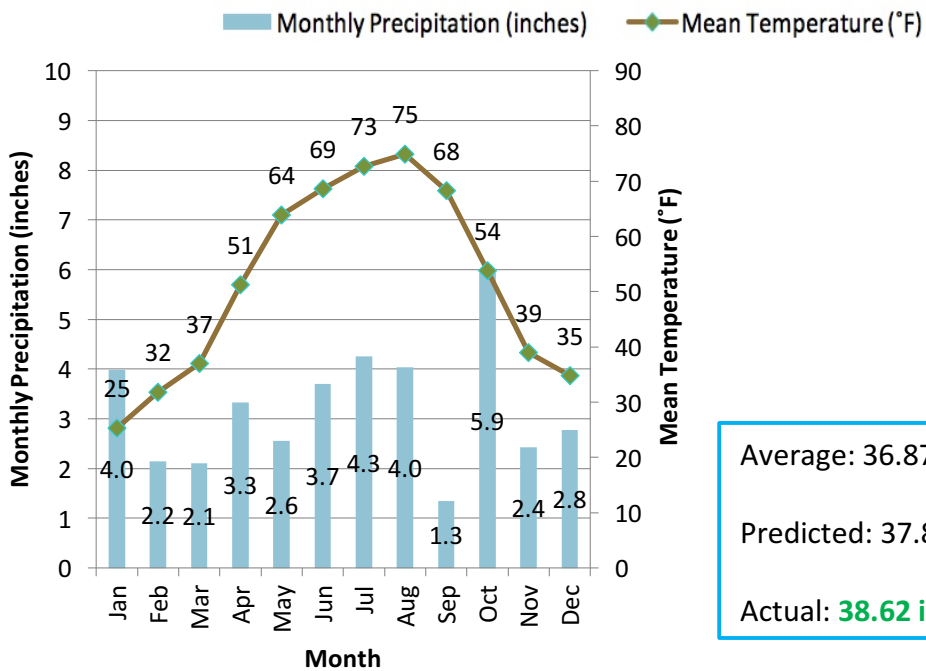


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 37.31 inches

Actual: 37.33 inches

1959 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

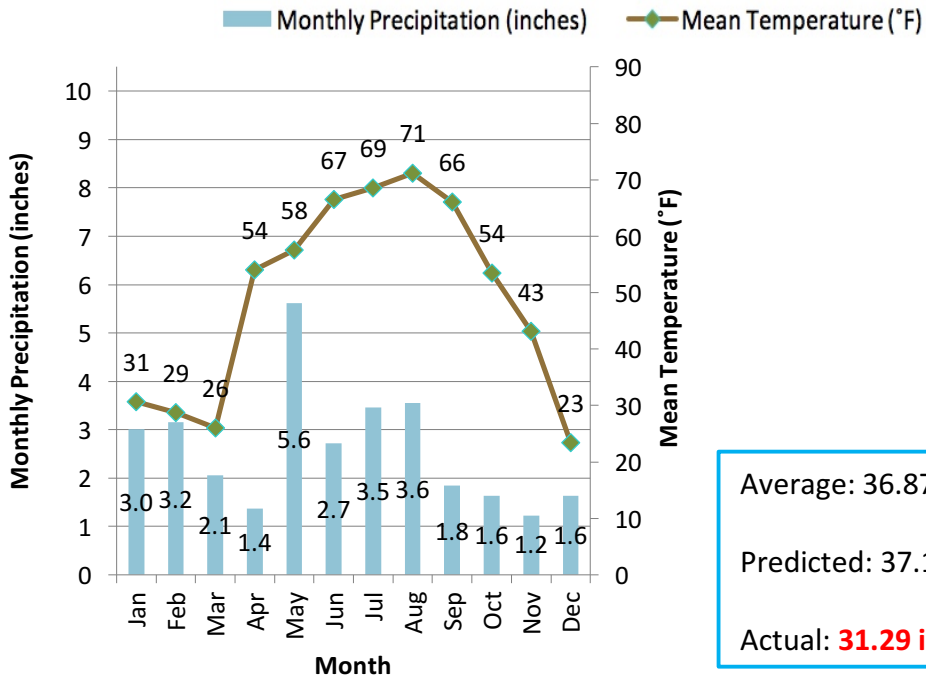


Average: 36.87 inches

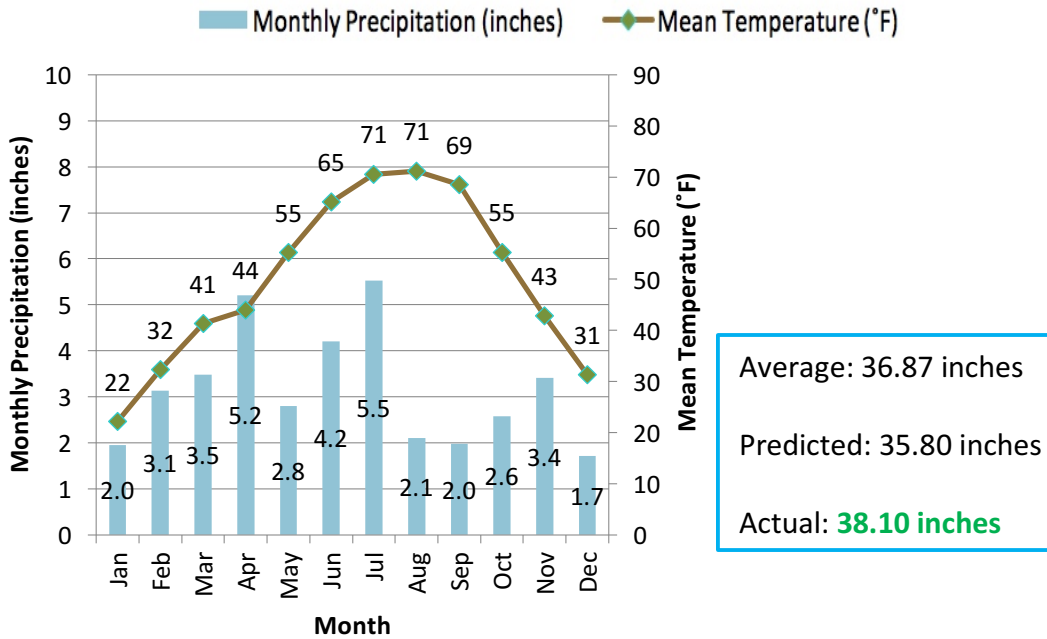
Predicted: 37.84 inches

Actual: **38.62 inches**

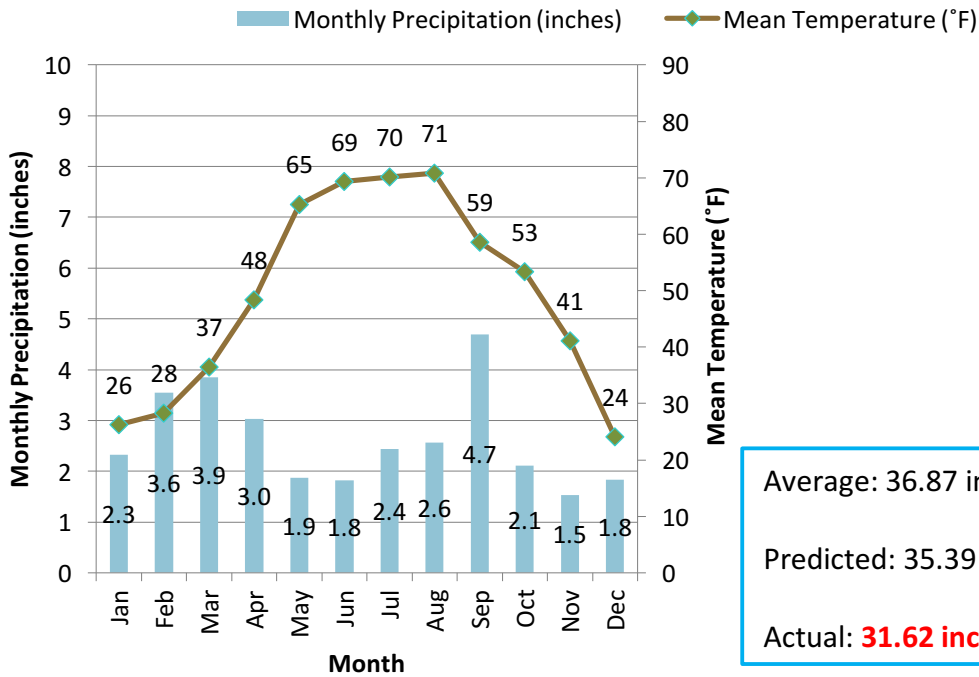
1960 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



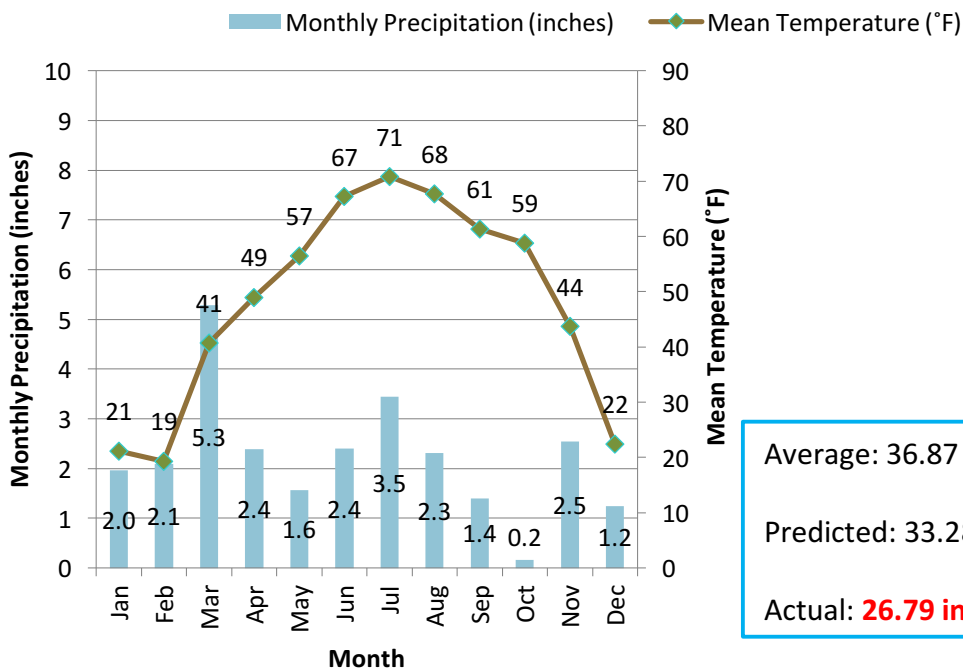
1961 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



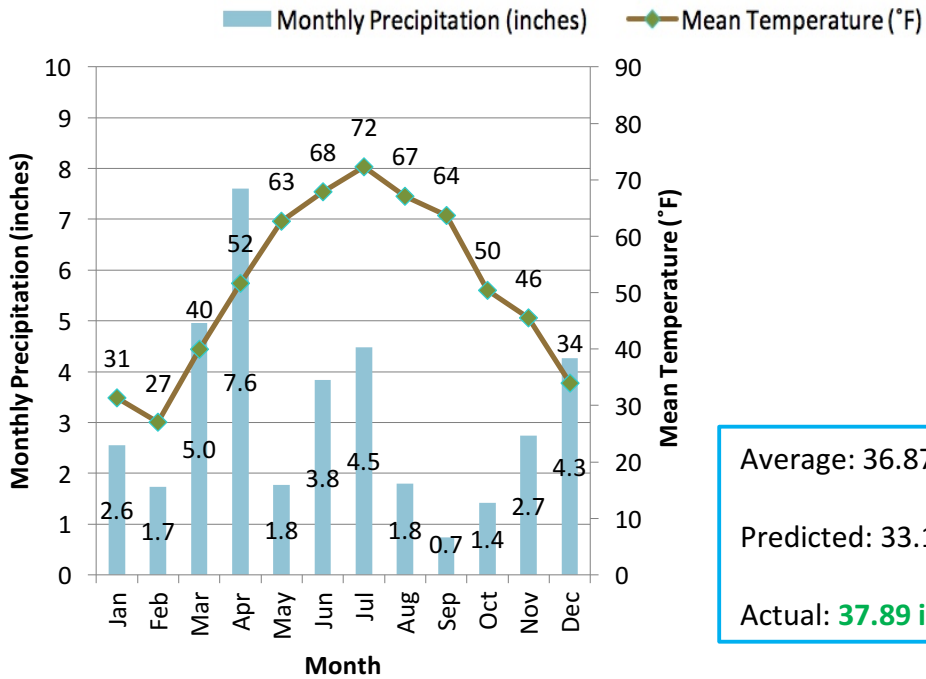
1962 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1963 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1964 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

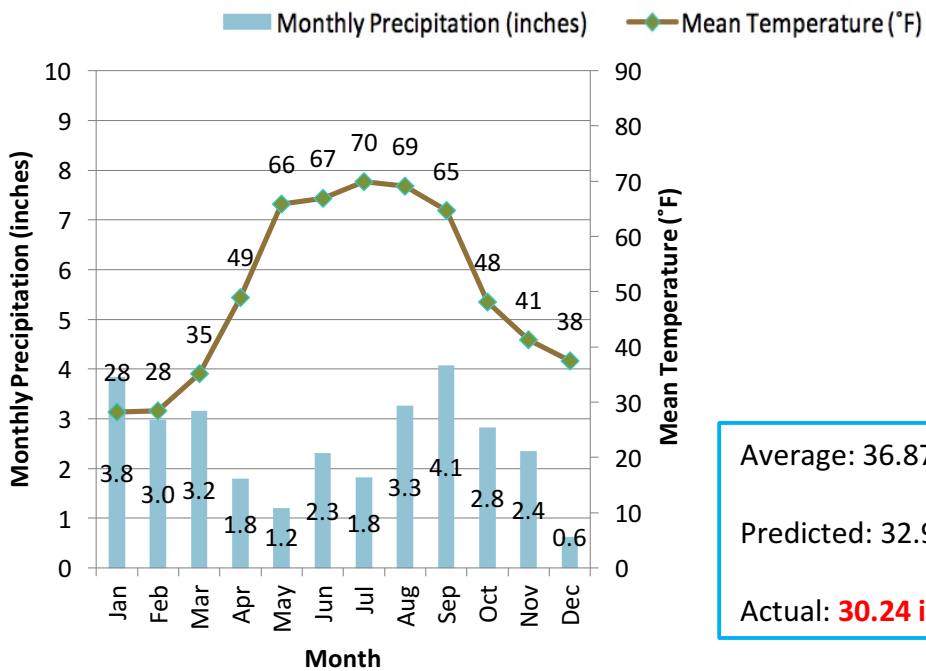


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 33.14 inches

Actual: **37.89 inches**

1965 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

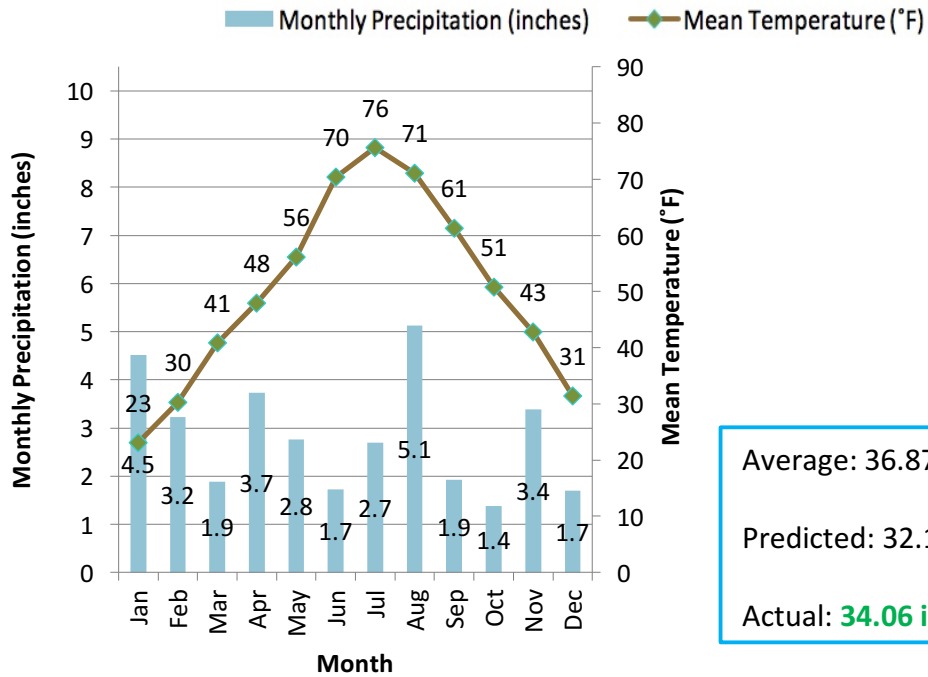


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 32.93 inches

Actual: **30.24 inches**

1966 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

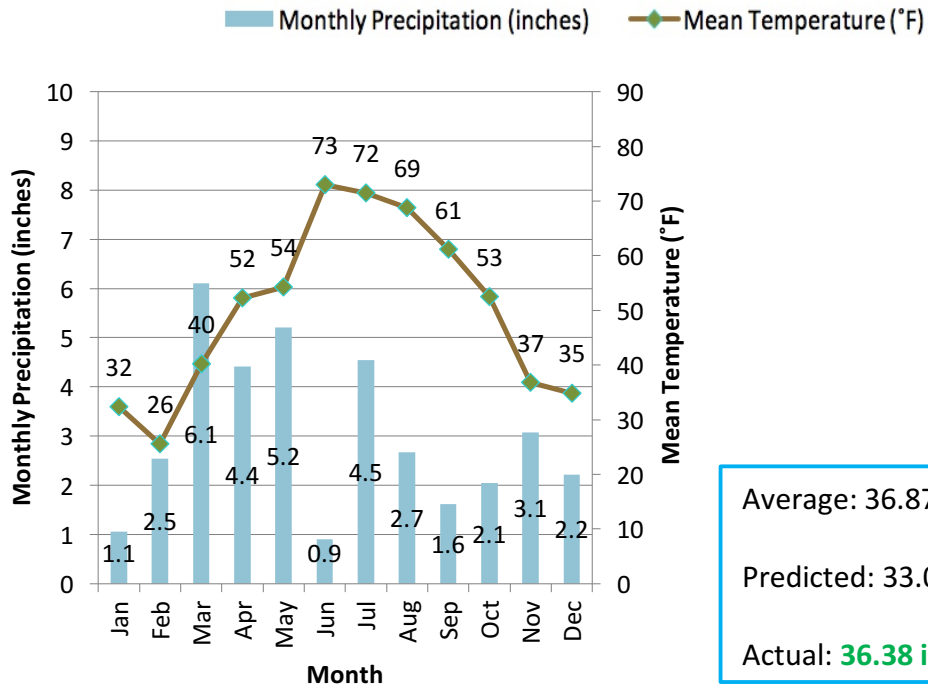


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 32.12 inches

Actual: **34.06 inches**

1967 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

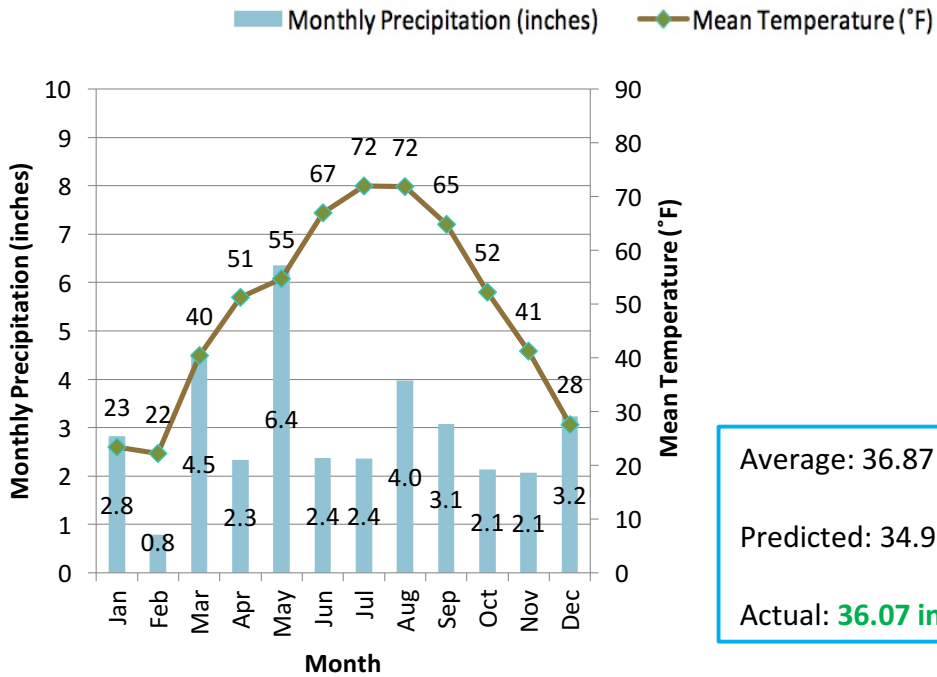


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 33.07 inches

Actual: **36.38 inches**

1968 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

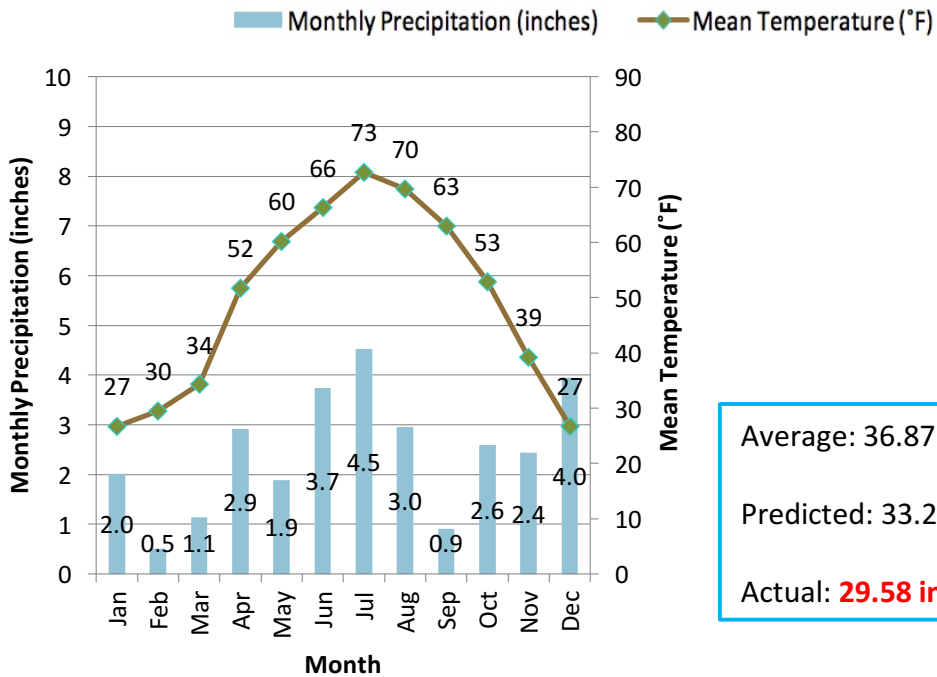


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 34.93 inches

Actual: **36.07 inches**

1969 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

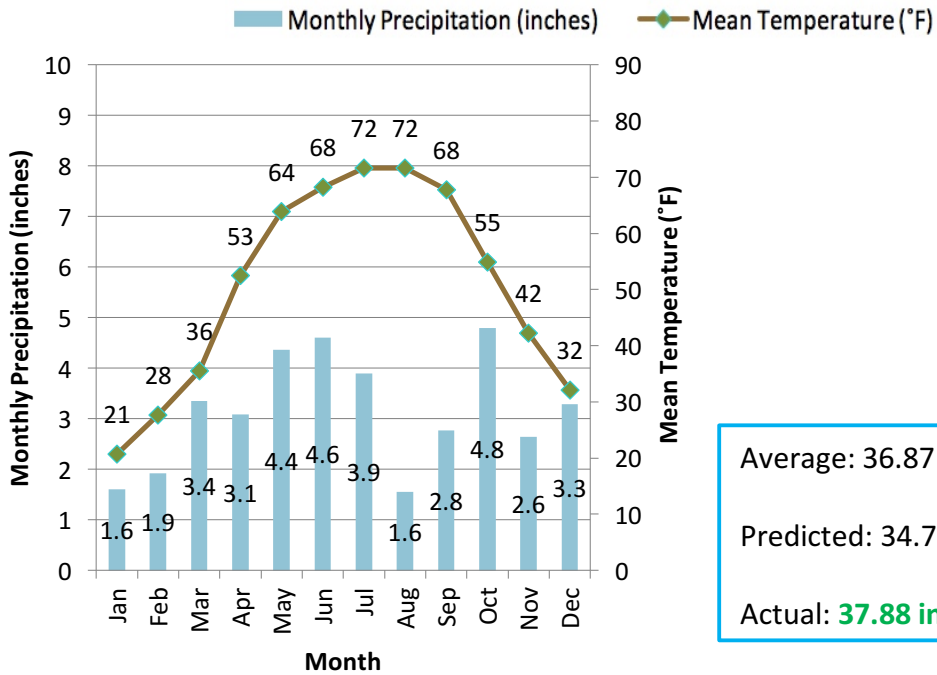


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 33.27 inches

Actual: **29.58 inches**

1970 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

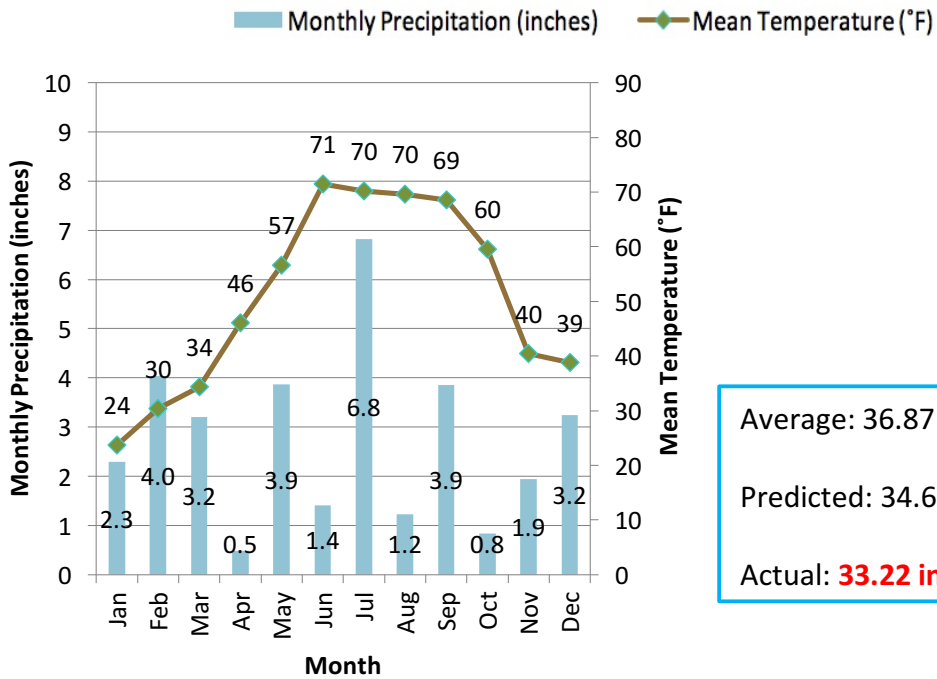


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 34.79 inches

Actual: **37.88 inches**

1971 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

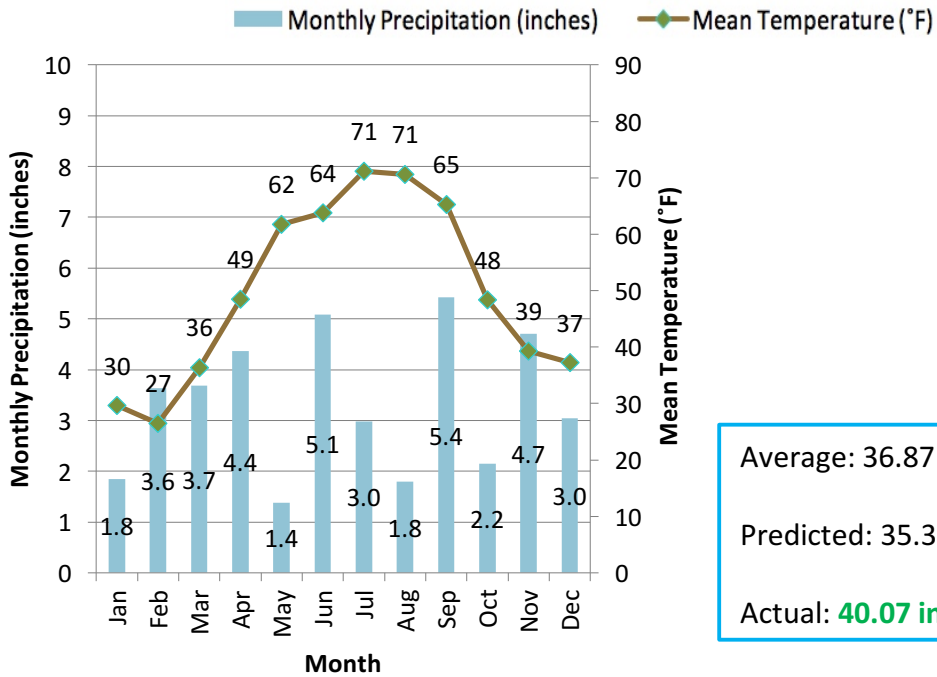


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 34.63 inches

Actual: **33.22 inches**

1972 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

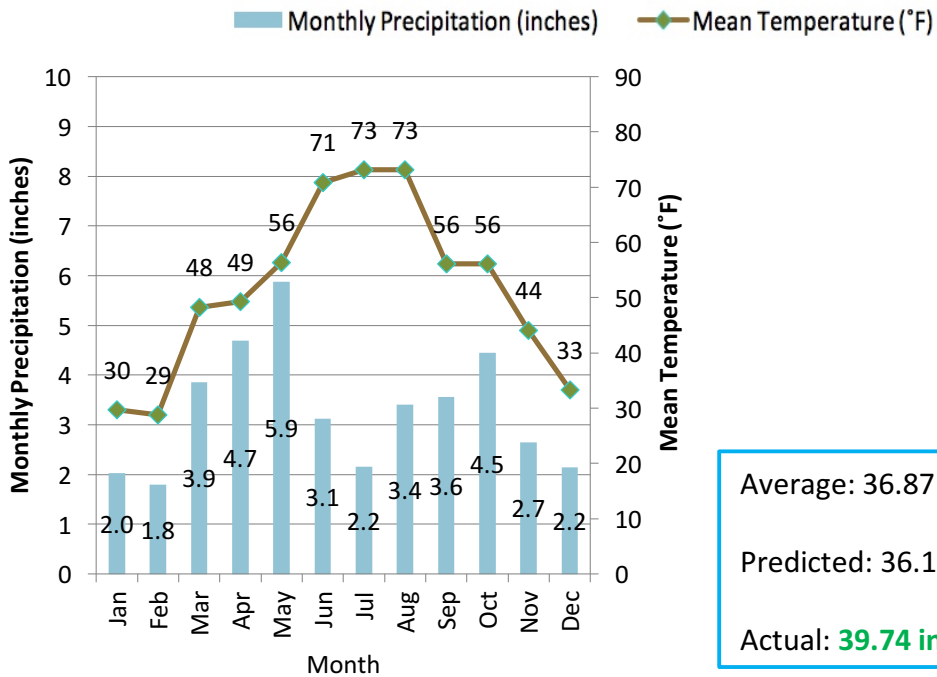


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 35.36 inches

Actual: **40.07 inches**

1973 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

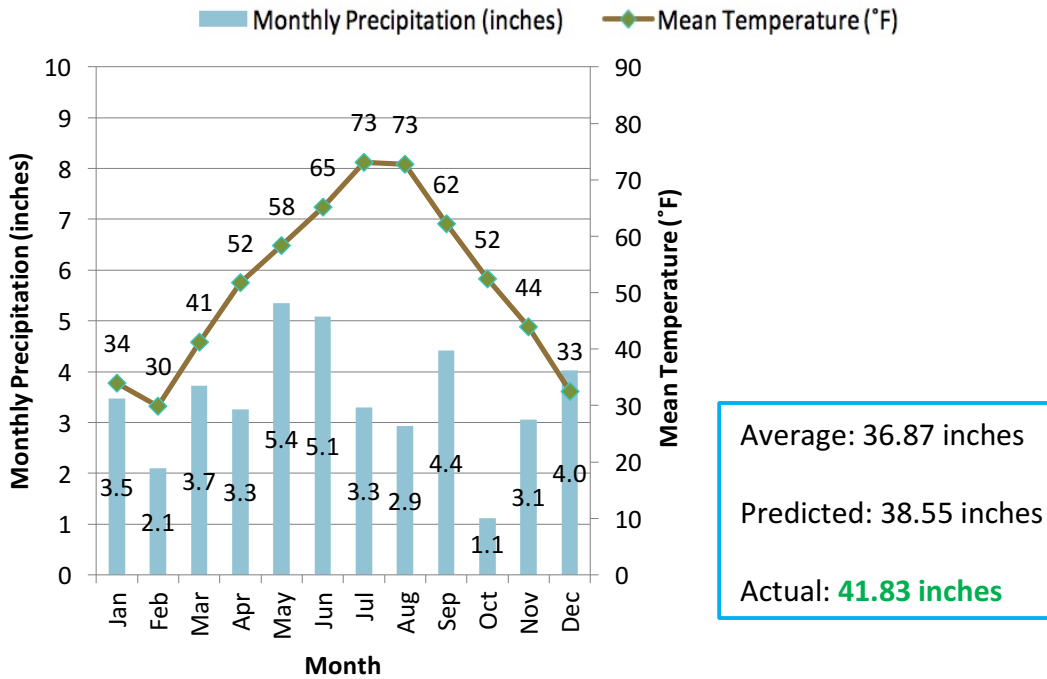


Average: 36.87 inches

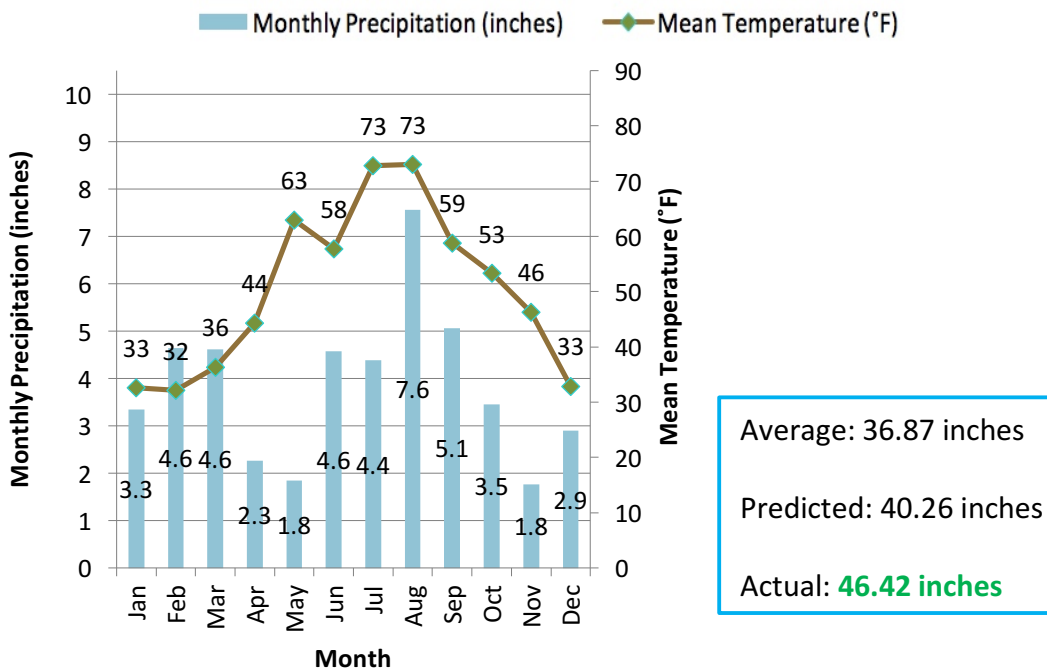
Predicted: 36.10 inches

Actual: **39.74 inches**

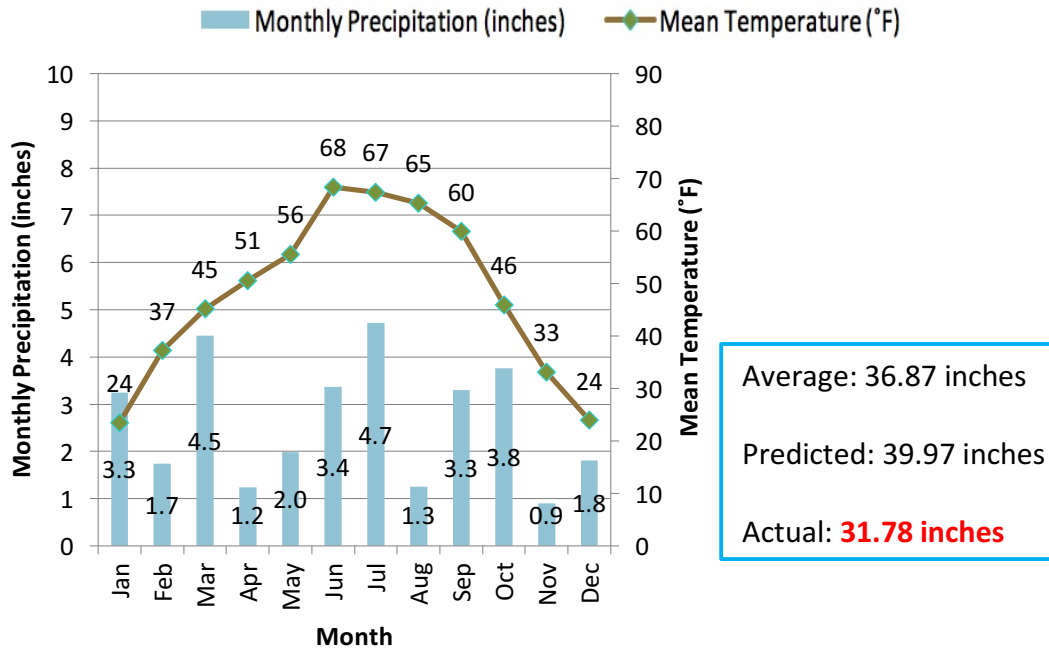
1974 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



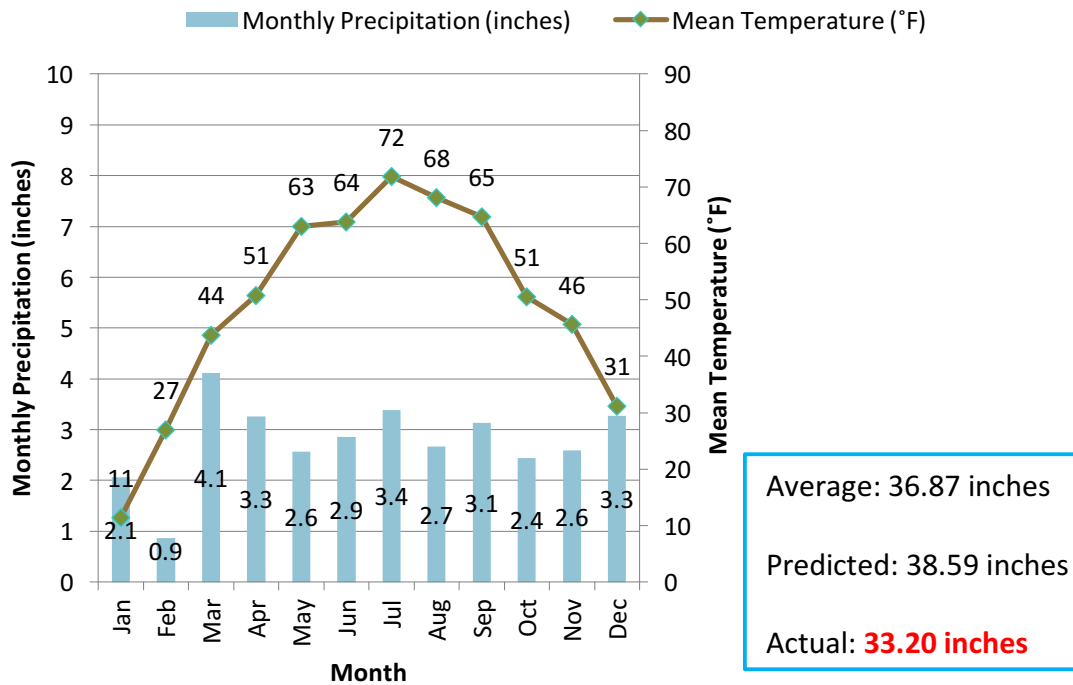
1975 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



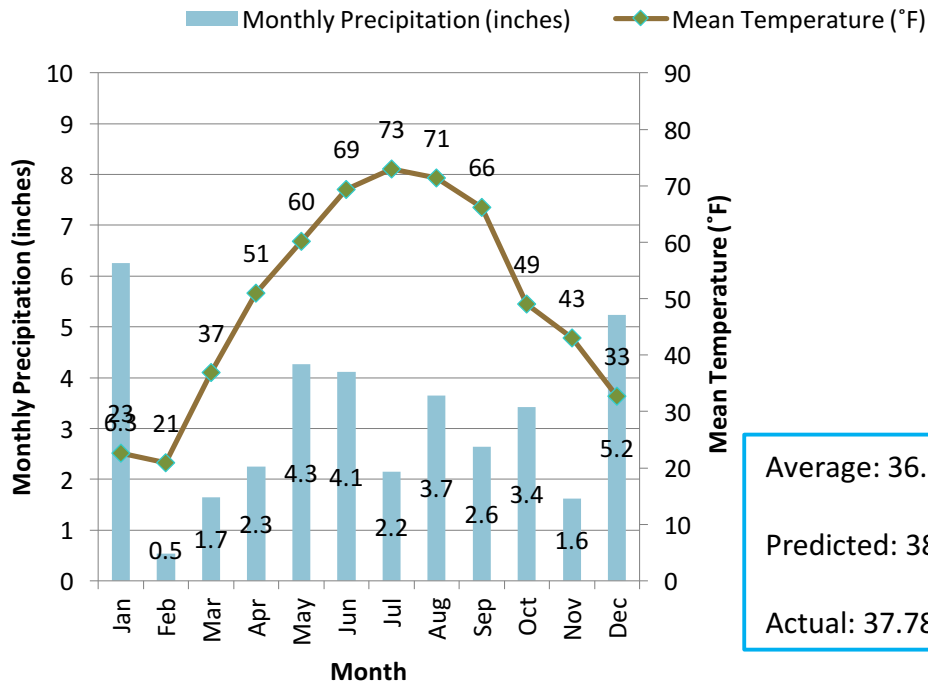
1976 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



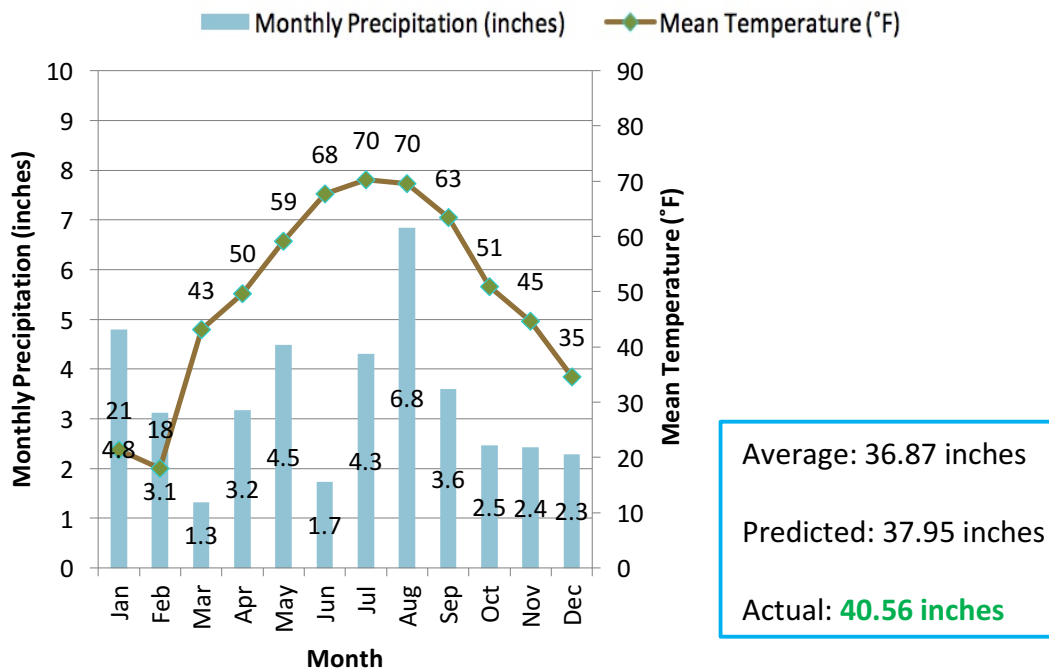
1977 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



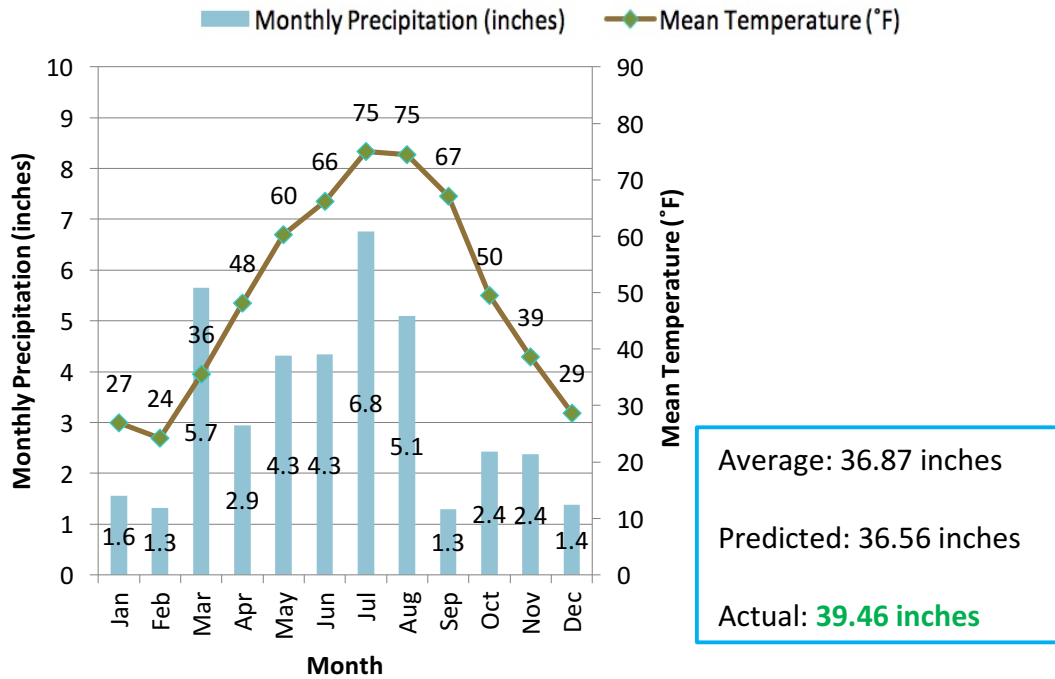
1978 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



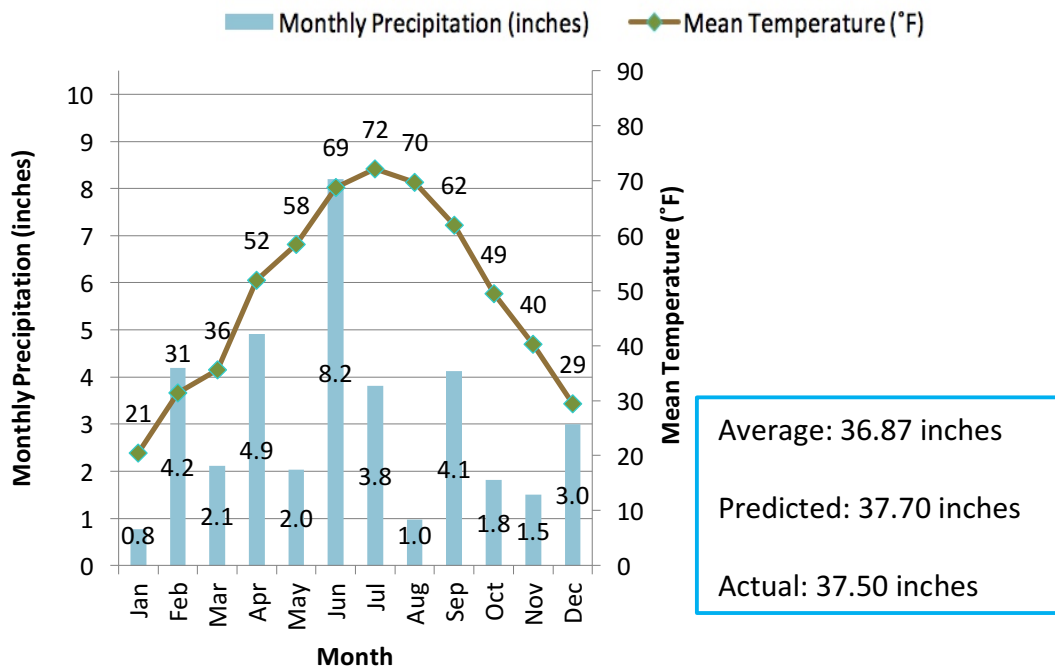
1979 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



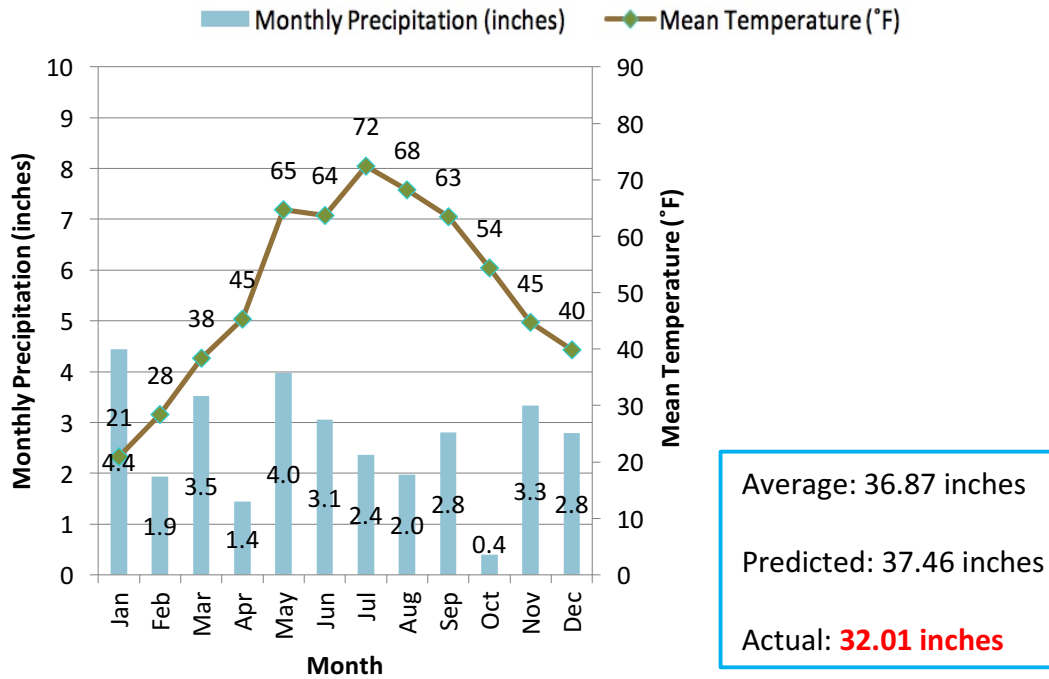
1980 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



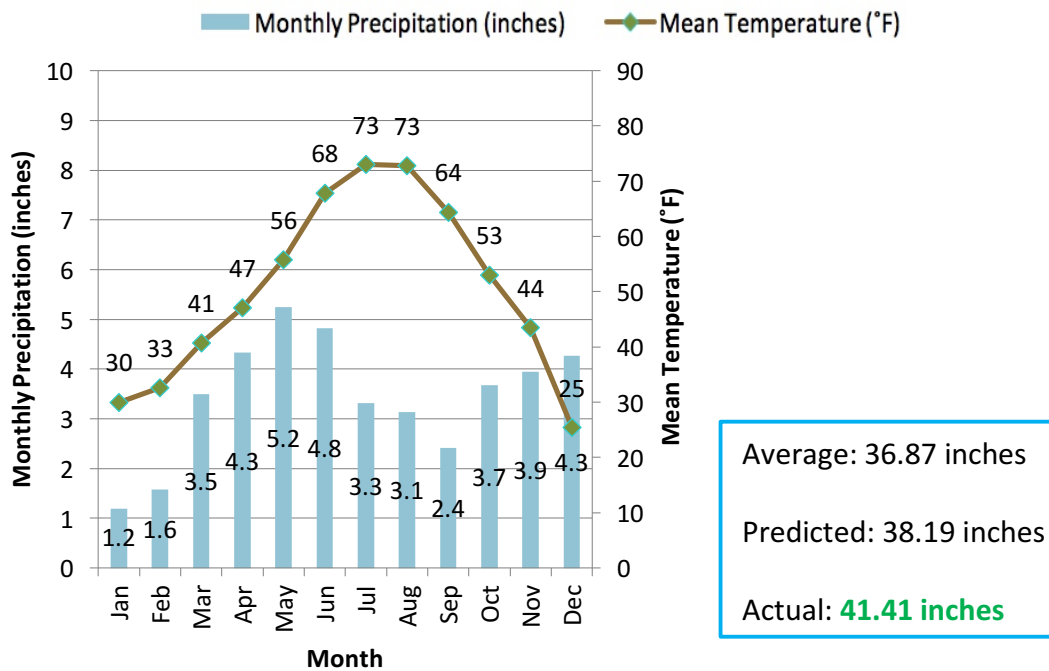
1981 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



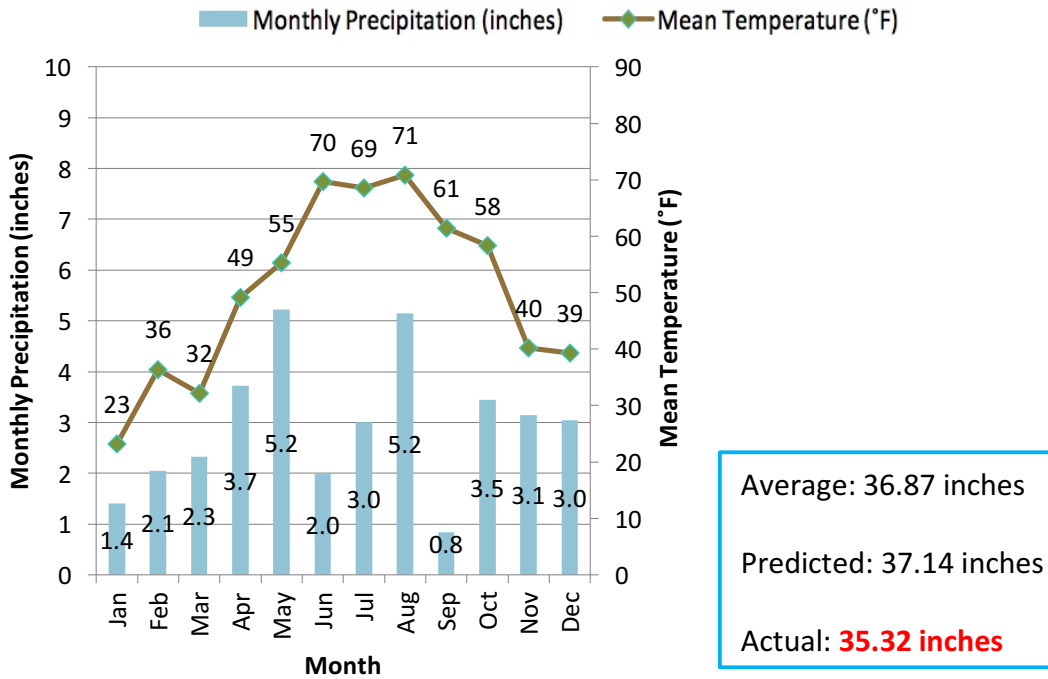
1982 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



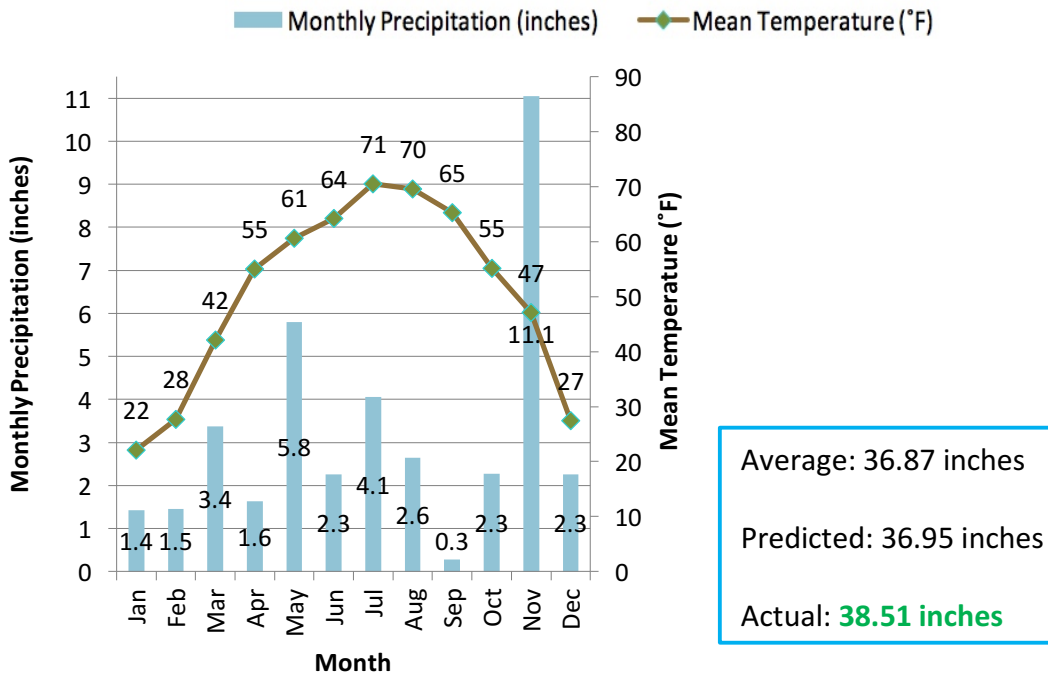
1983 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



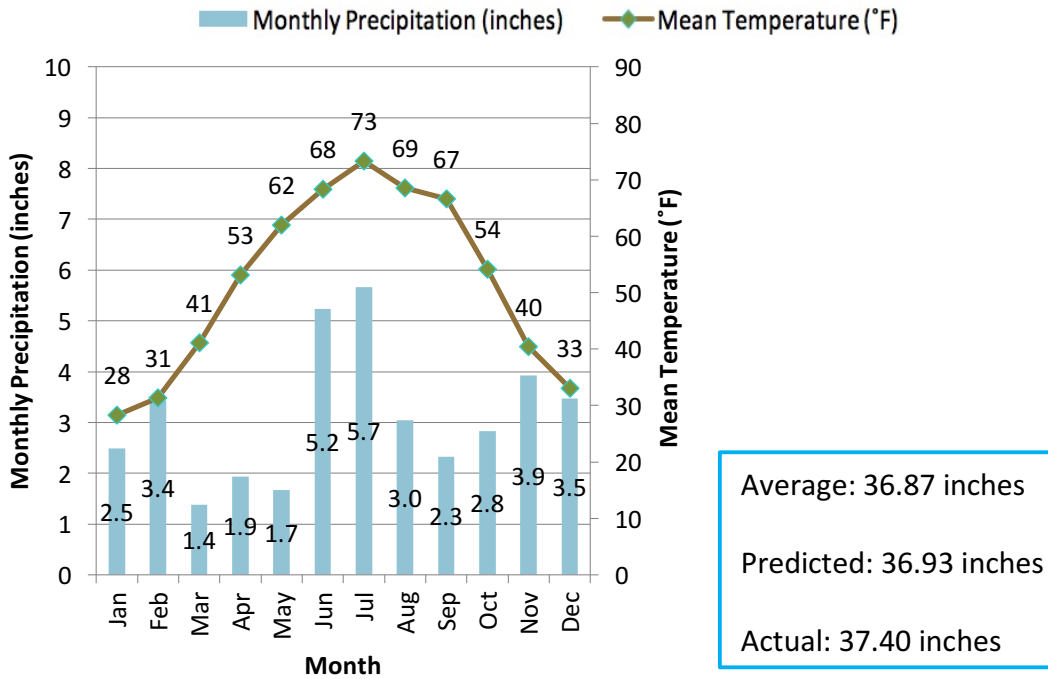
1984 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



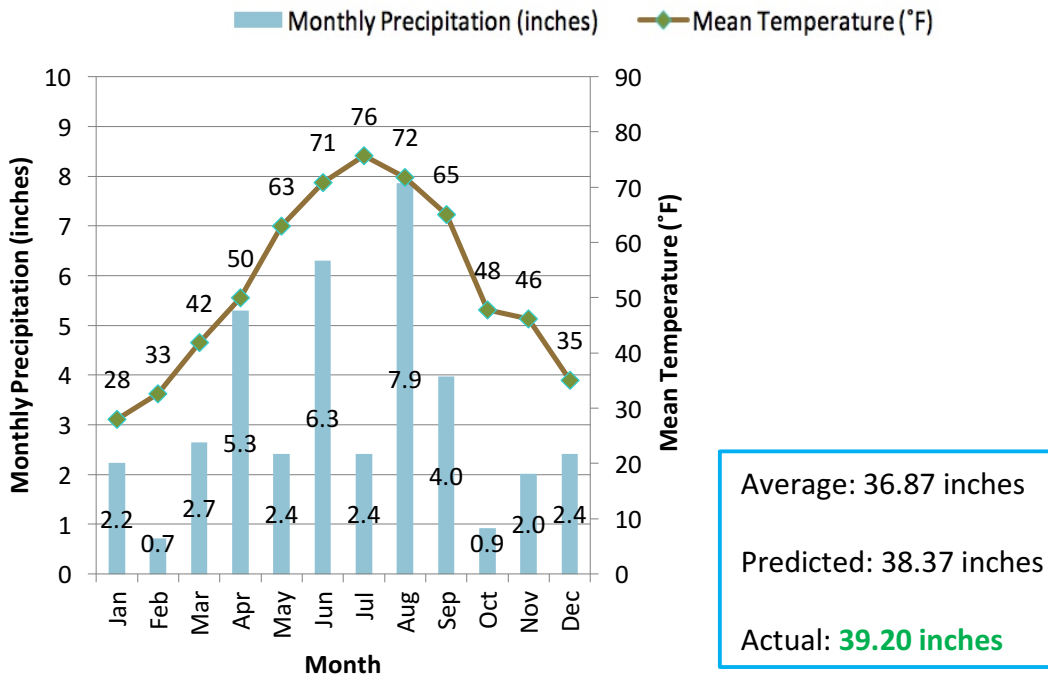
1985 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



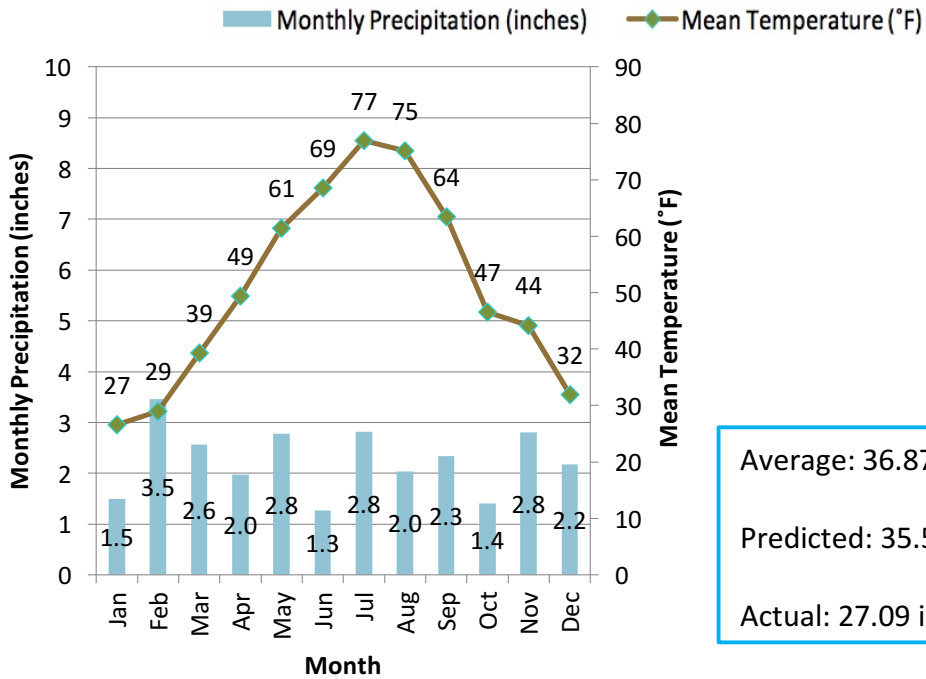
1986 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1987 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



1988 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

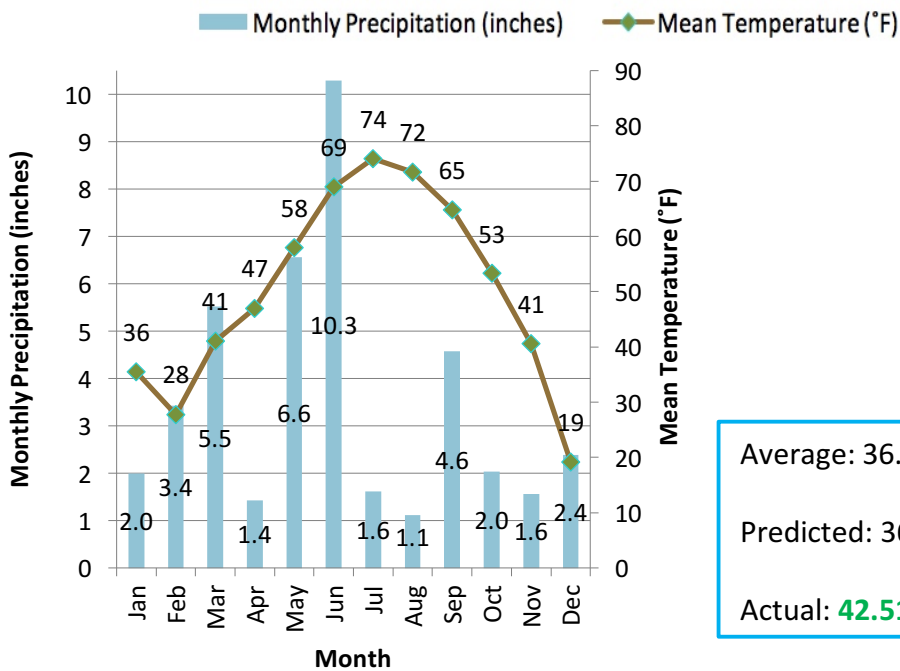


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 35.50 inches

Actual: 27.09 inches

1989 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

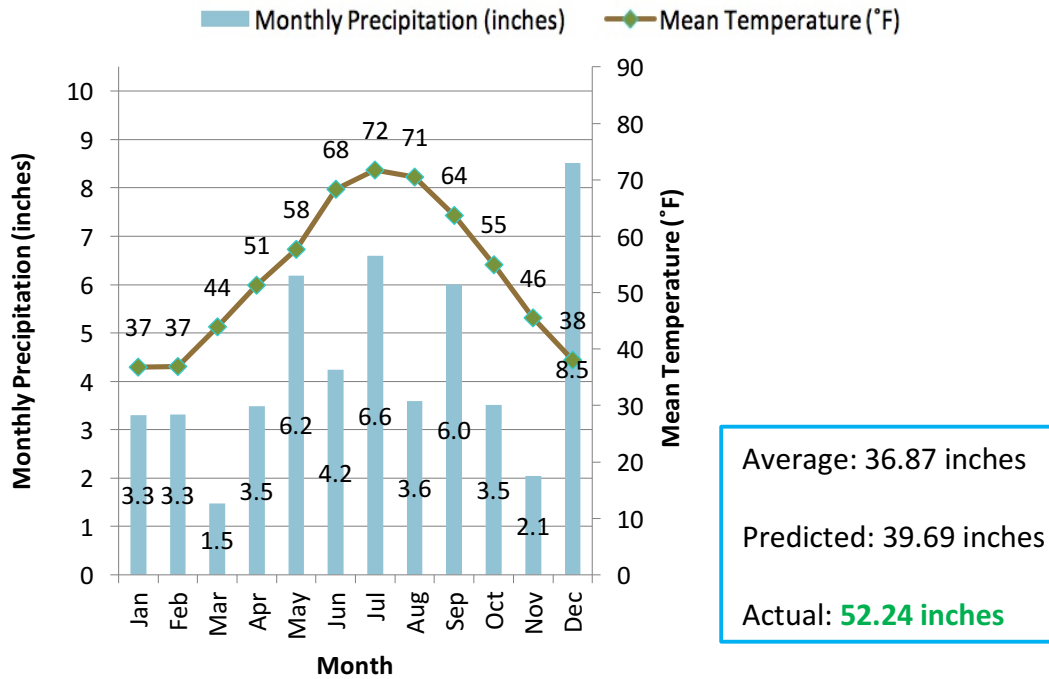


Average: 36.87 inches

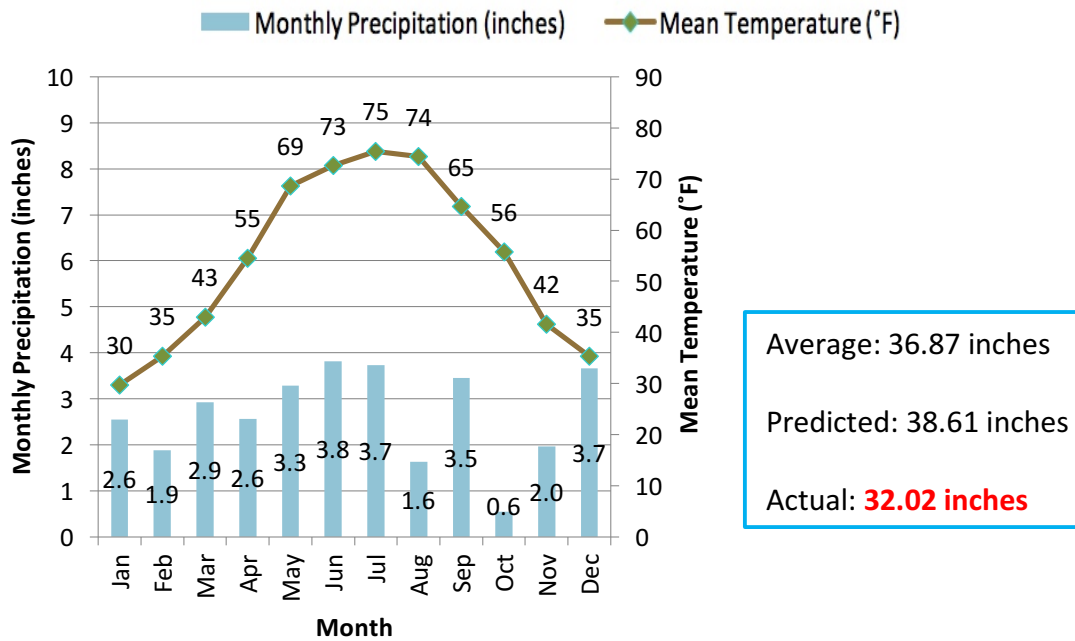
Predicted: 36.94 inches

Actual: **42.51 inches**

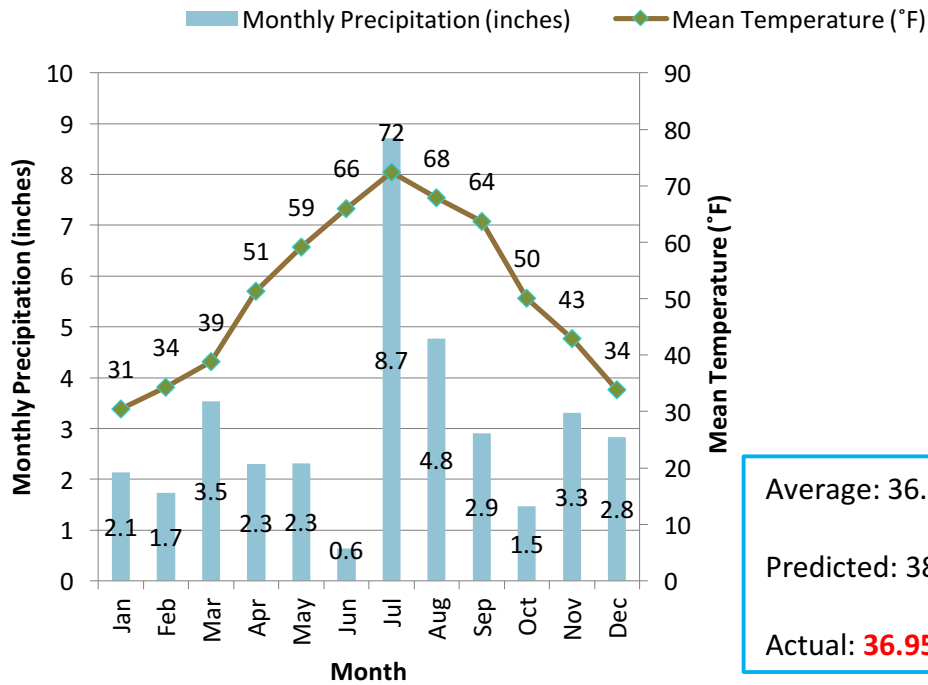
1990 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



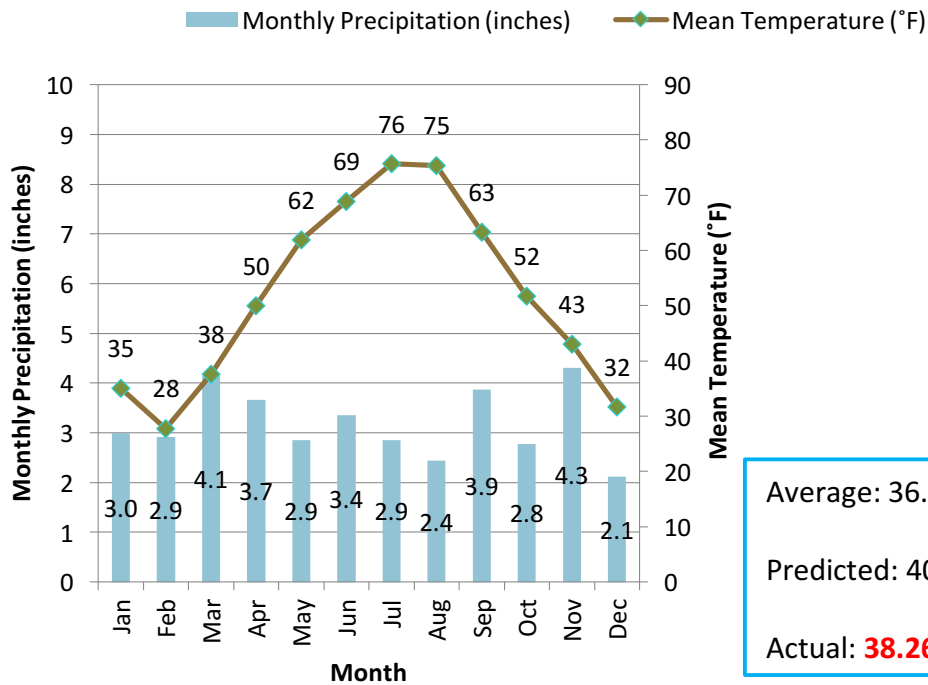
1991 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



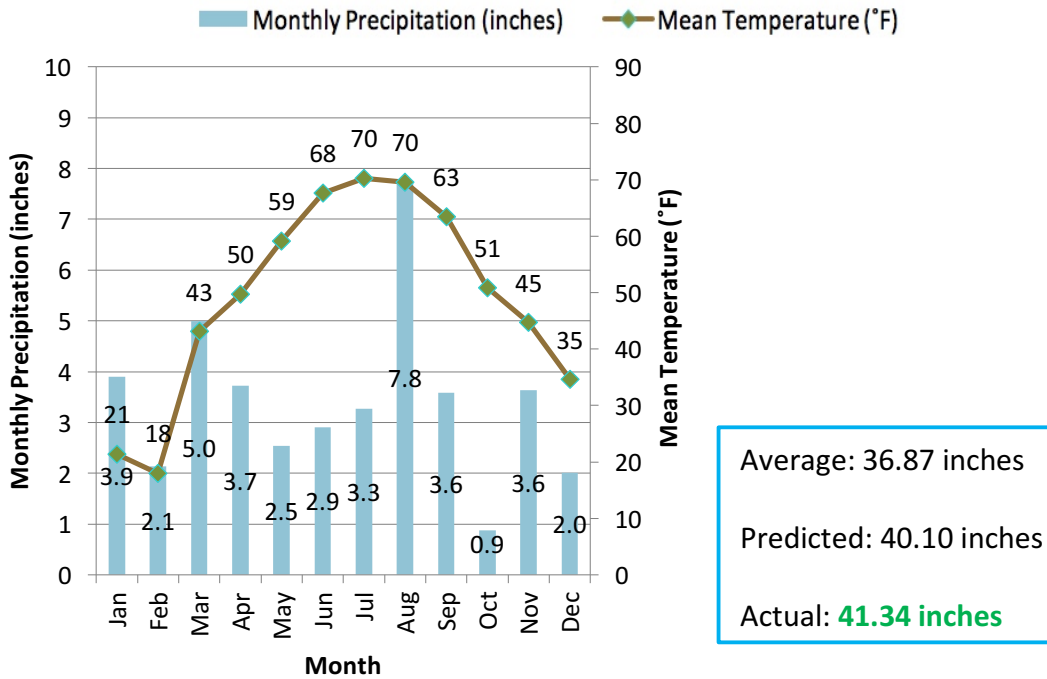
1992 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



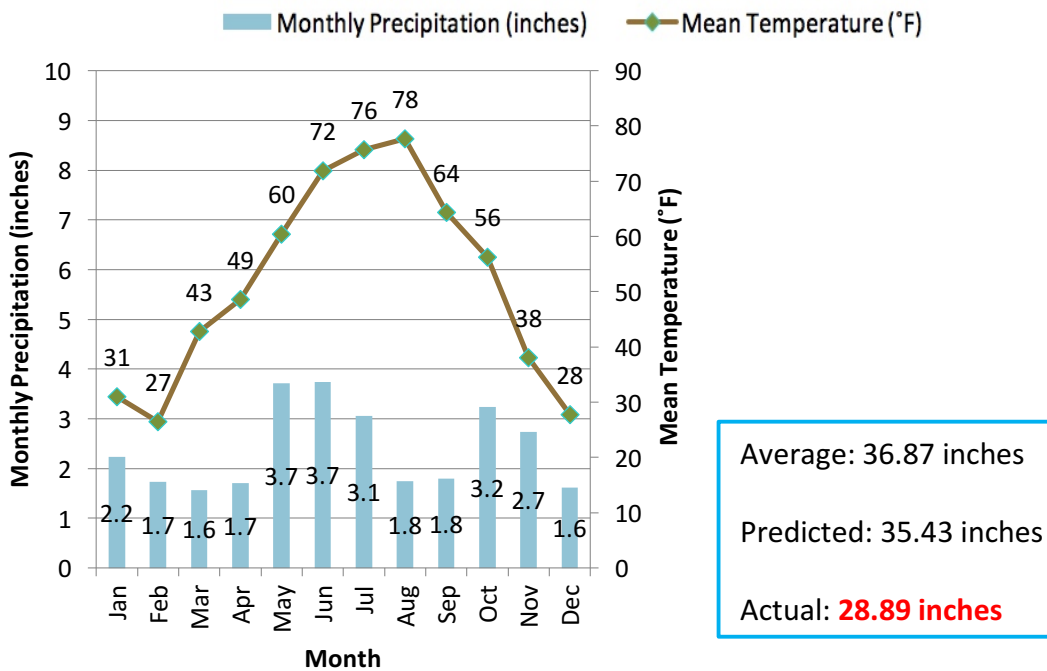
1993 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



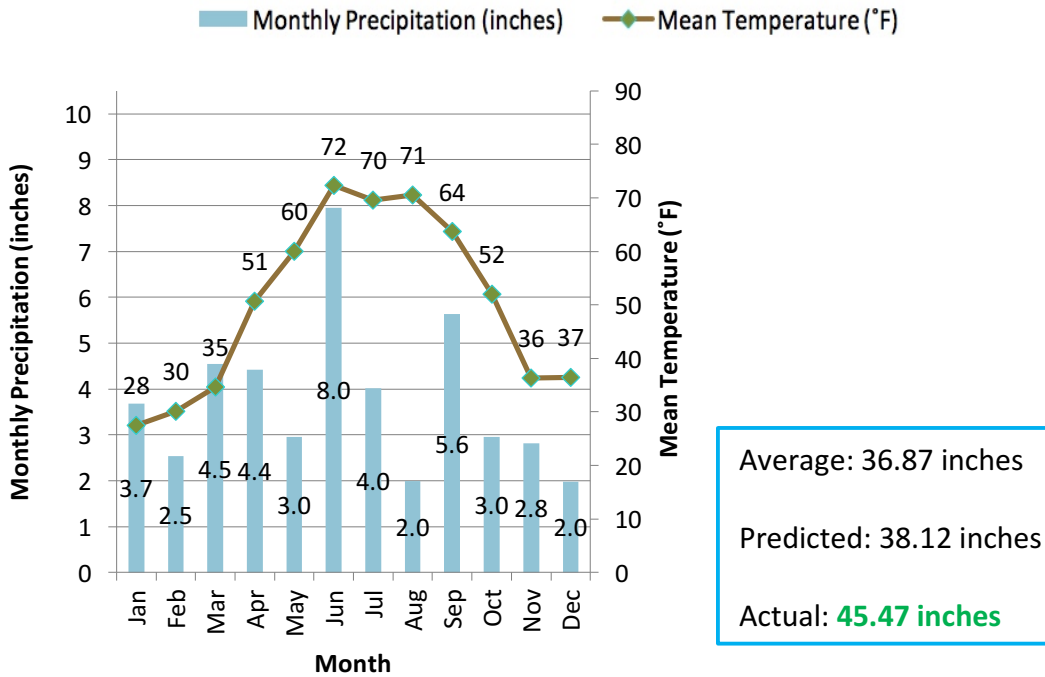
1994 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



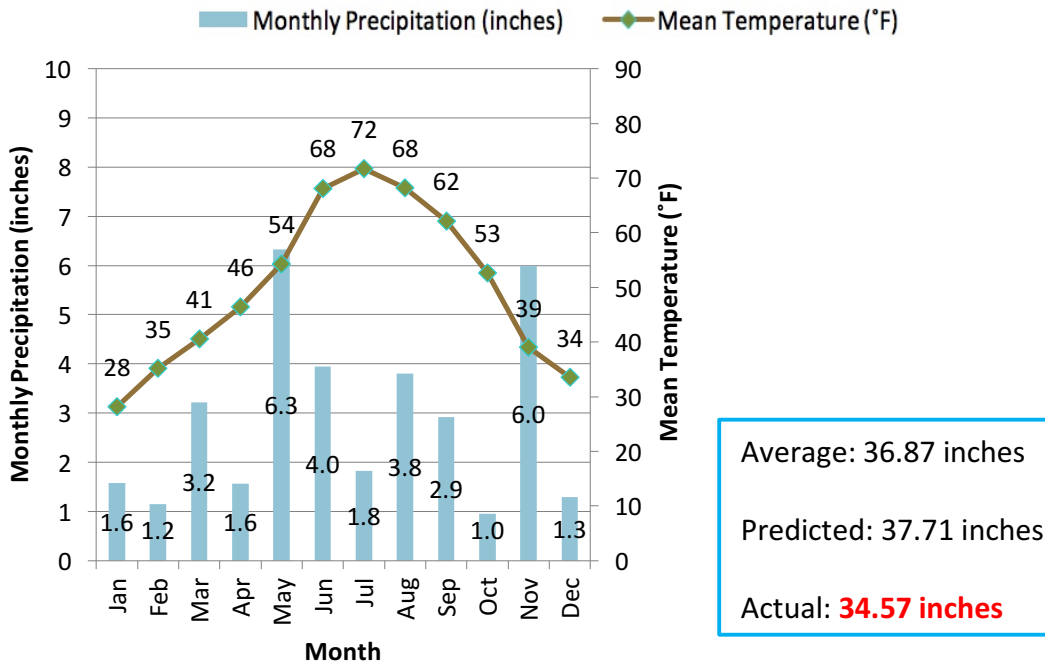
1995 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



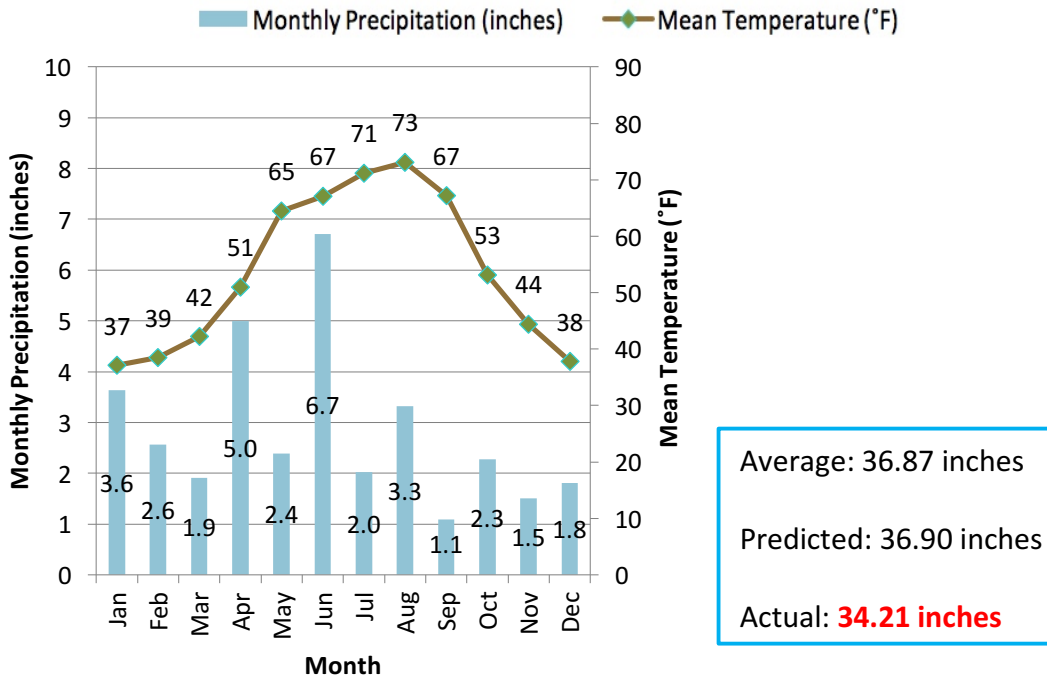
1996 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



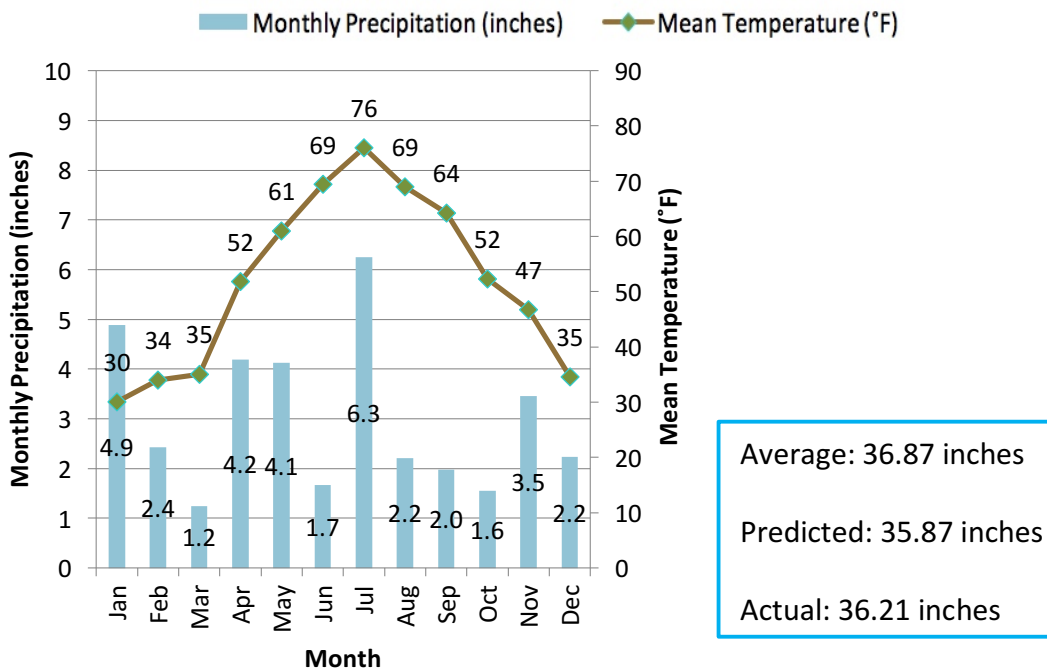
1997 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



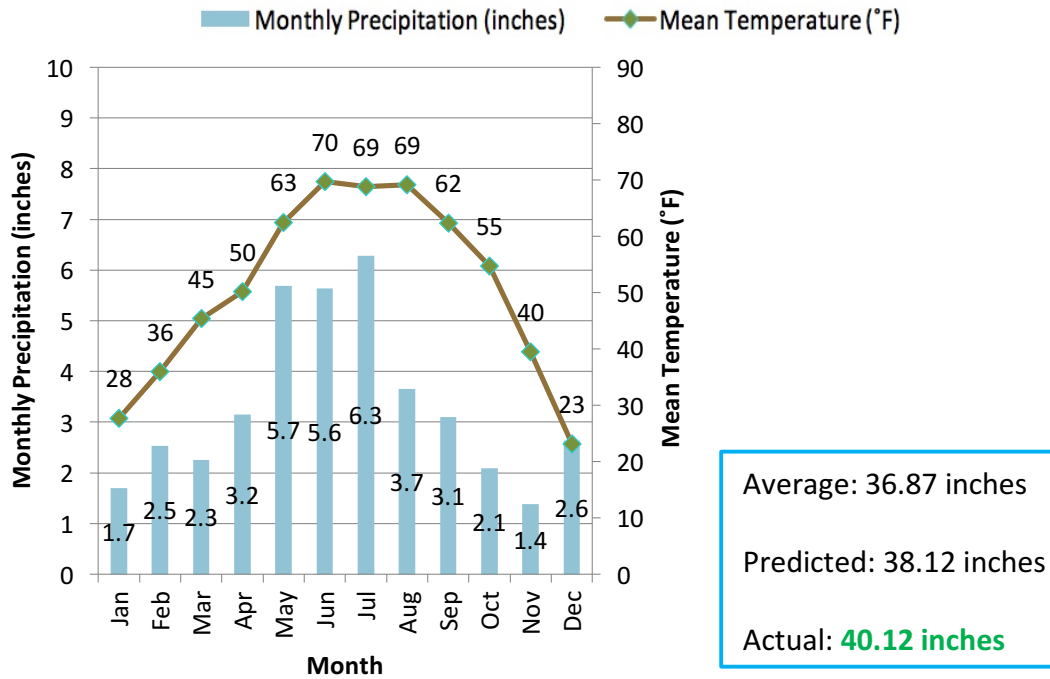
1998 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



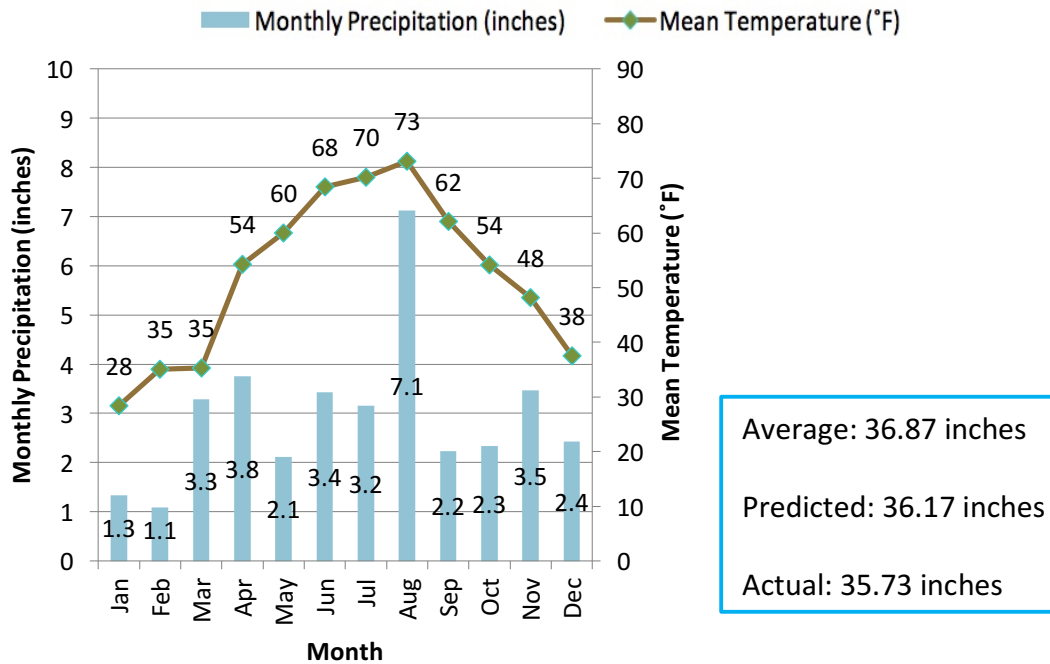
1999 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



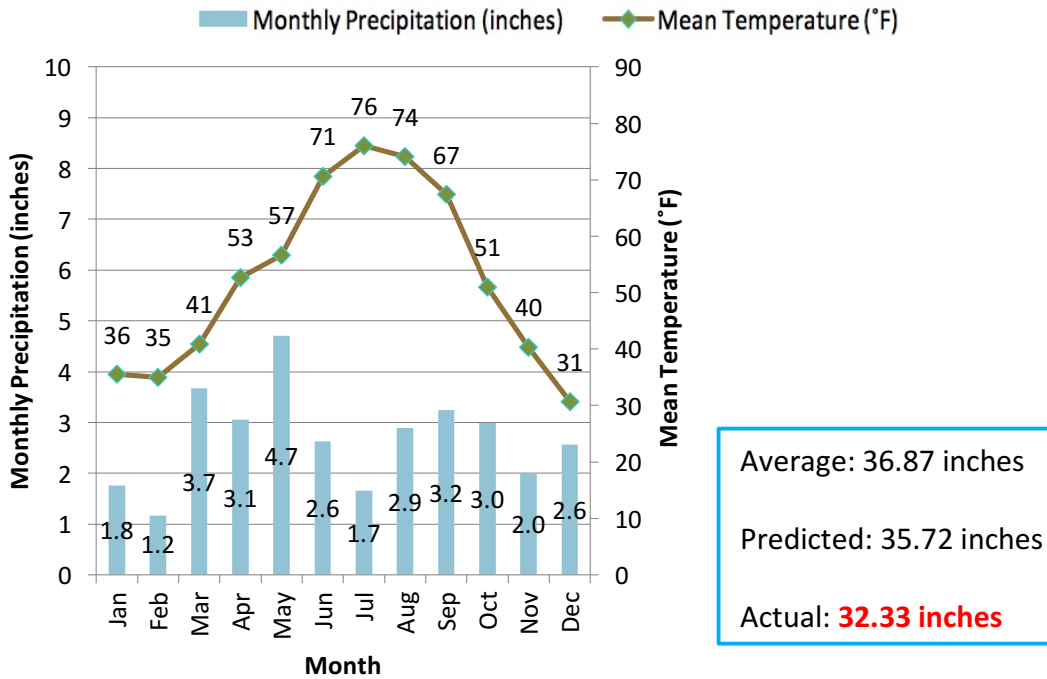
2000 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



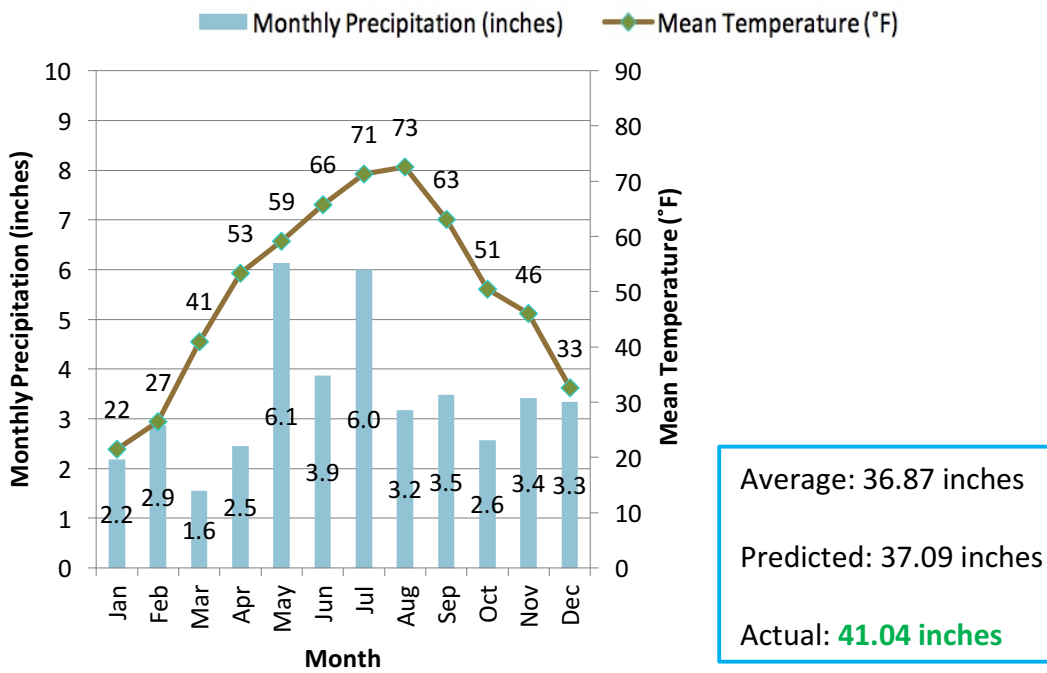
2001 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



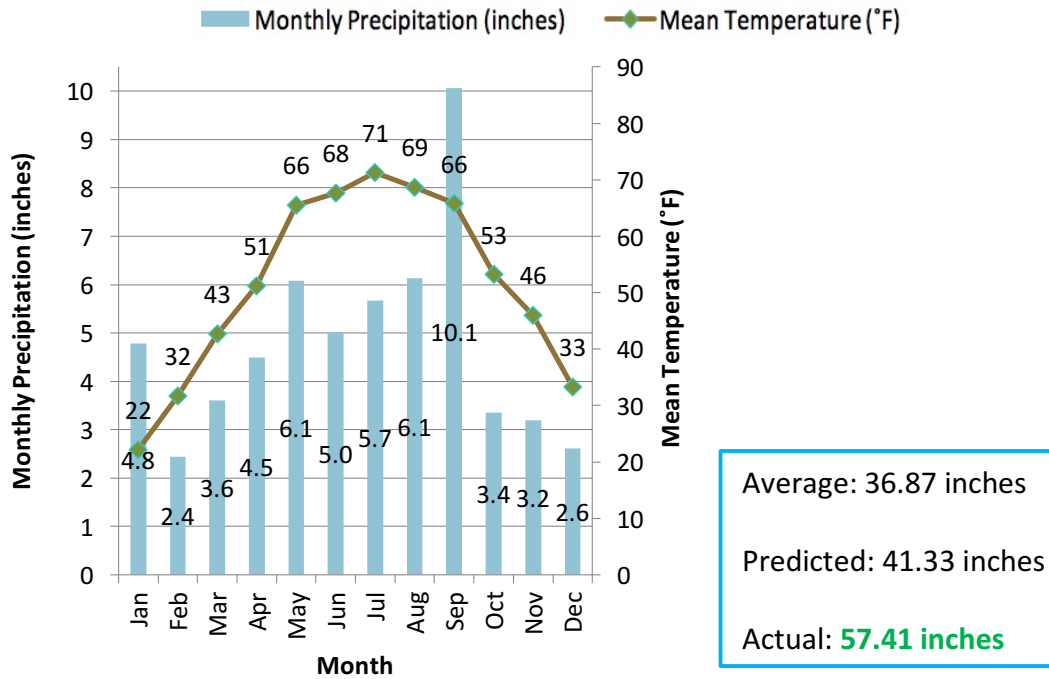
2002 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



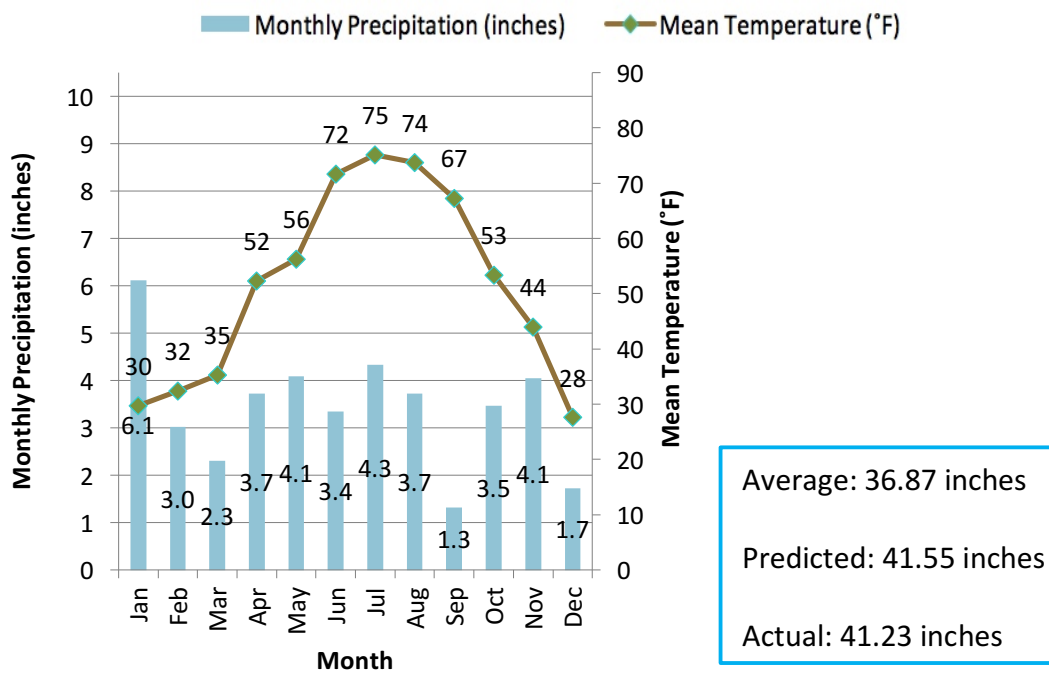
2003 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



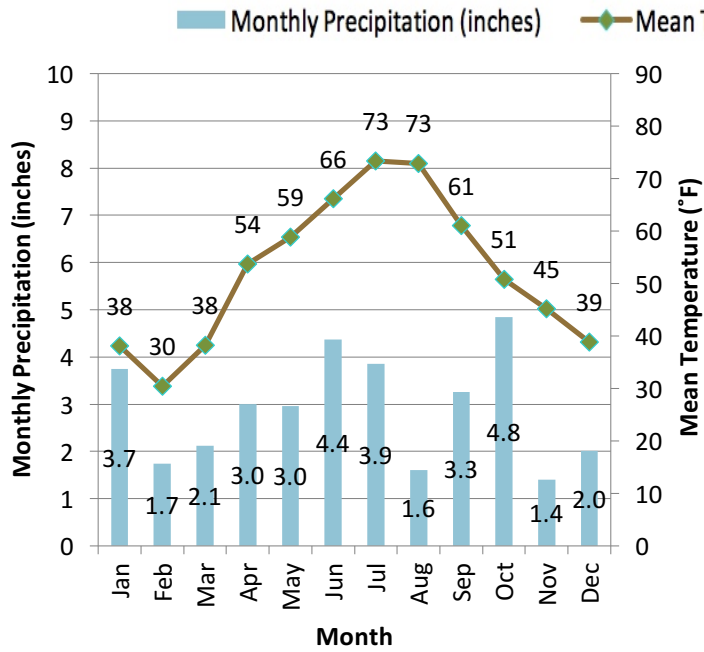
2004 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



2005 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



2006 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

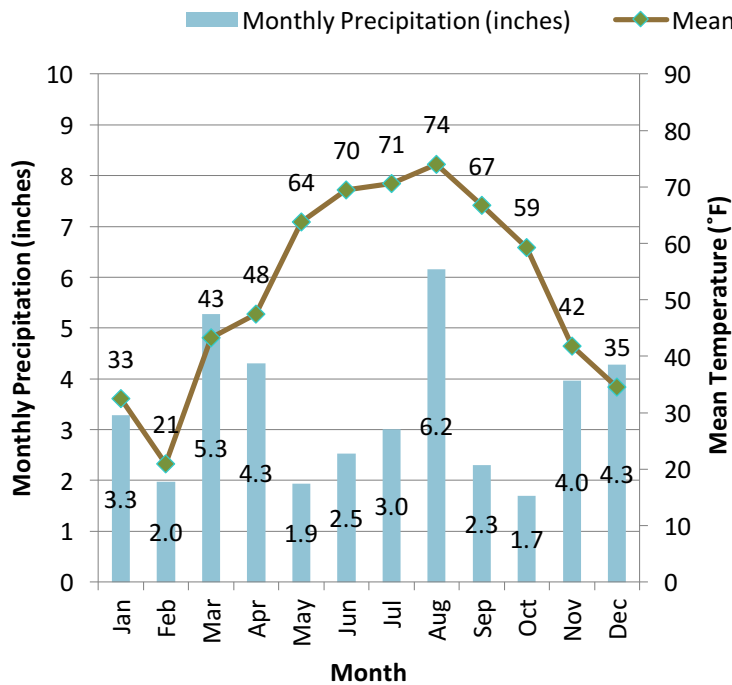


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 41.38 inches

Actual: **34.90 inches**

2007 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

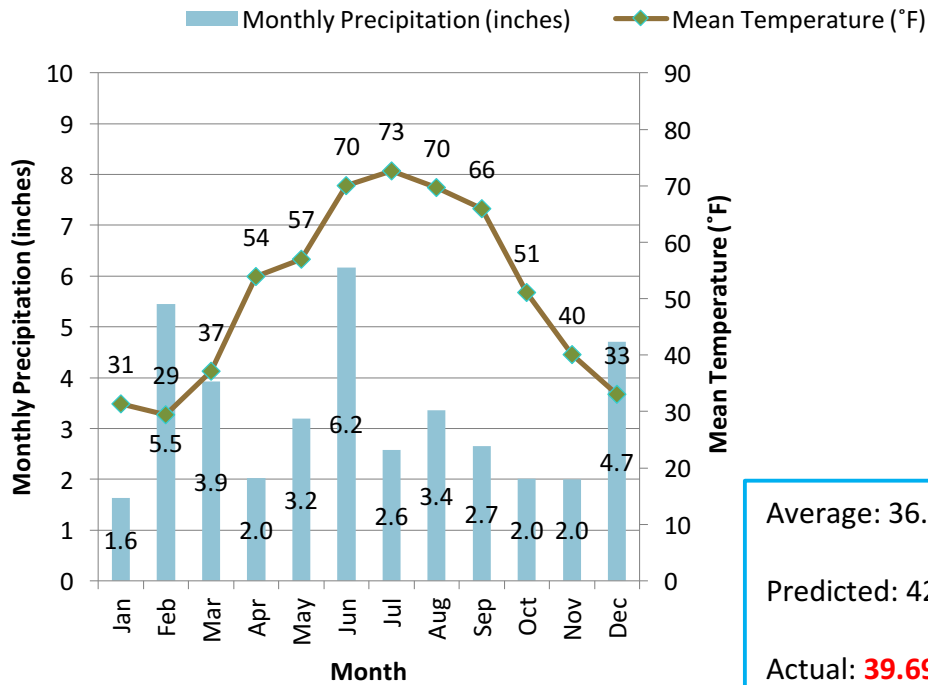


Average: 36.87 inches

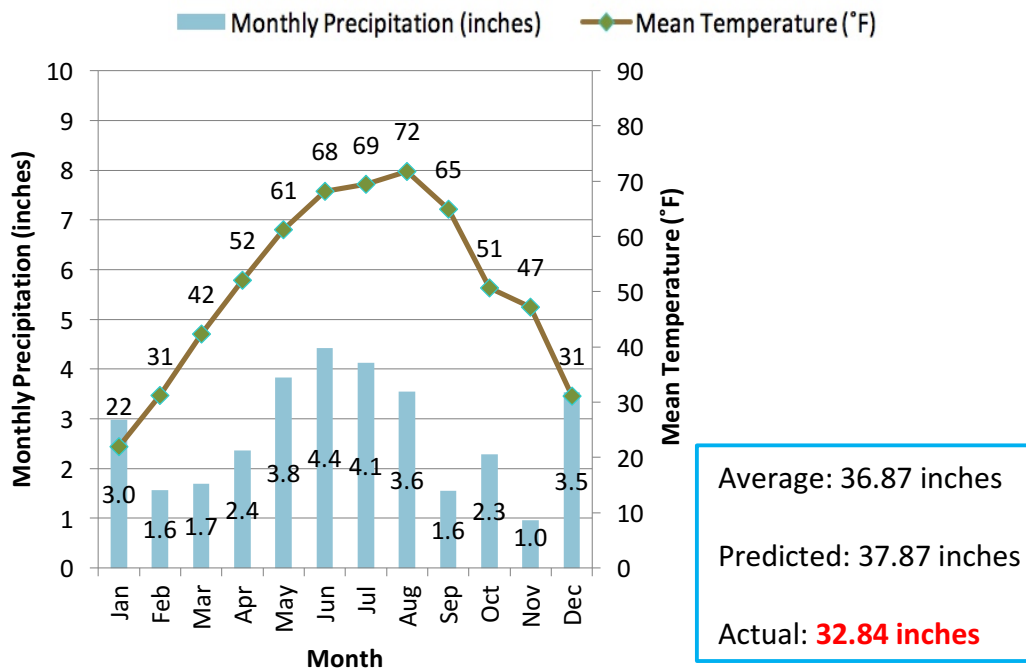
Predicted: 43.06 inches

Actual: **40.70 inches**

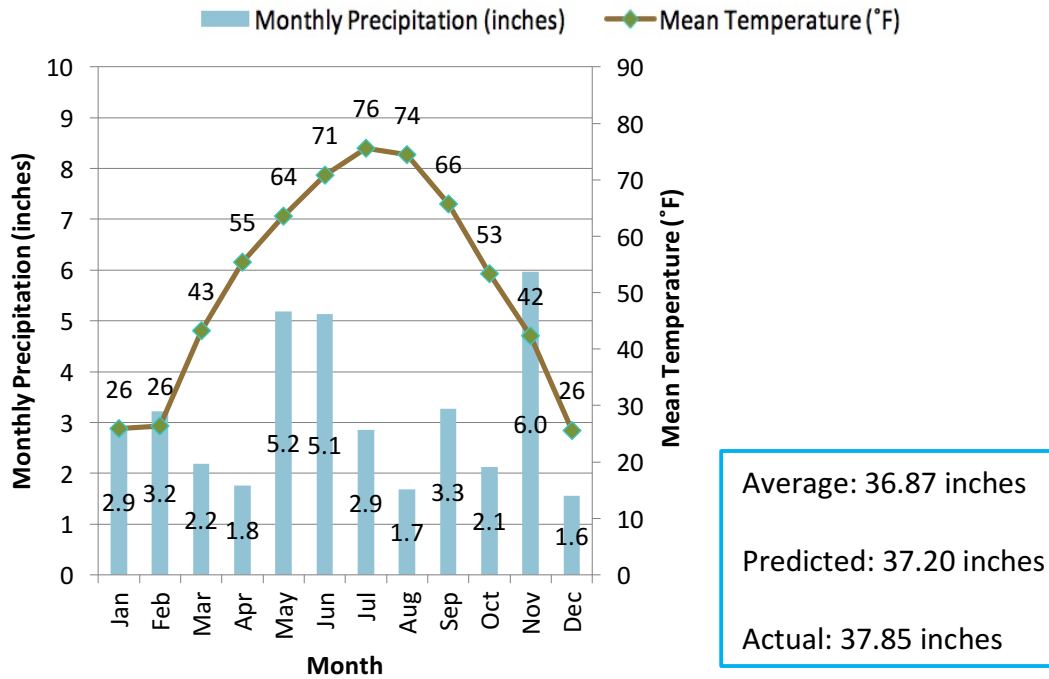
2008 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



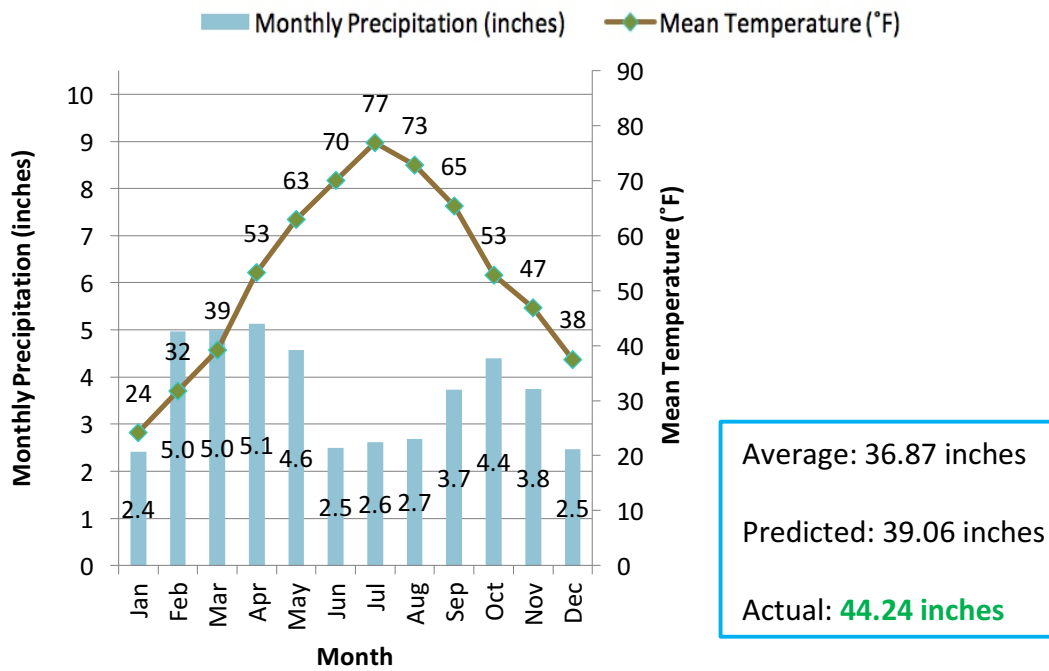
2009 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



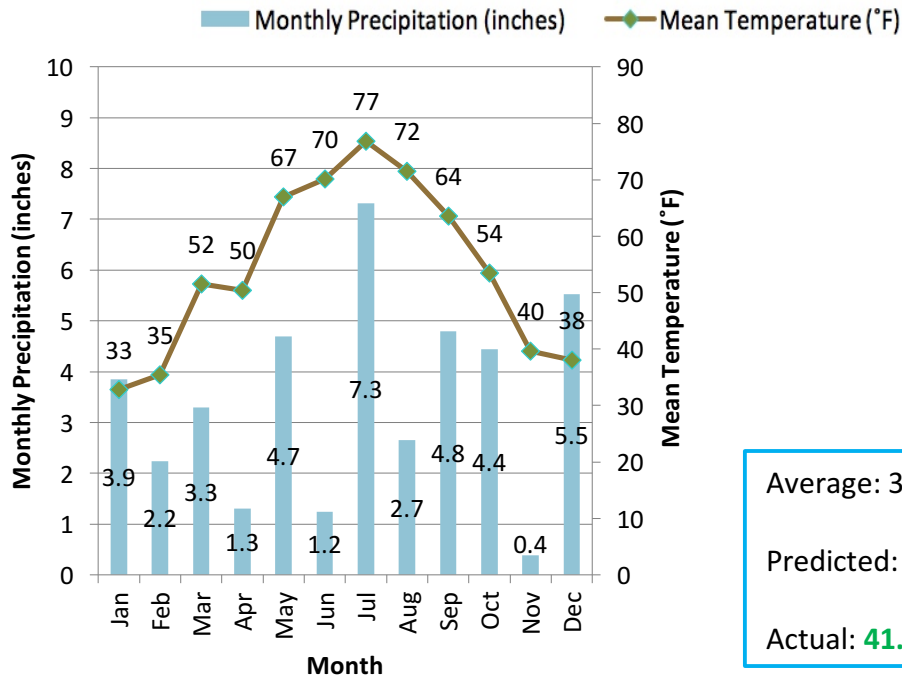
2010 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



2011 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



2012 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

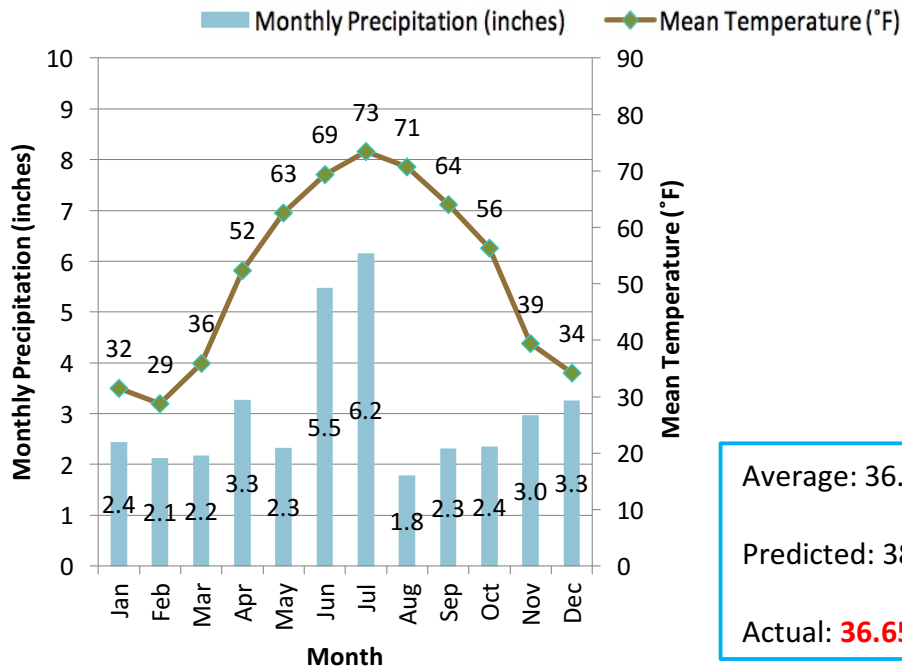


Average: 36.87 inches

Predicted: 39.27 inches

Actual: **41.74 inches**

2013 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

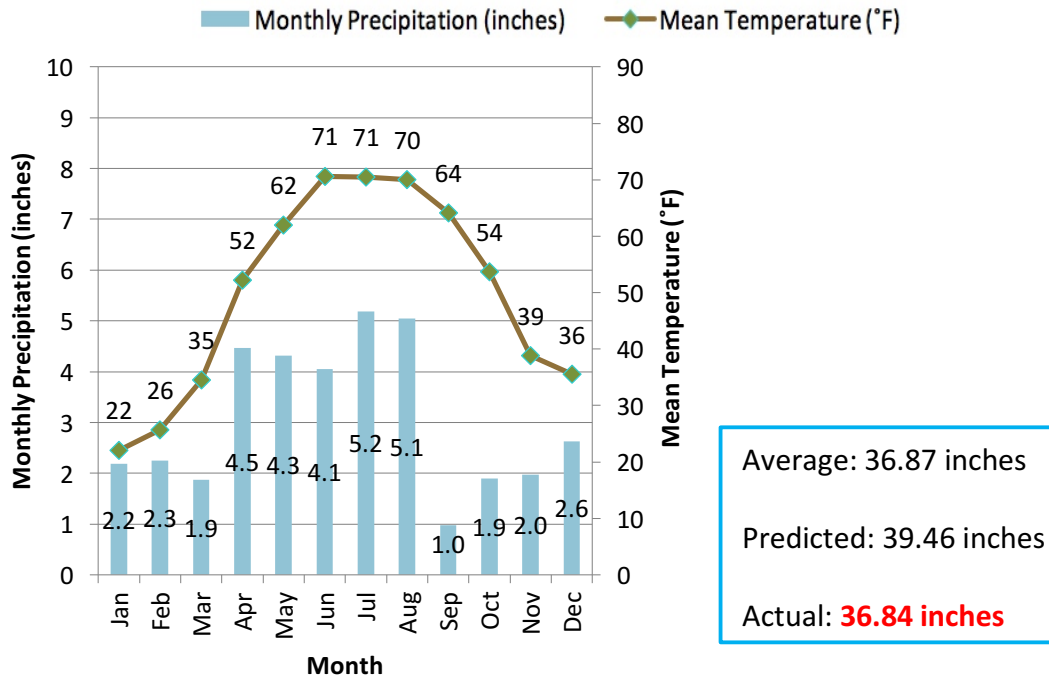


Average: 36.87 inches

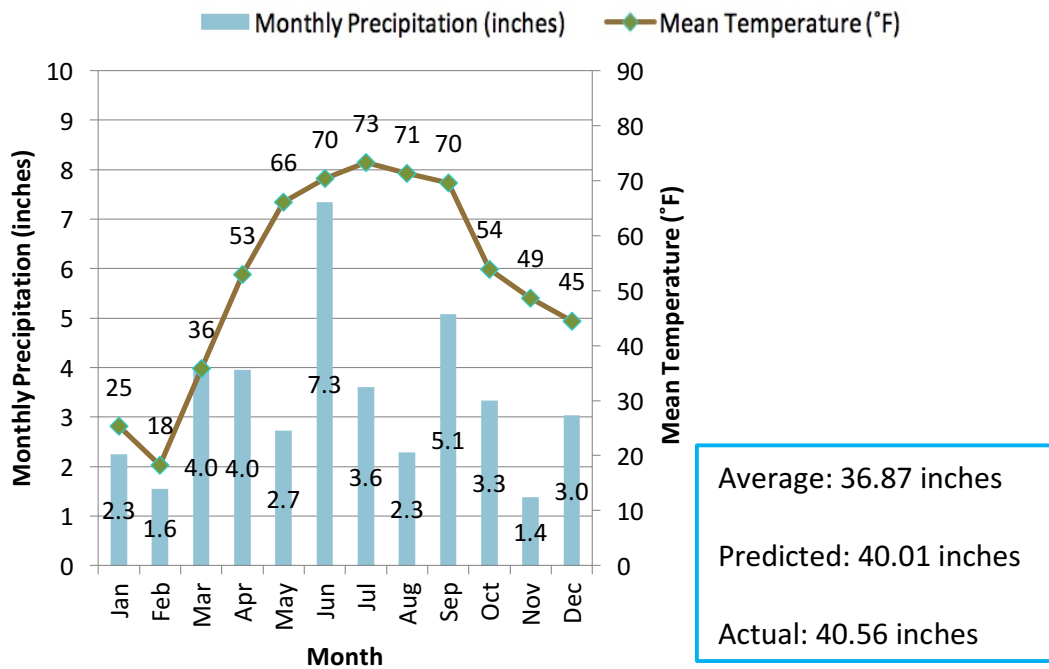
Predicted: 38.66 inches

Actual: **36.65 inches**

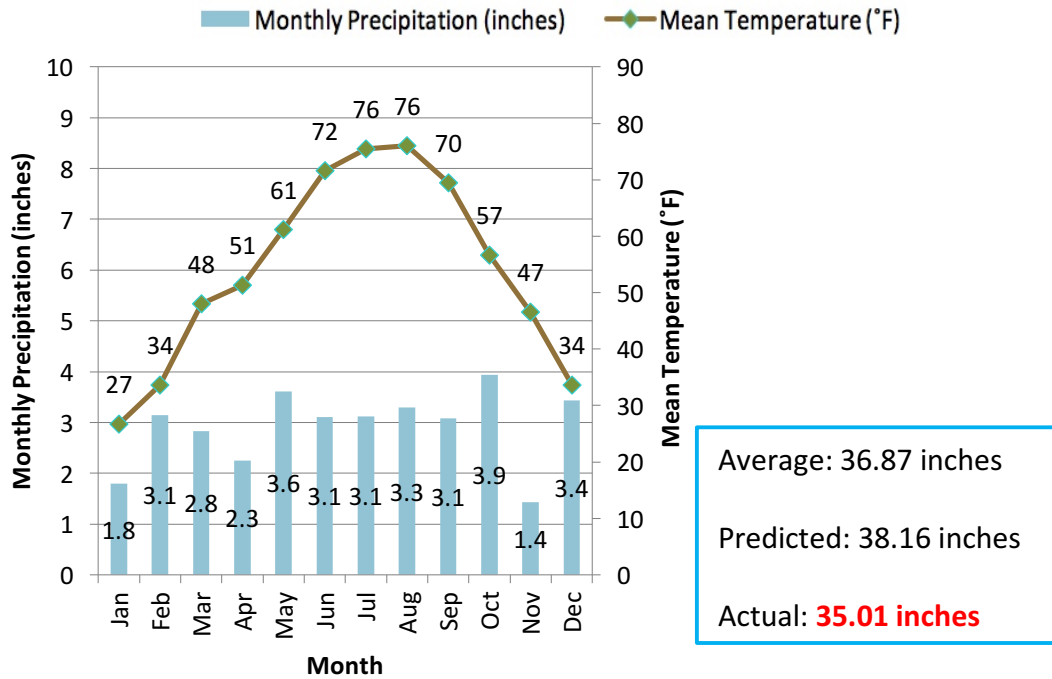
2014 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



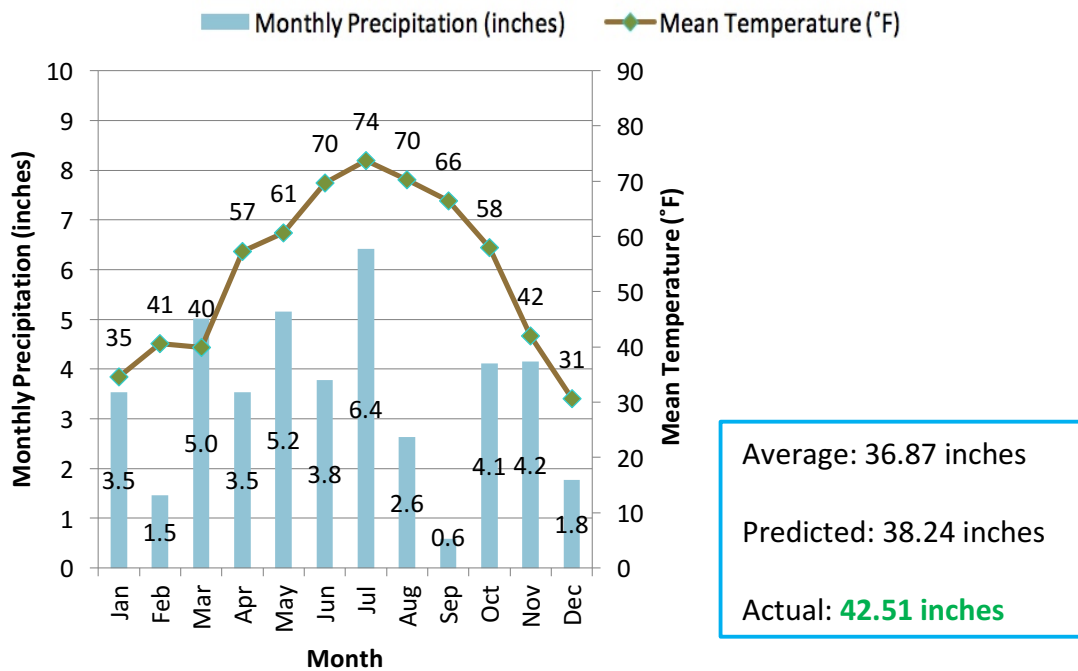
2015 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



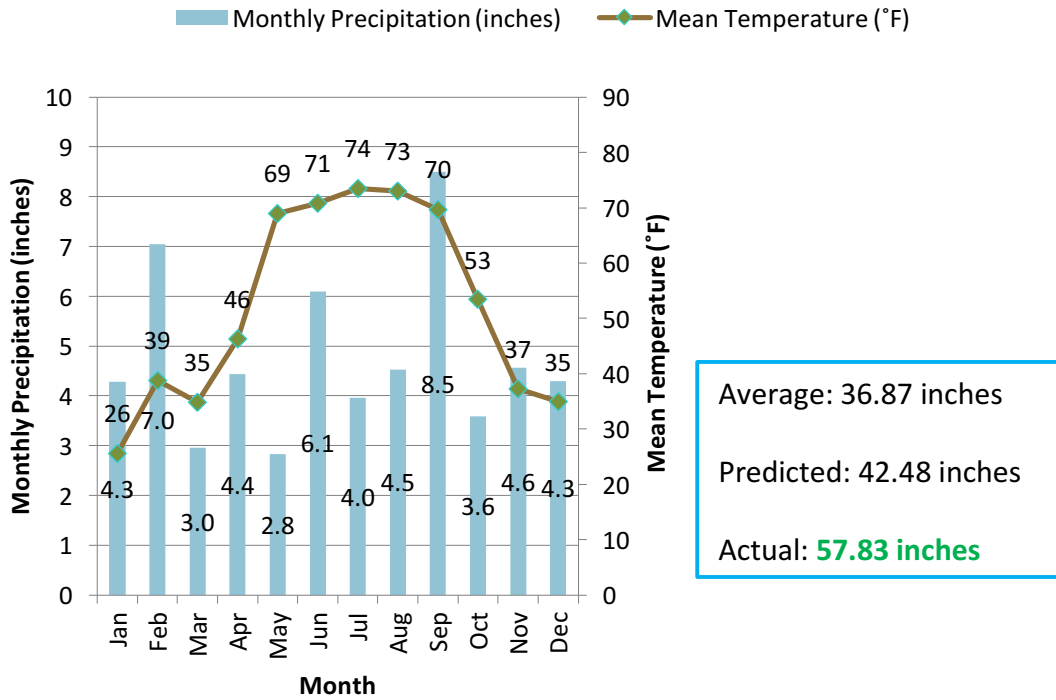
2016 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



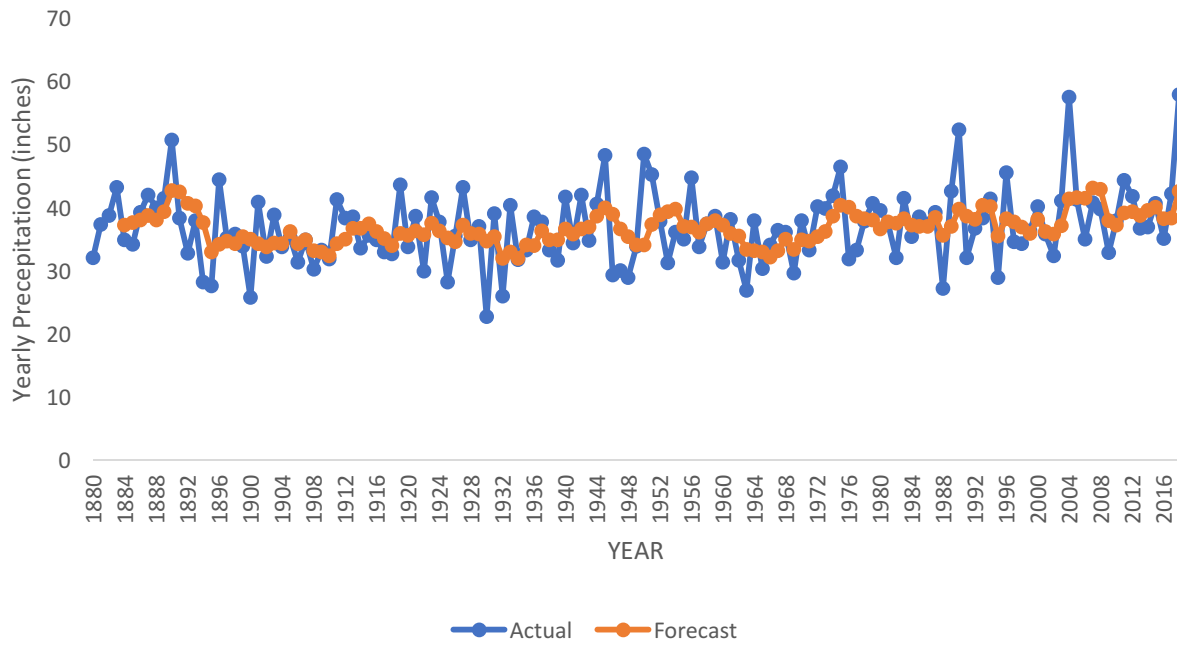
2017 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram



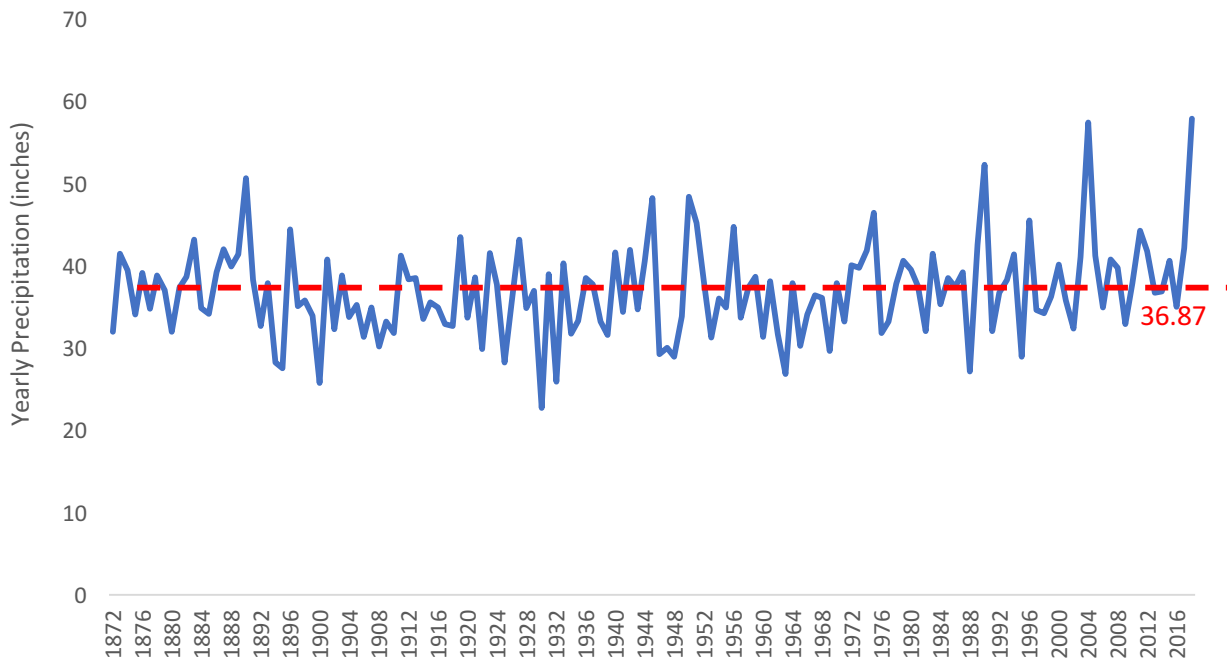
2018 Pittsburgh, PA Climatogram

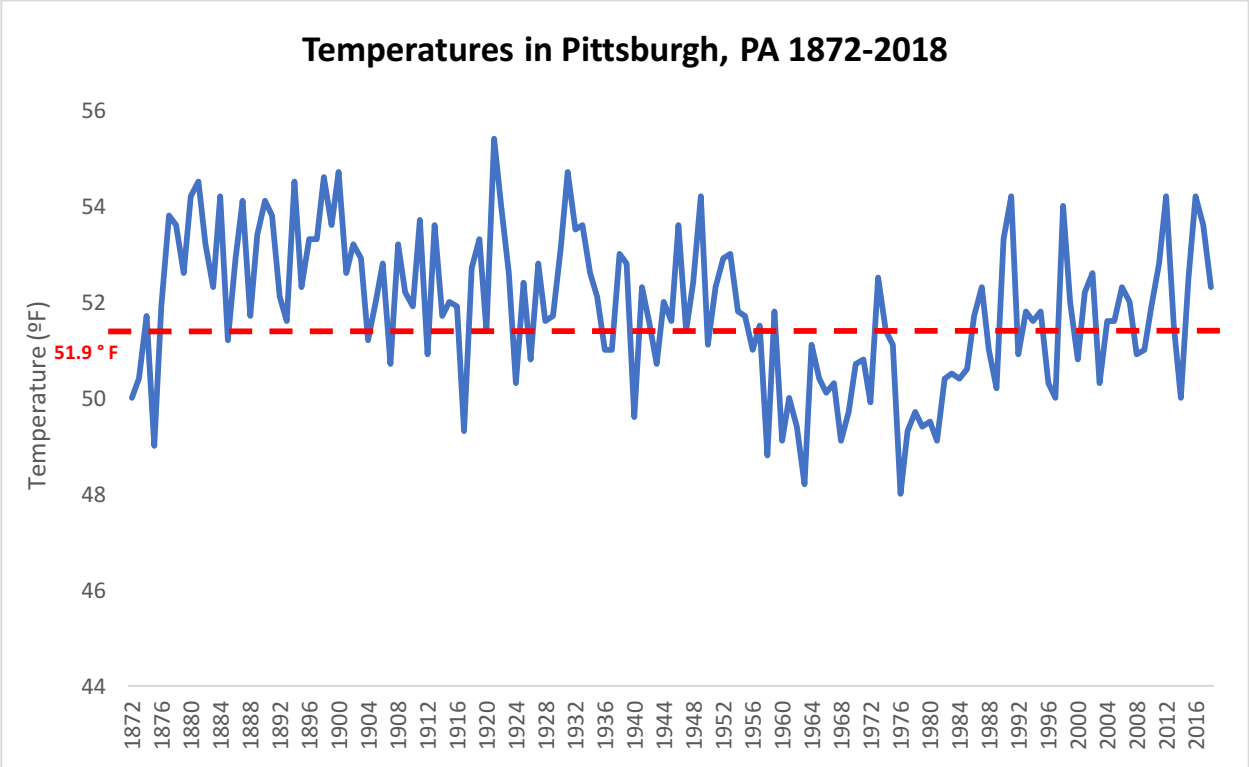
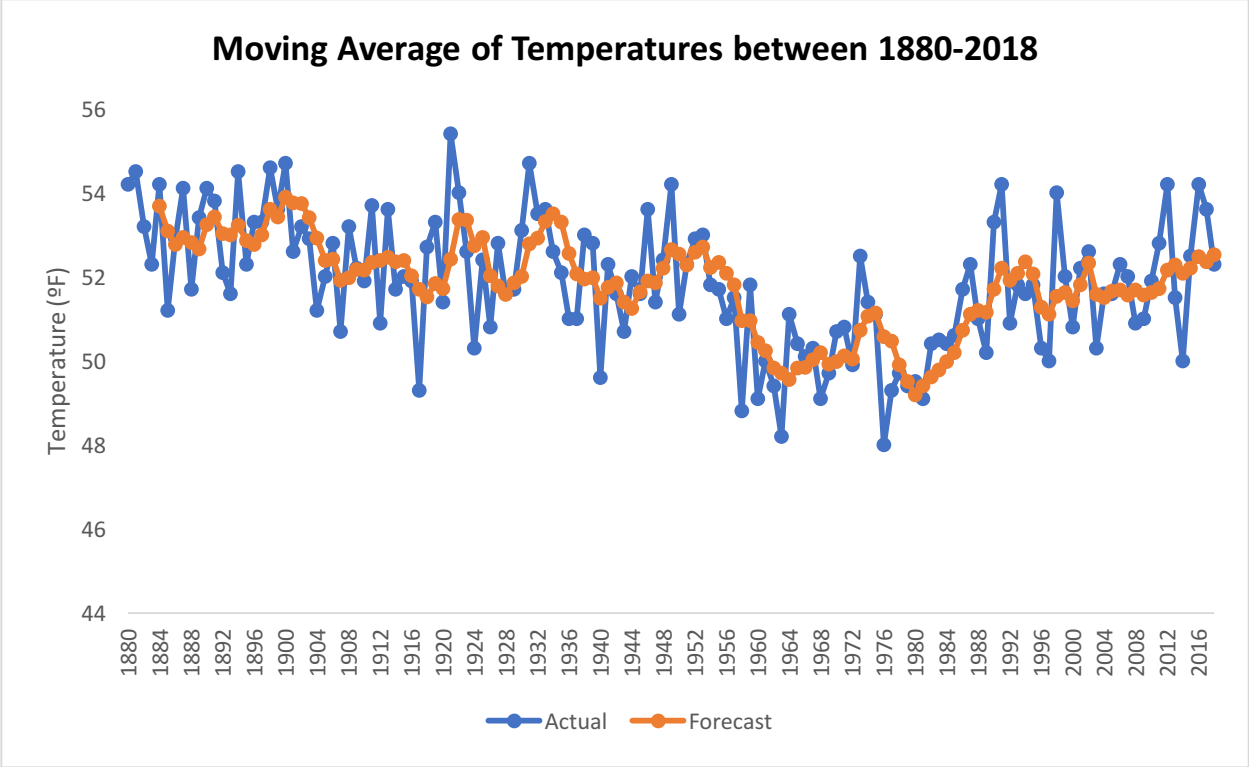


Moving Average of Precepitation between 1880-2018



Precipitation in Pittsburgh, PA from 1872-2018





Climate Change in My Community: Using Climatograms to Visualize Changes in Precipitation

Michelle Valkanas

Learning Goals:

1. To understand and visualize how precipitation changes over time in your community
2. To practice creating graphs and using data to draw conclusions
3. Compare conclusions from graph to real life “test” of the model

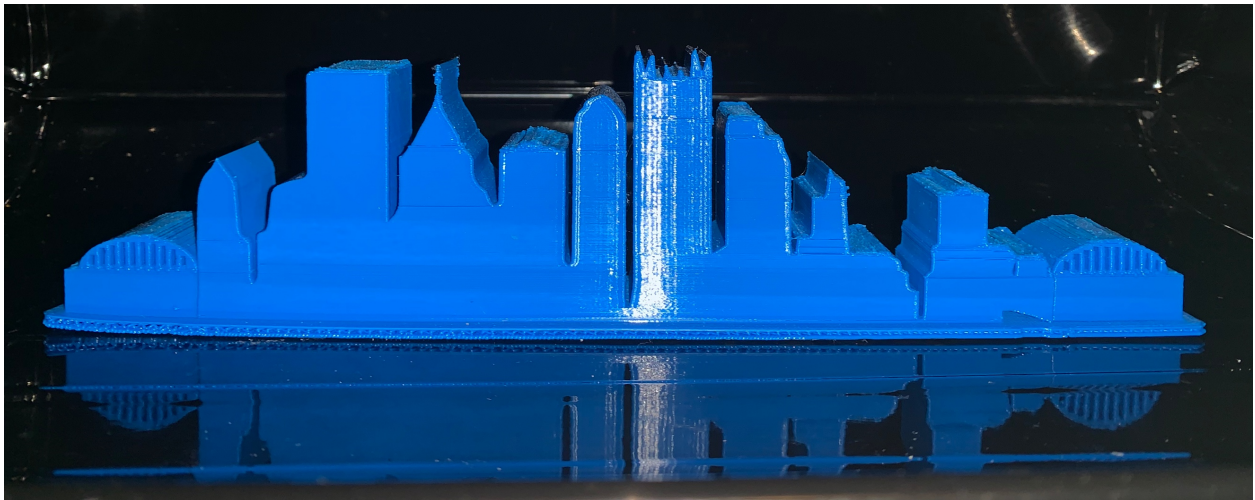
Summary: Using math counting cubes, participants will pick a year and count out the number cubes that corresponds to inches of precipitation for that year. They will place the cubes on the provided timeline. The timeline will have pictures hanging below given years showcasing different events that occurred in the target city (establishment of landmarks, championship sports wins, major flooding events, etc.), The pictures serve a dual purpose: 1. assuring an equal distribution of date selection and 2. providing a relatable component to the activity. As the number of participants increases, so will the data points on the timeline, presenting a bar graph of precipitation. To further demonstrate the amount of precipitation that occurred in each year, water is poured over a 3D image of the city for the same number of seconds as there was precipitation. There will be a designated flood line showing the probability of flooding for that year.



Preparation:

1. Design a timeline
 - a. We want to provide a hook that catches participants attention and provokes interest, while also providing a scaffolding for understanding recent history
 - b. Wikipedia has dedicated pages to timelines of major cities (i.e. “Timeline of Pittsburgh”)
 - i. See Pittsburgh as an example:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Pittsburgh
 - c. Find old (and new photos) to hang from your timeline using the internet or your local library
 - i. Be sure that the photos are properly credited and copyright is being honored
2. Collect precipitation data
 - a. Precipitation data for all major cities can be found online www.weather.gov
 - b. Choose a method of presenting your data. These include:
 - i. The data can be presented as is, simply with yearly precipitation totals
 - ii. The data can be graphed to be more visually pleasing (see attached example)
 - iii. Climatograms are another visual option where precipitation and temperature are graphed together to visualize change over time
 1. More on climatograms and a climatogram template can be found at <https://pmm.nasa.gov/education/lesson-plans/geographical-influences>
 2. See Climatogram Book of Pittsburgh (attached) as an example

3. Create 3D print of city
 - a. local libraries usually provide cheap to no cost 3D printing service
 - b. some city models can simply be bought
 - c. a lego model would also work



Supplies:

2 x 4 to build timeline (or alternative shelf/stand)

Math counting cubes

200 x 0.75 inch cubes

500 x 1 cm inch cubes

Book/Handout of precipitation data

Photos of city events

String or fishing line to hang pictures

3D model of target city

Watering can

Pan to collect water runoff from city

Procedure:

1. Participant selects a date either based on the pictures or a year at random
2. Using the data precipitation handout, they identify the total precipitation for that year and count out that many math cubes
 - a. Where 0.75 inch cubes are ten's value and 1 cm cubes are one's value
3. Once cubes are counted out, they should be placed on the appropriate spot along the timeline
4. The participant will then count to the number of seconds equivalent to precipitation, while pouring water over the city with a water can, representing rainfall
5. Lastly, check the city flood line to determine the probability of flooding for that given year

Questions for Discussion

1. Understanding how precipitation changes over time and using graphs to understand data
 - a. For younger visitors, the data can be used simply as a comparison rather than a graph. Which year had more rain based on the counting blocks displayed? If we look at the very beginning of the timeline verse the very end of the timeline, which end received more rain?
 - b. For older participants, the timeline should be used as a bar graph. How does precipitation change over time? Is there a steady increase or is it variable? What is the overall trend over the last hundred years?
2. Compare conclusions from graph to real life “test” of the model
 - a. For younger participants, will a given amount to cause the city model to flood. If flooding does occur, how can the city make changes in the future to accommodate increases in rainfall?
 - b. For older participants, the participants should first identify if the precipitation for a given year was above or below the predicted rainfall for that year. What is the consequences for drastically being over or under the predicted rainfall? A discussion on limitations on predicted rainfall can also be discussed. If flooding does occur, how can the city make changes in the future to accommodate increases in rainfall?