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Thanksgiving Travel Ticks Up, Just Shy of Pre-Pandemic Levels

AAA expects nearly 55 million Americans will travel during the long holiday weekend

AAA predicts 54.6 million people will travel 50 miles or more from home this Thanksgiving. That’s a 1.5% increase over 2021 and 98% of pre-pandemic volumes. This year is projected to be the third busiest for Thanksgiving travel since AAA started tracking in 2000*.

“Families and friends are eager to spend time together this Thanksgiving, one of the busiest for travel in the past two decades,” says Paula Twidale, AAA’s Senior Vice President of Travel. “Plan ahead and pack your patience, whether you’re driving or flying.”

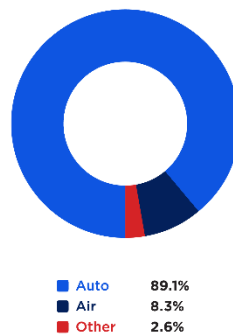
Most travelers will drive to their destinations, much like last year. Nearly 49 million people are expected to travel by car. While Thanksgiving road trips have slightly risen - up 0.4% from 2021 - car travel remains 2.5% below 2019 levels.

Air travel is up nearly 8% over 2021, with 4.5 million Americans flying to their Thanksgiving destinations this year. That’s an increase of more than 330,000 travelers and nearly 99% of the 2019 volume. “Airport parking spaces fill up fast, so reserve a spot ahead of time and arrive early,” Twidale suggests. “Anticipate long TSA lines. If possible, avoid checking a bag to allow for more flexibility if flights are delayed or you need to reschedule.”

Americans are also ramping up travel by other modes of transportation. More than 1.4 million travelers are going out of town for Thanksgiving by bus, train, or cruise ship. That’s an increase of 23% from 2021 and 96% of the 2019 volume. “With travel restrictions lifted and more people comfortable taking public transportation again, it’s no surprise buses, trains, and cruises are coming back in a big way,” Twidale adds. “Regardless of the mode of transportation you have chosen, expect crowds during your trip and at your destination. If your schedule is flexible, consider off-peak travel times during the holiday rush.”

2022 Thanksgiving Holiday Travel Forecast

Share of Travelers by Mode



Number of Travelers by Mode

	Auto	Air	Other	Total
2022 (forecast)	48.7M	4.51M	1.43M	54.6M
2021	48.5M	4.18M	1.16M	53.8M
2019	49.9M	4.58M	1.49M	56.0M
Growth* (2021 to 2022)	0.4%	7.9%	23.5%	1.5%
Growth* (2019 to 2022)	-2.54%	-1.38%	-3.92%	-2.49%

*Percentages may differ due to rounding.

**2005 and 2019 have been the busiest years for Thanksgiving travel, respectively, since AAA started tracking in 2000.*

Busiest Corridors and Best/Worst Times to Travel

INRIX expects severe congestion in several U.S. metro areas, with some drivers experiencing more than double normal delays. Highways in and around Atlanta, Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles will be the busiest. To avoid the most hectic times, INRIX recommends traveling early in the morning on Wednesday or before 11am on Thanksgiving Day and avoiding travel between 4pm-8pm Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

“Thanksgiving is one of the busiest holidays for road trips, and this year will be no different,” says Bob Pishue, Transportation Analyst, INRIX. “Although travel times will peak on Wednesday afternoon nationally, travelers should expect much heavier than normal congestion throughout the holiday weekend. Knowing when and where congestion will build can help drivers avoid the stress of sitting in traffic.”

Best & Worst Times to Travel (by car)

Date	Worst travel time	Best travel time
11/23/22	11:00 AM - 8:00 PM	Before 8:00 AM, After 8:00 PM
11/24/22	11:00 AM - 3:00 PM	Before 11:00 AM, After 6:00 PM
11/25/22	4:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Before 11:00 AM, After 8:00 PM
11/26/22	4:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Before 2:00 PM, After 8:00 PM
11/27/22	4:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Before 11:00 AM, After 8:00 PM

Peak Congestion by Metro

Metro	Corridor	Increase Over Typical Traffic	Peak Congestion
Atlanta	I-85 South; Clairmont Rd to MLK Jr Dr	105%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 1:30-3:30 PM
Boston	I-93 South; Albany St to MA-24	53%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 2:15-4:15 PM
Chicago	I-290 West; Morgan St to Wolf Rd	99%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 3:00-5:00 PM
Detroit	US-23 North; 8 Mile Rd to Lee Rd	32%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 2:00-4:00 PM
Houston	I-10 West; Sjolander Rd to TX-330	81%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 3:45-5:45 PM
Los Angeles	I-5 South; Colorado St to Florence Ave	144%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 5:30-7:30 PM
New York	I-278 South; I-495 to 6th Ave	158%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 2:45-4:45 PM
San Francisco	I-80 West; Maritime St to San Pablo Dam Rd	80%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 4:00-5:00 PM
Seattle	I-5 South; WA-18 to WA-7	86%	Wed, 11/23/22 - 4:15-6:15 PM
Washington DC	I-495 Counterclockwise; I-95 to VA-123	85%	Sun, 11/27/22 - 11:15 AM-1:15 PM

Expected Traffic by Metro & Corridor

Metro	Corridor	Increase over Typical Traffic	Day
Atlanta	I85 south J91 to J248A	105%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I75 north J205 to J227	64%	
	I85 clockwise J29 to J46	61%	
	I285 anti-clockwise J27 to J10B	56%	
	US19 north J4B to J10	11%	
Boston	I93 south J20 to J4	76%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I93 north J23 to J34	53%	
	I95 south J20B to J10	30%	

	I90 west J20 to 11A	26%	
	MA3 J15 North to I93 J23	19%	
Chicago	I290 west J29B to J16	99%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I290 east J17 to J29B	84%	
	I94 west J16 to J160	59%	
	I94 north J68B to J52B	35%	
	I294 J27B to J17B	14%	
Detroit	US23 north J53 to J60A	44%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I75 north J59 to J67	33%	
	I96 north J170 to J162	32%	
	I94 south J219 to J210	32%	
	I696 west J10 to J1	30%	
Houston	I10 west J795 to J787	81%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I69 east J123 to J132B	77%	
	I610 north J4A to J20	49%	
	I45 south J51 to J40B	33%	
	I69 south J136 to J115A	25%	
LA	I5 south J142 to J124	144%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I405 south J57 to J45	106%	
	I10 J19 to J38	88%	
	I405 J50 to I5	87%	
	I10 east J1B to J16A	86%	
New York	I278 south J35 to J22	158%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I495 east J13 to J32	97%	
	Blt Parkway west J17 to J3	77%	
	Blt Parkway east J3 to J17	66%	
	I495 west J44 to J16	21%	
San Francisco	I580 east J34 to J65	83%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I80 north J8A to J18	80%	
	I80 south J13 to J1A	63%	Saturday 26 Nov 2022
	I680 north J8 to J50	62%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	US101 north J439 to J451	32%	
Seattle	I5 south J142B to J133	86%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I5 south J182 to J164	62%	
	I405 south J18 to J6	59%	
	I405 north J2 to J9	32%	
	I5 north J168B to J182	30%	
Washington DC	I95 south J170A to J160	85%	Sunday, 11/27/22
	I495 anticlockwise J27 to J45	51%	Wednesday, 11/23/22
	I95 north J170A to J22A	32%	
	I270 north J1 to J32	32%	
	I95 south J29B to J15	24%	

Holiday Forecast Methodology: A Brief Overview

Travel Forecast

In cooperation with AAA, S&P Global Market Intelligence developed a unique methodology to forecast actual domestic travel volumes. The economic variables used to forecast travel for the current holiday are leveraged from S&P Global Market Intelligence's proprietary databases. These data include macroeconomic drivers such as employment; output; household net worth; asset prices, including stock indices; interest rates; housing market indicators, and variables related to travel and tourism, including gasoline prices, airline travel, and hotel stays. AAA and S&P Global Market Intelligence have quantified holiday travel volumes going back to 2000.

Historical travel volume estimates come from DK SHIFFLET's TRAVEL PERFORMANCE/Monitorism. The PERFORMANCE/Monitorism is a comprehensive study measuring the travel behavior of U.S. residents. DK SHIFFLET contacts over 50,000 U.S. households each month to obtain detailed travel data, resulting in the unique ability to estimate visitor volume and spending, identify trends and forecast U.S. travel behavior—all after the trips have been taken.

The travel forecast is reported in person-trips. In particular, AAA and S&P Global Market Intelligence forecast the total U.S. holiday travel volume and expected mode of transportation. The travel forecast presented in this report was prepared the week of October 10, 2022.

Thanksgiving Holiday Travel Period

For purposes of this forecast, the Thanksgiving holiday travel period is defined as the five-day period from Wednesday, November 23 to Sunday, November 27. The Wednesday to Sunday period is consistent with previous years.

About AAA

Started in 1902 by automotive enthusiasts who wanted to chart a path for better roads in America and advocate for safe mobility, AAA has transformed into one of North America's largest membership organizations. Today, AAA provides roadside assistance, travel, discounts, financial and insurance services to enhance the life journey of 62 million members across North America, including 56 million in the United States. To learn more about all AAA has to offer or to become a member, visit AAA.com

About S&P Global Market Intelligence

At S&P Global Market Intelligence, we understand the importance of accurate, deep and insightful information. Our team of experts delivers unrivaled insights and leading data and technology solutions, partnering with customers to expand their perspective, operate with confidence, and make decisions with conviction.

S&P Global Market Intelligence is a division of S&P Global (NYSE: SPGI). S&P Global is the world's foremost provider of credit ratings, benchmarks, analytics and workflow solutions in the global capital, commodity and automotive markets. With every one of our offerings, we help many of the world's leading organizations navigate the economic landscape so they can plan for tomorrow, today. For more information, visit www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence.

About DKSA

DK SHIFFLET boasts the industry's most complete database on U.S. resident travel both in the U.S. and worldwide. Data is collected monthly from a U.S. representative sample, adding over 60,000 traveling households annually, and is used daily by leading travel organizations and their strategic planning groups. DK SHIFFLET is an MMGY Global company.

About INRIX

Founded in 2004, INRIX pioneered intelligent mobility solutions by transforming big data from connected devices and vehicles into mobility insights. This revolutionary approach enabled INRIX to become one of the leading providers of data and analytics into how people move. By empowering cities, businesses, and people with valuable insights, INRIX is helping to make the world smarter, safer, and greener. With partners and solutions spanning across the entire mobility ecosystem, INRIX is uniquely positioned at the intersection of technology and transportation – whether it's keeping road users safe, improving traffic signal timing to reduce delay and greenhouse gasses, optimizing last mile delivery, or helping uncover market insights. Learn more at INRIX.com.

As Upstate New York's largest member services organization, AAA Western and Central New York provides more than 887,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive related services. Since its founding in 1900, AAA has been a leading advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. Visit AAA at www.AAA.com or www.NewsRoom.AAA.com or download our mobile app at www.AAA.com/mobile.

