



2021 Thanksgiving Holiday Travel Forecast

Nov 2021

53.4 Million Expected to Travel this Thanksgiving Holiday, Nearing Pre-Pandemic Levels

More People to Travel This Year Over 2020

Thanksgiving holiday travel volume will be higher this year with **53.4 million travelers**, an increase of 13% from 2020. This is within 5% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels.

90% of People Plan to Travel by Car

48.3 million Americans are expected to travel by car, an increase of 8.4% from 2020. This total is higher than volumes seen as recently as 2018.

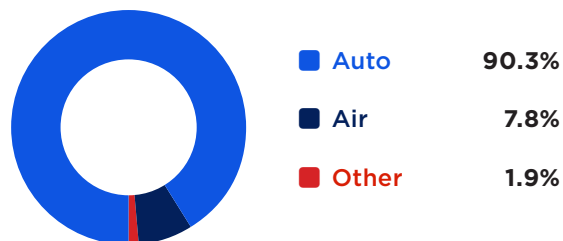
Air Travel Will Almost Completely Rebound

4.2 million travelers will take to the skies this Thanksgiving holiday. This volume represents an **80% increase** over 2020.

Key Takeaways:

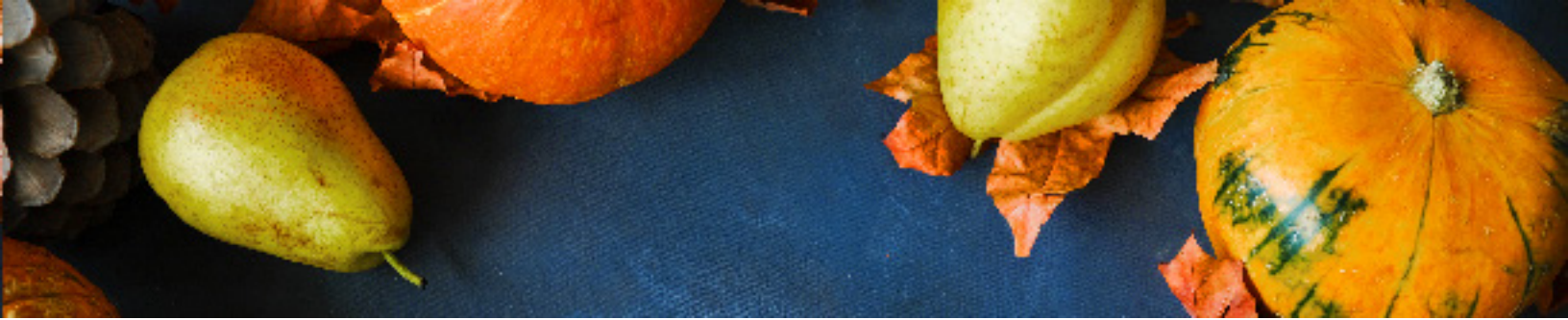
- 53.4 million people are expected to travel this Thanksgiving—6.4 million **more than 2020** and 2.5 million **fewer than 2019**.
- Following the dramatic decrease in travel in 2020, this year will see **the highest one-year increase** (6.4 million) since 2005.
- 48.3 million are expected to travel by car, an increase of 8.4% from 2020. This is the **highest year-over-year growth since the Great Recession**.
- After falling by nearly 50% in 2020, air travel is expected to increase to 4.2 million in 2021, the **highest one-year increase on record**.
- Travel by other modes (including train, bus and cruise) **will increase to 1.02 million**, nearly tripling the 2020 volume but still remain 31% lower than 2019 levels.
- The 2021 Thanksgiving holiday period is defined as Wednesday, Nov. 24 to Sunday, Nov. 28.

Share of Travelers by Mode



Thanksgiving Travelers

	Auto	Air	Other	Total
2021 <small>(forecast)</small>	48.3M	4.1M	1M	53.4M
2020	44.5M	2.3M	281K	47.1M
2019	49.9M	4.5M	1.5M	56M
Change <small>(2019 to 2021)</small>	-3%	-9%	-31%	-5%
Change <small>(2020 to 2021)</small>	8%	80%	264%	13%



How to Navigate Traveling this Thanksgiving

Travel restrictions in many places remain in flux, so before you go, know the requirements and recommendations of your specific destination. Also, masks are still required for everyone on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and places such as airports and stations.

Air Travel

- Tuesday is the most expensive and heaviest travel day with Monday being the lightest and least expensive. Those wanting to book last minute travel will find the best fares about **two weeks prior** to Thanksgiving but keep in mind availability may be limited.
- For **domestic travel**, arrive at the airport **2 hours ahead** of departure time and for **international**, arrive **3 hours ahead**.
- Domestic and international travel restrictions and recommendations vary. [Visit the CDC](#) for the latest on proof of vaccination, testing requirements and other information you need to know before you go.

Road Travel

- Wednesday afternoon will be the heaviest travel day with major metro areas seeing peak congestion from 1:30pm-6:00pm. The best time to leave is before noon the day before or even the day of Thanksgiving.
- Get a vehicle inspection to check key components, especially if your vehicle has been sitting for an extended period of time.

Economic factors influencing the travel forecast include the following:

- Continued improvements in personal income will drive year-over-year growth in consumer spending in the fourth quarter of 2021, up 11.9%.
- The unemployment rate has fallen to 4.6% from 6.8% a year ago but remains above the fourth quarter 2019 average of 3.6%.
- Concerns about the delta variant of the coronavirus have slowed the rebounds in consumer sentiment and spending, with consumer sentiment falling dramatically over the summer.
- Average October gas prices have increased more than a dollar from 2020, with prices not seen this high since 2014.

About AAA

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Download the forecast methodology here.