

1.1 million Oregonians travel for turkey

November 27, 2024



Traffic thickened up Wednesday, Nov. 27, as folks from Cottage Grove and across the state were on the move for the Thanksgiving holiday.

AAA projects 79.9 million Americans (23.6% of the population) will travel 50 miles or more from home for the Thanksgiving holiday, up 2.1% from 2023.

This year is the busiest ever for Thanksgiving travel, exceeding pre-pandemic numbers, according to the AAA. About 1.1 million Oregonians will head over the river and through the woods for turkey and all the trimmings. The Thanksgiving holiday travel period is defined as Tuesday, November 26 through Monday, December 2.

Car travel will set a new record this Thanksgiving with nearly 72 million Americans hitting the road, an increase of nearly 2% compared to last year. Nearly 90% of travelers will drive to their destinations. In Oregon, roughly 984,000 travelers will drive.

Air travel is also expected to set a new record, soaring to 5.8 million travelers flying over the holiday weekend. This is the highest number of air travelers since 2005. Approximately 114,000 Oregonians will travel by air. In all, about 7.3% of Thanksgiving travelers will fly to their holiday destinations.

Americans are also heading to their Thanksgiving destination by other modes of travel including bus, train or cruise ship. These modes are up almost 9% over 2023.

“Thanksgiving is the busiest holiday for travel and this year will set new travel records with more people than ever driving, flying and cruising over the holiday. Americans are eager to carve out time to see family and friends and gobble the big feast,” AAA Oregon/Idaho Public Affairs Director Marie Dodds said.

“Wherever you go, roads and airports will be stuffed so expect lots of company.”

“We’ve seen strong demand for travel all year, and now AAA expects record numbers of travelers to drive, fly and cruise this Thanksgiving,” AAA Oregon/Idaho Senior Vice President of Travel Doreen Loofburrow said. “Plan ahead for your trip. Use your AAA membership to find discounts and rewards, work with a travel agent, and consider travel insurance as well as medical travel insurance to protect your investment. Weather is always the wild card so be prepared for the possibility of winter storms.”

The record Thanksgiving travel is driven by economic trends including robust growth in person income and gradual decline of inflation. Consumer spending is expected to increase in Q4 compared to last year.

AAA projects 89.8% of travelers (71.7 million Americans) will drive to their Thanksgiving destination. This is a 1.95% increase over 2023. This year’s total also surpasses pre-pandemic numbers when 70.6 million people drove to their Thanksgiving destinations in 2019.

In Oregon, roughly 984,000 travelers will drive.

Air travel also breaks records

Air fares cost more for U.S. travel and less for international flights

Thanksgiving air travel will soar to 5.8 million travelers flying over the holiday weekend. This is up 2.1% compared to last year and a nearly 11% increase over 2019. In all, about 7.3% of Thanksgiving travelers will fly to their holiday destinations.

Approximately 114,000 Oregonians will travel by air.

According to AAA booking data, air travelers are paying 3% more for domestic Thanksgiving flights this year, while the number of flight bookings is similar to last year. International flight bookings are up 23% compared to last Thanksgiving, in part because the cost to fly internationally is down 5%. Find more on the costs of travel below.

Those who fly should expect full flights. Any weather or mechanical issues can make it difficult for airlines to catch up as alternate flights are also full.

Travel by bus, train and cruise also rises

Travel by other modes, including buses, trains, and cruises, will rise to nearly 2.3 million, an increase of nearly 9% from 2023 and an 18% jump over 2019. Roughly 29,000 Oregonians will travel by these modes this year.

“Demand for cruises is red-hot this year. AAA bookings show that domestic and international cruise bookings are up 20% compared to last Thanksgiving. Cruises took a major hit during the pandemic but are now more popular than ever. Cruising appeals to many travelers because there’s a wide variety of ships, amenities, and price points, it’s family friendly, there’s something for all ages, and you get to visit multiple destinations but only have to unpack once,” Loofburrow said.

Gas Prices lower than last year

Drivers are thankful for savings at the pumps this year. Pump prices are at their cheapest for Thanksgiving since 2020.

“Gas prices have been steadily falling for several weeks; however we’ve seen gas prices tick up slightly in the days leading up to Thanksgiving. Still, gas prices are the lowest they’ve been for Thanksgiving in four years,” says Dodds.

The current (as of Nov. 27) national average for regular unleaded is \$3.07 and the Oregon average is \$3.56. These prices are at or near the year-to-date lows for 2024 and are about 20 to 60 cents a gallon less than a year ago, depending on the market.

Visit the AAA Fuel Prices website for current gas and EV charging prices.

Find Oregon fuel price news here: <https://info.oregon.aaa.com/oregon-gas-prices/>

Best and worst times to drive; peak traffic expected Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday and Monday

Drivers can expect the most congestion on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons before Thanksgiving and again on Sunday and Monday afternoons as travelers return home. INRIX, in collaboration with AAA, says metro areas across the U.S. could see more than double the delays versus typical drive times, and larger urban areas could experience up to three times the normal delays. The best time to hit the road is Thanksgiving Day when traffic is usually lightest, as well as in the mornings on other days.

“With a record number of travelers taking a holiday road trip this Thanksgiving, drivers should avoid the busiest times if at all possible and realize that roads will be busy throughout the holiday weekend. Expect that it will take more time than usual to get to your destination,” says Dodds.

AAA also recommends that travelers use traffic apps, local Department of Transportation notifications, and 511 services to get real-time updates.

Facts from AAA on Thanksgiving travel

Car travel will set a new record this Thanksgiving with nearly 72 million Americans including 984,000 Oregonians hitting the road. Nearly 90% of travelers will drive to their destinations. Gas prices are lower than last year.

Air travel is also expected to set a new record, soaring to 5.8 million travelers including 114,000 Oregonians flying over the holiday weekend. In all, about 7.3% of Thanksgiving travelers will fly to their holiday

destinations.

Americans are also heading to their Thanksgiving destination by other modes of travel including bus, train or cruise ship. These modes are up almost 9% over 2023. Cruising is red-hot this year!

The busiest times on the roads are the Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons before Thanksgiving and again on Sunday and Monday afternoons after as people come home. The busiest times to fly are the Wednesday before and Sunday after.

This holiday season, AAA finds that travelers are generally paying about 12% less for domestic trips compared to last year and about 7% more for international vacations.

AAA expects to rescue more than 570,000 Americans including 9,000 Oregonians at the roadside over the Thanksgiving holiday period. Dead batteries, lockouts and flat tires are the top three issues.