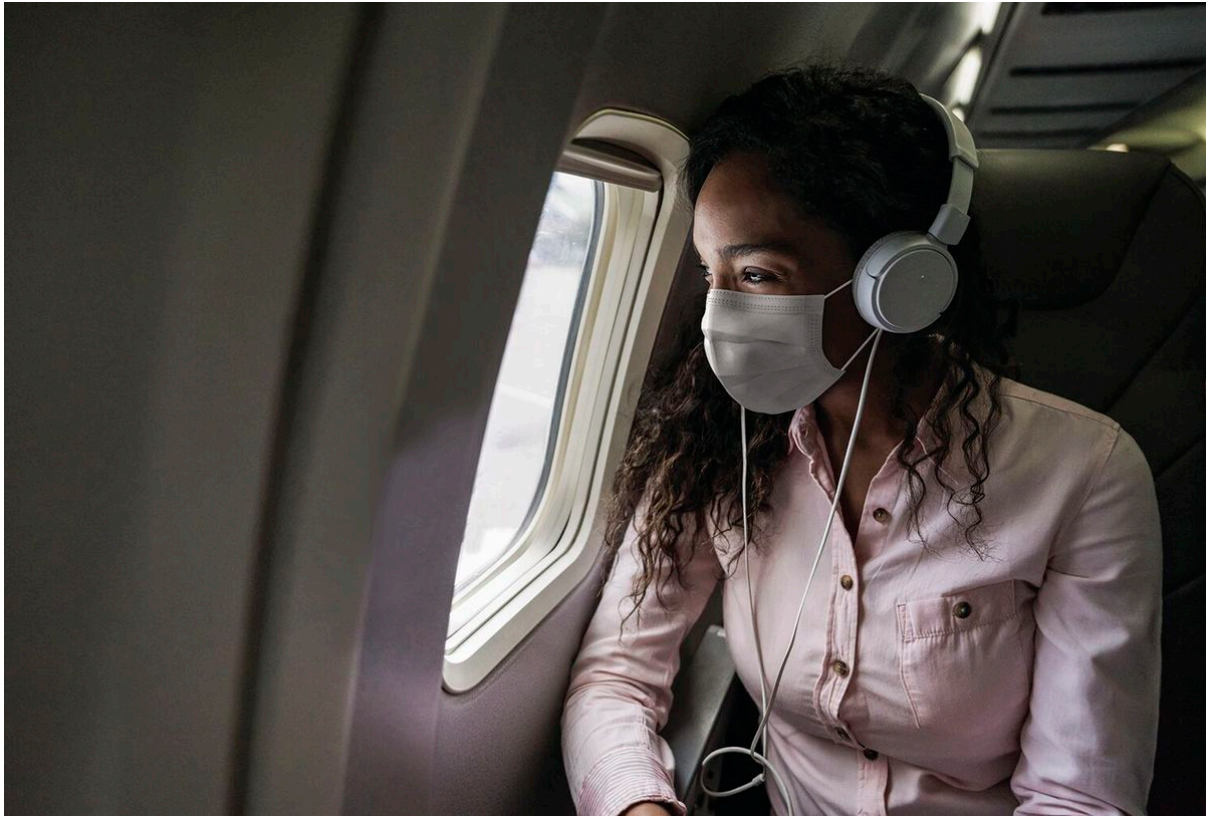


AAA: Thanksgiving travel to drop 10 percent due to pandemic

November 14, 2020



Thanksgiving travel will be on the lighter side this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. AAA projects a drop of at least 10% with travel volume shrinking to the lowest point since the Great Recession in 2008, and the end of 11 years of travel growth for the holiday weekend. Most will wait until the last-minute to decide whether to take a Thanksgiving trip.

Based on mid-October data, AAA would have expected 50 million Americans including 742,000 Oregonians heading over the river and through the woods for turkey and all the trimmings this year. But a recent rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, renewed quarantine restrictions, and relatively high unemployment mean that the actual turnout could be even lower.

With health and government officials stressing that staying home and avoiding social gatherings is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting sick, AAA advises travelers to exercise caution.

The Thanksgiving holiday period is defined as Wednesday, November 25 to Sunday, November 29.

Vast Majority to Travel by Car

AAA projects 95% of travelers (47.8 million Americans) will drive to their Thanksgiving destination. This is a 4.3 percent drop from 2019.

In Oregon, roughly 637,000 travelers will drive.

“Many would-be Thanksgiving travelers are taking a wait-and-see approach. For those who are considering a trip, most will go by car which provides flexibility leading up to the day of departure,” says Marie Dodds, public affairs director for AAA Oregon/Idaho.

Gas Prices Significantly Lower than Last Year

Those who decide to hit the road for Thanksgiving will find the cheapest gas prices for the holiday since 2016. The national average for regular is about 50 cents a gallon less than last year, and the Oregon average is about 70 cents less.

AAA members can fill up for even less at Shell stations when they join the Fuel Rewards® program at AAA.com/Shell Nov. 15 through Dec. 31. In addition to the five cents per gallon everyday offer, members will receive an additional 10 cents off per gallon on their first three fill-ups after joining for the first time as a Fuel Rewards® member, for a total savings of 15 cents.

Peak traffic expected Wednesday Afternoon

Traffic volume is expected to be less than in years' past, but travelers in urban areas will experience increased delays of up to 30% above normal pandemic congestion levels. INRIX expects the Wednesday afternoon before Thanksgiving to see the highest volume of traffic.

“Though fewer folks will be traveling this Thanksgiving, we expect more holiday drivers than we’ve had over the last few years since car travel is the dominant mode. Drivers should pack their patience and expect longer-than-normal trip times, especially on Wednesday afternoon and evening,” says Dodds. “If you can avoid that peak travel time, you may experience shorter delays.”

Few Travelers to Fly and Use Other Modes of Travel

AAA expects Thanksgiving air travel volume will be down by nearly half of prior years – to 2.4 million travelers including 84,000 Oregonians. This would be the largest one-year decrease on record.

AAA says holiday airfares are the lowest in three years. AAA reminds air travelers that in-flight amenities, including food and beverage services, may not be available. Wear your mask, and, as a precaution, wipe down your seat, armrest, belt buckle and tray table using disinfecting wipes.

Travel by other modes, including buses, trains and cruises, is expected to decline 76%, to 353,000 travelers including 21,000 Oregonians, as cruise ships remain docked and more travelers opt for car trips instead of taking buses or trains.

What to Know Before You Go

For those who make the personal decision to travel for the holiday, it is important to know the risks involved and ways to keep yourself and others safe. In addition to CDC guidance, travelers should also be aware of local and state travel restrictions, including testing requirements and quarantine orders.

Travelers can find the latest COVID-19 travel information and tips at [AAA.com/covid](https://www.aaa.com/covid) and the latest travel restrictions at [AAA.com/covidmap](https://www.aaa.com/covidmap). Just click on the destination you'd like to visit for the latest information.

"It's critical for travelers to check with state and local authorities along their route to learn about any restrictions. This plays an important role in being a responsible traveler during the pandemic," says Dodds. "Plan your trip before you leave home. Book any lodging and activities in advance, since many are limiting capacity, and figure out where you'll stop for food, gasoline and EV charging along the way."

AAA has tips for Thanksgiving travelers:

Heed all official warnings and remain vigilant while traveling. Refer to the latest updates from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Department of State to help decrease the spread of COVID-19. Check the CDC's Covid-19 data tracker, municipal and state health departments and local news for updates on coronavirus cases and continue to do so while on the road.

Check in advance on travel restrictions for each destination you plan to visit. Many states, counties, cities and countries still have travel restrictions in place. AAA has developed an interactive TripTik map with COVID-19 travel restrictions. Just click on the destination you'd like to visit for the latest information. [AAA.com/Covidmap](https://www.aaa.com/Covidmap)

Book your lodging, camping and rental car in advance. Many providers are limiting the number of guests and/or allowing more time between guests, so availabilities will likely be reduced.

Prior to any stay, ask what precautions hotels, campgrounds and other lodging are taking to protect guests. Ask about social distancing protocols like capacity reductions in common spaces and hotel staff requirements to wear masks at all times. Ask about any restrictions or changes to the check-in process. Many properties have reduced face-to-face interactions with guests.

Check on the cleaning standards. Many hotels, campgrounds, parks and rental car companies offer enhanced cleaning policies. For extra confidence, look for Diamond hotels that display a AAA Inspector's Best Of Housekeeping badge. Oregon has 181 properties from Albany to Yachats that are honored. Here's the complete list of Oregon properties.

When you check into your room, wipe down commonly touched surfaces with disinfectant. Pay special attention to light switches, door knobs, faucets, refrigerator handles, and remote controls.

Check with any museums, parks, attractions, etc. you want to visit and consider purchasing tickets in advance. Many will have reduced operating hours and limit the number of visitors at a time. Many also require face masks.

Bring snacks, beverages and non-perishable foods with you. Grocery stores and restaurants may have limited hours. Check to see if restaurants are open, and if they offer dine-in service, take-out and/or delivery. Pack picnic supplies and look for scenic stops where you can enjoy the outdoors while social distancing.

Pack hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting products such as face masks, hand sanitizer, soap, wipes, sprays, paper towels, tissues, toilet paper, thermometer, gloves, etc. as these items may be difficult to purchase while you're on the road.

Pay with a credit card instead of cash and use a wipe or sanitizing spray to disinfect your credit card before putting it away.

Take all necessary travel documentation, including health insurance cards.

Consider working with a travel professional to help plan your trip. They can help you sort through all of the pandemic-related restrictions, help you get the biggest bang for your vacation dollars, and act as an advocate if plans change unexpectedly. Visit [AAA.com/Travel](https://www.aaa.com/Travel) to get started.

Get your car road-trip ready. Breakdowns are always a hassle, and you don't want to be stranded during the coronavirus pandemic. Find a trusted mechanic nearby at [AAA.com/repair](https://www.aaa.com/repair).

If renting a car, ask about cleaning policies. Hertz, for example, has introduced Hertz Gold Standard Clean, an enhanced vehicle disinfectant and sanitization process. For extra peace of mind, use disinfecting wipes to wipe down door handles, steering wheels, shifters and control panels. Hertz is also offering deals for road trippers this fall. Book four or more days at any Hertz neighborhood location and get one day free. Visit [AAA.com/Hertz](https://www.aaa.com/Hertz) for more details.

Get to the airport at least two hours before your flight. Getting through security may take longer now that some locations are checking passengers' temperatures. Always maintain social distancing in security check lines and when boarding the plane. Consider bringing a refillable water bottle and snacks since airports and flights may have reduced meal and beverage service.

AAA to the Rescue

Before you head out, be sure your vehicle is ready for the trip to avoid a breakdown along the way. AAA expects to rescue more than 413,000 Americans including 8,200 Oregonians at the roadside this Thanksgiving. Dead batteries, lockouts and flat tires are the top three issues.

AAA makes it easy to request assistance – by phone, app or online – and members can track the service technician's progress as they make their way to your vehicle.

Holiday travel

AAA will release the year-end holiday travel projections on December 15.

"For those who want to fly to visit loved ones over the holidays, now is a good time to book your flights if you haven't done so already. Most major airlines have waived change fees so you can alter your plans if

necessary. But this doesn't mean you can get a refund if you decide not to go, or that you won't have to pay the difference in fare if you change to a more expensive flight. It's very important to read the fine print," says Doreen Loofburrow, vice president of travel for AAA Oregon/Idaho.

About AAA

AAA provides more than 61 million members with automotive, travel, insurance and financial services through its federation of 32 motor clubs and nearly 1,000 branch offices across North America. Since 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax-paying AAA has been a leader and advocate for safe mobility. Drivers can request roadside assistance, identify nearby gas prices, locate discounts, book a hotel or map a route via the AAA Mobile app. To join, visit AAA.com.