



USNews.com

November 1st, 2012

3,074,292 Unique Visitors Per Month

How to Avoid Thanksgiving Travel Disasters

Slices of roasted turkey, mounds of mashed potatoes, hefty wedges of pumpkin pie, and a couple of days off work—being thankful for the Thanksgiving holiday isn't difficult. However, mustering up enough nerve to face Turkey Day travel is a different story altogether. Everything—from crowds to frustration levels to prices—is at fever pitch. But take a deep breath: With some help from our friends at [CheapOair](#), [Travelzoo](#), [Hotwire.com](#), and [CheapAir.com](#), we've got a handful of tips to make your Thanksgiving Day journey more bearable.



AlenKadr/ Shutterstock [more photos]

[In Pictures: [11 Worst U.S. Airports for Layovers](#)]

Book Early

When it comes to finding cheap holiday flights, it's often the case that the early bird gets the worm. To nab the best deals, [CheapOair](#) recommends booking *at least* 45 days in advance. Not only will you protect yourself from airfare increases, you'll also be at peace, knowing that your seat is saved amidst the busy Thanksgiving weekend. But if you've already missed that deadline, CheapOair suggests searching for flight deals online late at night—that's when airlines often post their sales. But because Thanksgiving is right around the corner and airlines have already upped their prices several times, you should just go ahead and reserve your tickets. CheapOair's Mark Drusch advises "If a traveler finds a fare at the departure time and date that suits them, grab it."

Plan Pit Stops

If you choose to forgo insane flight prices by hitting the road, we commend you for your fortitude. But please note that you won't escape all of the Thanksgiving travel frustrations. After all, gas prices are high and traffic is a nightmare, especially along major interstates. That's why we suggest making a [road trip of it](#). Don't blame the little ones for whining about the traffic when you're doing the same thing. Instead, go ahead and plot out some interesting pit stops—[Roadside America](#) has a few unique ideas—to make a memory or even two before you get to grandma's house for Thanksgiving.



[In Pictures: [How to Travel with Kids](#)]

Be Flexible

Whether you decide to fly or drive, you can expect to encounter heavy crowds en route. You'll also be paying more for your transportation: Stop-and-go driving on the highways will burn quickly through your gasoline, and airlines hike their prices around Thanksgiving, especially for flights on Wednesday, November 21 and Sunday, November 25. Being flexible with your travel dates will save you some cash and some sanity. Jeff Klee, CEO of [CheapAir.com](#), says "Tuesday - to- Saturday trips during Thanksgiving week are, on average, \$70 cheaper than Wednesday-to-Sunday trips. Monday-to-Friday trips are even less—\$124 lower." And according to Mark Drusch, chief supplier relations officer of [CheapOair](#), flying on Thanksgiving day (Thursday, November 22) and returning the Saturday after (November 24) can salvage some bucks as well.

Leave the USA

It might be true that there's no place like home (especially during the holidays), but getting there might cost you a pretty penny. At the risk of angering moms and dads across the country, we recommend you skip the Turkey Day festivities at home and go abroad. According to the travel site [Travelzoo](#), late November sees reduced airfare rates to international destinations in [Europe](#) or the [Caribbean](#), which don't celebrate Thanksgiving. So, the end of November might be the perfect time to visit [Paris](#) or top off your fading tan in [Mexico](#).



[In Pictures: [Best Travel Gadgets Under \\$100](#)]

Travel After Thanksgiving

[Travelzoo](#) sees flight prices drop right after Thanksgiving weekend, so you could save some major coin by planning a much-needed vacation *after* the holiday. You could even convince your whole family to celebrate Thanksgiving in early December rather than late November, so that everyone could save some cash yet still enjoy time together. It's not *when* you celebrate Thanksgiving that matters, but *who* you celebrate it with, right? The [Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade](#) might not be on television, but that's what DVR is for.

Grin and Bear It

If you have to be in transit on the peak Thanksgiving travel days, keep calm and carry on. The airport is going to be nutty, and the interstate is going to be clogged. But visiting your loved ones and gorging on stuffing will probably outweigh your frustration. If you're flying, [Travelzoo](#) even recommends forking over some cash for extras, like \$39 to United Airlines for additional legroom or \$9 to American Airlines to pre-board. Clem Bason, president of the [Hotwire Group](#), also recommends keeping the airline's 1-800 number saved in your phone just in case a delay or a cancellation does happen. He also suggests acquiring smart-phone apps that allow you to check your flight status quickly.

[GateGuru](#) (which notifies you about security lines) and [CLEAR](#) (which allows you to bypass the chaos in airport security lines) are good resources to consult as well.

