



# HOLIDAY TRAVELERS EXPECTED TO HIT THE ROAD, SKIES IN NEAR- RECORD NUMBERS - CRONKITE NEWS

Posted on November 20, 2023 by Lux Butler | Cronkite News



*Photo: Near-record numbers of travelers are expected to take to the road and the air over the next week, when AAA predicts that more than 55 million Americans will be traveling for the Thanksgiving holiday. About 1.12 million Arizonans are expected to be among those travelers. (File photo by Kasey Brammell/Cronkite News)*

Millions of travelers won't have to look any farther than the lines in front of them this holiday season for evidence that Americans have moved past the pandemic.

Experts say this holiday season will be one of the busiest in the last 20 years, with travel surging to pre-pandemic levels and beyond, and they remind travelers to make sure they are prepared before getting to the airport.

[AAA estimates](#) that 49.1 million will drive more than 50 miles for the holiday, another 4.7 million people will fly and 1.5 million will travel by boat, train or other means. The 55.3 million total travelers is the third-highest since AAA started tracking holiday travel in 2000, trailing only 2005 and 2019.

"Specifically in Arizona, about 1.12 million people are expected to be traveling for Thanksgiving," said Julian Paredes, the spokesperson for AAA Arizona. He said that is the second-highest recorded in Arizona by AAA.

Those Arizonans who drive to their holiday destination will be doing so at sharply lower prices. Gas prices [in Arizona](#) that have fallen more than 60 cents in just the last month, to \$3.674 a gallon this week. [Nationally](#), gas prices have fallen from \$3.584 a gallon last month to an average of \$3.333 for the holiday.

The 4.7 million Americans who are expected to fly this holiday season is a 6.6% increase over 2022 and the highest number of Thanksgiving air travelers since 2005, according to AAA.

Officials at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport said it was already on pace to set a record for passenger this year, and that the coming week is expected to be the busiest of the year. The current record for Sky Harbor travelers was 44 million in pre-pandemic 2019.

"This year we're watching our monthly stats meet and sometimes exceed 2019," said Gregory Roybal, Sky Harbor's public information

officer.

Roybal and others offer a variety of suggestions – besides patience – that should help people cope with the expected crowds and make the travel days a little bit easier.



“The biggest thing for passengers to know, in general, is that people can find a lot of information, probably all the answers to whatever their travel questions are, on [skyharbor.com](http://skyharbor.com),” Roybal said.

That was echoed by Rebecca Spicer, a spokesperson for Airlines for America, who encouraged flyers to download the mobile app of the airline they will be flying on before heading to the airport.

“This is by far and away the most effective and efficient way for your airline to communicate with you,” Spicer said in a [news release](#). “Everything from your boarding pass to gate notifications to weather related changes.”

Besides leaving plenty of time, Spicer also recommended that people pack a snack for the inevitable delays and an empty water bottle that can be filled after getting through the security checkpoint.

Roybal offered some Sky Harbor-specific recommendations to ease the pain of holiday travel. The airport is encouraging travelers to use PHX Sky Train, which now has stations at both 24th Street and 44th Street, and to use services like [PHX Reserve](#), which lets passengers in Terminals 3 and 4 schedule a time for their Transportation Security Administration screening.

Like Spicer, Roybal said Sky Harbor also encourages passengers to utilize their mobile phones to stay up to date on their flight information.

“If people check and confirm their flight status, they will know before they even come to the airport and that can really save them some sorrow,” Roybal said.

Experts said the busiest travel days are expected to be Tuesday and Wednesday before Thanksgiving and the Sunday after.