

Travel between Canada and other countries, January 2019

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, March 21, 2019

Highlights

Travel to Canada by residents of overseas countries (countries other than the United States) reached a record high for the month of January, the sixth consecutive year-over-year increase for the month.

China was the top source market for overseas travellers to Canada. Arrivals from China were up 8.7% from December 2018.

Bad weather in Central Canada may have played a role in reducing travel by car both ways across the Canada-United States border in January.

Travel by Canadians to overseas countries declined for the first time since September 2018.

Travel from Asia to Canada increases

In January, residents of overseas countries (countries other than the United States) made 618,000 trips to Canada, up 4.3% from December 2018. This was also the sixth consecutive year-over-year increase in arrivals from overseas for the month of January. Arrivals reached new highs for a number of major source markets in January, including China, Australia, Mexico, France and India.

There were increases in the numbers of overseas travellers to Canada from all continents, most notably from Asia (+7.0%). The number of travellers from China increased 8.7% in January.

Arrivals from the United Kingdom declined 1.3%, partly offsetting increases from the rest of Europe (+3.1%). Arrivals from France rose 6.0% in January, the fifth consecutive year-over-year increase for the month.

The number of travellers from Mexico, the second-largest source of travellers to Canada from the Americas after the United States, increased 1.3% in January, the ninth consecutive year-over-year increase for the month.

Car arrivals to Canada decline, but plane arrivals up in January

US residents made 2.0 million trips to Canada in January, down 4.5% from December 2018. The decrease in January was led by fewer trips to Canada by car, down 5.1% from December 2018 to 1.4 million, after adjusting for normal seasonal variation.

Same-day car trips to Canada by US residents were down 8.2% in January to 662,000. On a year-over-year basis, same-day car travel (-1.2%) was also down from January 2018. Most provinces saw declines in the number of US same-day travellers arriving by car, including Ontario (-12.0%) and Quebec (-15.4%). By contrast, increases over December 2018 were recorded in British Columbia (+4.4%) and Alberta (+4.2%).

Overnight car trips to Canada fell 1.9% in January to 701,000. Ontario (-4.7%) and Quebec (-7.5%) were the provinces with the largest declines in overnight car arrivals from the United States. Despite the monthly decline, there were still 4.6% more overnight car trips to Canada by US residents in January than 12 months earlier.

Travel in Ontario and Quebec may also have been affected by a severe winter storm in the second half of January, which covered much of Central Canada and was accompanied by extreme cold conditions that lingered for a number of weeks.



In contrast, the number of plane arrivals to Canada by US residents rose 0.7% in January to 460,000. Increases in plane arrivals to Canada were reported in every province except Ontario (-1.4%), Quebec (-0.5%) and Alberta (-0.2%). Despite the monthly increase, there were still 3.1% fewer plane arrivals to Canada by US residents in January than 12 months earlier.

Plane travel to the United States declines in January

Canadian residents made 3.6 million trips to the United States in January, down 2.6% from December 2018 and 5.4% lower year over year.

Plane trips to the United States by Canadian residents fell 2.4% in January to 819,000. Declines in plane trips were reported in most provinces, with Alberta (-10.3%) recording the largest decrease. Despite the monthly decline, there were still 4.3% more plane trips to the United States by Canadians in January than 12 months earlier.

Car travel to the United States by Canadians declined 3.1% to 2.6 million in January. Same-day car trips, which represent almost two-thirds of all car trips taken to the United States by Canadian travellers, declined 4.7% in January to 1.7 million. On a year-over-year basis, Canadians made 10.1% fewer same-day car trips to the United States.

As well as the winter storms and extreme cold in Central Canada in January, the value of the Canadian dollar—a factor known to influence cross-border travel— may have contributed to the year-over-year decline. The average value of the Canadian dollar stood at \$0.75 US in January, compared with \$0.81 US in January 2018.

Overnight trips to the United States by car edged up 0.1% in January to 910,000, but that total was still 4.1% below the level recorded in the same month a year earlier. Alberta recorded the largest increase (+21.7%) in overnight car travel by Canadians to the United States in January 2019.

Overseas travel by Canadians declines

Canadian residents made 1.0 million trips to overseas destinations (countries other than the United States), down slightly (-0.2%) from December 2018, but 4.3% above the level 12 months earlier. This was the first monthly decline since September 2018.

Note to readers

Monthly data are seasonally adjusted. For information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#). Year-to-date figures are based on unadjusted data.

Seasonally adjusted data from January to December 2018 have been revised. Non-seasonally adjusted data for December 2018 have been revised.

Data for Statistics Canada's Frontier Counts program are produced using administrative data received from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on all international travellers who have been cleared for entry or re-entry into Canada. This includes residents of Canada, the United States and overseas entering Canada from abroad.

Starting with January 2019 data, Statistics Canada updated the method of determining trip durations for US residents travelling to Canada and Canadian residents returning from the United States. This change affects the relative proportions of same-day/overnight travellers arriving in Canada by air and 'other' modes of transportation (train, marine private, pedestrians, other vehicles). Trip durations for travel by automobile and bus are not affected. Caution is therefore advised when comparing 2019 data with earlier time periods for these modes of transportation. Users analyzing trends in the same-day or overnight portions of these modes are advised to also compare trends for the total as comparison.

In 2017, the CBSA began introducing the electronic Primary Inspection Kiosk (PIK) system at airports in Canada. The PIK system replaces the E311 Declaration Cards that were completed by international travellers to Canada.

Data users are cautioned that the switch from E311 cards to PIK has affected the historical comparability of some data series. Most notably, there has been an increased tendency of Canadian travellers returning from overseas trips via the United States to report in PIK that they are returning from the United States and not from overseas via the United States. In the Frontier Counts, this has led to increases in the numbers of Canadian residents returning from the United States by air, and decreases in the numbers of Canadian residents returning from countries other than the United States by air via the United States (as well as more aggregated series to which these data contribute). Data for other series that include international travellers to Canada by air do not appear to be affected by the switch from E311 to PIK and hence comparisons with data for other reference months can be made.

Further information on the switch from E311 cards to PIK is available in the document "[Impacts of PIK on Tourism Data](#)."

During 2018, Statistics Canada undertook a review of sources of data on overseas residents entering Canada at land ports. Overseas residents who enter Canada at land ports represent about 10% of total overseas travellers to Canada. Total counts of overseas travellers were revised to reflect new sources of data at some ports. In addition, starting with August 2018 data, Statistics Canada implemented a new method for estimating the country of residence breakdowns of these overseas travellers entering Canada at most land ports. These changes have varying degrees of impact on the total counts of travellers to Canada from individual countries. Users are therefore advised to use caution when comparing changes in travel to Canada with previous months for individual overseas countries.

Overseas countries refer to countries other than the United States.

A **Canadian resident traveller** is a Canadian resident who has travelled outside Canada for a period of less than 12 months.

A **non-resident traveller** is a resident of a country other than Canada who is travelling to Canada for a period of less than 12 months.

An **overnight traveller or a tourist** is a traveller whose trip includes one or more night's stay.

Table 1
Travel between Canada and other countries – Seasonally adjusted

	January 2018 ^r	December 2018 ^r	January 2019 ^p	December 2018 to January 2019
	thousands			% change ¹
Canadian trips abroad²	4,738	4,678	4,579	-2.1
To the United States	3,766	3,661	3,565	-2.6
To other countries	972	1,017	1,014	-0.2
Same-day car trips to the United States	1,916	1,808	1,724	-4.7
Total trips, one or more nights	2,786	2,836	2,723	-4.0
United States ³	1,814	1,819	1,709	-6.1
Car	949	909	910	0.1
Plane	781	836	727	-13.1
Other modes of transportation	84	74	73	-2.5
Other countries	972	1,017	1,014	-0.2
Travel to Canada²	2,593	2,689	2,620	-2.6
From the United States	2,027	2,096	2,002	-4.5
From other countries	566	593	618	4.3
Same-day car trips from the United States	671	722	662	-8.2
Total trips, one or more nights	1,757	1,801	1,791	-0.6
United States ³	1,202	1,233	1,198	-2.8
Car	670	715	701	-1.9
Plane	397	388	403	3.8
Other modes of transportation	134	130	94	-27.7
Other countries ⁴	555	568	592	4.3
Travel to Canada: Top overseas markets,⁵ by country of origin^{6, 7}				
China	62	68	74	8.7
United Kingdom	68	69	68	-1.3
France	49	52	55	6.0
Mexico	32	41	42	1.3
Germany	34	33	34	4.2
Australia	32	33	34	1.3
India	25	25	27	6.5
Japan	24	21	21	-0.4
South Korea	22	20	21	2.0
Brazil	17	16	16	-1.2
Hong Kong	12	13	15	11.4
Netherlands	12	12	12	6.0

^r revised

^p preliminary

1. Percentage change is based on unrounded data.

2. Totals exceed the sum of "same-day car trips" and "total trips, one or more nights" because they include all of the same-day trips.

3. Data for the United States include counts of cars and buses, and data for planes, trains, boats and other methods of transportation.

4. Figures for other countries exclude same-day entries by land only via the United States.

5. Overseas markets refer to countries other than the United States.

6. Includes same-day and overnight trips.

7. Starting with August 2018 data, Statistics Canada implemented a new method for estimating the country of residence breakdowns of overseas travellers entering Canada at land ports where this breakdown was not available. This change has varying degrees of impact on the total counts of travellers to Canada from individual countries. Users are therefore advised to use caution when comparing changes in travel to Canada with previous months for individual overseas countries.

Source(s): Tables [24-10-0005-01](#), [24-10-0043-01](#) and [24-10-0006-01](#).

Available tables: [24-10-0002-01](#), [24-10-0003-01](#), [24-10-0005-01](#), [24-10-0006-01](#), [24-10-0041-01](#) and [24-10-0043-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5005](#).

The January 2019 issue of *International Travel, Advance Information*, Vol. 35, no. 1 ([66-001-P](#)), is now available.

For more information regarding the impacts on Statistics Canada travel and tourism data resulting from the replacement of E311 cards with the Primary Inspection Kiosk (PIK), please consult the document "[Impacts of PIK on Tourism Data](#)."

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).