

National Travel Survey, first quarter 2019

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Residents of Canada made 63.5 million trips in Canada and abroad in the first quarter, spending \$19.2 billion. Although Canadians travelled less (-3.5%) overall compared with the first quarter of 2018, their travel spending (+0.2%) rose slightly. The decline in travel was due largely to fewer trips within Canada and to the United States compared with the same quarter of the previous year.

Travel inside Canada declines, while spending edges up

Canadian residents made 54.2 million trips to destinations within Canada in the first quarter, down 3.7% from the same quarter of 2018. However, domestic travel spending edged up 0.3% to \$8.3 billion in the first quarter.

Most provinces, including Alberta (-7.8%), British Columbia (-5.6%), Quebec (-3.4%) and Ontario (-0.9%), reported fewer domestic visits.

The decline in domestic travel coincided with heavy winter snowstorms as well as extreme cold conditions, which affected much of Central Canada in January and February.

On average, Canadian travellers spent \$152 per trip inside Canada. Food and beverages in restaurants and bars were the largest single expense item (22.8%), followed by accommodation (21.9%) and vehicle operation expenses (14.5%).

Visiting friends or relatives was the most common trip purpose, accounting for 43.3% of all domestic trips during the first quarter, followed by trips for pleasure or leisure (27.6%).

Canadians took 6.6% fewer domestic trips for pleasure or leisure, and also made 6.4% fewer trips to visit friends or relatives within Canada compared with the first quarter of 2018.

In contrast, the numbers of domestic trips for other business-related purposes (+8.1%), other personal reasons such as shopping (+7.0%), and attending conferences, conventions or trade shows (+6.2%) in Canada were higher than during the first quarter of 2018.

Travel to the United States declines

Canadian residents made 6.0 million trips to the United States in the first quarter, down 3.0% from the first quarter of 2018. 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 the first quarter, down from \$0.79 US in the first quarter of 2018.

Despite this decline in travel to the United States by Canadian residents, their spending was up (+3.0% to \$5.5 billion) compared with the first quarter of 2018. On average, spending on trips to the United States totalled \$918 per trip.

Accommodation was the largest single expense item, accounting for 40.0% of total travel expenditures in the United States, followed by food and beverages in restaurants and bars (17.9%).

Just over half (50.5%) of all trips to the United States made by Canadian residents during the quarter were for pleasure or leisure. Visiting friends or relatives was the next most commonly reported reason for travelling to the United States (18.1%).

Year over year, the number of Canadians travelling to the United States for pleasure or leisure increased 1.6% in the first quarter, while travel for visiting friends or relatives declined 8.0%.

Travel for business-related purposes decreased 11.0%, while trips for personal conferences, conventions or trade shows in the United States were down 9.7%.



Fewer Canadians travelling overseas

The first quarter is typically the busiest quarter for travelling overseas, as many Canadians seek to escape the cold. In the first quarter of 2019, Canadians made 3.3 million trips to overseas countries (countries other than the United States), down slightly (-0.3%) compared with the same quarter a year earlier.

Spending by Canadian residents during trips to overseas countries totalled \$5.4 billion, down 2.5% from the first quarter of 2018. Accommodation (47.9%) and food and beverages in restaurants and bars (20.8%) accounted for two-thirds of overseas travel expenditures by Canadian residents (excluding the cost of transportation booked in Canada for travel to or from the overseas destination).

The most commonly visited countries were the sun destinations of Mexico (803,000 visits), Cuba (410,000 visits) and the Dominican Republic (295,000 visits), followed by China (240,000 visits), India (130,000 visits) and the United Kingdom (100,000 visits).

Pleasure or leisure was the main trip purpose for visiting Caribbean countries and Mexico, while reuniting with friends or relatives was the main reason for visiting China, India and the United Kingdom.

These two reasons combined represented over 9 of every 10 trips overseas made by Canadian residents during the first quarter.

Table 1
Travel by Canadian residents in Canada and abroad by trip purpose, first quarter of 2019

	Trips	Travel expenditures
	thousands	millions of dollars
Trips by Canadian residents in Canada	54,200	8,300
Business	6,800	1,600
Pleasure	15,000	3,200
Visiting friends/relatives	23,500	2,100
Other ¹	9,000	1,300
Trips by Canadian residents abroad	9,300	10,900
To the United States	6,000	5,500
Business	610	650
Pleasure	3,000	4,100
Visiting friends/relatives	1,100	500
Other ¹	1,300	280
To other countries	3,300	5,400
Business	140	290
Pleasure	2,300	4,100
Visiting friends/relatives	780	910
Other ¹	110	150

1. The "Other" category includes travel to shop, to attend a personal conference, convention or trade show, or for other personal reasons.

Source(s):

National Travel Survey (5232).
Table 24-10-0045-01.

Note to readers

This is the first release of quarterly data for the 2019 National Travel Survey (NTS). The NTS collects information about domestic and international travel by Canadian residents.

The NTS was developed to fully replace the Travel Survey of Residents of Canada and the Canadian resident component of the International Travel Survey. Please note that NTS data are not comparable with data from these two surveys because the NTS was designed using a different survey methodology.

The target population is the civilian, non-institutionalized population 18 years and older in Canada's provinces. Not included in the survey's coverage are persons living on Indian reserves and persons living in the territories. Also excluded are out-of-scope trips such as routine trips and trips taken by commuters and diplomatic or military personnel.

***Domestic trips** are made by travellers residing in Canada who have travelled inside Canada for a period of less than 12 months and who are returning to their place of residence.*

***Same-day trips or visits** are considered to have taken place within the same calendar day, that is, the traveller left and returned home on the same day, and have to be 40 km or more (one way) in length.*

***Trips abroad** are made by travellers residing in Canada who have travelled outside of Canada for a period of less than 12 months and who are returning to Canada. Foreign citizens who are residing in Canada and travel abroad are included as Canadian resident travellers.*

***A trip abroad** for persons residing in Canada starts when they cross the border to exit Canada and ends when they first re-enter Canada.*

***Trips and visits.** A trip can consist of one or more visits. A Canadian traveller on a trip abroad may cross into several countries or US states before being recorded as having re-entered Canada. Each of these crossings represents a visit. Similarly, Canadian residents travelling in Canada may stay in several locations during their trip. Each stay at a Canadian location (for example, a province) within a given trip represents a visit.*

Available tables: table [24-10-0045-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5232](#).

Data from the National Travel Survey for first quarter 2019 are now available. Other tables, including statistical profiles of Canadian travellers, are available upon request.

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).