

Travel between Canada and other countries, February 2020

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Highlights

In late January, a Canadian resident who returned to Toronto from Wuhan, China, became Canada's first documented case of the new coronavirus (COVID-19). Although there were only 15 confirmed cases of COVID-19 by the end of February, early indications of the potential impact of the virus on international travel were already evident.

The total number of arrivals to Canada from overseas countries fell 8.3% from January to February, the largest month-over-month decline since 1993. Incoming travel from Asia was down by one-quarter, and travel from China was down by just over one-half.

Travel across the Canada–United States border occurred as usual during February (+2.0%). This will change dramatically in the March data. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada announced a 30-day restriction on all non-essential travel across the Canada–US border as of March 21, 2020.

Fewer overseas travellers to Canada in February

In February, the number of arrivals to Canada from overseas countries (countries other than the United States) declined 8.3% from January, to 573,000 trips. The number of travellers from Asia fell 24.7%, to 165,000, while travel from Europe edged up 1.0%, to 263,000 trips.

Arrivals from China fell by 52.6% from the previous month, to 31,000 trips in February. This followed the Government of Canada's advisory on January 29, 2020, to avoid non-essential travel to China, and Air Canada's subsequent suspension of all flights between Canada and Beijing and Shanghai, effective January 30, 2020.

The February decline was also partly caused by the shift in the date of the Chinese New Year, which occurred on January 25 in 2020, compared with February 5 in 2019. Travel from China usually peaks before the Chinese New Year.

Travel from other affected countries in Asia, including South Korea (-17.2%), Japan (-15.7%) and Hong Kong (-12.2%), also declined.

In February, several European countries announced their first COVID-19 cases, many of which were linked to travel-related exposure to the virus in northern Italy, the most affected region outside Asia at the time. Italy began implementing physical distancing measures in late February, but cross-border and international travel continued.

Travel to Canada from France rose 2.1% from January, to 59,000 trips, contributing to the overall increase in arrivals from Europe. This was offset by fewer arrivals from the United Kingdom (down 1.2%, to 74,000 trips) and Germany (down 2.6%, to 33,000 trips).

Car arrivals from the United States rise

US residents made 2.1 million trips to Canada in February, up 1.0% from the previous month. The increase was led by car travel.

In February, the number of US residents who entered Canada by car rose 1.4%, to 1.4 million trips. Same-day car arrivals increased 3.2%, to 715,000 trips to Canada, while overnight car travel edged down 0.3%, to 738,000 trips. All border provinces except Quebec reported an increase in same-day car trips by US residents in February.

In February, the number of US residents who arrived in Canada by air declined 1.4% from January, to 458,000.



Travel to the United States rises

Canadian residents made 3.7 million trips to the United States in February, up 2.6% from January, with both car and plane travel increasing.

The number of Canadian residents who returned from the United States by car increased 3.4% from January, to 2.8 million trips. Same-day car trips rose 3.5% from the previous month, to 1.8 million, while overnight car trips were up 3.3%, to 950,000. Although most provinces recorded increases, the largest increases occurred in British Columbia (+9.3%) and Manitoba (+9.3%).

Plane trips edged up 0.4% from the previous month, to 845,000.

Overseas travel by Canadian residents edges down

In February, the number of Canadian residents who travelled overseas edged down 0.1%, to 1.0 million, in the wake of increased government travel warnings related to coronavirus outbreaks in overseas countries and the evacuation of Canadian citizens from affected areas.

On a year-over-year basis, almost 18,500 more Canadians returned to Canada from overseas in February 2020 compared with February 2019.

Note to readers

Data for Statistics Canada's Frontier Counts program are produced using administrative data received from the Canada Border Services Agency 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 countries who are entering Canada from abroad.

Monthly data are seasonally adjusted. Seasonally adjusted data for January 2019 to January 2020 have been revised.

For information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

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 nights' stay.

Table 1
Travel between Canada and other countries – Seasonally adjusted

	February 2019 ^r	January 2020 ^r	February 2020 ^p	January to February 2020
	thousands			% change ¹
Canadian trips abroad²	4,632	4,698	4,790	2.0
To the United States	3,603	3,650	3,743	2.6
To other countries	1,029	1,048	1,047	-0.1
Same-day car trips to the United States	1,769	1,778	1,839	3.5
Total trips, one or more nights	2,739	2,801	2,828	1.0
United States ³	1,711	1,753	1,781	1.6
Car	890	920	950	3.3
Plane	757	768	766	-0.3
Other modes of transportation	64	65	66	0.9
Other countries	1,029	1,048	1,047	-0.1
Travel to Canada²	2,606	2,717	2,686	-1.1
From the United States	1,994	2,092	2,113	1.0
From other countries	612	625	573	-8.3
Same-day car trips from the United States	656	693	715	3.2
Total trips, one or more nights	1,784	1,859	1,806	-2.9
United States ³	1,202	1,263	1,261	-0.1
Car	664	740	738	-0.3
Plane	422	418	415	-0.8
Other modes of transportation	116	104	108	3.8
Other countries ⁴	582	596	544	-8.6
Travel to Canada: Top overseas markets,⁵ by country of origin^{6, 7}				
United Kingdom	73	75	74	-1.2
France	55	57	59	2.1
Mexico	41	44	42	-4.3
Germany	36	34	33	-2.6
Australia	32	31	32	1.5
China	63	64	31	-52.6
India	29	30	28	-8.0
South Korea	23	23	19	-17.2
Japan	21	22	18	-15.7
Hong Kong	14	17	15	-12.2
Brazil	16	12	13	2.8
Netherlands	11	12	13	7.6

^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 the totals include same-day trips by all modes of transportation.

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 February 2020 issue of *International Travel, Advance Information*, Vol. 36, no. 2 ([66-001-P](#)), is now available.

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).