

Travel between Canada and other countries, December 2021

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Highlights

In December, the number of international visitors to Canada continued to increase, but remained well below levels before the pandemic.

While residents from overseas countries made more than five times the trips in December 2021 than in the same month in 2020, it was under half (42.7%) of December 2019.

Likewise, US residents made almost five times more trips than in December 2020, yet less than one-third (32.4%) of those in the same month in 2019.

Compared with the same month in 2020, Canadians made more than four times the return trips home from visiting abroad in December 2021, but this was over one-third (37.1%) of the December 2019 trips.

After a record 96.8 million international arrivals—non-residents and returning Canadians as well as other travellers—to Canada in 2019, the number declined to 25.9 million in 2020, but had begun to recover in 2021.

2021 in review

The initial impacts from COVID-19 were not felt until mid-March during 2020, making 2021 the first full year impacted by the virus for all 12 months. The total of 18.8 million international arrivals to Canada in 2021 reflects nine consecutive months of year-over-year growth since April. Indeed, excluding January to March, such arrivals to Canada almost doubled from 2020 to 2021.

Over the entire year, the 3.3 million arrivals of US residents in 2021 to visit Canada were over four-fifths (82.6%) of 2020 arrivals, but a fraction (13.2%) of 2019 levels. In 2021, the 986,100 arrivals of non-residents from overseas were close to 2020 levels but represented a fraction (13.2%) of 2019.

The number of Canadian residents returning from visiting abroad was 7.9 million in 2021, over half (54.1%) of the 2020 volume but a fraction of pre-pandemic 2019. Again, a good portion of total international arrivals in 2020 stemmed from January, February and into early March, before the pandemic.

After the implementation of border and other restrictions in March 2020, the impact on international travel was immediate, with international arrivals falling to a record low in April of that year. As of April 2021, while overall travel to and from Canada began to increase gradually, it remained far below 2019 levels.

Some closures and restrictions continued in 2021 with COVID-19 variants. However, there were increased vaccination rates along with provincial re-openings over the summer and the gradual re-opening of Canada's borders to all fully vaccinated non-resident travellers. As such, international visitors to Canada began to support [Canadian tourism activity](#) in the fall.

Travel restrictions return

In late November 2021, the World Health Organization declared a new variant of concern, Omicron, prompting Canada to implement new travel restrictions. On December 15, the Government of Canada advised against all non-essential travel outside of the country and then, as of December 21, a negative molecular test for all travellers was required for entry.



Overseas visitors up sharply in December

With testing and quarantine no longer required for fully vaccinated travellers entering Canada for much of December, 211,100 overseas residents arrived in December 2021. While more than five times the number of arrivals in December 2020, it was still less than half (42.7%) of overseas residents who entered Canada during the same month in 2019.

The number of visitors originating from Canada's major markets increased. Europe jumped from 14,900 in December 2020 to 104,900 in December 2021, while those from Asia increased from 15,600 in December 2020 to 46,900 in December 2021. Both remained below December 2019, before the pandemic, as did arrivals from other overseas countries.

On a monthly basis, overseas visitors arriving in December 2021 nearly doubled from November, a higher than normal seasonal jump.

More US residents crossing into Canada

In December, US residents took 550,300 trips to Canada, almost five times as many as in December 2020 (113,900), but less than one-third (32.4%) of the 1.7 million such trips taken in December 2019.

Of the total arrivals in December, 374,200 were by automobile, with just over one-third (35.5%) same-day returns (133,000)—a jump from a total of 92,200 in 2020. However, the total number of US motorists entering Canada in December 2021 was less than one-third (30.8%) of the 1.2 million trips before the pandemic, in December 2019.

Trips to visit US increasing

Canadian residents returned from 1.1 million trips to the United States in December 2021, more than four times December 2020 (271,100), but far below the 3.4 million such trips in December 2019.

Of the total returning Canadian trips in December 2021, 776,400 were by automobile with just under two-thirds (502,500) being same-day.

In December, while the number of return air trips by Canadian residents rose more than five times from December 2020 to 335,400, this was 39.3% of such trips from the same month in 2019, before the pandemic.

More Canadians return from visiting overseas

In December 2021, 503,400 Canadian residents returned from visiting overseas, almost five times the number in December 2020 (108,300), but just over half (50.7%) of the 993,300 returning Canadians observed in December 2019.

Table 1
Travel between Canada and other countries – Seasonally adjusted

| | December 2020 ^r | November 2021 ^r | December 2021 ^p | November to December 2021 |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | thousands | | | % change ¹ |
| Canadian trips abroad² | 403 | 1,228 | 1,613 | 31.3 |
| To the United States | 278 | 835 | 1,175 | 40.8 |
| To other countries | 125 | 394 | 438 | 11.1 |
| Same-day car trips to the United States | 169 | 299 | 517 | 73.0 |
| Total trips, one or more nights | 223 | 917 | 1,082 | 18.0 |
| United States ³ | 98 | 523 | 644 | 23.1 |
| Car | 39 | 219 | 328 | 49.5 |
| Plane | 58 | 301 | 313 | 4.0 |
| Other modes of transportation | 1 | 3 | 3 | 8.4 |
| Other countries | 125 | 394 | 438 | 11.1 |
| Travel to Canada² | 150 | 774 | 835 | 7.9 |
| From the United States | 112 | 594 | 627 | 5.5 |
| From other countries | 38 | 180 | 208 | 15.8 |
| Same-day car trips from the United States | 62 | 151 | 151 | 0.1 |
| Total trips, one or more nights | 83 | 612 | 672 | 9.9 |
| United States ³ | 46 | 434 | 467 | 7.4 |
| Car | 28 | 280 | 282 | 0.7 |
| Plane | 18 | 151 | 179 | 18.7 |
| Other modes of transportation | 0 | 4 | 6 | 49.9 |
| Other countries ⁴ | 36 | 177 | 205 | 15.8 |
| Travel to Canada: Top overseas markets,⁵ by country of origin^{6, 7} | | | | |
| India | 5 | 16 | 10 | -39.4 |
| Mexico | 1 | 17 | 17 | -4.4 |
| China | 2 | 5 | 6 | 16.8 |
| United Kingdom | 4 | 29 | 33 | 12.6 |
| France | 3 | 25 | 35 | 38.1 |
| Netherlands | 1 | 3 | 5 | 37.2 |
| Hong Kong | 1 | 2 | 2 | 21.6 |
| Australia | 0 | 3 | 3 | 28.8 |
| Japan | 1 | 1 | 2 | 23.6 |
| Germany | 2 | 12 | 14 | 21.2 |
| South Korea | 1 | 3 | 3 | 19.3 |
| Brazil | 1 | 3 | 5 | 42.5 |

^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](#).

Note to readers

Statistics Canada's Frontier Counts program uses administrative data from the Canada Border Services Agency on all international travellers who have been cleared for entry or re-entry into Canada.

Since April 2020, releases have been based on unadjusted data (not seasonally adjusted) to emphasize the change in actual volumes.

Seasonally adjusted data from January to November 2021 have been revised. Revisions were made to unadjusted data for November 2021.

Overseas countries refer to countries other than Canada or the United States.

A **Canadian resident visitor** is a Canadian resident traveller whose trip purpose outside Canada is related to tourism and whose trip duration is less than one year.

A **non-resident visitor** is a traveller whose country of residence is not Canada or the United States, whose trip purpose is related to tourism and whose trip duration is less than one year.

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 December 2021 issue of *International Travel: Advance Information* ([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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).