

# National Travel Survey, third quarter 2021

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Friday, February 25, 2022

---

## Highlights

In the third quarter of 2021, Canadians took 86.8 million trips within Canada or abroad. While this 4.4% increase from the third quarter of 2020 signalled the beginning of a modest recovery, travel still lags the same quarter in 2019, before the pandemic.

The number of trips taken by Canadians from July to September 2021 was 14.5% less than those taken during the same period in 2019. For this quarter, however, virtually all (98.9%) trips were domestic, while before the pandemic, roughly 10% were to the United States or overseas destinations.

With a slight growth in overall trips by Canadians in the third quarter, tourism spending at home increased by 7.1% compared to the same quarter of 2019, while spending abroad declined by 80.0%.

More recent data on international travel by Canadian residents are available from the monthly "[Travel between Canada and other countries](#)."

## Canada sees some easing of restrictions

In 2020, travel and tourism was among the first and hardest-hit sectors of the economy because of COVID-19. During the second quarter, travel came to a near standstill. While some public health restrictions were eased in the third quarter, travel restrictions remained in effect and were tightened in many provinces, resulting in a lacklustre fourth quarter.

In 2021, new restrictions were introduced on top of the advisory against non-essential travel outside the country, discouraging international trips by Canadians. During the third quarter, Canada began easing some restrictions. Starting on July 5, 2021, testing upon arrival with a hotel stopover as part of a 14-day quarantine—a measure in force since February—no longer applied to fully vaccinated Canadians. Initially, domestic travel was supporting overall [Canadian tourism activity](#) in the third quarter of 2021.

## Domestic travel recovering

Canadians took 85.8 million domestic trips in the third quarter, down 6.3% compared with the same quarter in 2019. The number of same-day trips decreased by 8.4% to 51.3 million, compared with the same three months (July to September) of 2019, while overnight trips declined by 3.0% to 34.5 million.

With relatively more overnight domestic trips in the third quarter, spending on these trips rose to a total of \$23.2 billion, from \$21.7 billion in 2019. Average spending was \$270 per trip compared with \$236 in 2019, with Canadians spending \$109 per same-day trip and \$511 per overnight trip.

The largest spending component was accommodation at \$6.1 billion during the quarter, 32.6% more than in 2019. With more overnight trips, spending on vehicle operations—the second largest expense category—was \$4.1 billion, 5.6% higher than in 2019. Spending in restaurants and bars and on recreation was also higher, by 5.4% and 22.7%, respectively.

With some public health restrictions still in effect, the \$730 million spent on entertainment and the \$1.7 billion spent on commercial transportation remained lower than the third quarter of 2019, by 33.8% and 31.1% respectively.

Trip activities in the third quarter of 2021 reflected the easing of restrictions that began allowing small gatherings. However, activities that consisted of very large gatherings, such as festivals (-82.1%) or concerts (-74.5%) remained low compared with 2019. In 2021, visiting friends or family, going to a restaurant and shopping dropped 14.8%, 10.6% and 12.0%, respectively.



During the third quarter of 2021, outdoor activities continued to be more prevalent, as was the case with the same quarter of 2020. For instance, over 10 million people reported hiking in the third quarter, up 47.8% from 2019. Similarly, 3.7 million people reported cycling in the third quarter of 2021, up 42.7% from the same quarter in 2019, before the pandemic.

**Table 1**  
**Top domestic activities by decrease, third quarter 2021 compared with third quarter 2019**

	Activities, third quarter 2021	Change, third quarter 2019 to third quarter 2021	Change, third quarter 2019 to third quarter 2021
	thousands	%	thousands
Festival or fair	756	-82.1	-3,473
Performance such as a play or concert	671	-74.5	-1,960
Business meeting, conference or seminar	827	-63.3	-1,424
Go to the movies	715	-51.4	-756
Casino	601	-49.1	-580
Sports event as a spectator	1,180	-48.2	-1,099
Aboriginal event	161	-38.6	-101
Museum or art gallery	2,300	-29.0	-941
Zoo or aquarium	1,443	-28.1	-564
Historic site	3,681	-27.7	-1,407

**Note(s):** Multiple counts: respondents can indicate multiple activities done on any given trip.

**Source(s):** National Travel Survey (5232).

**Table 2**  
**Top domestic activities by increase, third quarter 2021 compared with third quarter 2019**

	Activities, third quarter 2021	Change, third quarter 2019 to third quarter 2021	Change, third quarter 2019 to third quarter 2021
	thousands	%	thousands
Hiking or backpacking	10,199	47.8	3,298
Cycling	3,661	42.7	1,096
Golfing	3,436	35.9	907
National, provincial, or nature park	11,952	29.6	2,731
Canoeing or kayaking	6,267	19.7	1,031
Beach	11,608	15.7	1,577
Camping	6,716	6.6	416
Go wildlife viewing or birdwatching	6,061	5.9	339
Boating	6,482	5.6	343

**Note(s):** Multiple counts: respondents can indicate multiple activities done on any given trip.

**Source(s):** National Travel Survey (5232).

### Travel to the United States remains down

With the land border restricted to essential travel, Canadian residents made 343,600 trips to the United States in the third quarter of 2021—twice as many compared with the same quarter in 2020. However, this level was much lower than the 7.5 million trips recorded during the same quarter in 2019.

Consequently, the \$648.3 million Canadian residents spent in the United States, while 10 times higher than in the third quarter of 2020, was much lower than the \$4.9 billion spent in 2019. However, Canadians spent an average of \$1,887 per trip during the third quarter, compared with \$655 in 2019.

Among trip purposes in the third quarter, there were 51,800 business-related trips, such as attending conferences or regular sales, and 86,300 trips for holidays, leisure or recreation.

The total spent by Canadians in the United States on accommodation and in restaurants and bars—typically the two largest expense categories—was \$248.2 million and \$182.5 million, respectively, in the third quarter.

### Fewer Canadians travel overseas

The requirements for testing and quarantine upon re-entry ended for fully vaccinated Canadians on July 5, 2021. There were 639,300 Canadian residents who returned from overseas countries during the third quarter, over three times more than in the same quarter of 2020. Despite this jump, the number was 74.2% below that observed from July to September of 2019.

Over half (55.7% or 356,200) of Canadians who made overseas trips during the third quarter did so to visit friends or relatives. By comparison, 192,400 Canadians took trips for holiday, leisure or recreation, 10 times more than in 2020 but 86.0% lower than 2019.

The \$1.3 billion spent overseas by travellers in the third quarter of 2021 was less than 30% of that spent in 2019 (\$4.9 billion). The drop observed across most categories: spending on transportation fell by 77.1% to \$119.7 million, on accommodation by 75.0% to \$509.4 million, and on restaurants and bars by 72.8% to \$258.2 million.

### Note to readers

The National Travel Survey collects information about the domestic and international travel of Canadian residents.

With fewer Canadian residents travelling abroad during the pandemic, estimates for international travel have higher levels of variability. As such, users are advised to note the quality indicators associated with these estimates.

Please also note that the measure of total domestic-visit expenditures now includes commercial air expenditures incurred at the point of origin of the trip.

**Target population** is the civilian, non-institutionalized population aged 18 and older in Canada's provinces, excluding persons living on Indian reserves and in the territories. Routine trips taken by commuters and diplomatic or military personnel are out-of-scope.

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

**Same-day trips or visits** take place within the same calendar day—that is, the traveller left and returned home on the same day—and must be a distance of 40 km or more away (one way).

**Trips abroad** are made by travellers residing in Canada who travelled outside of Canada for a period of less than 12 months before returning. 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 the country 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, a Canadian resident 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.

## Products

Data from the second quarter of 2021 from the [National Travel Survey](#) are now available. Other tables, including statistical profiles of Canadian travellers, are available upon request.

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

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

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](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).