

TSA expects surge in travel volume for Thanksgiving, stresses importance of preparedness

WASHINGTON—The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) expects airport security checkpoints nationwide will be busy during the upcoming Thanksgiving travel period, which runs from Friday, Nov. 19, through Sunday, Nov. 28, and the agency is prepared to handle the increase in passenger volume for the holiday. TSA expects to screen about 20 million passengers during the Thanksgiving holiday.

“We anticipate that travel may be very close to pre-pandemic levels this holiday, and we are staffed and prepared for the holiday travelers. We have deployed technologies that enhance detection capabilities and reduce physical contact, and it’s equally important that passengers are prepared with travel tips for the most efficient checkpoint experience,” said TSA Administrator David Pekoske. “With overall vaccination rates improving nationwide and greater confidence in healthy travel, there will be more people traveling so plan ahead, remain vigilant and practice kindness.”

Typically, the busiest days during the Thanksgiving travel period are the Tuesday and Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving and the Sunday afterward. [The highest travel day in TSA’s history was the Sunday after Thanksgiving of 2019](#) (pre-pandemic), when nearly 2.9 million individuals were screened at TSA security checkpoints nationwide. Travel volume this year is not expected to reach pre-pandemic levels, but it is expected to be notably higher [in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving](#).

The best way to ensure a smooth trip through the security screening process is to arrive early and be prepared. Travelers are encouraged to allow time to park their cars or return rental cars, check their bags with their airline, and get their boarding passes before heading to the security checkpoint. TSA recommends travelers getting to the terminal with plenty of time before their scheduled flight.

“I recommend that travelers pay attention to the guidance that the TSA officers are providing at the checkpoint,” Pekoske added. “They may be directing you to a shorter line or guiding you around someone who is moving slowly. And they may be giving you some advice that will lessen the likelihood that you’ll need a pat-down.”

Additionally, travelers should keep these tips in mind:

1. **Wear a mask.** Travelers, TSA personnel, and other aviation workers are required to wear a mask as prescribed by the [federal mask mandate](#). Everyone in airports, bus and rail stations, on passenger aircraft, public transportation, passenger railroads, and over-the-road buses operating on scheduled fixed-routes must wear a mask. If a traveler did not bring a mask, a TSA officer will offer a mask to that individual at the screening checkpoint.
2. **Pack smart.** Prepare for security when packing and ensure that there are no prohibited items in baggage. Know which foods should go into a checked bag. Gravy, cranberry sauce, wine, jam, and preserves should all go into a checked bag, because they are not solids. If you can spill it, spray it, spread it, pump it or pour it, then it's not a solid and

should be packed in a checked bag. As always, passengers can bring solid foods such as cakes and other baked goods through the checkpoints.

3. **It's okay to bring hand sanitizer.** TSA is currently allowing travelers to bring one liquid hand sanitizer container up to 12 ounces per passenger in carry-on bags until further notice. Passengers can expect all containers larger 3.4 ounces will need to be screened separately, which will add some time to their checkpoint experience. Travelers also are permitted to bring alcohol wipes or anti-bacterial wipes in carry-on, checked luggage, or both.
4. **Enroll in or renew your [TSA PreCheck®](#) membership.** Individuals who obtained TSA PreCheck five years ago are now able to [renew their membership online at a discount](#). Individuals who do not have TSA PreCheck should enroll now to get TSA PreCheck benefits, available at more than 200 U.S. airports. Travelers enrolled in a trusted traveler program, like TSA PreCheck, do not need to remove shoes, laptops, liquids, belts and light jackets. TSA PreCheck membership is more valuable now than ever before because it reduces touchpoints during the pandemic and puts travelers in security lines that have fewer travelers and move quicker, which encourages social distancing. To find the trusted traveler program that best suits your travel needs, use the [DHS trusted traveler comparison tool](#).
5. **Request passenger support.** Travelers or families of passengers with disabilities and/or medical conditions may call the [TSA Cares helpline](#) toll free at 855-787-2227 at least 72 hours prior to flying with any questions about screening policies, procedures and to find out what to expect at the security checkpoint. TSA Cares also arranges assistance at the checkpoint.
6. **Get your questions answered before you head to the airport.** Ask TSA. Travelers can get assistance in real time by submitting their questions and comments to [@AskTSA](#) on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook Messenger](#). Travelers can also reach the TSA Contact Center at 866-289-9673. Staff is available from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekends/holidays; and an automated service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
7. **Ensure you have proper ID.** Before heading to the airport, travelers should make sure they have [acceptable identification](#). Identity verification is an important step in the security screening process.
8. **Remain aware.** As a reminder, public awareness is key for supporting TSA's security efforts. Travelers are encouraged to report suspicious activities, and remember: If You See Something, Say Something™. For additional information about TSA's screening policies, visit www.tsa.gov.