

How to steer clear of traffic on busy travel weekends

Roadways are undeniably busier during certain times of year. The holiday season might be the first period people think of when imagining crowded roadways, but three-day weekends and popular standalone holidays like the Fourth of July also have a tendency to compel people to get behind the wheel so they can celebrate with their loved ones.

The American Automobile Association (AAA) reports that the Friday before Labor Day was the fifth worst travel day in the United States in 2021. AAA determined its worst travel days by examining data about overcrowded airports and flight delays, but also by looking at how much vehicle traffic was on the nation's highways. Labor Day weekend is often characterized as the unofficial end of summer, so it should come as no great surprise that

the travel data company Arrivalist reports that 43 million people traveled on Labor Day weekend in 2021.

The excitement surrounding a weekend getaway or road trip vacation can quickly evaporate when drivers find themselves sitting in traffic. These strategies can help drivers avoid such misfortune.

Go against the grain. One of the reason popular travel weekends like Memorial Day and Labor Day tend to be plagued by so much traffic is that everyone is heading to the beach. That means everyone is going in the same direction. Drivers can avoid hours spent sitting on the road by going against the grain and heading to a less popular destination. If everyone in your area tends to head south to the beach, consider a trip north to a nearby campsite instead.



Use a GPS or maps app.

Veteran travelers may have traversed the same roadways to reach popular weekend getaway destinations for decades. But as the old saying goes, "familiarity breeds contempt." Sticking to the same route could land weekend travelers in the same traffic jams they've been sitting in for years. Modern GPS devices and maps apps allow users to pick the fastest route to their destination, which isn't always the one drivers know best. Taking the recommended route as opposed to the most familiar one could help drivers spend less time in traffic and more time having fun.

Start early (or late). If the majority of weekend getaway travelers tend to head in the

same direction, they also tend to leave around the same time. A 2018 study from Waze found that traffic speeds slowed by up to 33 percent in the Chicago Metro area between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Memorial Day. Starting early by departing a day in advance of a busy travel weekend or in the early morning hours can help drivers avoid traffic. Patient travelers also can leave after the evening rush, which ends around 7 p.m. in most cities.

A certain amount of traffic is unavoidable on busy travel weekends. But a handful of strategies can help travelers avoid the bumper-to-bumper traffic on popular travel weekends.

Did you know?



Historically high fuel prices will undoubtedly prove to be one of the defining stories of our current era. As the average price for a gallon of gas reached heights drivers might never have imagined, some might have wondered just how much that same gallon might have cost roughly 100 years ago. According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, the average price for a gallon of gas in 1929 was 21 cents. Inflation calculators indicate that 21 cents in 1929 would have about the same purchasing power as \$3.59 has in 2022, suggesting that drivers had a far less painful trip to the pump in 1929 than they have had for much of 2022.

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