

Best and Worst Days for Christmas Travel 2021

(Courtesy of Peter Thornton, Airfarewatchdog)

Christmas travel is generally a little more flexible as it always falls on a different day of the week and school schedules tend to vary with some being closed for the entire week between Christmas and New Year's Day. Families may also prefer to take a longer Christmas vacation this year if it is possible to work remotely.

Since Christmas falls on a Saturday this year, the observed holiday may be Christmas Eve or the following Monday depending on the company, which makes for a perfect long weekend without the need to take extra vacation days.

Airfare data from Hopper suggests that Christmas flights are trending about 10% higher than 2019 levels with an average domestic price of around \$430 roundtrip, which is drastically higher than 2020 levels (\$250). This data shows that airlines are expecting higher demand for Christmas travel than Thanksgiving as hopefully more of the population will be vaccinated and Covid-19 variants will be under control.

Busiest Christmas Travel Days for 2021

As per usual, the busiest—and most expensive—day to travel around Christmas is the Sunday after the holiday, December 26th, which also coincides with the start of Kwanzaa. CheapAir suggests that you'll pay \$125 more per ticket, on average, if you fly home on Sunday compared to flying home on Tuesday. The busiest days for travel prior to the holiday are either just before Christmas Eve or the Sunday before with many travelers deciding to take an extended trip.

While flying on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day is generally cheaper, it's actually cheapest to fly on December 21st this year due to it falling on a Tuesday, when airfare is typically cheapest overall. For return travel dates, you'll find the best prices and fewer crowds if you can fly Wednesday or later the week after Christmas.

Best Christmas Travel Days 2021

- Tuesday, December 21
- Friday, December 24
- Wednesday, December 29

Worst Christmas Travel Days 2021

- Thursday, December 23
- Sunday, December 26

Although Christmas travel airfares are currently trending higher than Thanksgiving travel overall, there is less variance in pricing for surrounding dates. It may make more sense to travel on your preferred dates rather than save a few bucks if you are inflexible with travel dates. Either way, don't expect there to be many last-minute deals for holiday travel—especially if you want to travel on peak dates.

It's best to book at least 21 days in advance, which is when fare rules usually dictate higher airfares. Generally, this means you should book your Thanksgiving flights before Halloween and book your Christmas flights before Thanksgiving. Last-minute sales may pop-up but you'll be rolling the dice, and any last-minute deal will likely be for off-peak travel dates/times on budget airlines.

Whenever you choose to travel this holiday season, make sure to adhere to any COVID-19 protocols to ensure a safe travel environment so we can all enjoy this festive season with our loved ones.