

THIS IS MEMBER-EXCLUSIVE CONTENT 

BUSINESS > AIRLINES

These will be the busiest holiday travel dates at DFW Airport and Dallas Love Field

Nearly two million passengers could go through DFW Airport and Dallas Love Field next week, if weather doesn't turn the holiday into a travel nightmare.





American Airlines customer service worker Maria Sauve (right) helps Hassan Thabaten and his nephew Sean with their flight information to Jordan on Tuesday at DFW International Airport. (Rebecca Slezak / Staff Photographer)



By [Kyle Arnold](#)

5:30 AM on Nov 16, 2022



Listen to this article now



Powered by **Trinity Audio**

00:00



1.0x

05:52

[Dallas Love Field](#) and [DFW International Airport](#) will be stuffed fatter than Thanksgiving turkeys next week as airlines scheduled nearly two million seats on arriving and departing planes to meet the holiday rush.

The Sunday following Thanksgiving will likely be the busiest travel day the airports have seen since the summer of 2019, before COVID-19 reset the airline industry.

Combined, DFW Airport and Love Field have more than 323,000 scheduled seats for that day on commercial jets coming in and out of North Texas, led by Fort Worth-based American Airlines and Dallas-based Southwest, according to flight schedule data from Cirium.

Related: Higher airfares, fewer flights greet holiday travelers after COVID-19 worries ease

But nearly every day during the next six weeks is expected to be busy. Airline schedules at the two airports drop below 275,000 potential passengers on only four days:

Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

“Thanksgiving is always packed because it’s a condensed holiday,” said Scott Keyes, founder of travel deals website [Scott’s Cheap Flights](#). “With Christmas, it’s a softer peak, but you don’t have as many options with Thanksgiving.”



SPONSORED CONTENT

5 tips for helping caregivers and older loved ones enjoy the holidays

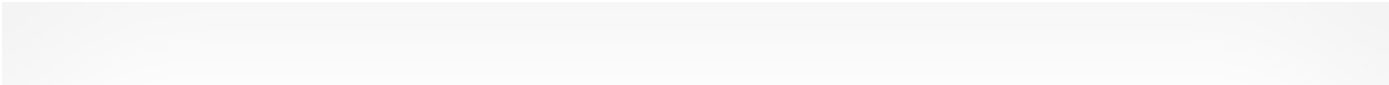
BY 
THE SENIOR SOURCE®

Busy airports come as travelers are facing a full bag of extra stresses this holiday season coming off of 2020 and 2021 when the travel industry was overshadowed by a

worldwide pandemic and illness worries. Now inflation has pushed ticket prices above pre-pandemic levels and a shortage of pilots has forced airlines to reduce schedules. But the appetite for travel hasn't waned and planes are more full than they were in 2019, according to travel industry trade group Airlines for America.

“Demand for the entire holiday period ... is very robust,” [Delta](#) CEO Ed Bastian said last month during the company's third-quarter earnings call. “And with travelers having a lot more flexibility and mobility relative to work, I think you're going to see a busy period for the Thanksgiving week throughout the week.”

ADVERTISING



That doesn't mean there won't be peak travel days, though.

The Sunday following Thanksgiving will be the busiest day at DFW Airport with 260,000 scheduled seats, followed by Dec. 23, the Friday before Christmas, with as many as 257,000 possible passengers.

DFW Airport spokesman Francisco Rodriguez said the airport's traffic is expected to be about the same as it was in 2019 over this Thanksgiving week, peaking on Nov. 27.

The busiest days of the holiday season at DFW International Airport and Dallas Love Field

Sunday, Nov. 27, is expected to be the busiest day of the holiday travel season based on the number of scheduled seats on flights coming in and out of DFW International Airport and Dallas Love Field. But the busiest days vary by airport.

Rank	DFW Airport	Flights	Seats	Dallas Love Field	Flight
1	Nov. 27	1,813	260,328	Dec. 21	400
2	Dec. 23	1,761	257,047	Dec. 22	400
3	Dec. 30	1,760	255,993	Dec. 23	400
4	Jan. 2	1,750	255,450	Dec. 28	400
5	Dec. 16	1,751	255,339	Dec. 30	400
6	Dec. 22	1,750	255,312	Dec.	400

The airport is expected to be the second busiest in the country behind Atlanta, with the busiest travel times in the morning, according to travel website Hopper.

DFW's next busiest days all come on Fridays in late December. The 23rd will have as many as 257,047 passengers, followed by Dec. 30 with 255,993 potential passengers and Dec. 16 with 255,339. Monday, Jan. 2, will also be a heavy travel day.

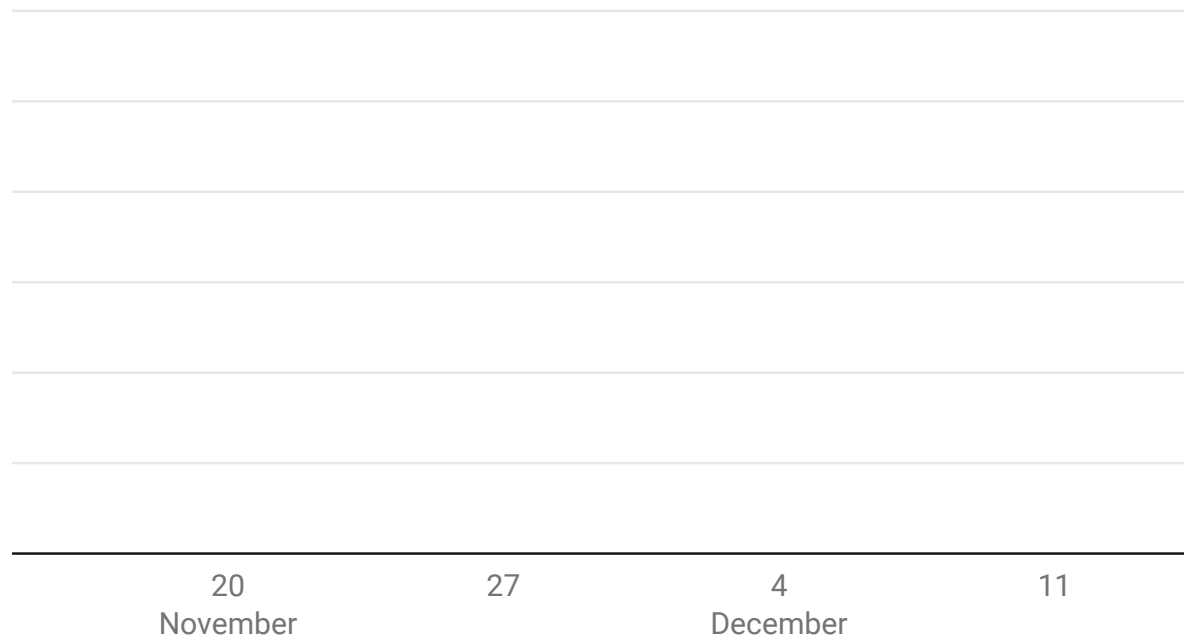
Thursdays are turning into a surprisingly heavy travel day during the holiday period as airlines see more passengers take their flexible jobs on the road for a day or two during the holidays.

That means it's harder to find cheaper flights and less busy days by traveling early or late, analysts and airline executives have said.

“Pre-pandemic, the Thanksgiving travel period would be from the Tuesday or Wednesday before Thanksgiving to the Sunday immediately following the holiday,” said Cowen analyst Helane Becker in a note to investors. “Right now, the hybrid work environments we are seeing allow the travel period to elongate to start the Thursday prior to Thanksgiving and go through at least the Sunday following the holiday.”

Days DFW Airport and Dallas Love Field could see the most passengers based on scheduled airplane seats

Nov. 27 will be the busiest travel day since the summer of 2019, based on combined scheduled airline flights and seat counts out of DFW International Airport and Dallas Love Field.



At Dallas Love Field, scheduled traffic will actually peak on five days between Dec. 21 and Dec. 30 with 63,286 seats. That's because Southwest, which dominates the city-owned airport, runs a more consistent schedule with its fleet of Boeing 737 jets.

Love Field is also constrained to 20 gates, so airlines are already running at peak capacity there.

Love Field has another dubious distinction. During the summer of 2022 and the Thanksgiving period of 2021, [Dallas Love Field saw the second most travel disruptions of any airport in the country](#), just behind Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey, according to Hopper.

Flying on the actual holidays themselves could help travelers avoid crowds and get cheaper tickets, Keyes said. But options will be limited.

Thanksgiving will have the smallest airline schedule at Love Field and DFW, with just over 173,000 available seats on arriving and departing flights combined.

Not only are the holidays notable because of the record post-pandemic crowds, but also because airports will be packed with customers who aren't regular flyers, including families and children, said Keith Jeffries, the former Transportation Security Administration federal security director at Los Angeles International Airport and vice president of K2 Security Screening Group.

That leads to customers packing too much luggage, carrying food and liquids that may not be allowed or even forgetting essentials such as identification.

“It’s great to see that the passenger volumes are up, but make sure to pack your patience,” Jeffries said. “This is what everyone prepares for.”

Read more airport-related stories

[VIEW MORE](#) >

- [Beer at Dallas Love Field, DFW costs more than most other airports](#)
- [Airport parking lots could be as packed as terminals over holiday travel peak](#)
- [Antitrust trial over American Airlines, JetBlue partnership now in judge’s hands](#)
- [These will be the busiest holiday travel dates at DFW Airport and Dallas Love Field](#)
- [Frustrated American Airlines flight attendants protest over contract as holidays near](#)



[Kyle Arnold](#). Kyle Arnold is the aviation writer for The Dallas Morning News, covering airlines, air travel and the aerospace industry. He previously worked as a business



journalist for the Orlando Sentinel, Tulsa World and The Monitor in McAllen. He is a University of Washington graduate.

 kyle.arnold@dallasnews.com  [/bykylearnold](https://www.facebook.com/bykylearnold)  [kylelarnold](https://twitter.com/kylelarnold)