

Over 7,000 flights scrapped as Omicron hits Christmas weekend travel

December 26 2021



Travelers at Los Angeles International Airport on December 24, 2021.

More than 7,000 flights have been canceled worldwide over the Christmas weekend and thousands more delayed, a tracking website reported Sunday, as the highly infectious Omicron variant brings holiday

hurt to millions.

Severe weather is compounding the travel chaos in the United States, with storms expected to wreak havoc on roadways in the country's west, though they brought a white Christmas weekend to Seattle and parts of California.

According to Flightaware.com, more than 2,000 flights were canceled on Sunday—including more than 570 originating from, or headed to, US airports. More than 4,000 delays were reported.

Aircrew and ground staff have fallen sick or gone into quarantine after exposure to Covid, forcing Lufthansa, Delta, United Airlines, JetBlue, Alaska Airlines and other carriers to cancel flights during a peak travel period.

More than 2,800 flights were scrubbed around the globe on Saturday, including more than 990 originating from or headed to US airports, with over 8,500 delays. On Friday, there were around 2,400 cancellations and 11,000 delays.

"Help @united flight cancelled again. I want to get home for Christmas," one exasperated traveler from the US state of Vermont tweeted early Saturday.

Flightaware data showed United canceled around 200 flights on Friday and nearly 250 Saturday—about 10 percent of those that were scheduled.

"The nationwide spike in Omicron cases this week has had a direct impact on our flight crews and the people who run our operation," United said in a statement Friday.

Delta scrapped 310 flights Saturday and over 100 more Sunday, saying it has "exhausted all options and resources."

"We apologize to our customers for the delay in their holiday travel plans," the company said.



Travelers check flight information at Los Angeles International Airport.

The cancellations added to the frustration for many people eager to reunite with their families over the holidays after last year's Christmas was severely curtailed.

Chinese airlines accounted for the highest number of cancellations, with China Eastern scrapping more than 1,000 flights, over 20 percent of its

[flight](#) plan, on Friday and Saturday—and Air China grounding about 20 percent of its scheduled departures over the period.

'Treacherous' conditions

The American Automobile Association estimated more than 109 million Americans would travel by plane, train or automobile between December 23 and January 2, a 34 percent increase over the last year.

But most of those plans were made before the detection of Omicron, which has become the dominant strain in the United States, overwhelming hospitals and healthcare workers.

The state of New York reported a record 44,431 new daily positive Covid tests on Friday, as new cases surged nationwide.

As unseasonably warm temperatures were bathing eastern states, the National Weather Service announced winter storm warnings, including a deep freeze, for significant parts of the west.

"Anomalously cold conditions and a barrage of Pacific moisture results in prolonged periods of mountain snow and coastal/valley rain, some of which may fall heavy at times," the NWS said.

An eye-popping two to four feet (61 to 122 centimeters) of snow was forecast to fall this weekend in the Sierra mountains and state of Oregon.

Travel will be "treacherous to at times impossible" from the Sierras to the central Rocky Mountains at the weekend due to whiteout snow conditions, the NWS said.

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