

World's Worst Traffic Nightmares

Places Where People Regularly Spend Hours in Traffic! Incidents Where Traffic Jams Did Not Clear Up for Days!

Yes, sitting in New York traffic can be unpleasant. It's not for naught that Tom Kaminski is one of the city's better-known names. On its best days, Manhattan is a traffic nightmare; on its worst days, a traffic disaster! Drivers can spend hours behind the wheel advancing no more than several feet. Nevertheless, as bad as traffic is for New Yorkers, there are places in the world where it is much worse! Read about some of those places....

Experts pinpoint four reasons that America (and Europe, and Asia...) suffers from such difficult traffic problems. First, the vast majority of people work the same hours of the day, so they are out on the road at the same time. Second, many families are able to afford more than one car, increasing the number of vehicles on the road. Third, the population has grown dramatically since the period when highways were designed and built; they were not meant to handle so much traffic. Finally, the greater number of cars creates a greater number of accidents, which in turn means a greater number of backups and delays.

Last year, the average American lost a total of 38 hours sitting in traffic. (Bear in mind that the farmer in South Dakota driving mile after mile with no other car in sight lowers the average....) If only busy cities in America are included, the average rises to 42 hours over the year. In the New York area the traffic is worse, and the average motorist lost 51 hours waiting for things to move. That adds up to millions of unproductive hours and millions of gallons of gasoline wasted in New York alone.

Many northeasterners believe that New York City suffers from the nation's worst traffic. That makes sense, considering that it has the highest population density in the country, with an average of 2,826 people per square mile. (The US city with the second highest density is Los Angeles.) Furthermore, New York City is home to four of the most backed-up roadways in America, with the 11.3 mile Cross Bronx Expressway topping the list.

According to estimates, the Cross Bronx Expressway is backed up 124 hours per week (out of a total of 168). Traffic often crawls along at 11.2 MPH. WCBS traffic reporter Tom Kaminski explains that the problem with the Cross Bronx is simply "too many cars, too little roadway."

The highway has no room to expand by adding lanes or even widening the shoulder. It is fated to suffer from traffic jams indefinitely.



Gridlock at New York City's 1st Avenue and 57th Street in Manhattan.

Despite all that, New York City does *not* host the worst traffic in the nation. It actually ranks fifth! The worst cities in the United States are: Los Angeles, Honolulu, San Francisco and Austin.

The average New Yorker spends 34.9 minutes commuting to work; longer than anyone in any other city in the US. The reason this does not make New York the worst city to drive in is because only 56.6% of New Yorkers drive to work—the lowest rate anywhere in America. In 2011, the most recent year for which these statistics are available, over 31% of New Yorkers used public transportation to reach their workplace. That is over double the rate of any other city.

This rate is reflected to an extent in the Jewish community as well. While upstate virtually every Jewish family owns at least one car, within New York City it is not uncommon to make do without any. Instead, residents will rely on walking, biking, public transportation or taxis to reach work and other places they must get to.



New York traffic in the 1950s.



New York traffic "way back when."

While this may ease some of the pain for some New Yorkers, it does nothing to help Los Angeles, the city with by far the worst traffic in the country. Yet, even LA traffic is a joke compared to what people in certain locales outside of America face. Join us on a tour of the world's worst traffic sites.

São Paulo:



Sitting in Traffic is a Fact of Life

Welcome to São Paulo, the largest city in Brazil. It is the most highly populated city in South America and ranks as one of the largest cities in the world. Its complete metropolitan area totals over 20 million. When people enter their cars in the morning, they plan ahead for a day of traffic. Many motorists shave as they wait, read newspapers or books, learn foreign languages and so on. It is common for drivers to develop friendships with fellow motorists as they sit in traffic.

The traffic system in São Paulo is so crippled that residents are destined to spend a significant portion of their lives sitting in cars waiting for an opportunity to move. It makes no difference what time of day you are trying to get around, the problem remains morning, noon and night. Nor do weekends offer any relief. The streets form a mass parking lot as cars sit bumper-to-bumper waiting for something to change.

The city of São Paulo is widely recognized as the business, design and industrial center of South America. Its 20 million residents are spread over a sprawling area that encompasses hills and valleys—which do not improve the situation. The growing economy and improved standard of life the city has enjoyed in recent years have only added to the trouble. More people can afford to own their own cars and the number of vehicles crowding the streets grows daily by the thousands. In addition, massive construction projects help create chaotic situations throughout the city.

It is common for people to sit in traffic until they give up. Frustrated motorists will leave their cars on the road and seek relief in a nearby coffeehouse or café. Some people have begun complaining about the traffic before they even leave their homes! Neighbors often jostle one another while trying



Chaos in Sao Paulo.