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## Get ready for holiday hell, drivers

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Even Santa's sleigh couldn't take these roads!

Just in time for Christmas, a new study is out warning drivers of the worst holiday traffic spots in the region, where dashing through the streets will take double and triple the amount of time as normal.

From the top of The Bronx to the Holland Tunnel, more drivers are expected to go bumper to bumper than in the last decade, clogging the roads and making spirits anything but bright.

The study found it will take a miracle to quickly travel up the FDR from 34th Street to 116th Street.

Travel times on that road go from seven minutes during the normal time of year to 16 minutes during the evenings and late afternoon around Christmas and New Year's.

One of the worst places for holiday traffic is I-95 in The Bronx, which includes the notoriously slow Cross Bronx Expressway.

Driving from Exit 13 to Fort Lee, NJ, takes 15 minutes during decidedly less festive times, but will take you about 40 minutes this week, according to the study from the NYU Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management.

Other problematic highways include the Henry Hudson Parkway and the Major Deegan Expressway — both of which will take more than double the amount of travel time for the holidays.

Gridlock has become as much a holiday tradition as eggnog and bad sweaters, said Mitchell Moss, director of the Rudin Center.

"The last few days before Christmas are the peaks of driving times," said Moss.

It's also the time when traffic patterns tend to change, with city dwellers hitting the road for long highway drives and bringing urban-style gridlock to the suburbs, he said.

And people aren't taking quick jaunts. The weekend before Christmas typically brings a 93 percent jump in the number of long-distance trips by car.

"Very few people don't go somewhere for Christmas," Moss said.

This year is expected to be particularly busy.

AAA predicts the next 11-day period will see the highest volume of traffic the country has seen in the past decade.

That's not welcome news to Ivica Tandara 43, who needs to drive to his construction job.

"It's crazy during Christmas from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.," he said.

Traffic is so bad that one city dweller disputes the season's "most wonderful time of the year" moniker.

"I think it's the worst time of year," said Ariana Chacon, 45.

### **Christmas brake lights**

#### **Major trouble spots you'll hit driving in the tri-state area during the holiday season:**

**1. FDR Drive** — 34th Street to 116th Street

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 9-minute delay

**2. Henry Hudson Parkway** — 72nd Street to George Washington Bridge

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 9-minute delay

**3. Pulaski Skyway** — I-95 to Tonnelle Ave.

\* **Worst time:** 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., 10-minute delay

**4. I-95 (across Bronx and Manhattan)** — Exit 13 to Fort Lee, NJ

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 24-minute delay

**5. Major Deegan Expressway** — I-278 to I-95

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 5-minute delay

**6. Major Deegan Expressway** — Van Cortlandt Park to I-95

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 7-minute delay

**7. Whitestone Expressway** — Exit 14 to Whitestone Bridge

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 11-minute delay

**8. Hutchinson River Parkway** — Cross-County Parkway to Mamaroneck Road

\* **Worst time:** 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., 13-minute delay

**9. I-84 (near Waterbury, Conn.)** — I-691 to Austin Road

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 8-minute delay

**10. Conn. Turnpike in New Haven** — Marsh Hill Rd. to Ella Grasso Blvd.

\* **Worst time:** 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., 8-minute delay

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