

Transit Time Delays Across Key Global Trade Routes

Portcast data reveals how transit times on major global trade routes have shifted in the last 12 months.

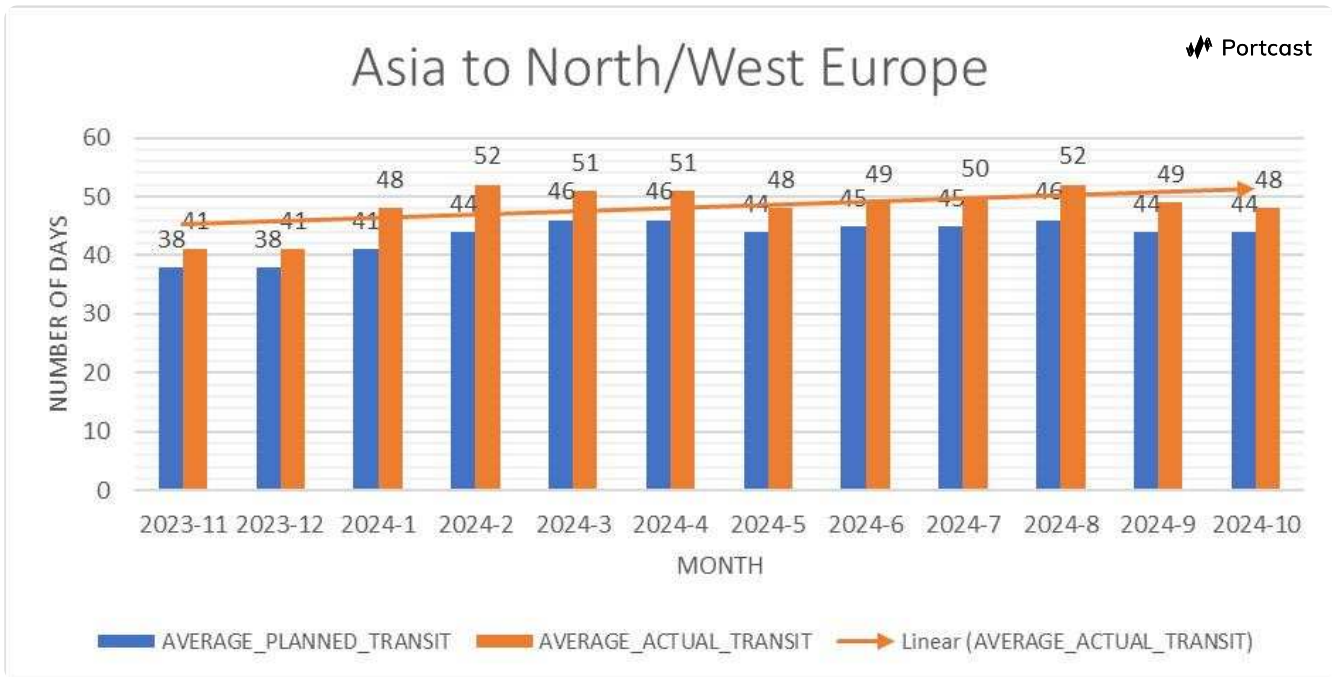


Overall transit times have **increased by 20-30% in the last 12 months**, on average. Key disruptions, including the ongoing Red Sea crisis, Panama Canal restrictions, labour strikes, adverse weather conditions, and port congestion, have driven these delays.

This report focuses on the impact of these factors on transit times along key routes, with an emphasis on Asia, North America, and Europe—critical regions for both loading and destination ports.

Asia to North/West Europe

Impacted by the Red Sea crisis and Singapore port congestion



Since the start of 2024, **shipments from Asia (China, Korea, and Japan) have seen notable increases in transit to North/ West Europe**. The primary cause has been Houthi attacks on merchant vessels in the Red Sea. Other factors contributing to delays include severe port congestion in Singapore mid-year and weather-related disruptions that halted operations at key North and South East Asian ports, disrupting schedules.

Transit Time Trend:

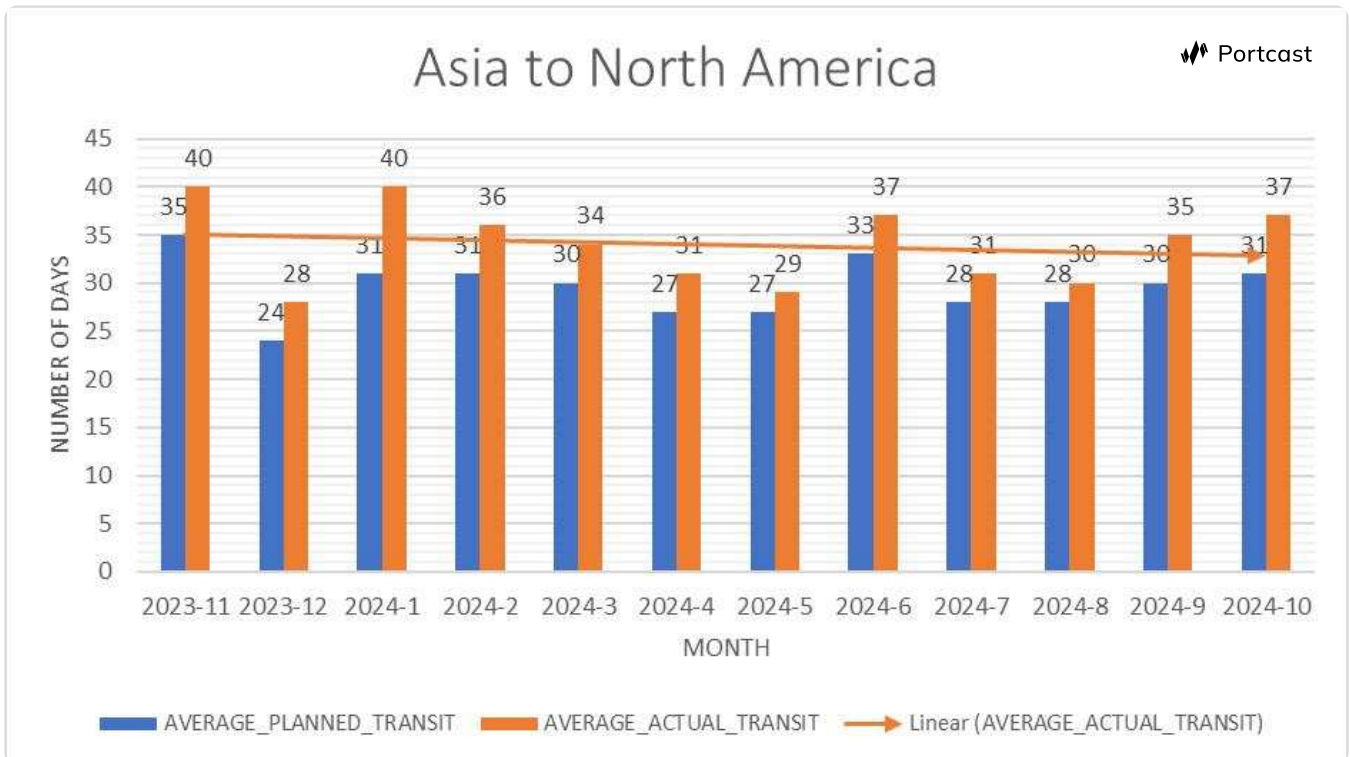
- The average actual transit time has fluctuated between 48 and 52 days from February to October 2024. This is higher than the 41 days seen in November and December 2023.
- Comparing October 2024 to November 2023, **transit time increased by 17%, reflecting a steady rise** in delays over the year.

Average Difference from Planned Transit:

- The average difference from planned transit peaked in February 2024, with a delay of 8 days. This was primarily due to vessels rerouting via the Cape of Good Hope as a result of the Red Sea crisis.
- Since March 2024, the delay has improved, though it still fluctuates between 4 and 6 days longer than planned.

Asia to North America

Impacted by the Panama Canal drought



Transit times on the Asia to North America route spiked in January 2024 due to the Red Sea crisis, with journey lengths peaking during this period.

Transit Time Trend:

- The average actual transit time ranged from 28 days in December 2023 to a peak of 40 days in January and November 2023 (Peak in November possibly due to the Panama Canal drought situation). Throughout 2024, transit times gradually decreased, then rose slightly to 37 days by October 2024.
- Comparing October 2024 to November 2023, **transit time decreased by 7%**, from 40 to 37 days, suggesting improved transit efficiency, though some fluctuation remains.

Average Difference from Planned Transit:

- The average deviation from planned transit peaked in January 2024 at 9 days. However, this gradually decreased over the months, with October 2024 showing a 5-day deviation.



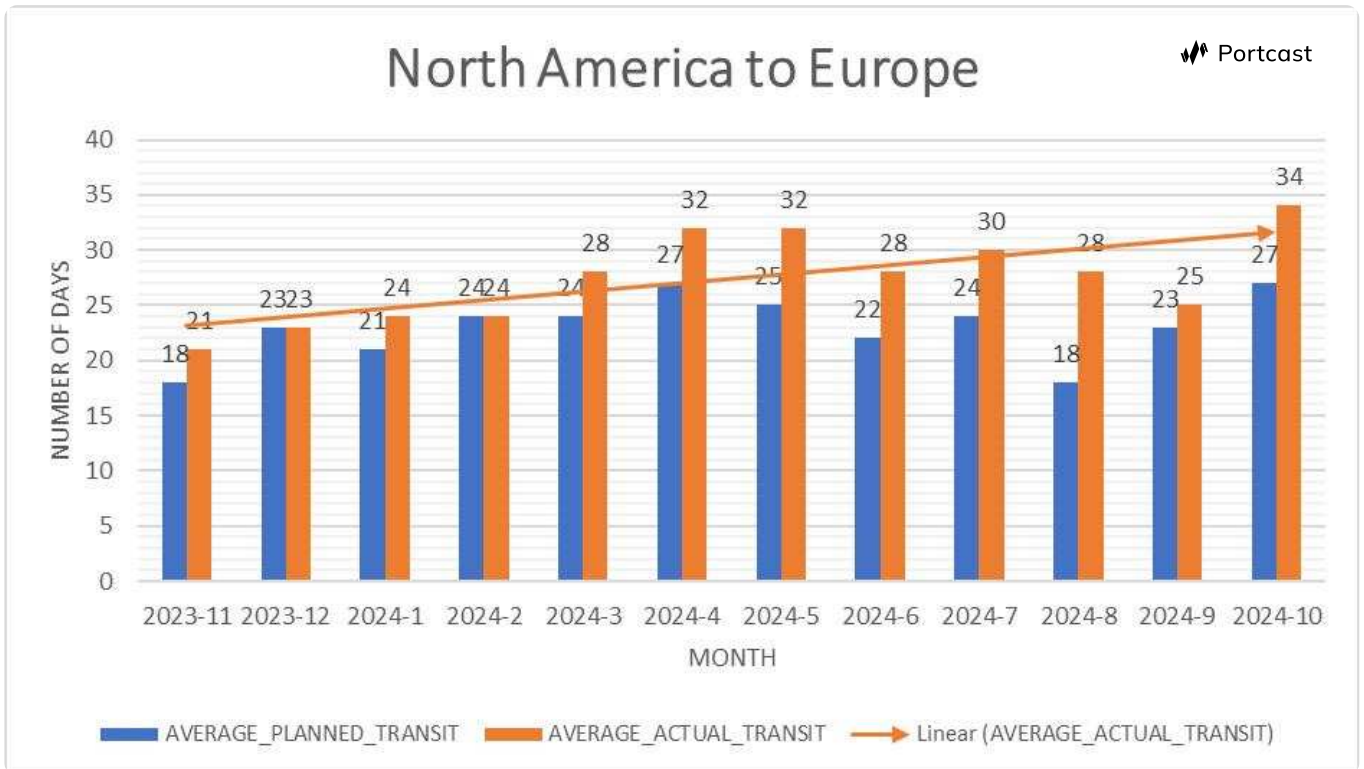
From Adverse Weather to Tariff Changes: Factors Impacting Asia-Origin Shipments



- While not as severe as the Red Sea crisis, delays were notable in April due to **port closures at Shanghai, Ningbo, and Busan** caused by dense fog, which resulted in significant berth congestion.
- In May 2024, the announcement of a **US tariff hike on Chinese goods led to a surge in shipping activities**, exacerbating congestion at key transit ports like Singapore by early June. Delays were compounded as ships returned to Asia after longer voyages around the African Cape. Missed weekly sailings further extended transit times for shipments using Singapore as a transshipment hub.
- In September 2024, **Typhoon Yagi—one of the most powerful storms to hit China in a decade**—disrupted terminal operations at Yantian, Shekou, and Chiwan. Vessel berthing dropped to nearly zero at some ports, further increasing delays.

North America to Europe

Impacted by the labour strikes, hurricanes, and increased rail dwell times



Transit Time Trend:

- The average actual transit time rose from 21 days in November 2023 to a peak of 34 days in October 2024, indicating **a steady increase in transit times throughout 2024**.

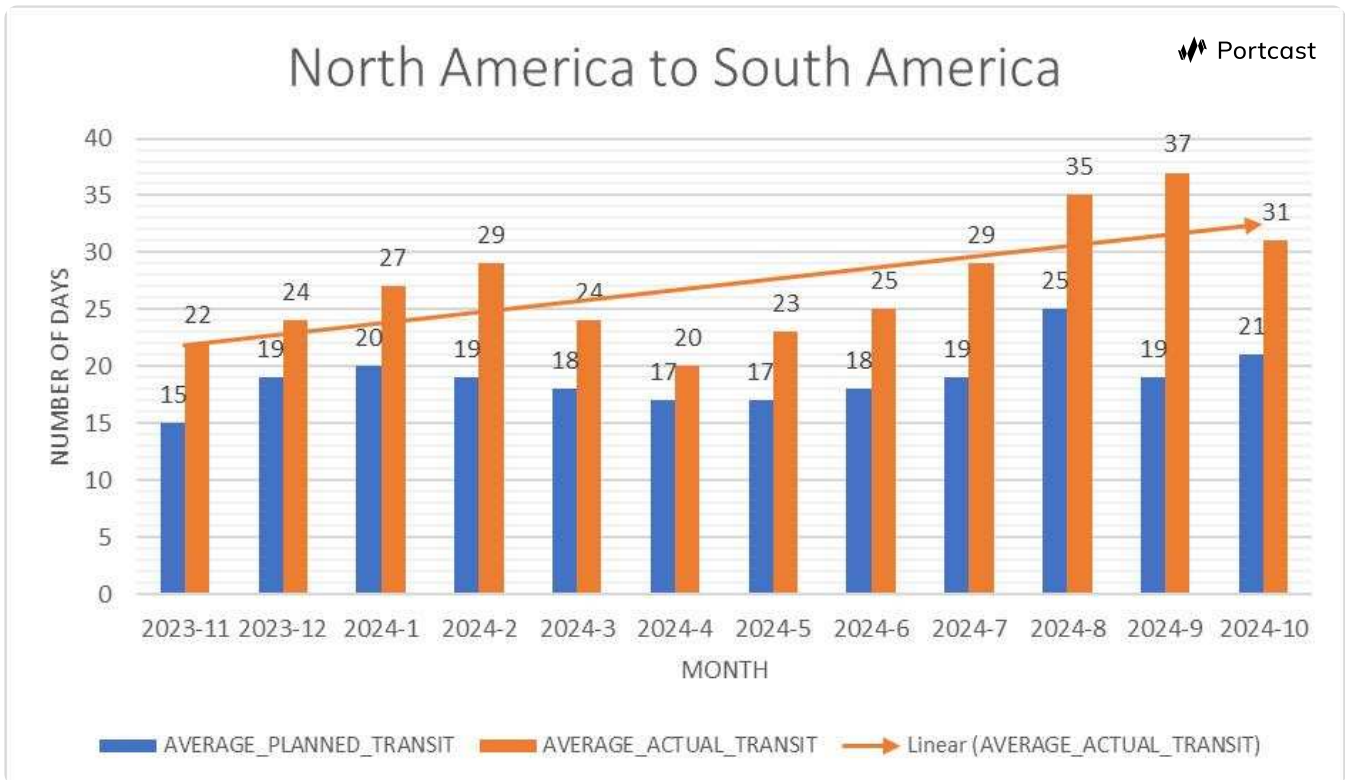
Average Difference from Planned Transit:

- The difference from planned transit times varied widely, with the highest deviation of 10 days occurring in August 2024.
- In comparison, November and December 2023 saw much smaller deviations, suggesting that delays became more pronounced in mid-2024 before showing some improvement toward year-end.



North America to South America

Impacted by the labour strikes, hurricanes, and increased rail dwell times



Transit Time Trend:

- Transit times were shortest in April 2024 at 20 days and peaked in September 2024 at 37 days, marking a substantial increase.
- From May to October 2024, transit times rose significantly, indicating a period of extended delays.



From Labour Strikes to Hurricanes: Factors Impacting North America-Origin Shipments



In March 2024, the **collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge** after being struck by a container vessel disrupted traffic at the Port of Baltimore, requiring diversions to nearby ports and causing delays.



Mid-2024 saw **increased rail dwell times at major North American ports**, including Los Angeles, Long Beach, Seattle, Charleston, Savannah, Houston, New York, and Vancouver. The resulting rail carrier shortage delayed container handling, impacting transit times for shipments.



In July, **Hurricane Beryl affected operations at the Port of Houston**, leading to delays and longer transit times.



In August, a **Canadian rail strike following a lockout** by Canadian National Railway (CN) and Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) caused vessels to drop Canadian ports from their schedules in the subsequent weeks.



At the beginning of October, **Hurricane Milton, a Category 3 storm, impacted key ports**, including Tampa Bay, Everglades, Miami, Jacksonville, Savannah, and Georgia, adding to transit delays along this route.



The brief ILA strike in the U.S. and the **ongoing Montreal port strike in Canada** further increased transit times. Montreal's container handling slowed, and rail embargoes since October 2024 worsened delays.



In late October 2024, approximately 60,000 **port workers in Brazil went on a 12-hour strike**, halting operations at major ports like Santos. Such actions compounded existing delays.

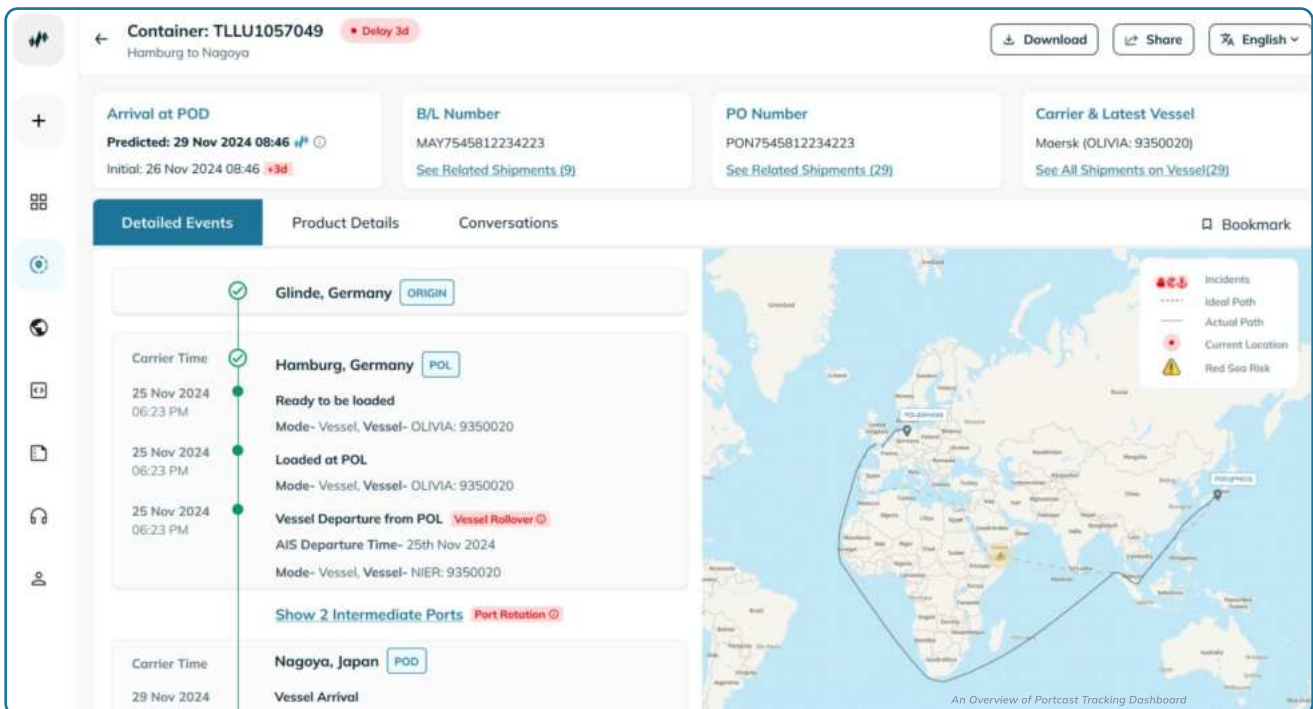


A surge in cargo volumes, particularly in Mexican ports like Lazaro Cardenas and Manzanillo, led to **yard congestion and extended container dwell times**. This congestion further slowed the movement of goods between the continents.

Why Transit Time Should Be a Point of Focus

While this report gives a broad overview of transit times between continents, insights into specific historical port-to-port performance based on your business's ports of loading and destination can be invaluable. Understanding transit time patterns—whether for full container load (FCL) or less than container load (LCL) shipments—is crucial for meeting delivery schedules.

To make more informed and cost-effective booking decisions, businesses need access to reliable data on historical port-to-port performance, congestion, vessel speeds, lane trends, and carrier reliability. Real-time container tracking platforms like [Portcast](#) provide these essential transit time insights, transforming shipping records into actionable intelligence.



Things to Watch Out For

- Potential shifts in U.S. trade policy may drive a temporary surge in pre-emptive export volumes from China, further impacting transit times.
- The ongoing Montreal strike in Canada and the potential for an ILA strike starting in January 2025, if negotiations stall, could lead to major disruptions and congestion across key global trade routes, pushing transit times even higher.

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