Portcast Transit Time Trends Report (April 2024 – March 2025)

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



Transit Time Analysis Across Asia, Europe & the Americas

Over the past 12 months, global ocean freight transit times have been shaped by a mix of geopolitical disruptions, port congestion, seasonal volume swings, and carrier behavior.

As we close Q1 of 2025, global trade lanes remain under stress, particularly those originating in Asia. Prolonged Red Sea diversions and shifting carrier schedules continue to stretch average ocean transit times, just as demand begins to rebound post-Lunar New Year.

This report takes a closer look at each key trade route, focusing on Asia, North America, and Europe — key regions for both origin and destination ports.

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Key Highlights

- Asia to Europe lanes saw a **20–30% increase in transit times** compared to pre-Red Sea disruption levels.
- Asia to North America had the most stable month-over-month trend, though it **remains above 2023 averages.**
- North America to Europe faced delays due to East Coast port congestion and storm-related vessel slowdowns.
- The North America to South America trade lane continues to show volatility, with the gap between planned and actual transit times widening since the start of the year.



1. Asia → North/West Europe

Main drivers: Red Sea diversions via the Cape of Good Hope have extended journey durations.

Since April 2024, vessels travelling from Asia to Europe have consistently faced delays due to rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope and operational slowdowns at key transshipment ports in Southeast Asia.



Transit Time Trend:

- The monthly average transit times ranged between 45 and 52 days from April to December 2024.
- However, instead of improving, delays worsened in early 2025, reaching 53 days in March—the longest average in the 12-month period. Congestion at European ports had intensified, putting pressure on port capacity and causing disruptions to vessel schedules bound for Asia. This backlog was projected to limit available capacity in April 2025, further impacting transit times along the Asia- Europe trade routes.
- The route showed a consistent trend of elevated transit times, with no clear sign of normalization by Q1 2025.

- From April to November 2024, actual transits exceeded planned schedules by 4 to 6 days.
- Delays persisted through early 2025, hovering around 6–7 days.
- March 2025 recorded a 6-day difference, indicating continued strain on the lane despite relatively stable planned schedules.

2. Asia → North America

Main drivers: post-CNY volume surges, port congestion, and intermittent blank sailings.

Fluctuations in demand, operational strain at Pacific Coast terminals, and shipping line strategies have influenced transit stability.

Congestion on the US East Coast drove increased demand on the West Coast, causing irregular transit times.



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Transit Time Trend:

- Average actual transit time fluctuated between 29 and 37 days from April to December 2024, **peaking twice at 37 days** in both June and October.
- Although there was a slight dip in November and December to 34 and 32 days respectively, the upward trend returned in early 2025.
- By March 2025, transit times again hit 36 days, indicating a persistent and gradually rising trend over the 12-month period.



- Delays stayed relatively consistent from April to September 2024, with differences of 2–5 days.
- From October onward, gaps widened—October and February both saw delays of 6 days above planned schedules.
- March 2025 recorded a 6-day delay, showing minimal improvement and suggesting ongoing congestion or slowdowns on this route.

What's Impacting Asia-Origin Shipments

- The Red Sea crisis is still pushing rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope, **extending voyages by 10–15 days**.
- The post-Lunar New Year volume spike caused port delays and capacity tightening.
- Weather-related port closures (typhoons, storms) in China, Korea, and Japan.
- Congestion at Southeast Asian hubs like Singapore during peak summer months.
- Feeder vessel shortages in major transshipment hubs like Singapore and Busan.
- Blank sailings are still being used to optimise vessel utilization.



3. North America → North/West Europe

Main drivers: East Coast weather disruptions and peak-season port bottlenecks.

Shippers on this lane dealt with seasonal unpredictability, including storm-related slowdowns and congestion across European gateways.



Transit Time Trend:

- The average actual transit time hovered around 25–33 days from April to October 2024.
- Average actual transit times declined toward the end of 2024 and into January 2025. However, they began to rise steadily afterward, reaching a **peak of 36 days** in March 2025.
- This reflects a gradual upward trend in delays, with volatility mid-year and reduced reliability in recent months.

- April to July 2024 saw a consistent delay of 5–6 days.
- September 2024 showed a notable improvement with just a 2-day delay, coinciding with the dip in actual transit.
- From October onward, delays widened again, **reaching 7-8 days in February and March 2025**—marking the highest deviation from planned schedules over the year.

4. North America → South America

Main drivers: Vessel schedule adjustments and equipment repositioning challenges

While more stable, this lane still experienced seasonal fluctuations — particularly during high-demand export windows.



Transit Time Trend:

- From April to July 2024, the actual transit time steadily increased from 20 to 29 days
- The trend intensified from August to September, where **actual transit peaked at 35 and 37 days** respectively, showing a significant spike.
- Although there was a minor improvement in October and November, the gap between planned and actual remained wide.
- From December 2024 onward, the average actual transit time trended upward again peaking at 38 days in February 2025, and **slightly declining** to 32 days in March.

- In the first half of 2024 (April–July 2024), the gap between planned and actual transit ranged from 3 to 7 days.
- August and September saw the largest discrepancies, with +10 and +18 days, respectively.
- December had a marginally better alignment, with delays narrowing to 6 days, but still substantial.
- January to March 2025 showed persistent and elevated delays of 9 to 19 days, pointing to ongoing congestion or operational inefficiencies.

What's Impacting North America-Origin Shipments

- Severe winter weather and hurricanes disrupted US East Coast and Gulf routes.
- Post-U.S. port strikes, vessel schedules into South America were heavily impacted.
- Ongoing drought conditions throughout 2024 reduced Panama Canal transit capacity, forcing daily vessel limits and occasional rerouting.
- European port bottlenecks during summer peaks (especially Rotterdam and Hamburg).
- Equipment imbalance and repositioning delays in the Atlantic trade.
- Terminal congestion due to early peak bookings and chassis shortages.
- Fluctuations in agricultural export demand drove capacity shortages to South America.
- Carrier schedule reshuffles to align with shifting import/ export demand.



Watchouts

- With 95%+ of vessels rerouted around the Cape, the **Asia Europe corridor** remains the most unpredictable, with Red Sea disruptions showing no signs of resolution.
- **Geopolitical risks** and labour-related uncertainty at North American ports could still spark sudden changes in Q2.
- **Singapore congestion levels**, especially as transshipment season ramps up.
- The US-tariffs could lead to more volatility and impact transit times across major trade routes.
- **Shipper Strategy**: Increasing reliance on predictive visibility tools to manage ETAs and avoid demurrage charges.

Why Transit Time Should Be on Your Radar

Accurate transit time visibility isn't just about ETA prediction — it's about risk mitigation. With freight rates volatile and geopolitical risks increasing, **knowing how long your cargo will take** — **and how early it deviates from the plan** — **is critical**. Unexpected delays can lead to missed retail windows, inventory imbalances, and higher demurrage or dwell fees. In uncertain times, predictive transit intelligence becomes your competitive edge.

Stay Ahead — Talk to Portcast

Want to track your shipments and preempt delays before they impact your supply chain? Get predictive transit insights, port delay forecasts, and real-time exceptions all in one platform. <u>Schedule a free demo today!</u>



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