

Top States with the Smoothest Roads in America



By Tony Rached

Top States with the Smoothest Roads in America

Friday, April 12, 2024

Ever hit a pothole so deep you felt it in your soul? If you're nodding along, you're not alone. Complaining about road conditions is a national pastime that transcends state lines, yet some Americans have less to grumble about than others. While it's a common belief that our own state's roads are the worst, data from the federal Bureau of Transportation Statistics tells a different story. This story isn't just about which states have the best and worst roads; it's about understanding why and how some states are paving the way to smoother rides. So, buckle up as we explore the stretches of asphalt that make up America's roadway royalty and the rocky roads of its underperformers.



America's Best Roads: Leading the Pack

According to a study by Pennsylvania personal injury firm Munley Law, using data from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Idaho, Georgia, and Tennessee top the charts with the highest average rates of acceptable road quality. It's no small feat considering the vast expanse and varied climates of the U.S. Here's a quick snapshot of the states with the smoothest rides:

- **Idaho** leads the pack with 94.78% of roads deemed acceptable.
- **Georgia** follows closely with 94.5%.
- **Tennessee** rounds out the top three with 94.17%.

What's their secret? Apart from diligent maintenance, these states share a common thread in their approach to funding and long-term planning for highway improvements. Take Tennessee, for example, which has not borrowed money for road construction for 45 years, relying instead on vehicle excise taxes and federal, state, and local government contributions.

The Rocky Roads: The Northeast's Struggle

Flip the coin, and you'll find the Northeast bearing the brunt of America's worst roads. New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Connecticut find themselves at the bottom of the list, with just 50.71%, 51.51%, and 58.14% of roads meeting the acceptable quality standard, respectively. The reasons? A perfect storm of heavy traffic, severe weather, and possibly, a historical backlog of maintenance challenges.

Why Road Quality Varies So Much

It's not just about the amount of money thrown at the problem; it's about strategic, long-term planning and execution. States with better roads tend to have robust funding mechanisms that aren't solely reliant on the federal government. Localized decision-making, prioritizing road maintenance, and innovative funding solutions, like Tennessee's use of vehicle excise taxes, play crucial roles.

Appraiser Blog

| Rank | State | Avg. % of acceptable roads |
|------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Idaho | 94.78 |
| 2 | Georgia | 94.5 |
| 3 | Tennessee | 94.17 |
| 4 | North Dakota | 93.96 |
| 5 | Nebraska | 92.47 |
| 6 | Wyoming | 91.51 |
| 7 | Kentucky | 91.24 |
| 8 | Alabama | 90.77 |
| 9 | Montana | 89.6 |
| 10 | Oregon | 89.44 |
| 11 | Kansas | 89.23 |
| 12 | Florida | 89.11 |
| 13 | Nevada | 88.95 |
| 14 | North Carolina | 88.06 |
| 15 | South Dakota | 88.03 |
| 16 | Texas | 87.78 |
| 17 | Minnesota | 87.03 |
| 18 | Ohio | 86.15 |
| 19 | Iowa | 86.13 |
| 20 | South Carolina | 85.32 |
| 21 | Arizona | 84.79 |
| 22 | Michigan | 84.57 |
| 23 | Indiana | 84.14 |
| 24 | Arkansas | 84.02 |
| 25 | Virginia | 82.64 |
| 26 | Utah | 82.45 |
| 27 | Delaware | 82.24 |
| 28 | Illinois | 80.02 |
| 29 | Vermont | 79.11 |

Appraiser Blog

| | | |
|----|---------------|-------|
| 30 | Alaska | 78.49 |
| 31 | New Hampshire | 78.38 |
| 32 | Colorado | 78.2 |
| 33 | Maryland | 78.1 |
| 34 | Missouri | 77.96 |
| 35 | Maine | 76.16 |
| 36 | Louisiana | 75.74 |
| 37 | Wisconsin | 73.86 |
| 38 | Oklahoma | 73.85 |
| 39 | New York | 73.74 |
| 40 | Pennsylvania | 72.29 |
| 41 | Mississippi | 72.16 |
| 42 | New Mexico | 71.83 |
| 43 | West Virginia | 71.3 |
| 44 | Washington | 70.44 |
| 45 | Massachusetts | 63.47 |
| 46 | California | 59.65 |
| 47 | Hawaii | 59.27 |
| 48 | Connecticut | 58.14 |
| 49 | Rhode Island | 51.51 |
| 50 | New Jersey | 50.71 |

Beyond Potholes: The Real Impact of Bad Roads

It's easy to lament a bumpy ride, but the consequences of poor road conditions extend beyond discomfort. They can cause significant damage to vehicles, leading to costly repairs for suspension systems, tires, and more. Moreover, bad roads can lead to increased accidents and traffic congestion, affecting both safety and efficiency.

Conclusion: A Roadmap to Better Roads

The state of America's roads is a tale of two countries: those enjoying smooth travels and those navigating a labyrinth of car-damaging obstacles. While factors like

Appraiser Blog

geography and weather play their roles, the key differentiator is how states manage and fund their road maintenance. As we've seen with Tennessee, Idaho, and Georgia, proactive and innovative approaches to road funding and maintenance can lead to tangible improvements in road quality. For states struggling to keep up, perhaps it's time to take a leaf out of their book. After all, the journey to better roads begins with a single step—or in this case, a single repair.