

How to stop wasting your PTO

19 DAYS OF PTO.

56 DAYS OFF.

The exact 2027 dates to request — and where I'd go.

Start with the calendar. Find the holidays your employer gives you, then place PTO next to them to turn short requests into real time away.

Assumes a Monday-Friday workweek and all 11 listed U.S. federal holidays off. Private employers may observe different holidays, including Juneteenth and October 11. Confirm your calendar before requesting leave.

11 EXTENDED BREAKS / ONE SMARTER YEAR

Your year at a glance

Holiday dates are observed dates. “Take PTO” is the leave request; each break includes weekends and the holiday.

BREAK	TAKE PTO	TIME OFF	PTO → OFF
NEW YEAR’S DAY	Jan 4	Jan 1-4	1 → 4
MLK DAY	Jan 15	Jan 15-18	1 → 4
PRESIDENTS DAY	Feb 12	Feb 12-15	1 → 4
MEMORIAL DAY	May 28	May 28-31	1 → 4
JUNETEENTH	Jun 17	Jun 17-20	1 → 4
INDEPENDENCE DAY	Jul 6-9	Jul 3-11	4 → 9
LABOR DAY	Sep 3	Sep 3-6	1 → 4
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ /	Oct 8	Oct 8-11	1 → 4
VETERANS DAY	Nov 10 + 12	Nov 10-14	2 → 5
THANKSGIVING	Nov 24 + 26	Nov 24-28	2 → 5
CHRISTMAS	Dec 20-23	Dec 18-26	4 → 9

19 PTO DAYS / 11 BREAKS / 56 DAYS OFF

January — May

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Jan 1-4 · Mexico City / Puerto Rico

TAKE PTO: JAN 4 HOLIDAY: JAN 1 1 PTO → 4 OFF

An easy long weekend from many U.S. gateways. Pick the shorter flight and plan one neighborhood or beach base.

MLK DAY

Jan 15-18 · Mexico / Costa Rica

TAKE PTO: JAN 15 HOLIDAY: JAN 18 1 PTO → 4 OFF

A winter escape. Mexico is flexible by budget and departure city; Costa Rica works best when you stay in one region.

PRESIDENTS DAY

Feb 12-15 · Puerto Rico / Iceland

TAKE PTO: FEB 12 HOLIDAY: FEB 15 1 PTO → 4 OFF

Puerto Rico is especially easy for U.S. citizens. Iceland can work from East Coast gateways, but keep the itinerary tight; aurora sightings are never guaranteed.

MEMORIAL DAY

May 28-31 · Portugal / Greece

TAKE PTO: MAY 28 HOLIDAY: MAY 31 1 PTO → 4 OFF

Late spring can offer a gentler pace before peak summer. From the U.S., prioritize direct flights and one base.

June — October

JUNETEENTH

Jun 17–20 · Belize / Bahamas

TAKE PTO: JUN 17 HOLIDAY: JUN 18 OBSERVED 1 PTO → 4 OFF

Both lend themselves to a short warm-weather break. Belize has been a favorite of mine; check seasonal rain forecasts before booking.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Jul 3–11 · Thailand / Italy

TAKE PTO: JUL 6–9 HOLIDAY: JUL 5 OBSERVED 4 PTO → 9 OFF

Nine days make a longer flight worthwhile. Thailand's weather varies by coast in July; Italy is beautiful but expect peak-season prices.

LABOR DAY

Sep 3–6 · Montreal / Mexico City

TAKE PTO: SEP 3 HOLIDAY: SEP 6 1 PTO → 4 OFF

Choose a city with a manageable flight, then spend your four days eating and exploring rather than transferring.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' / COLUMBUS DAY

Oct 8–11 · New Orleans / San Juan

TAKE PTO: OCT 8 HOLIDAY: OCT 11 1 PTO → 4 OFF

A four-day food-and-culture trip is easier when the flight is short. Check whether your employer observes this holiday.

November — December

VETERANS DAY

Nov 10–14 · Mexico City / Guatemala

TAKE PTO: NOV 10 + 12 HOLIDAY: NOV 11 2 PTO → 5 OFF

Five days can cover one city and a nearby day trip; build in the travel days before adding a second stop.

THANKSGIVING

Nov 24–28 · Colombia / Dominican Republic

TAKE PTO: NOV 24 + 26 HOLIDAY: NOV 25 2 PTO → 5 OFF

A five-day escape can work from convenient U.S. gateways. Holiday airfare may rise, so compare flight times before committing.

CHRISTMAS

Dec 18–26 · Vietnam / Peru

TAKE PTO: DEC 20–23 HOLIDAY: DEC 24 OBSERVED 4 PTO → 9 OFF

A longer trip fits nine days, though holiday flights can be costly. For Vietnam, choose one region; for Peru, allow time for altitude.

For Thanksgiving and Christmas, flight prices can jump. Price flights before locking in leave.

Holiday dates: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/federal-holidays/