SOFTWARE & TECH

Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795582987200197

The Enduring Magic of Steve Martin in Planes, Trains and Automobiles

When you hear the phrase **Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles**, your mind likely jumps to one of the most beloved comedies of the 1980s. Released in 1987 and directed by John Hughes, this film has transcended its holiday-themed roots to become a timeless exploration of patience, human connection, and the sheer absurdity of travel. More than just a movie about a man trying to get home for Thanksgiving, it is a masterclass in comedic timing and heartfelt storytelling, anchored by the brilliant performances of Steve Martin and the late, great John Candy. The phrase itself has become shorthand for travel nightmares, but the movie offers so much more than a series of mishaps. It is a story about learning to see the person behind the annoyance, and it remains profoundly relevant decades later.

The Core of the Journey: Neal Page vs. Del Griffith

At its heart, **Planes, Trains and Automobiles** is a classic odd-couple road movie. Steve Martin plays Neal Page, a high-strung, fastidious marketing executive who just wants to get from New York back to his home in Chicago for Thanksgiving dinner. Everything about his demeanor screams control: his perfectly tailored suit, his precise way of speaking, and his obvious discomfort with chaos. He is a man who calculates every step. In stark contrast, John Candy plays Del Griffith, a loquacious, messy, and endlessly optimistic shower curtain ring salesman. Del is the embodiment of chaos. He eats snacks in rental cars, tells long-winded stories to complete strangers, and has a heart that is far too big for his own good.

The chemistry between these two actors is the engine that drives the entire film. Steve Martin's exasperated, tightly-wound reactions are the perfect foil for John Candy's childlike enthusiasm. When Neal first meets Del on a plane, he wants nothing more than to sit in peace. Instead, he gets a seatmate who talks about everything and anything, who spills food, and who invades every inch of Neal's personal space. The comedy arises not just from the situation, but from the authentic friction between two very different ways of being in the world. This is where the magic of **Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles** truly lies: within the tension between a man who hates mess and a man who lives in it.

A Cascade of Travel Disasters

The plot of the movie is essentially a long, painful, and hilarious string of disasters. What begins as a simple flight from New York to Chicago quickly unravels. A snowstorm diverts the plane to Wichita, Kansas. From there, Neal's journey becomes a desperate, multi-modal nightmare that includes:

- The Plane: A first-class seat that turns into a cramped, delayed, and diverted flight.
- The Train: A desperate attempt to take a train, which leads to a night in a sketchy motel with an even sketchier bed.

- The Automobile (and the Car): After the train fails, Neal and Del rent a car. It gets stolen. Then they rent another car, which becomes a burnt-out shell.
- The Truck: A ride with a maniacal truck driver (an unforgettable cameo) and a ride in the back of a flatbed truck.
- The Bus: The final leg, which brings them to Chicago just in time for Thanksgiving.

Each mode of transportation fails in its own spectacular way. The film uses these failures not just for gags, but to steadily peel away Neal's composure. By the time he is screaming at a rental car agent ("You're going to be okay? I want my two dollars!"), the audience is fully invested in his breakdown. The phrase **Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles** has become a cultural reference point for any trip that goes from bad to worse, but the film itself treats these disasters with a surprising amount of heart. They are the crucible that forges an unlikely friendship.

Beyond the Laughter: The Unexpected Emotional Depth

What separates **Planes, Trains and Automobiles** from a typical comedy is its willingness to sit in genuine emotional pain. The movie is extraordinarily funny, but its most famous scene is not a physical gag—it is the moment in the motel room when Neal, frustrated beyond reason, unleashes a torrent of insults at Del. He calls him a "bullheaded, know-it-all, opinionated pain in the ass." The tirade is devastatingly funny because of Steve Martin's delivery, but the aftermath is not. Del quietly accepts the verbal abuse and walks out into the rain.

Later, Del returns, and Neal awkwardly apologizes. Then, in one of the most poignant scenes in cinema history, Del sits on the bed and tells Neal about his wife. "I like me. My wife likes me. My customers like me. Because I'm the real article. What you see is what you get." It is a moment of raw vulnerability that completely recontextualizes the character. John Candy's performance in this scene is heartbreaking. The laughter stops, and the audience is left with the simple truth: this lonely, kind, ridiculous man is just trying to survive, just like everyone else. It is a scene that ensures **Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles** is remembered as much for its heart as its humor.

The Final Revelation: A Twist That Changes Everything

The film's ending delivers one final, perfect twist. After a near-impossible journey, Neal finally arrives home, only to hear the honk of Del's horn. He realizes that Del, having lost his train tickets and his wallet, has nowhere to go. In a moment of pure character growth, Neal invites Del inside for Thanksgiving dinner. As the camera pulls back, Del tells the family that he sells shower curtain rings. Neal's wife (played by Laila Robins) says, "Oh, you're the one. Neal, you never said he was the one who sold you the shower curtain rings?" It is a throwaway line, but the audience catches the deeper implication.

In the final scene, Neal lights a fire and joins Del to watch the football game. Del starts to tell a story about a dog and a raccoon, and Neal begins to cry. The twist is that Del is homeless. He has been sleeping in train stations and on the streets. The entire journey, Del was simply looking for a friend. When Neal realizes this, the comedy collapses into pure empathy. He knows that the man who annoyed him, burdened him, and frustrated him is also the man who saved him from his own selfishness. This moment solidifies the legacy of **Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles** as a film that reveals the gifts hidden in our most frustrating experiences.

Cultural Impact and Lasting Legacy

Nearly four decades after its release, the film continues to resonate. It is a staple of Thanksgiving viewing, but its themes are universal. It is about the struggle to maintain grace in the face of adversity. It is about the cost of being a jerk and the reward of genuine kindness. The dialog has entered the lexicon. "Those aren't pillows!" is an immortal line. The scene with the rental car agent ("I want my $2!") is a meme. Steve Martin's performance is a textbook example of how to play the straight man with a boiling core of frustration.

The film also stands as a testament to the brilliance of John Candy, who delivers a performance of

Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles his career. The combination of writing, directing, and acting. John Hughes, known for teen dramas, proved his mastery of adult comedy with this film. He understood that the funniest moments often come from the most painful realities.

Lessons for the Modern Traveler

If you watch **Planes, Trains and Automobiles** today, its lessons are as sharp as ever. We live in an age of travel anxiety, of overbooked flights and delayed trains. The film reminds us that the journey is not just about getting from point A to point B. It is about the people we meet along the way—especially the ones who drive us crazy. It teaches patience, humility, and the simple power of offering a kind word or a warm meal. Neal Page starts the movie as a man who measures success by status and punctuality. He ends it by crying in his living room, grateful for a messy, loud, homeless man. That is the deepest lesson: the best gifts come in the most irritating packages.

Conclusion

Steve Martin Planes Trains And Automobiles is far more than a nostalgic comedy. It is a beautifully crafted story about human connection, resilience, and the strange grace that appears when our plans fall apart. Steve Martin and John Candy deliver performances that are both hilarious and profoundly moving. The film invites us to laugh at the absurdity of travel, but also to look at the stranger next to us with a little more compassion. It is a rare movie that makes you laugh until you cry, and then cry for entirely different reasons. If you haven't watched it in a while, it is time for a revisit. Bring tissues—both for the tears of laughter and for the ones that arrive unexpectedly when Del Griffith says, "I like me." So does the world, Del. So does the world.

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