

## AAA Projects a Slight Increase in Memorial Day Travel

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Travel will be up slightly this Memorial Day holiday despite high gas prices and increasing vacation costs, according to AAA. AAA estimates that 38.3 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home this holiday, a 1.7 percent increase from last year.

Approximately 32.1 million travelers (84 percent of all holiday travelers) expect to go by motor vehicle, a 1.8 percent increase from the 31.5 million who drove a year ago.

Another 4.4 million (11 percent of holiday travelers) plan to travel by airplane, up 1.0 percent from last Memorial Day. A projected 1.9 million (5 percent of all holiday travelers) vacationers will travel by train, bus, or other mode of transportation, about even with a year ago.

'High gas prices and increased vacation costs won't deter Americans from traveling this Memorial Day,' said Gail Weinholzer, director of public affairs, AAA Minnesota/Iowa. 'Families will travel closer to home, they will travel for fewer days and will save money by staying in less expensive hotels and eating in cheaper restaurants, but they will continue to take vacations and plan getaways.'

Holiday auto travelers will find gas prices nationwide currently averaging \$3.04 for a gallon of self-serve regular gasoline-up 25 cents from a month ago and more than 15 cents higher than this time last year.

Travelers will get a bit of a break this holiday weekend when making their way to their destination. AAA's Leisure Travel Index shows flights over the holiday weekend averaging 5 percent less this year than last year, with the average flight costing \$166. Car rental rates are expected to fall 16 percent from last year, with renters paying an average of \$31, almost \$6 less than last year. Hotel rates, however, will be up about 13 percent from a year ago, with travelers spending an average of \$174 per night at AAA 3 Diamond hotels.

The average household that is traveling this Memorial Day Weekend will spend \$594.

Many American households will be traveling with their children. In fact, 57 percent of households with children under 18 will bring them along on their Memorial Day vacation this year nationwide. Travelers from the Midwest region are most likely to travel with their children, with 66.6 percent saying they would be bringing their kids along. The Southeast follows close behind with 60 percent traveling with kids under 18. Fifty four percent of parents in the Northeast will travel with their children, while 53 percent of parents in the West say the same. The lowest percentage of families traveling with kids under 18 will be from the Great Lakes region, with 50 percent.

AAA's travel agents continue to see increased interest in summer travel compared to a year ago, especially in international travel, which continues to grow in popularity. In addition, cruise sales for AAA travel agencies are up 4.7 percent, online bookings have increased 35 percent and sales of trip insurance are up 4 percent during the same period last year.

The greatest number of Memorial Day auto travelers will originate in the West with 7.6 million travelers, followed by the Southeast with 6.9 million; Midwest, 6.8 million; Northeast, 6.0 million; and Great Lakes, 4.8 million.

The West is expected to produce the largest number of air travelers with 1.4 million, followed by the Midwest with 1.2 million; Southeast, 900,000; Northeast, 500,000; and Great Lakes, 400,000.

Research for Memorial Day travel is based on a national survey of 2,000 adults by the Travel Industry Association of American, which conducts special research for AAA.

As North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA provides its more than 50 million members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax-paying AAA has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers.

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