

AAA Forecasts Record Fourth of July Travel

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Dropping Gas Prices Will Make for Pleasant Holiday Travel

Independence Day falls on a Wednesday this year, and while Americans will be adjusting their vacation plans, they will travel nonetheless. AAA estimates that a record 41.1 million Americans will leave home this holiday week (June 29 to July 8), 0.8 percent more than the 40.8 million who traveled last year. This year's increase is lower than last year's increase, in part, because July 4, 2006 fell on a Tuesday and many Americans could not pass up an opportunity to leave town for a four day weekend.

According to a AAA survey, Fourth of July travelers intend to spend the entire week on their holiday trip this year. In fact, the largest share of Fourth of July travelers are planning to leave Friday, June 29 or before (37.9 percent). (See chart below.)

Approximately 34.7 million travelers (84 percent of all holiday travelers) expect to go by motor vehicle, a 0.7 percent increase from the 34.5 million who drove a year ago.

Another 4.7 million (11 percent of holiday travelers) plan to travel by airplane, up 3.5 percent from the 4.5 million that flew last Fourth of July. A projected 1.7 million vacationers (4 percent) will go by train, bus, or other mode of transportation.

'This Fourth of July holiday is somewhat unique, in that it falls in the middle of the work week,' said AAA Travel Managing Director Betsy Sell. 'Interestingly, we're finding that Americans aren't willing to give up their traditional Fourth of July celebrations with friends and family, and many are choosing to take a few more days off of work to do so. Although prices for gasoline are higher this holiday than last year, Americans have felt a bit of relief in fuel prices over the last few weeks, which may influence their decision to travel.'

Holiday auto travelers will find gas prices nationwide currently averaging \$2.99 for a gallon of self-serve regular gasoline - down 23 cents from a month ago and about 14 cents higher than a year ago.

AAA's Leisure Travel Index shows some other vacation costs up from Fourth of July 2006, while others have dropped somewhat significantly. Hotel rates are up a bit, averaging 5 percent higher for AAA-rated Three Diamond hotels than last year. Car rental rates will be similar to last year, which are up 3 percent. Airfares however are a welcome 12 percent lower than Fourth of July 2006.

'Vacationers will benefit from making their travel plans as early as possible to take advantage of lower airfares, and to reserve a room at their destination,' said Sell.

The greatest number of Fourth of July auto travelers will originate in the Southeast with 8.9 million, followed by the West with 8.6 million; Midwest, 6.6 million; Northeast, 5.8 million; and Great Lakes, 4.7 million.

The West is expected to produce the largest number of air travelers with 1.8 million, followed by the Midwest and Southeast at 800,000 each; Northeast, 700,000; and Great Lakes, 500,000.

Fourth of July is the busiest travel period of the summer since schools are not in session and many families take the opportunity to go on vacation with their kids. In fact, of households with children, 66 percent say they plan on bringing their kids along on their Fourth of July vacation.

| | Percent Without Children Under 18 | Percent Traveling With Children ¹ | Percent Traveling Without Children ¹ |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Total United States | 30.8% | 66.4% | 33.6% |
| Northeast | 30.6% | 62.5% | 37.5% |
| Southeast | 31.7% | 63.1% | 36.9% |
| Great Lakes | 35.8% | 76.7% | 23.3% |
| Midwest | 27.6% | 68.0% | 32.0% |
| West | 30.0% | 65.9% | 34.1% |

¹ Among households with children.

| | Percent Leaving Friday the 29th or before | Percent Leaving Saturday the 30th | Percent Leaving Sunday the 1st | Percent Leaving Monday the 2nd | Percent Leaving Tuesday the 3rd | Percent Leaving Wednesday the 4th |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Total United States | 37.9% | 17.2% | 12.0% | 12.2% | 11.9% | 8.6% |
| Northeast | 28.4% | 31.6% | 10.0% | 6.2% | 7.6% | 16.1% |
| Southeast | 41.9% | 11.6% | 10.6% | 6.6% | 14.5% | 14.7% |
| Great Lakes | 33.7% | 16.3% | 25.7% | 8.2% | 10.6% | 5.5% |
| Midwest | 38.8% | 21.1% | 9.5% | 18.0% | 11.1% | 1.4% |
| West | 42.0% | 10.1% | 9.6% | 22.0% | 13.6% | 2.7% |
| Average Length of Stay | 5.7 | 5.1 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.0 | 4.0 |

Research for holiday travel is based on a national telephone survey of 1,950 adults by the Travel Industry Association of America, which conducts special research for AAA.

As North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA provides 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. AAA clubs can be visited on the Internet at www.AAA.com.

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