

Memorial Day travel expected to increase slightly

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

In spite of high gasoline prices and increasing vacation costs, AAA expects Memorial Day travel to be up slightly from a year ago. AAA estimates 38.3 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home this holiday, a 1.7 percent increase. Of them, approximately 32.1 million travelers (84 percent) 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) plan to travel by airplane, a 1.0 percent increase, and a projected 1.9 million (5 percent) will travel by train, bus, or other transportation mode, about even with a year ago.

“Americans won't be deterred from traveling this Memorial Day,” said AAA Oregon/Idaho Travel Services Director Doreen Loofburrow. “Families will travel closer to home, they will travel for fewer days, and they 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 regular gasoline currently averaging \$3.09 per gallon nationwide. The current Pacific Coast states average, including Oregon, Washington and California, is \$3.44 per gallon.

Air travelers will get a bit of a break. AAA's Leisure Travel Index shows flights will average \$166, about 5 percent less than last year. Car rental rates are expected to fall 16 percent, with daily rates averaging \$31, almost \$6 less than last year. Hotel rates, however, will be up about 13 percent from a year ago, averaging \$174 per night at AAA 3-Diamond hotels. On average, a family of four traveling this Memorial Day Weekend will spend \$594.

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

The West also 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.

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

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.

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