AAA Projection for Independence Day Holiday Travel Ties Record for Highest Volume in Past Decade

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Overall travel up 4.9 percent from Independence Day holiday period last year, mid-week holiday contributes to volume increase and affords travelers more departure day options

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Cynthia Brough
Director,
AAA Public Relations
(407) 444-8014
cbrough@national.aaa.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Heather Hunter
Manager,
AAA Public Relations
(407) 444-8005
hhunter@national.aaa.com

ORLANDO, Fla., (June 19, 2012) – AAA projects 42.3 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the Independence Day holiday weekend, a 4.9 percent increase over the 40.3 million people who traveled last year. The expected 2012 Independence Day holiday travel volume will tie the past decade's previous high mark set in 2007 and represents a near 42 percent increase from 2009. The Independence Day holiday travel period is defined as Tuesday, July 3 to Sunday, July 8.

Since July 4 falls on a Wednesday, the calendar will play a role in driving holiday travel volume as the mid-week holiday expands the traditional five-day travel period to six days and provides the option of including a weekend and two week days on either side of the actual holiday. When asked about day of departure, fifty-four percent of people intending to travel this holiday plan to begin their trip prior to the start of the work-week that includes July 4. Response percentages by trip departure day are:

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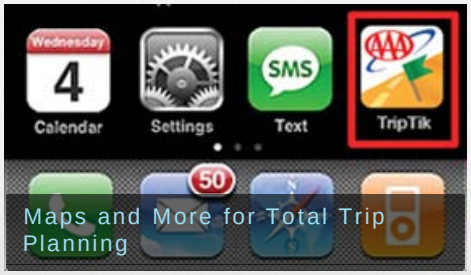

- 25 percent – Friday, June 29
- 16 percent – Saturday, June 30
- 13 percent – Sunday, July 1
- 11 percent – Monday, July 2
- 19 percent – Tuesday, July 3
- 16 percent – Wednesday, July 4

"AAA's projection for a decade high number of Independence Day travelers is being fed by Americans' appetite for travel, a mid-week holiday and lower gas prices," said Bill Sutherland, vice president, AAA Travel Services. "This is the second holiday this year where travelers indicated a determination to travel while economizing by actively seeking value-added travel options and activities."

"A healthy travel industry is critical to the overall well-being of our economy and consistent increases in travel are encouraging," added Sutherland.

Impact of gasoline prices on travel plans

The price of gasoline is another factor expected to play a role in spurring intentions to travel this Independence Day holiday period. On April 6, motorists experienced a year-to-date peak average price of $3.94 per gallon for regular gasoline. The current national average price of regular gasoline is $3.50 per gallon, 44 cents lower than the April peak and 16 cents less than this time last year.

Automobile travel up four percent, highest auto travel volume in past decade

Approximately 35.5 million people plan to travel by automobile setting the high-water mark for the decade, as 84 percent of all Independence Day holiday travelers choose this traditionally dominant mode of transportation. This is a four percent increase over the 34.1 million people who traveled by auto last year.

Number of air travelers expected to increase by over nine percent, airfares unchanged

Slightly more than 3.2 million leisure travelers (eight percent of holiday travelers) will fly during the Independence Day holiday period, a more than nine percent increase over the 2.9 million air travelers in 2011. This year's increase is the third consecutive year of rising Independence Day holiday air travel volume,

Videos

- July Holiday Forecast Announcement on YouTube- Short
- DOWNLOAD: Holiday Travel Forecast Video Announcement: short version (large download times vary by connection speed) – 180 MB
- DOWNLOAD: Holiday Travel Forecast Video Announcement: large version (large download times vary by connection speed) – 650MB

Additional Resources

- Independence Day Forecast Report – 2012
- 2012 4th of July Impact of Mid-Week Holiday Infographic – Color
- 2012 4th of July Impact of Mid-Week Holiday Infographic – Black & White
- 2012 4th of July Travelers 2003 – 2012 – Black & White
- 2012 4th of July Travelers 2003 – 2012 – Color
- Independence Day Travel Forecast Infographic – Black & White
- Independence Day Travel Forecast Infographic – Color

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following the decade low 1.4 million air travelers in 2009.

Airfares are flat year over year with an average lowest round-trip rate of $200 for the top 40 U.S. air routes in both 2011 and 2012, according to AAA's Leisure Travel Index. A longer holiday period and stable airfares are spurring this increase.

The remaining eight percent of holiday travelers are expected to use other modes of transportation, including rail, bus and cruise ship, accounting for 3.6 million travelers – a 10 percent increase over last year and the second highest volume in the past ten years.

Travelers to experience increases in hotel rates, decreases in car rental rates

According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, Independence Day holiday hotel rates for AAA Three Diamond lodgings are expected to increase four percent from a year ago with travelers spending an average of $164 per night compared to $157 last year. Travelers planning to stay at AAA Two Diamond hotels can expect to pay nine percent more at an average cost of $120 per night. Weekend daily car rental rates will average $40, a nine percent decrease from one year ago.

Average travel distance increases

According to a survey of intended travelers, the average distance traveled by Americans during the Independence Day holiday weekend is expected to be 723 miles, up 150 miles from last year's average 573 miles. The increase in expected air travel is a factor in lifting the average travel distance as air trips typically span a longer distance than automobile trips. The survey found that the share of holiday trips in excess of 1,500 miles increased to 18 percent from last year's 10 percent share, while the share of trips shorter than 250 miles decreased to 28 percent from 35 percent a year ago.

Median spending down seven percent, travelers continue to economize

Median spending is expected to be $749, a seven percent decrease compared to the expected median spending of intended holiday travelers ($807) in 2011.

The Independence Day holiday traditionally involves spending time with family and friends, enjoying the outdoors and participating in celebrations highlighted by fireworks. This year's survey of intended travelers found that the economizing travel consumer behavior reported in AAA's Memorial Day travel forecast will continue over the Independence Day holiday period. Lower spend activities like visiting family and friends and sightseeing are expected to increase up to four percent, while shopping and entertainment will decrease by as much as nine percent.

AAA offers mobile travel planning resources

AAA's digital tools for travel planning 'on the go' include eTourBook guides for 101 top North American destinations, free to members at AAA.com/ebooks. Choose from city titles, like Orlando, New York and the award-winning Las Vegas, as well as National Parks.

Free AAA apps for iPhone and Android devices use GPS navigation to help travelers map a route, locate nearby member discounts and find current gas prices. Travelers can learn about AAA apps and AAA Mobile Web at AAA.com/mobile.

Travelers can find thousands of AAA Approved and Diamond Rated hotels and restaurants using AAA's digital travel planning tools or online at AAA.com/Travel. Every AAA Approved establishment offers the assurance of acceptable cleanliness, comfort and hospitality, and ratings of One to Five Diamonds help travelers find the right match for amenities and services.

AAA's projections are based on economic forecasting and research by IHS Global Insight. The Boston-based economic research and consulting firm teamed with AAA in 2009 to jointly analyze travel trends during the major holidays. AAA has been reporting on holiday travel trends for more than two decades. The complete AAA / IHS Global Insight 2012 Independence Day Holiday Travel Forecast can be found at NewsRoom.AAA.com.

As North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA provides more than 53 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 AAA.com.

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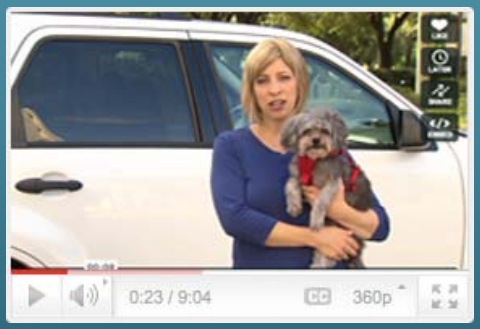

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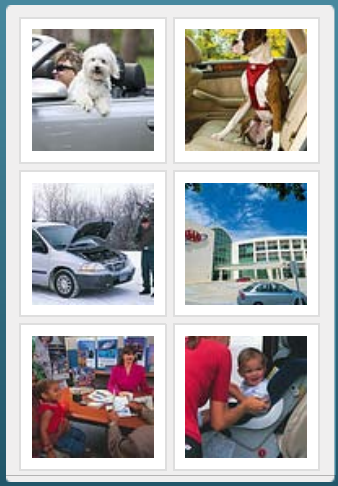

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