



News Release

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A broadcast-quality video featuring Holiday Travel Safety tips produced by AAA National Public Relations, this news release and supporting infographics are available for download at <http://newsroom.aaa.com/>.

DESPITE SLUGGISH ECONOMY AMERICANS CONTINUE TO PRIORITIZE HOLIDAY TRAVEL, AAA SAYS

Projected travel up 2.9 percent from Labor Day holiday weekend last year, highest travel volume expected since 2008 before the recession caused a retraction in Labor Day travel

VIRGINIA BEACH Va., (August 22, 2012) – AAA Travel projects 33 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the Labor Day holiday weekend, a 2.9 percent increase from the 32.1 million people who traveled last year. The total number of 2012 Labor Day holiday travelers is expected to reach a new post-recession high, and is the third increase in holiday travel this year, according to the AAA/IHS Global Insight 2012 Labor Day Holiday Travel Forecast. AAA's Memorial Day and Independence Day holiday travel forecasts projected increases of 1.2 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively.

Despite a sluggish economy and recent rises in gas prices, the increase in expected Labor Day holiday weekend travelers is driven by improving consumer confidence compared to one year ago and American's unwavering desire to travel. The Labor Day holiday travel period is defined as Thursday, August 30 to Monday, September 3.

"In the absence of strong economic growth that might fuel a significant boost in travel volume, it is an encouraging sign that Americans continue to prioritize travel," said Georjeane Blumling, spokesperson for AAA Tidewater Virginia. "Travel is still within America's discretionary spending budget." **The Commonwealth is expected to follow this trend with a forecasted 924,710 travelers over the Labor Day weekend, a 1.7 percent increase over 2011.**

Impact of household finances on travel plans

A survey of intended travelers found that 66 percent said their current financial situation would not negatively impact their Labor Day holiday weekend travel plans. Of the remaining 34 percent of travelers who said their current finances would impact their travel plans, 21 percent will economize in other areas, 9 percent are planning to take a shorter trip, and the remaining 4 percent will travel by an alternate mode of transportation. The group of surveyed travelers who reported their intent to economize in other areas plan to reduce spending on shopping and sightseeing and will stay with friends and relatives instead of reserving a hotel room. Conversely, changes in the expected primary activities of travelers this Labor Day holiday include increases in entertainment like nightlife, sporting events, concerts and golf.

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Automobile travel up 3.1 percent

Approximately 28.2 million people (85 percent of holiday travelers) will make their Labor Day holiday journey by automobile, considered the most convenient mode of travel for many Americans. This is a 3.1 percent increase over the 27.3 million people who took to the nation's roadways in 2011. ***In Virginia, 802,210 persons are expected to 'hit the road' over Labor Day, a 1.8% increase from last year.***

Number of air travelers expected to increase by 3.7 percent, airfares decrease

Labor Day holiday air travel has been fairly consistent since the recession bounce back began for the travel industry in 2010. About 2.55 million leisure travelers (eight percent of holiday travelers) will fly during the Labor Day weekend, a 3.7 percent increase over 2011 when 2.46 million traveled by air. In 2010, 2.6 million chose to fly to their Labor Day vacation destinations which began the steady recovery from the decade-low 1.5 million air travelers in 2009. **This year, 73,217 Virginians will fly to their destination over the holiday weekend, 2.3% increase from 2011.** Airfares decreased four percent over last year with an average lowest round-trip rate of \$197 for the top 40 U.S. air routes, according to AAA's Leisure Travel Index.

The remaining seven percent of Labor Day holiday travelers are expected to use other modes of transportation, including cruise ship, rail and bus travel accounting for 2.3 million Americans - a nominal 0.2 percent decrease over last year.

Average travel distance increases as most travelers prefer shorter trips, spending up

According to a survey of intended travelers, the average distance traveled by Americans during the Labor Day holiday weekend is expected to be 626 miles, up slightly from last year's average 608 miles. Despite the longer average travel distance, most holiday travelers (54 percent) will be taking shorter-distance trips, between 100 and 400 round-trip miles. The increase in expected air travel is a contributing factor to the slight lift in the average travel distance as air trips typically span longer distances than automobile trips, many over 1,500 round-trip miles. Median spending is expected to be \$749, a small increase over the \$702 median spending of intended holiday travelers in 2011.

Travelers to experience increase in hotel rates, decrease in car rental rates

According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, Labor 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 \$154 per night compared to \$148 last year. Travelers planning to stay at AAA Two Diamond hotels can expect to pay six percent more at an average cost of \$117 per night. Weekend daily car rental rates will average \$39, a ten percent decrease from one year ago.

Impact of gasoline prices on travel plans

National gas prices have fluctuated and been particularly sensitive to region variations throughout much of the year. On April 5 and 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 for August 21, 2012 is \$3.72 per gallon, which is .22 cents less than the April peak and .14 cents more than last year's price on August 21.

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Gasoline purchases are critical expenditures in most household budgets, yet 66 percent of intended holiday travelers said their current household finances would not negatively impact their Labor Day holiday weekend travel plans. As the Labor Day holiday weekend approaches, increases in gas prices could cause some travelers to alter their plans. Conversely, falling prices could spur last-minute travel increases.

Barring any significant unforeseen events such as severe hurricanes, geopolitical incidents or dramatic nationwide price increases, gas prices are not expected to have a major impact on Labor Day holiday weekend travel. Historically, incidents that impact regional gas prices and regional travel have not impacted nationwide holiday travel.

AAA offers digital 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.

The free AAA Mobile app for iPhone and Android devices uses GPS navigation to help travelers map a route, find current gas prices and nearby member discounts and access AAA roadside assistance. Travelers can learn about the AAA Mobile app and AAA Mobile Web at AAA.com/mobile.

On AAA.com, travelers can find thousands of AAA Approved and Diamond Rated hotels and restaurants using AAA's TripTik Travel Planner or the searchable Travel Guides 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 part of North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit AAA.com and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).

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