

Increase expected for year-end holiday travel

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

AAA Colorado projects that 92.3 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home Dec. 23-Jan. 2, 2011. This is an increase of 3.1 percent over last holiday season, and the fifth consecutive holiday period this year in which AAA has predicted a year-to-year increase in the number of travelers.

In the mountain region, which includes Colorado, AAA projects a 2.4 percent increase for holiday travel.

More than nine out of 10 will drive to their holiday destinations.

As Colorado enjoys some of the lowest gas prices in the nation, 6.5 million people will drive to their year-end holiday destinations. This represents a 2.4 percent increase in automobile travel over last year. Nationally, approximately 85.7 million people (93 percent of all holiday travelers) will drive. Mountain region air travel is expected to increase 1.8 percent, compared to a 2.8 percent increase nationwide. 2.67 million leisure air travelers will take to the skies during the year-end holidays.

Travel distance and spending up

According to a survey of traveler intentions, the average distance traveled by Americans during the year-end holidays is expected to be 1,052 miles, which is 33 percent more than last year's average travel distance of 791 miles. Median spending is expected to be \$694. Median spending a year ago was \$670. Similar to Thanksgiving, a majority of survey respondents (75 percent) reported that the main purpose of their upcoming trip was a visit with friends or family.

Hotel rates increase, airfares decrease and car rental rates are unchanged compared to a year ago.

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According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, hotel rates for AAA Three Diamond lodgings over the year-end holidays are expected to increase five percent from a year ago with travelers spending an average of \$125 per night compared to \$119 last year. Airfares are expected to be three percent less than last year with an average lowest round-trip rate of \$174 for the top 40 U.S. air routes. Weekend daily car rental rates will remain unchanged at an average of \$50.

AAA's travel projections are based on economic forecasting and research by IHS Global Insight. AAA has been reporting on holiday travel trends for more than two decades.

AAA Colorado has more than 530,000 members and is an advocate for safety and security for all travelers. As North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA provides over 51 million members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive related services, as well as member exclusive savings. AAA can be visited at www.AAA.com.