

Lodging industry optimistic about 2012

By Barbara De Lollis, USA Today

Travelers in the coming year should prepare to pay higher rates and compete for the best rooms, a new analysis of future hotel bookings suggests.

Occupancy nationwide is expected to increase by about 5 percent and rates by about 4 percent, according to industry tracker TravelClick's analysis of North American hotel bookings for the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2012.

"While there is much uncertainty regarding where the overall economy is headed, hotel industry performance over the remainder of 2011 and heading into 2012 continues to look strong," said Tim Hart, a TravelClick executive vice president.

The gains should please hotel owners, who endured steep drops in occupancy and room rates in the recession. Revenue per available room, the industry's key financial measure, is expected to increase by almost 7 percent, the analysis said.

But the recovery will not be across the board.

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