

# Roads expected to be crowded during holidays

AAA projects 98.6 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the year-end holiday season, an increase of 4 percent from the 94.8 million people who traveled last year. The holiday period is defined as Dec. 23-Jan. 4.

This upward trend marks the highest forecast growth rate for the year-end holiday season since 2009 and the highest travel volume for the holiday period on record.

Nearly 91 percent of all travelers (89.5 million) will celebrate the holidays with a road trip, an increase of 4.2 percent from 2013. Air travel is forecast to grow 1 percent from 2013, with 5.7 million travelers taking to the skies.

Low gas prices continue to help boost disposable income. Today's national average is at the lowest level in five years and 70 cents lower than last year.

The calendar is having a positive effect on the number of travelers expected this year. This year the holidays land on a Thursday, creating a holiday travel season that is one day longer than last year's and the longest since 2008, offering travelers more options for departures and return trips.

According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, hotel rates for AAA three diamond lodgings are expected to increase 4 percent from one year ago, with travelers spending an average of \$143 per night compared to \$138 last year. The average hotel rate for AAA Two Diamond hotels has risen 5 percent, with an average cost of \$108 per night.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*