

e-Edition Plus

A current events feature for teaching with electronic editions.

By Emilia Pastina

As gas prices fall, more families are thinking vacation

With Memorial Day and summer right around the corner, many Americans may soon do something they haven't done in a while — go on vacation.

"Motorists may be very happy this Memorial Day weekend since retail gasoline prices will most likely be lower than expected," says Jessica Brady, public relations manager for the AAA travel group.

The national average that families now pay for a gallon of gas is around \$2.90. Experts had predicted that it would be more than \$3 per gallon by Memorial Day, but it doesn't look like that is going to happen.

One of the reasons for lower prices is a greater supply of gasoline. As of mid-May, the U.S. had 222 million barrels stored. That's around 5 percent more than last year.

Also, economic problems on the continent of Europe may reduce the demand for energy there, making more gasoline available for U.S. drivers.

On top of that, tensions in the Middle East and other oil-producing regions have quieted, although that could change at any time.

In July 2008, consumers were paying around \$4.11 per gallon for regular gasoline. By this summer, families could see prices drop as low as \$2.70 a gallon.

Travel upswing

The U.S. Travel Association reports that leisure travel is expected to see a 2 percent increase this year.

"Projected growth in leisure travel is an indicator of rising consumer confidence and disposable income,"

Suzanne Cook, senior vice president of research for the Travel Association, said in a USA Today article.

Recently, Travelocity polled more than 2,000 people about their travel plans. About 50 percent said they plan to travel more this year, while 7 percent said they plan to travel less.

"Flights are going to be completely full this summer," said Rick Seaney, CEO of FareCompare.com, a travel Web site. "I haven't seen airlines smile about any seasons recently, but they're smiling about summer. Almost any cheap seats are sold out."

With cheaper seats unavailable, however, prices will likely be higher for remaining seats, experts say.

Vacation detours

As more Americans plan to hit the road or the air this summer, there is

uncertainty in many coastal towns that normally host vacation travelers.

On April 20 a massive oil spill happened in the Gulf of Mexico, and there are fears it could have a negative effect on vacation resorts across the Gulf region.

The spill — which is still not completely controlled — could hurt tourism from Louisiana to Florida.

This is hard news for beach communities that count on visitors. In Alabama alone, tourists to the state's two coastal Gulf counties spend more than \$3 billion a year.

Any loss of vacation dollars will mean lost jobs, wages and profits at a time when many businesses are struggling.

"We feel for our tourism partners along the Gulf Coast," said Charlie Clark, a spokesman for the Chamber of Commerce of Hilton Head Island on the Atlantic Ocean in South Carolina. "No destination wants to see this happen."

Veer Marketplace Photo



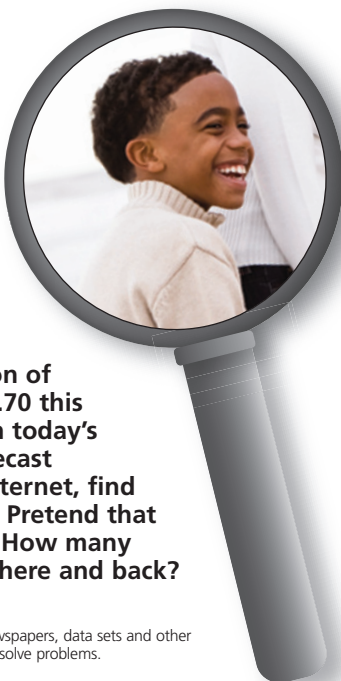
Summer is a time for family vacations, and with gas prices dropping, more families are making plans to get away. Lower prices for gas will make car trips less expensive.

Talk About the News

- Many families look forward to summer vacations, because that is a time when kids are out of school. As a class, talk about places you have gone on vacation in the past and what you liked about them. Poll the class to see where students would like to go if they could travel to another state this summer and chart the results. Then poll the class to see what places students would like to visit in your state.

Learning Standard: Engaging peers in constructive conversations about matters of interest or importance.

Explore Your e-Edition



- The national average price of a gallon of gas is expected to drop as low as \$2.70 this summer. Look at the weather map in today's e-Edition to choose a city with a forecast different than your city. Using the Internet, find the distance between the two cities. Pretend that your car gets 25 miles to the gallon. How many gallons of gas will you need to get there and back? How much would that cost?

Learning Standards: Acquiring information from books, maps, newspapers, data sets and other sources; using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to solve problems.

- Some experts believe more people will be going on vacation this summer. Using ads, news and feature articles in the e-Edition, choose an event or location you'd like to visit on vacation. Write why you would like to experience this place or event. Then print out words and images from the e-Edition to design a poster showing the appeal of this place or event.

Learning Standards: Responding to a variety of texts by making connections to students' personal lives and the lives of others; reading and writing fluently, speaking confidently, listening and interacting appropriately, viewing critically and representing creatively.

- U.S. states on the Gulf of Mexico fear that the oil spill there will hurt tourism. Read the e-Edition to find facts about the oil spill, details about states on the Gulf Coast, attractions in those states and other information to create an e-Edition ad convincing visitors to still visit one of these areas when on vacation this summer.

Learning Standard: Acquiring information from multiple sources; reading and writing fluently, speaking confidently, listening and interacting appropriately, viewing critically and representing creatively.

How Well Did You Read?

Understanding what you read is a skill that will help you all through life. Review the story about gas prices and summer vacations by answering the questions below.

1. According to the story, retail gasoline prices have been:
 - A. Increasing
 - B. Decreasing
 - C. Staying the same
 - D. Predictable
2. According to the U.S. Travel Association, leisure travel is expected to increase how much this year?
 - A. 2 percent
 - B. 7 percent
 - C. 13 percent
 - D. 50 percent
3. According to the story, what is expected to be the difference between the price of a gallon of gas in July 2008 and this summer:
 - A. \$4.11
 - B. \$2.90
 - C. \$2.70
 - D. \$1.41
4. In the story, what factor is linked to higher prices for airplane tickets:
 - A. More people flying
 - B. Lower gasoline prices
 - C. Higher gasoline prices
 - D. More people driving
5. What state in the story is not on the Gulf of Mexico?
 - A. Florida
 - B. South Carolina
 - C. Louisiana
 - D. Alabama