

More people expected to travel at the holidays this year

AAA projects 93.3 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the year-end holidays, an increase of 1.6 percent from the 91.8 million people who traveled last year.

This increase brings holiday travel figures to within half a million of the decade high mark seen during the 2006-07 season. The period is defined as Dec. 22-Jan. 1.

Ninety percent of travelers (84.4 million) are expected to travel by automobile, representing 26.7 percent of the total U.S. population. Holiday air travel expected to increase 4.5 percent to 5.6 million travelers from 5.4 million in 2011.

AAA estimates the national average price of gasoline will slowly drop through the end of the year and average between \$3.20-\$3.40 a gallon by New Year's Day. Gas prices dropped about 50 cents a gallon on average from September through early December, but remain at record highs for this time of year. AAA does not expect gas prices to have a major impact on travel volume, but consumers could have more money to spend on holiday shopping, dining and entertainment if prices drop through December as expected.

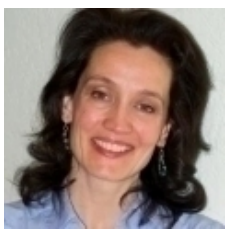
According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, year-end holiday hotel rates for AAA Three Diamond lodgings are expected to increase 2 percent from a year ago, with travelers spending an average of \$129 per night compared to \$126 last year. Travelers planning to stay at AAA Two Diamond hotels can expect to pay 3 percent more, at an average cost of \$95 per night.

Setting a reasonable pace, expectations make for happy holidays

By Mandy Kendall

The holiday period can be busy enough with present buying, menu planning, travel arrangements, house decorating and more that day-to-day routines can often get thrown into disarray. Healthy eating and exercising can often go by the wayside and we may end up feeling like we need a vacation after all the festivities.

Figuring out what is most important to you and your family will help prevent you from being drawn into other people's agendas and feeling exhausted at the end of it all.



Mandy
Kendall

So, here are a few more holiday *Qwik-e* tips to help you have your favorite Christmas this year:

Plan – I know, I know. I've talked about lists many times, but they really do help. You can use them to prioritize into "must do" and "nice to do" sections. You can also add a time element to them; what time a task needs to be completed by or how long

it should take you to do. If you list out what needs to be done and how long it should take you, you will quickly find out if you have enough hours in the day and where you might need to delegate or rethink.

Preparation or socializing – No time to do both? Having a baking party with girlfriends or a group gift shopping expedition will make sure you don't miss out on time with family and loved ones.

Set parameters – We can't do it all. Set the important things taken care of first (this means taking care of you, too) and get to less crucial things if you can. If you can't do it all, don't beat yourself up. Pick and choose your holiday engagements. Map them out in your calendar and be honest as to whether you really want to go or just feel obliged to.

Pace yourself – Adding some down time in your calendar to do what you want to do, whether it's some alone time with a book in the bath, or catching up with a special friend, will help preserve your energy and sense of humor.

Gifts – Are often the most costly part of Christmas. Setting a price limit with family or friends can make sure the spending doesn't get out of hand. Some families choose to focus on gifts only for the kids, just make sure the big kids in the family won't feel left out. A last minute dash to the store for a forgotten present can be avoided by giving the person your own gift card, i.e. promising them something they would enjoy doing with you; perhaps a movie or dinner.

Relax – A calm mind is a productive mind. A few minutes to yourself will do wonders for your focus and stamina. Just pausing to gather yourself with some deep breaths, or doing a few stretches, will set you up for the next stage of your day.

Feed yourself – Skipping breakfast because there's no time is not a great way to start the day. You will likely end up grabbing sugary snacks to help keep you going and throw off

your energy levels. Need I say it, but six cups of coffee is not the same as six glasses of water.

Indulge a little – I like to work on the 80/20 rule when it comes to Christmas eating and treating myself. I will indulge, but I will choose my indulgences carefully. It might be one particular party or event, or one particular dish that I decide I won't go without. That way I don't overindulge, but don't feel like I've deprived myself either. If you know your self-control is probably going to desert you, then how about making a pact with a friend to hit the gym in the New Year?

What will be will be – If you have a tendency to want to control everything and every detail, be daring this year and let go a little. Let others take charge and enjoy what happens. Sometimes the most unexpected things make for the best memories.

Wishing you and yours a very happy and healthy Christmas.

Until next time.

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Note: Join the Health Connective team this January and kick start your New Year with a New You. Feel fabulous with a nutritional cleansing and weight release program and a few sessions with a holistic health professional of your choice. Email connect@healthconnective.com for more details.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

El Dorado County offering \$10 flu shots

The Public Health Division of the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency has wrapped up its community flu vaccination clinics for the season, and is now offering the flu vaccine by appointment.

The seasonal influenza vaccine is available for \$10 per vaccination. No one will be turned away due to inability to pay.

To schedule a vaccination appointment, call (530) 621.6100 in Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.

People at high risk for serious complications from the flu, and their close contacts, are especially encouraged to be vaccinated. These high-risk individuals include children younger than age 5, adults age 65 and older, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions (asthma and other lung disease, diabetes, neurological conditions, and heart disease), people who are morbidly obese, healthcare personnel, and those living with or caring for persons at high risk of severe influenza-related complications. Individuals must be at least 6 months of age to receive the influenza vaccine.

TOCCATA rehearsing for January performances

TOCCATA – Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – kicks off its 8th Winter MusicFest with a concert series that features violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn performing Prokofiev's Concerto in D major on the legendary Red Stradivarius Violin.

The program also includes the Tahoe Symphony Chorus in selections from Bach's masterpiece, the B minor Mass.

The performances are Jan. 19 at 3pm at St. Patrick's Church in Incline Village; Jan. 20 at 3pm at St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe; and Jan. 22 at 7pm at Trinity Church in Reno.

Tickets are available at the door or online.

General admission to all concerts is \$30 adults, \$25 seniors, \$5 students aged 19 to 23 and preferred seating is \$40. Youth 18 and younger are admitted free.

For information or preferred seating, contact TOCCATA online, call (775) 313.9697, or email ToccataTahoe@gmail.com.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Bella is one of several dogs who has arrived in Tahoe from a Reno shelter this past weekend to find a new home. Our shelter frequently has available kennels for homeless pets when other

nearby shelters have almost run out of space, and so the Tahoe staff brings these pets up here to change their luck.



Bella is a very sweet, small (31 pounds) miscellaneous mix of border collie, whippet, and who knows what else. She is affectionate, gets along well with other dogs, and walks nicely on her leash.

Bella is spayed, microchipped, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online to see photos and description of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

Santa arrives in Meyers via modern sleigh

MEYERS – Santa had some special elves and reindeer with him as he arrived in Meyers on Sunday night.

He traded in Rudolph's red nose for the lights of the Calstar

helicopter to guide him to the landing zone near the Divided Sky restaurant. Instead of little men assisting him, he was escorted by bodyguards, aka deputies, from the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department.

This was the second year for Meyers to celebrate the season with a tree lighting, Santa, the Lake Valley fire truck all a glow, free flowing hot cocoa and buttered popcorn to munch on.

New this year was the guys from RISE (Mike Miller and Marley Reel) printing their "trucker hats" at a discount and with all the proceeds going to the Meyers Community Alliance.

The Alliance is the name for what was the Meyers Business Group. It's a grassroots group that is in the process of establishing itself as a nonprofit that is all about embracing Meyers as a destination as well as creating events like the annual tree lighting.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report



Hundreds of people attend the Dec. 9 Meyers tree lighting.



Santa makes his way under sheriff's deputy escort to all the waiting kids.
Photos/Kathryn Reed



Popcorn and hot cocoa are popular with all ages.

Diet plays role in reducing risk of second heart attack

By Jennifer Corbett Dooren, Wall Street Journal

Patients with heart disease frequently assume that medication is enough to forestall a repeat heart attack or stroke, but a large new study shows the preventive power of a healthy diet.

The findings from a report released last week looked at the impact of diet in addition to the medicines routinely used to treat cardiovascular disease. Although it is widely accepted that healthy diets are powerful tools to prevent cardiovascular disease, less is known about the impact of diet on people who already have the disease.

People with the healthiest diets – those with the highest intakes of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and a higher intake of fish relative to meat poultry and eggs – were 35 percent less likely to die from a repeat heart attack or stroke during the length of the study, compared with those with the least healthy diets, according to the five-year study of 32,000 people in 40 countries.

They also were 28 percent less likely to develop congestive heart failure, 14 percent less likely to have an additional heart attack and 19 percent less likely to have a stroke.

Patients in the new study, published in the American Heart Association's medical journal *Circulation*, previously participated in two studies designed to look at certain medicines used to treat high blood pressure.

"At times, patients don't think they need to follow a healthy diet, since their medications have already lowered their blood pressure and cholesterol—that is wrong," said Mahshid Dehghan, a study author and a nutritionist at the Population Health Research Institute, McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. "The more healthy you eat, the healthier you are."

The drug and diet studies were funded by the German pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim.

Study participants were at least age 55 or older and had a prior history of heart disease, stroke or had Type 2 diabetes that was severe enough to have damaged organs.

The goal of the diet research was to see whether healthier

diets had any impact on the rate of cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes.

Participants in the diet-portion of the studies were followed for almost five years.

Dehghan explained that researchers used two diet indexes to measure diet quality and to rank people into five groups according to the healthiest to least-healthy diet.

People were asked how often they consumed dairy, meat, fish, fruits and vegetables. They were also asked about consumption of fried foods and whole grains. Portion sizes weren't recorded.

Researchers controlled for other factors that can influence the progression of cardiovascular disease such as weight, exercise and smoking.

However, Steven Nissen, chairman of the cardiovascular medicine department at the Cleveland Clinic, said that while eating healthy is a good idea, the study itself "doesn't prove anything." Nissen said people with the healthiest diets are more likely to practice other healthy habits such as exercise and said the study authors "cannot adjust for all of these other known and unknown behaviors."

Dehghan said researchers also looked at diet quality and the risk for other things, such as cancer, fractures and non-heart related hospitalizations and didn't find any associations related to diet.

Heart disease is the top killer of Americans, according to the American Heart Association.

The group considers a heart-healthy diet to include more than four cups of fruits and vegetables, and at least three servings of whole grains daily, in addition to limiting intake of sodium and sugar-sweetened beverages.

At least two servings of fish and four servings of nuts or seeds are recommended each week, along with limiting processed meat to no more than two servings a week.

Study: Slot players aren't just in it to win money

By Ron Sylvester, Las Vegas Sun

For people who play slot machines, time is more important than money.

Instead of focusing on hitting a big jackpot, they spin the reels to relieve stress, entertain themselves or kill time.

That's according to a new study from Oregon State University.

The results are important because they help gaming executives understand – and market to – the slot players who provide the most profit to casinos.

“Casinos can cater to different types of gamblers,” said Sandy Chen, an assistant professor of hospitality management at Oregon State University-Cascades and one of the study's authors. “Instead of having a long line of slot machines, for example, they can be arranged in a circle to maximize socialization for those who are motivated by that aspect. Socialization may be a major reason for people to continue going to casinos instead of choosing online gambling options.”

About three-quarters of casino revenue comes from slot play. Between 70 percent and 90 percent of American gamblers say they prefer to play slot machines rather than table games.

Additionally, more than 60 percent of slot players say they'd rather win small, frequent payouts than large, sporadic jackpots. Only 33 percent of gamblers surveyed said they prefer progressive machines, which tend to offer the biggest jackpots.

Chen said slot players typically aren't in a lower-income bracket and looking for big wins. Rather, they are more affluent and seeking entertainment.

Players most likely to be found at slots are women ages 55 to 60 who are homeowners with some college education and a household income of more than \$55,000.

Chen said her study showed that women tend to play slots for the experience while men hope to make money.

"Women are more into functional motives – the social experience, the excitement and the fun," Chen said.

Slot players typically fall into four groups: bored people looking for something to do, players seeking a buzz, people who want to have fun and people looking to relieve stress. The last group, the "relaxation gamblers," tends to be the most educated and affluent. Those players make up the majority of gamblers in the United States, according to surveys by slot manufacturers.

As for specific games, almost three-quarters of progressive players said their favorite game is "Wheel of Fortune." "Jacks or Better" was by far the most popular video poker game.

Relatively unpopular – contrary to information reported by manufacturers – are slot machines with complex story lines and colorful characters. Fewer than 1 in 5 players sought those types of games, Chen said.

Co-authors of the study included Stowe Shoemaker and Dina Zemke, from the Harrah College of Hotel Administration at

Delving into reasons why seniors more prone to scams

By Patti Neighmond, NPR

Lots of scams come by phone or by mail, but when the scam artist is right in front of you, researchers say the clues are in the face.

“A smile that is in the mouth but doesn’t go up to the eyes, an averted gaze, a backward lean” are some of the ways deception may present itself, says Shelley Taylor, a psychologist at UCLA.

Taylor wanted to know if older people recognized these visual cues as readily as younger people. She brought 119 adults older than 55 into the research lab along with 24 younger adults in their 20s. Both groups were shown 30 photographs, each depicting either a trustworthy, a neutral or an untrustworthy face.

“The older adults rated the trustworthy faces and the neutral faces exactly the same as the younger adults did, but when it got to the cues of untrustworthiness, they didn’t process those cues as well,” she says. “They rated those people as much more trustworthy than the younger adults did.”

In a small follow-up study using brain imaging, Taylor’s findings suggest older adults may have less activity in the very area of the brain that processes risk and subtle danger. Another possible reason older adults don’t pick up on warning

signs, she says, is an increasing bias against negativity.

“It’s part of this effort to make life more positive after a certain point in life, which is normally just a wonderful thing,” Shelley says. “Older adults are really great emotional regulators, but it leaves them with this particular vulnerability so that they don’t recognize untrustworthy cues when they should.”

A survey last year from the AARP analyzed the behavior of 723 victims of fraud and compared them to the general public. The survey found the average age of fraud victims was 69.

“Fraud victims tend to be much more likely to do things like open junk mail, listen to unknown callers on the phone who are telemarketing,” says Doug Shadel, who’s with AARP in Washington state and who headed the survey. “They’re more open to putting themselves in sales situations, and this explains in part why they may be defrauded.”

They are also inclined to believe those too-good-to-be true promises, like a guaranteed 50 percent return on investment with no risk. Ironically, it was older men with experience in investing who lost the most. Women were more vulnerable to petty fraud – things like sending in \$50 to collect on that \$50,000 sweepstakes they just won.

The current biggest scam, says Shadel, a former fraud investigator who wrote a book titled *Outsmarting the Scam Artists: How to Protect Yourself from the Most Clever Cons*, are gold coins often advertised in print and broadcast.

“They’ll say, ‘During periods of economic instability, you can’t trust the stock market, can’t trust the bond market – the thing you can trust is precious metals,’” he says.

The genius of the scam is that you actually receive the coins. It’s just that you’ve paid up to five times their market value. Scam artists today, says Shadel, are aided enormously

by technology that enables them to simply press a button and send hundreds of thousands of emails.

The best defense, he says, is don't go for any of it. Throw out the junk mail. Don't answer unknown callers. And forget about those free lunches and dinners that promise great options for investment.

Scholarship set up in former LTCC student's name

A memorial scholarship has been established for former Lake Tahoe Community College student Lyra B. Fisher.

Fisher was tragically murdered this summer, the apparent victim of domestic violence.

Anna Lee, who works at changing students' lives everyday as the TRiO-SSS program specialist at Lake Tahoe Community College, had Fisher as a student. Lee decided to start a scholarship in Fisher's name with the Lake Tahoe Community College Foundation.

"She was a very kind woman who had an incredibly generous spirit," Lee said in a prepared statement. "I got to work with Lyra for about a year and a half. She had decided to come back to school to make very positive changes in her life, not just for herself, but for her young son."

The LTCC Foundation is collecting donations for a scholarship to honor Fisher's life and educational goals. Fisher was working toward an associate degree in criminal justice with plans to become a police officer, Lee said.

Students applying for the Lyra B. Fisher Memorial Scholarship this spring will be asked to write an essay describing how their educational goals will work to end violence in their community.

Donations may be sent to LTCC Foundation, One College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

For questions or more information, call (530) 541.4660, ext. 210.