# Kelley Blue Book Offers Tips for Labor Day Road Trips Amid Ongoing Pandemic, Recent Hurricane, Climbing Gas Prices

**IRVINE, Calif., September 1, 2021** – As millions of Americans take to the highway this weekend to squeeze in one last road trip adventure before the weather turns, Kelley Blue Book offers timely tips for a safe, enjoyable Labor Day weekend road trip amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, recent Hurricane Ida and rising gas prices. Labor Day weekend used to be the unofficial end of summer, but a nationwide trend in starting the school year earlier has nearly put an end to that. Yet it remains the last heavy travel weekend of the season, and anytime millions of people take to the roads, some advanced planning and preparation is in order.

Recent reports indicate that despite obstacles like the ongoing pandemic and recent hurricane, many Americans are still planning to travel this weekend. Hotel booking site Orbitz reports that traditional outdoor getaways like national parks and beaches are seeing a spike in reservations, while competitor Expedia reports that the average Labor Day weekend traveler has reserved three nights for their getaway this year instead of the average two. While Labor Day weekend used to be such a heavy travel time that AAA would provide an estimate of nationwide traffic before it started, the organization has not done so since 2016. Yet even without an exact estimate this year, AAA still reports that it expects Labor Day travel volumes to remain high.

Additionally, gas prices are going up beyond the slight amount they usually rise as the travel weekend approaches. Labor Day weekend 2021 is complicated by the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, which left a trail of damage through the Gulf Coast and caused the evacuation of more than 95% of active drilling platforms. About 20% of the nation's oil refineries were shut down ahead of the storm, and many could be without power for weeks. On top of this, 2021 has seen a shortage of the tanker truck drivers who move gasoline to stations. With that in mind, AAA recommends that drivers not allow their gas tank to sink below one quarter on road trips in case they encounter an area where shipments have been delayed.

"Americans historically love a good Labor Day road trip, and even with the current challenges facing the U.S., many holiday travelers are getting ready to take off this weekend," said Matt DeLorenzo, senior managing editor for Kelley Blue Book. "To prepare for an upcoming Labor Day weekend road trip, we recommend drivers take the time to prepare their vehicle in advance of hitting the road and be mindful of some key safety tips along the way."

### Road Trip Checklist for Your Vehicle

Before setting out, make sure your car, drivers and passengers are ready for the distance ahead. Kelley Blue Book, along with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, recommends that drivers take the following steps in the days leading up to a road trip:

- **Check for Recalls:** Millions of Americans are driving cars that have been recalled for safety reasons, but dealership service bays can get swamped ahead of a busy travel weekend. Check early to see if your car needs any free repairs using Kelley Blue Book's recall center.
- **Get Your Car Serviced:** Keeping up with your car's maintenance schedule can help prevent costly breakdowns. Check Kelley Blue Book's maintenance

pricing and service schedules page to see if you are due for any service.
- **Know Your Car:** While you're probably all set here if you're driving your own car, the case may be different if you're renting. If renting a car, pick it up an hour before you need to leave so you can familiarize yourself with it.
- **Plan Your Travel and Route:** Check road conditions, weather and traffic to know what you're getting into.
- **Stock Your Vehicle with a Safety Kit:** Drivers should carry items like a first aid kit, flashlight, jumper cables, tire pressure gauge, non-perishable food and water, and other safety-kit items to ensure their car is well-stocked in case of emergency.

**Road Trip Safety Tips**

Once you're on the road, safety is all about paying attention and keeping yourself alert. Accordingly, Kelley Blue Book recommends the following safety tips for Labor Day weekend road trips:

- **Pack Masks:** Whether everyone in your car is vaccinated or not, you may not be familiar with local mask mandates in every jurisdiction you pass through. The easiest way to ensure you can always follow local law and stay safe is to have a mask on hand for everyone in the car.
- **Drive at Non-Peak Times:** Late afternoon and early evening are the worst times to be on the road. Avoid the Labor Day traffic by leaving early Friday or Saturday morning to head off on your adventure. For the trip home, leave early Monday or give yourself an extra day and travel home on Tuesday.
- **Limit Nighttime Driving:** In 2017 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), 79% of Labor Day weekend traffic fatalities happened at night. If possible, drive during daylight hours.
- **Let a Passenger Handle Traffic Apps and Entertainment:** It's never a good idea for drivers to handle their phone when their hands should be on the wheel. Put a passenger in charge of Waze or Google Maps, and let them put on the music or podcasts.
- **Take Frequent Breaks:** Getting out of the car is good for everyone, especially the driver. The best way to avoid feeling tired behind the wheel is to give yourself a break and a regular change of scenery.
- **Share the Driving:** If you have multiple qualified drivers, let everyone take a turn handling the stress of driving and a turn relaxing in the passenger seat.
- **Buckle Up:** While we hope we don't need to convince you of this, it can never hurt to give a friendly reminder – be sure everyone fastens their seatbelts. According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, accidents were the fourth leading cause of death for Americans in 2020.

For more details on Labor Day road trip tips and safety information from Kelley Blue Book, visit https://www.kbb.com/car-news/road-trips-car-checklist-safety-tips/.

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