

Independence Day travel expected to be second busiest in history

By CARLOS FUENTES
The Observer

LA GRANDE — With 56% of all adult Americans now fully vaccinated, travelers are gearing up for Fourth of July weekend. According to the American Automobile Association, 597,000 Oregonians are expected to travel for the holiday, a 40% increase from 2020.

This will be the second highest number of travelers for Independence Day in Oregon, only slightly under the 2019 record of 609,000.

AAA says the easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions, increased vaccinations and lower unemployment are giving Americans increased confidence to travel for vacations and fireworks this year.

“People are eager to travel this summer after staying close to home for the last year-and-a-half, Doreen Loofburrow, senior vice president of travel at AAA Oregon/Idaho, said in a press release. “With pandemic restrictions easing and more people getting vaccinated, we saw a strong kick-off to the summer travel season over Memorial Day and that trend continues for Independence Day.”

Oregonians won't be traveling alone: 48 million Americans are expected to travel between July 1 and July 5 — 14.4% of the total population,



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

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according to AAA.

The most popular destinations for Oregonians include Central Oregon, national parks of Utah, Yellowstone, Hawaii, Disneyland and Las Vegas, AAA reported. With record numbers of travelers hitting the road, traffic is expected to cause major delays on highways and in

metropolitan areas.

“With travelers eager to hit the road this summer, we’re expecting nationwide traffic volumes to increase about 15% over normal this holiday weekend. Drivers around major metro areas must be prepared for more delay,” Bob Pishue, transportation analyst at INRIX, said

in a press release. “Knowing when and where congestion will build can help drivers avoid the stress of sitting in traffic.”

To avoid major traffic delays, AAA recommends avoiding travel on the afternoons of July 1 and 2 and mid-day July 5.

More traffic likely will

lead to more accidents and delays. AAA expects to rescue more than 468,000 motorists nationally and 8,000 in Oregon this Independence Day weekend, with the most common issues being dead batteries, lockouts and flat tires.

However, not all accidents are so minor.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Fourth of July weekend usually sees an increase in impaired driving crashes. According to their website, from 2015-19, 1,339 drivers died in motor vehicle crashes during the holiday weekend — over a third of whom were drunk.

Nearly 3.5 million Americans are expected to use airline travel on the holiday weekend; 12% of Oregon travelers will be flying to their destinations, compared to the 86% of drivers who will pay for the highest gas prices on July 4 in seven years, according to AAA.

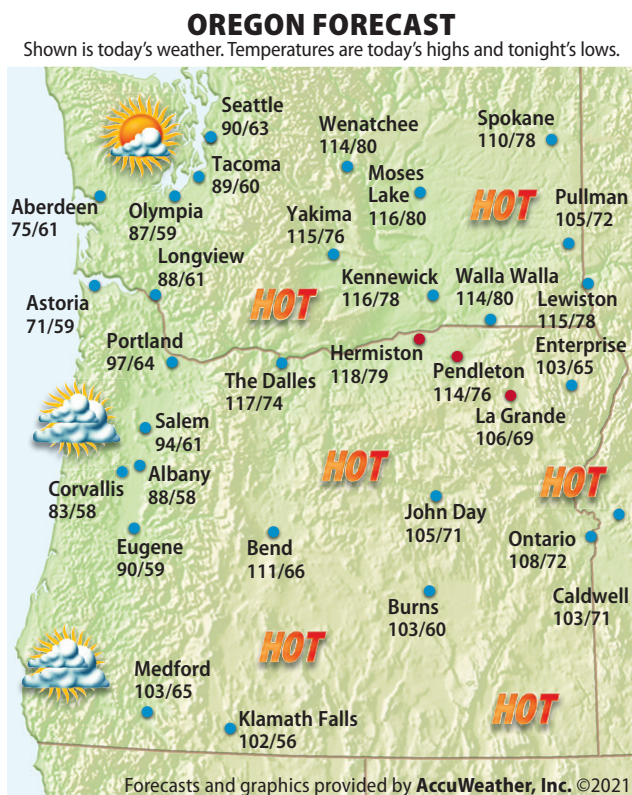
The holiday’s national gas price average of \$3.07 will be the highest average since 2014, and the Oregon average of \$3.49 is the fifth highest in the nation.

Nonetheless, these prices aren’t deterring travel plans, according to AAA.

“Expensive pump prices won’t keep people home,” Marie Dodds, public affairs director for AAA Oregon/Idaho, said. “Instead, travelers will find other ways to save money, such as staying closer to home, shortening the duration of a trip, limiting restaurant meals and/or eating at moderately priced restaurants, limiting shopping budgets, and looking for free or low-cost activities.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
HOT	HOT	HOT	HOT	HOT
Record-breaking temperatures	Near-record temperatures	Mostly sunny and very hot	Very hot with sizzling sunshine	Very hot with partial sunshine
114° 76°	106° 72°	100° 69°	100° 68°	101° 70°
118° 79°	109° 75°	103° 73°	104° 71°	104° 73°



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	110°	72°
Normals	83°	55°
Records	110° (2021)	40° (1908)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.28"
Normal month to date	1.02"
Year to date	4.31"
Last year to date	8.57"
Normal year to date	7.53"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	112°	70°
Normals	84°	55°
Records	112° (2021)	40° (1964)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.23"
Normal month to date	0.56"
Year to date	1.93"
Last year to date	1.65"
Normal year to date	5.67"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Wed.
Boardman	NE 4-8	SW 7-14
Pendleton	SE 4-8	NNW 6-12

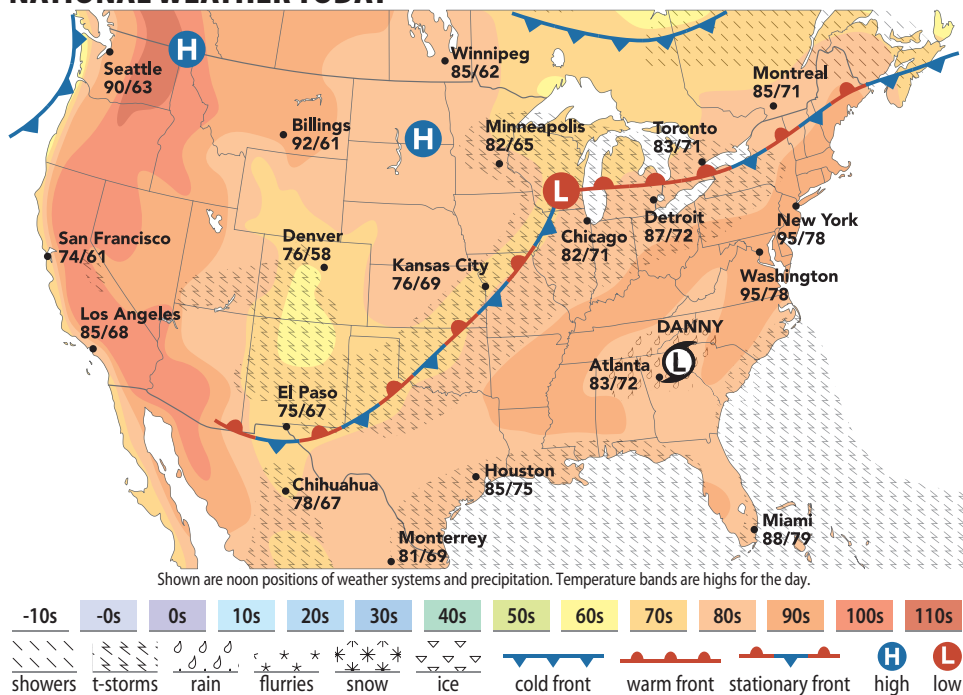
SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:09 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:49 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:08 a.m.
Moonset today	10:41 a.m.

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 117° in The Dalles, Ore. Low 31° in Gothic, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



‘Joe Bell’ to open in theaters next month

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The compelling and tragic story of Jadin Bell and his father, Joe Bell, will soon hit the silver screen.

“Joe Bell” is set to open in theaters July 23. The announcement has been made on the Twitter site of Mark Wahlberg, an American actor, producer and songwriter, who plays Joe Bell in the film.

“This family and their story touched my heart in a big way,” the social media post said.

The story of Joe and Jadin Bell made national headlines in 2013 after Jadin, a 15-year-old sophomore at La Grande High School, took his own life after being bullied because he was gay.

Joe Bell later started on a national walk in memory of his son to draw attention to bullying. He was killed Oct. 9, 2013, while walking along a road when he was hit by a

truck in Colorado.

“Joe Bell” originally was scheduled to be released in theaters in February, but the release was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patty Johnson, manager of La Grande’s Granada Theatre, said she is attempting to get the movie booked for showings at the theater. Johnson said she first needs to receive authorization from its distributor. She said distributors have requirements for elements like screen size and audience capacity that must be met before their films can be shown in a theater. Johnson said she does not anticipate problems in receiving authorization.

“Joe Bell,” which is being released by Solstice Studios, was directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green and its screenplay was written by Diana Ossana and Larry McMurtry. Ossana and McMurtry also wrote the screenplay for the 2005 landmark film “Brokeback Mountain.” The stars

of “Joe Bell,” in addition to Wahlberg, include Connie Britton and Morgan Lily. The movie was filmed at sites around Utah, including Salt Lake City and Summit County.

Although the film was not shot in Union County, Wahlberg did visit La Grande in late January 2019 to do research for his part in the movie.

A portion of the movie focuses on Joe Bell’s walk, when he gave a number of talks in churches, schools and other places on behalf of his foundation. He talked of the evils of bullying and what can be done to prevent it.

Jadin Bell’s family members and friends said bullying drove him to suicide, and they later launched an anti-bullying campaign called Faces for Change.

“Joe Bell” premiered at the 2020 Toronto International Film Festival. It was once titled “Good Joe Bell,” according to the website www.slashfilm.com.

IN BRIEF

No public interest in jail deputy after getting caught having phone sex with inmate

JOHN DAY — An attorney for the jail deputy recorded having sexual phone conversations with an inmate said there was no public interest in the matter and threatened to sue the county if records related to the investigation are released.

Dan Thenell, general counsel for the Fraternal Order of Police union, argued his clients, former deputy Abigail Mobley and her husband the undersheriff, had been “vilified” based on “false accusations.” He made the statements at a name clearing hearing June 23 offered by the Grant County Court, which has indicated it plans to release records related to the case.

“(Mobley) has been the victim of a vicious campaign to defame her,” Thenell said.

Thenell said there was no public interest in the records because Mobley resigned from her position at the sheriff’s office and the only reason to release them would be to hurt her.

He said, if the county releases the records as planned, it would present his client in a false light, and he would have no choice but to pursue a legal remedy.

Personnel discipline actions are conditionally exempt from disclosure under Oregon law — unless the public interest requires disclosure in the particular instance. Personnel investigations of public safety employees that do not result in discipline may not be disclosed — unless the public interest requires disclosure, or the public body (in this case, the county court) determines that nondisclosure of the information would adversely affect the confidence of that body.

Mobley spent 21 months on administrative leave from March 2019 until she resigned in December 2020, costing county taxpayers between \$117,500 and \$149,000, amid investigations by Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office, the Oregon Department of Justice and Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office.

DOJ officials determined through dozens of recorded jail calls that Mobley was having sexual conversations with former jail inmate Darren Mortimore but concluded there was not “a reasonable likelihood of proving beyond a reasonable doubt that Ms. Mobley committed the crime of custodial sexual misconduct.”

Thenell said at the hearing that the inmate was an intelligent predator seeking out and abusing vulnerable women, including another former female sheriff’s office employee.

— EO Media Group

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