

At the Pumps: Prices topping \$4 a gallon in Oregon, near \$5 in California

May 16, 2023



Greater demand for gasoline and lower crude oil costs are basically cancelling each other out, leading to minimal changes in gas prices this week, according to the latest American Automobile Association (AAA) price survey.

Crude has been in the low \$70s for the last several days, leading to fairly stable pump prices as Memorial Day approaches.

The West Coast region continues to have the most expensive pump prices in the nation with all seven states in the top 10, according the AAA. It's typical for the West Coast to have six or seven states in the top 10 as this region tends to consistently have fairly tight supplies, consuming about as much gasoline as is produced.

In addition, this region is located relatively far from parts of the country where oil drilling, production and refining occurs, so transportation costs are higher. And environmental programs in this region add to the cost of production, storage and distribution.

Holiday travel

Despite rising prices at the pumps, AAA expects Memorial Day travel volume to be the third busiest on record.

AAA projects 42.3 million Americans, 12.6% of the population, including 578,000 Oregonians will travel 50 miles or more from home this Memorial Day weekend. This is an increase of 7% over 2022.

For the week, the national average for regular ticks up half a cent to \$3.53 a gallon. The Oregon average edges up one and a half cents to \$4.13.

“Increasing demand for gasoline would usually drive pump prices higher, but the cost of crude oil has remained relatively low in May. This means drivers shouldn’t see dramatic swings in pump prices for now,” AAA Oregon/Idaho Public Affairs Director Marie Dodds said.

Price breakdown

Oregon is one of 44 states and the District of Columbia where prices have changed by a nickel or less in the past week. Ohio (+23 cents) has the largest weekly jump. Florida (-7 cents) has the largest weekly decrease.

California (\$4.80) has the most expensive gas in the nation for the 11th week in a row. Hawaii (\$4.78) is second, Arizona (\$4.66) is third, Washington (\$4.59) is fourth, Nevada (\$4.21) is fifth, Oregon (\$4.13) is sixth, and Utah (\$4.05) is seventh. These are the seven states with averages at or above \$4 a gallon. This week 43 states and the District of Columbia have averages in the \$3-range. One state, Mississippi (\$2.97) has an average in the \$2 range this week, same as a week ago.

The cheapest gas in the nation is in Mississippi (\$2.97) and Louisiana (\$3.07). For the 122nd week in a row, no state has an average below \$2 a gallon.

The difference between the most expensive and least expensive states is \$1.82 this week, same as a week ago.

Oregon is one of only 12 states with higher prices now than a month ago. The national average is 14 cents less and the Oregon average is nine cents more than a month ago. Utah (+41 cents) has the largest monthly jump. North Carolina (-30 cents) has the largest month-over-month drop. The average in Rhode Island is flat.

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have lower prices now than a year ago. The national average is 95 cents less and the Oregon average is 87 cents less than a year ago. The District of Columbia (-\$1.21) has the largest yearly drop. Arizona (-10 cents) has the smallest. A year ago, pump prices were rising rapidly after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.