

ROAD WARRIOR

The lure of fall travel despite rising hotel prices

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Saturday, 20 Sep 2014 | 7:00 AM ET



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Leisure and business travelers considering fall travel are likely to find slightly higher hotel prices this season, but at least airfare so far is in check.

Flights around Thanksgiving are currently 14 percent cheaper than last year's prices, according to [Hopper](#) travel data, which analyzes airfare searches from multiple sources.

"Fortunately, prices in 2013 remained flat up until about 10 days before departure, so those waiting until the first week of November to book still didn't see much of a price increase," the Hopper report states. But once the 10-day window hit, prices jumped 25 percent to 30 percent.

Hotel room rates in the United States this year are up 4.5 percent on average, and are forecast to climb at a 5 percent rate in 2015, said Jan Freitag, a senior vice president at Tennessee-based travel research firm STR.

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But those percentage increases are higher at the luxury levels, and in cities where demand is especially high, such as Nashville, where rates were up 13 percent in the first seven months of the year, and [San](#)

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ROAD WARRIOR



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Francisco, which saw an 11 percent rise. Hotel rates have been on a sustained climb for many months. Currently the **average room rate in the United States** is \$117.73, according to STR data.

Across the U.S., demand keeps going up and there are only 100,000 hotel rooms under construction nationwide, Freitag told CNBC. Right now, "it's a sellers market" when it comes to room rates, he said.

Very recent hotel openings include the **SLS** and **Delano in Las Vegas**, and the Park Hyatt in midtown Manhattan's 90-story One57 skyscraper. Much anticipated hotels on track to open this season include **The Knickerbocker** at Times Square in New York and the **Nautilus South Beach** in Miami from Jason Pomeranc's new SIXTY boutique chain.

Other hotels are offering new ways to get around this fall. At one end, the **Waldorf Astoria Driving Experience** offers a chance at the wheel of Ferrari's 458 Italia, a MP4-12C by McLaren or Porsche 911 Turbo while the **Hotel Hugo** in New York is touting Vespa scooter rentals for its guests.

Travelers looking for fall deals have at least one new option. In Los Angeles, the first **Hotel Week LA** will begin Nov. 29 with rooms discounted to \$100, \$200 or \$300 per night at a handful of locations.

Fall destinations, at least for the jet-set crowd, include Houston, Las Vegas, Dallas. And according to September, October and November bookings with **Sentient Jet**, Florida is a key destination with cities West Palm Beach, Jacksonville and Naples, ranking among the top choices.

At Sentient, which handles both business and leisure private jet travel, fall bookings are up 19 percent over 2013 and 33 percent over 2012, according to company president Andrew Collins.



Source: Kevin Burkholder | Amtrack

Amtrak's last remaining Great Dome car was built in 1955 by the Budd Company for the Great Northern Northern Railway and the Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad.

Other U.S. destinations are likely to get a boost through new attractions, festivals and installations this fall.

Northeastern states are touting their fall colors as one of the best in recent years and Amtrak is getting in on the action rolling out its "Great Dome" car on its **Adirondack** line from Sept. 25 through Nov. 4, allowing panoramic overhead views for the serious leaf peepers. The car, the only



Started as a training exercise for oil company employees who routinely flew to remote locations, the course is now open to frequent fliers.



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LA hotel workers eye \$15.37 min wage

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remaining dome car in Amtrak service, will operate between Albany and Montreal because of physical clearance issues further south.

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At Ellis Island, new tours of the long-shuttered **hospital will open to the public for hard-hat tours** in hopes of raising money to help restore the buildings. The buildings, still in a serious state of disrepair, have some of the original equipment in place. The hospital has been open to the public in the past on a limited basis through tours such as the annual fall **Open House New York** weekend. Tickets go on sale Sept. 25 for tours starting Oct. 1. New York is also preparing for the opening of the third phase of its **High Line park**, built atop a long-abandoned elevated freight railway line.

Earlier this month, the **White House Visitor Center** reopened after a \$12.5 million renovation and is filled with 90 artifacts including President Franklin D. Roosevelt's desk.

On the opposite coast, another National Park Service facility, **Alcatraz Island**, will host a site-specific installation by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei on the topics of human rights and freedom of expression. Also in San Francisco, the \$100 million James H. Herman Cruise Terminal at Pier 27 is set to open next week, becoming the city's primary cruise ship terminal.

In **Colorado**, the **Royal Gorge Bridge and Park** just reopened following a fire that burned 90 percent of the park. It's been closed for 16 months to allow for the repair of one of the world's highest suspension bridges and other attractions.

And in **Florida**, the town of **St. Augustine is celebrating its 450th anniversary** with events that will stretch into next year.

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