Summertime means sunshine, sundaes and summer travel, so it's no surprise that many Americans spend more time this season on the road, on the water and in the air. Whether vacationing or visiting family and friends across the country and around the world, petroleum fuels 90% of transportation energy demand in the United States and remains the number one source of energy worldwide.

See below to learn how petroleum-derived liquid fuels and petrochemicals help Americans make the most of the summer season.

Driving

Summer is when Americans do most of their driving — specifically from Memorial Day to Labor Day — and, fittingly, it's also when drivers need American refineries to make the most gasoline. For the vast majority of American drivers, internal combustion engine cars and trucks are what they use to get from place to place. In fact, gasoline-fueled vehicles accounted for a full 87% of all vehicle miles traveled in 2024.

To prepare for and meet heightened summer fuel demand, U.S. refineries routinely operate at some of their highest utilization rates for the duration of the summer. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the trends for both refinery utilization and the number of vehicle miles traveled routinely peak in the summer.



Flying

Two of the busiest times for air travel also fall during the summer: Independence Day weekend and late August in the lead up to Labor Day. In 2024, there was an average of nearly 700,000 passenger aircraft miles flown between May and September.

Last year on July 7, TSA recorded 3,013,622 people passing through security checkpoints — the first time in history that number exceeded three million in a single day. And of the top 15 air travel days in 2024, 14 occurred between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day. Americans are all about summer trips!



Boating

100 million Americans go boating each year and, this year, a record 19 million are expected to go on cruises. At the same time, popular summer destinations such as Destin, Miami, Los Angeles, New York City and Tampa have seen considerable growth in boating tourism and recreation. Much of this is made possible by American-made liquid fuels and petrochemicals.



While there are certainly alternative fuels in the mix — including sustainable aviation fuel, LNG and renewable diesel (many of which are also produced by American refineries) — it is largely petroleum-derived liquid fuels that power your summer excursions.

Petrochemicals also play an integral role. From your car's steering wheel and tires to an airplane's wings, seats and overhead bins, all are derived from petrochemicals. You can find petrochemicals in the most essential elements of a boat too, including its hull, as well as recreational water toys — like inner tubes to float down a lazy river.

So, whether you're setting out on a long-awaited road trip, jet-setting to your dream vacation destination or relaxing on the water with friends and family, remember:

Summer fun is brought to you by American-made liquid fuels and petrochemicals.

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About AFPM:

The American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM) is the leading trade association representing the makers of the fuels that keep us moving, the petrochemicals that are the essential building blocks for modern life, and the midstream companies that get our feedstocks and products where they need to go. We make the products that make life better, safer and more sustainable — we make progress.

Topics

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