

## Gas Prices Driving Cost of Driving Up

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Gas prices continue to rise across the nation. Gas prices here in the High Country are reaching almost \$2.60 per gallon and are expected to continue to drift upward during the spring and summer travel seasons.

That increase is driving up the cost of car ownership. According to Carolina's Triple A, the average cost of car ownership in North Carolina has increased to \$5,195 dollars a year. That's about 49 cents per mile for someone driving 15,000 miles a year. Conventional wisdom is split on how the gas price increase might impact tourism in the high country. Some believe it will slow travel down a bit, while others believe it will drive more tourism here as regional travelers opt for more trips closer to home. Traffic to and in the high country over the past couple of weeks seems to be growing. Regional promotion for the upcoming Trout Derby and Wine Festivals in Blowing Rock, and Easter travelers will likely keep the flow of traffic coming up mountain.