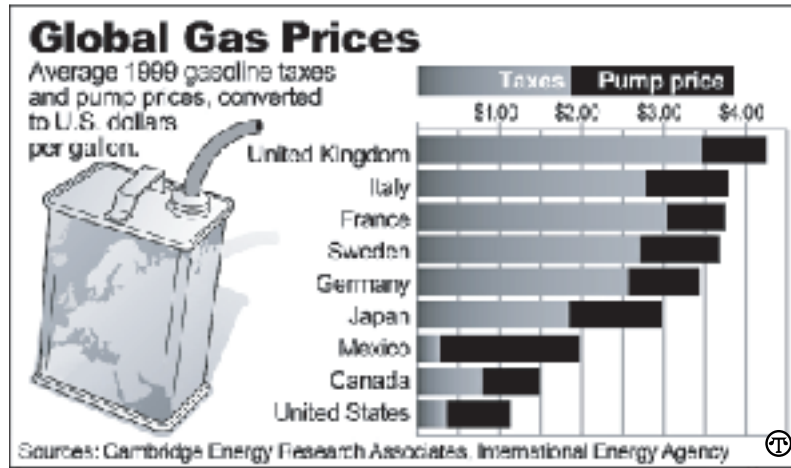


Gas Prices And America's Love Affair With Cars



Juan Thomasolo

Americans pay far less for a gallon of gasoline than residents of other countries.

(NAPSA)—Americans love almost everything about cars. We love the way they look, drive, work and even that “new car smell.” It’s been that way for more than 100 years and statistics suggest it won’t change for at least that many more.

Consider this: America has about 10 percent more cars than licensed drivers—and those cars are getting a workout. In 1980, each driver averaged 9,700 miles per year. Twenty years later, that figure is over 13,000 miles.

There’s only one area where Americans’ love affair with cars goes off track and that’s at the pumps. Many Americans are frustrated with the price of feeding their cars.

At the same time, we sometimes forget that U.S. consumers pay less for fuel than any other world citizens and that taxes—not oil company profits—make up a significant percentage of each gallon’s cost.

Oil companies are constantly exploring new technologies to provide energy for the future while educating the public about the forces that determine the price and availability of our current energy supply.

In remarks to the House Commerce Committee, Red Cavaney, president of the American Petroleum Institute, said, “The intensive use of the latest, most advanced technology is making the century-old oil and gas

industry an innovative, visionary and highly efficient new industry. Our industry has been producing, and intends to keep providing, both the fuels and feedstocks that make life simpler and safer, more comfortable and more convenient for American society.”

Travel overseas and experience a new kind of sticker shock: Converted to American dollars and gallons, the average Brit paid \$4.25 for a gallon of gas in 1999; the French paid \$3.79. Taxes are the primary reason: The U.S. government takes about 34 percent of the price of a gallon of gasoline, while England’s government takes 82 percent and France’s, 80 percent.

U.S. drivers use one out of every nine barrels of oil produced worldwide. Collectively, we’re using almost four times as much gasoline per day as we did 50 years ago. We have more places to go and more roads to travel. We also have more leisure time, more efficient engines and, not to be overlooked, cleaner, more efficient gasolines.

So, despite other options, Americans continue their love affair with cars—and with new fuels-related technology discovered daily, chances are it will remain that way long into the future.

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