🔔 MOTEL COACH

Motel Coach Resource: Forecasting Motel Occupancy

Forecasting Motel Occupancy for the Next 12 Months

Step 1: Define the Timeframe & Set Up a Spreadsheet. First, decide the exact period (next 365 days) and create a spreadsheet (Excel or Google Sheets) with one row per date. Include columns like Date, Day of Week, Baseline Occupancy (a starting guess), Seasonal Adjustment, Event/Holiday Adjustment, and Forecast Occupancy. For example, list all dates Jan 1 through Dec 31 in one column, and note weekdays vs. weekends. Enter formulas so that Forecast = Baseline + Seasonal Adjustment + Event Adjustment. (Cap the forecast at 100% if your sum would exceed full occupancy.) Defining your period clearly is important: as Lighthouse notes, forecasting for one night versus an entire year "will vary quite a bit".

- ✅ **Tip:** Start by entering a constant or simple formula in Baseline Occupancy (e.g. an average) so you have something to adjust. You can later replace these with more refined monthly values.
- If you know your motel's number of rooms (capacity), you could also work in room-counts instead of percentages (e.g. Baseline = 10 rooms, out of 20 total).

Step 2: Establish a Seasonal Baseline. Determine a base occupancy level for each month or week of the year, even if only by educated guess.

In many regions, motel demand is strongly seasonal. For example, U.S. hotels "consistently emerge with peaks" in the summer (June–August) and much lower demand in winter . One dataset shows July–August accounting for about 31% of annual guest-nights while January is under 5%. NetSuite also explains that "many hotels experience periods of high and low demand due to seasonality," so forecasting those spikes (and troughs) is especially critical . Seasonal occupancy example chart. In practice, you might set a higher Baseline Occupancy (say 70–90%) for summer months and a lower one (30–50%) for winter, reflecting local climate and tourism patterns. For instance, if your motel is in a summer-beach or mountain area, July–August could be

almost fully booked (80–100%), while November–January might be under 50%. If you have no data, start with a plausible mock pattern: e.g., Jan 40%, Feb 50%, Mar 60%, Apr 70%, May 80%, Jun 85%, Jul 90%, Aug 85%, Sep 70%, Oct 60%, Nov 50%, Dec 45%. (Adjust these after discussing with staff or local colleagues.) Also consider weekday vs weekend: HFTP advises asking whether demand "dips during certain weekdays" . Many motels fill up more on weekends (leisure travelers) and are quieter midweek. You can further break down your baseline by day of week if that pattern is strong.

Step 3: Identify Holidays, School Breaks, and Local Events. Next, list all special dates in the coming year that could boost or reduce demand:

- Public Holidays: Mark federal and state holidays (e.g. New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas). Holiday weekends usually bring higher travel.
- School Breaks: Note local school vacation periods (spring break, summer break, winter break). Families often travel during these, significantly increasing bookings .
- Local Events: Research any big events in your area (festivals, concerts, sports games, conventions). Check city calendars, fair schedules, and tourism websites. For example, a county fair or annual expo can spike

local occupancy. As a guide: "Are there demand spikes linked to local festivals, holidays, or school breaks?" – identifying such spikes lets you plan ahead. For each date or range, decide how much extra occupancy to add. BookingNinjas recommends "account for holidays, local events, and their anticipated impact on demand using event calendars". For example, if July 4 falls on a Friday, you might add +10–20% to those dates. If a school spring break is mid-March, add extra occupancy to that week (e.g. +15%). Conversely, note any periods likely to dip (e.g. immediately after Christmas or the autumn off-season). Little Hotelier points out that "holiday periods are a busy time" and a chance to "push the limits of your occupancy" . In your sheet, you could put a row flagging "Independence Day", "County Fair", etc., with an adjustment percent or room count.

- Example: If baseline for July is 90%, but July 4th is expected to sell out, you might set Event Adjustment = +10% on that date (so Forecast=100%). If a large trade show comes to town in September, perhaps add +20% to those dates. If an expected holiday actually falls on a midweek and family travel is higher, increase accordingly.

- School Breaks: The data-driven advice is clear: school holidays drive bookings . For each local school district break, add occupancy (e.g. +15%–30%). You might find these dates on a state education site.
- Weekends and Season: Some adjustments overlap (e.g. a summer weekend plus holiday); you can add multiple factors but ensure Forecast ≤100%.

Step 4: Calculate the Final Forecast. With baseline and adjustments in place, compute each day's forecast occupancy. In your spreadsheet, you might use a formula like:

Forecast Occupancy % = Baseline % + Seasonal Adj % + Event/ Holiday Adj %

(or the analogous room count). If your motel has, say, 20 rooms, you could also translate percentages into number-of-rooms forecasts. For instance, 75% occupancy = 15 rooms; if an event adds 3 more rooms, forecast = 18/20 = 90%.

- Cap at Capacity: Never exceed 100% (full house). If the sum goes above 100%, set it to 100%.
- Staffing and Rates: Use the forecast to plan operations. For example, NetSuite notes that a good forecast "helps hotel managers predict and schedule the right level of resources" (staff, housekeeping, supplies) each day . If your forecast shows 90% occupancy on a summer weekend, plan for extra staff that day. If only 30% in mid-January, you can schedule minimally. Similarly, adjust pricing: as

NetSuite explains, hotels often change room rates based on demand factors (seasonality, events, etc.) rather than charging a flat rate. When high-demand dates appear in your forecast, you can safely raise rates; when demand is low, consider discounts or promotions to try and capture additional share of your market's bookings.

Step 5: Review and Update Regularly. Forecasting is an ongoing process, not a one-time task. As bookings start to come in, compare actual numbers to your forecasts and adjust future months. BookingNinjas emphasizes that you should "regularly update your forecast to reflect new data, trends, and market conditions". For example, if by April you see that spring bookings are stronger than expected, raise the baseline for the coming months. If a planned event is canceled or a new hotel opens nearby, revise accordingly. Always revisit the 12-month forecast at least monthly.

- Refine with Reality: Use real reservation data as it arrives. If your spreadsheet shows 60% in May but by mid-May you're already at 80% booked, increase June's forecast proportionally.
- Plan Staff and Costs: An accurate, updated forecast keeps you from overstaffing on slow nights and helps prevent understaffing on busy nights.

- Stay Flexible: Be prepared to update the forecast if unexpected events occur (e.g., a sudden concert announced, or a local emergency).

By following these steps – setting up a spreadsheet, building a seasonal baseline, marking holidays/events, applying adjustments, and continually refining – a new motel manager can produce a practical year-ahead occupancy forecast. This forecast will support smarter rate plans and staffing schedules. For example, if your forecast shows August weekends at 95% occupancy, you'll know to set higher rates and hire extra housekeepers. Likewise, if December weekdays are only 30%, you might offer promotions or reduce hours to cut costs.

Sources: Industry guides and data emphasize the importance of these factors. Seasonal demand swings (high summer, low winter) are well documented . Holidays and school breaks are known to boost travel demand , and local events can create sharp spikes . Forecasts are used by hotels to align pricing and staffing with expected occupancy . All advice above is drawn from hospitality industry sources to help a motel manager create a straightforward, manual occupancy forecast.

The hotelier's ultimate guide to occupancy forecasting
https://www.mylighthouse.com/resources/blog/how-to-forecast-hotel-occupancy

Hotel Occupancy Rates Reflect Seasonal Trends in U.S. Hospitality Industry
https://www.hoteljolt.com/posts/hotel-occupancy-rates-reflect-seasonal-trends-in-u-s-hospitality-industry

Seasonality in the tourist accommodation sector - Statistics Explained - Eurostat
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Seasonality_in_the_tourist_accommodation_sector

Hotel Forecasting Defined: Why It's Important & How to Optimize | NetSuite
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Hotel Demand Management: Forecasting & Market Intelligence Explained | HFTP
https://www.hftp.org/news/4127633/hotel-demand-management-forecasting-market-intelligence-explained

How School Holidays Impact Your Business, and How to Use That Data - PredictHQ
https://www.predicthq.com/blog/how-school-holidays-impact-your-business

Mastering Occupancy Forecasting for Hotel Success
https://www.bookingninjas.com/blog/the-hoteliers-guide-to-occupancy-forecasting

Hotel peak season: Strategies for small hotels - Little Hotelier
https://www.littlehotelier.com/blog/get-more-bookings/hotel-peak-season/