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Slide Show

School tours filling town with buses

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If you think you've seen a lot of tour buses around town this week, you're right. It's school tour season.

"We are seeing more than we did last spring," said Billy Scruggs, who runs Retro's Good Eats downtown. "I think when schools were worried about their budgets, the field trips were the first thing to be cut."

Friday morning between 8:30 and 9 there were at least 25 tour buses headed east on Interstate 64 to Williamsburg.

"It has been busy," said Debby Padgett at the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation. She has more reservations for school tours from now through June than she had last year.

Colonial Williamsburg spokesman Tom Shrout said, "The other day I think I counted about a dozen lined up near our museums. We are definitely seeing an increase in school visits this year."

David Smith, sales manager for Oleta Coach Lines, said, "It's up quite a bit. We have a number of sold-out days this spring. The economy is turning around."

One problem is the escalating cost of fuel. School and other tours are booked months in advance and priced based on gas prices at the time. As prices have soared near \$4 a gallon, the tour bus operators have felt the squeeze.

"It definitely cuts into the profit margin," Smith said. "But you can't tell somebody after they've signed a contract that they are going to have to pay more."

Crude oil prices fell this week, giving hope that gas and diesel will soon follow.



Buses brought thousands of schoolchildren to the Historic Area this week.

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