



For Immediate Release

July 8, 2009

Five Reasons To Travel This Year

This is likely to be the best year in many years to travel, especially overseas, according to the U.S. Tour Operators Association. The organization, whose members book vacations for 11 million people a year, points to five reasons why Americans should seize the opportunity now to travel abroad.

A Stronger Dollar means money goes further

The U.S. dollar has risen against many world currencies by 10–45% depending on destination. While it is showing gains against the Euro, the dollar buys at least 20% more than last year in European countries that rely on their own currency, including the U.K., Hungary, Sweden, and Iceland. In Australia, Brazil, Mexico, and New Zealand, the dollar continues to be strong against local currencies.

Good Deals are easier to find

Travelers are seeing average savings of 20% over last year on travel arrangements. “The dollar’s stronger buying power, combined with the need to increase business revenues during the recession has led to any number of good deals,” says Bob Whitley, USTOA president.

Some examples:

- In **Italy**, the number one foreign destination, buying power of the dollar is nearly 10% higher than in 2008. Travelers are saving 10–25% over last year on custom arrangements and vacation packages.
- In **Australia**, where the dollar’s purchasing power has risen by more than 15%; a 16 day, custom itinerary, including airfare, costs \$1,430 this year—\$500 less than 2008.
- In the **United Kingdom**, the dollar buys over 20% more than in 2008, and a one-week air inclusive tour of England, Scotland, and Ireland costs \$2599, or \$250 less than last year.

More Americans are obtaining passports

American accessibility to travel abroad is growing, as more U.S. citizens hold passports today than ever before. According to U.S. State Department figures, over 16 million passports were issued last year alone. As of June 1, Americans need a passport document to re-enter the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda as part of the final phase of the Department of Homeland Security’s Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

“Holding a passport opens up a world of travel beyond our neighboring countries to people who have never ventured across the Atlantic or Pacific oceans,” said Whitley. “What makes foreign travel even

easier is the fact that 27 countries -- including the U.K., France, Italy, Iceland, Latvia, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Singapore – no longer require visas from American citizens.”

Travel Stimulates the World Economy

Travel is a major economic stimulus worldwide. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, a record 58 million international travelers visited the U.S. in 2008, each contributing an average \$4,400 to our economy. The World Travel & Tourism Council estimates international tourism to the U.S. accounts for 15% of our gross domestic product. And travel remains among the three largest global industries, responsible for 1 in 13 jobs worldwide—some 220 million workers.

“Just as travelers visiting the U.S. help our economy, international travel by Americans supports not only the U.S. tourism industry, but economies overseas, some of which depend on tourism for a sizeable part of their revenue,” notes Whitley. “This is especially true in developing countries where tourism may be the only real industry.”

The “Obama Effect”

As an impetus to travel abroad, USTOA is calling on Americans to take advantage of the goodwill and positive American image generated by President Obama’s policy of engagement and openness with world leaders.

“By traveling, each American becomes an unofficial global ambassador,” said Whitley. “We encourage Americans to follow in President Obama’s footsteps and explore the vast world outside our borders and underscore American values around the globe.”

More Information

For more information on USTOA, and for a list of member companies, visit: www.USTOA.com, www.USTOA.travel, or see your travel agent. USTOA member companies adhere to strict industry standards, including participation in the Association’s ‘Traveler Assistance Program,’ which, among other things, protects consumer travel packages for up to \$1 million. USTOA is the premier association of companies providing vacation packages, tours, and custom travel itineraries.

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Contact:
Linda Kundell
Kundell Communications
(212) 877-2798
Kundellcom@nyc.rr.com – or –
LRKPR@aol.com