



For Immediate Release
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ITALY PLACES FIRST FOR PACKAGED TRAVEL IN 2009, DESPITE RECESSION National Parks rank first for domestic travel, New York cited as top city

Despite a worldwide recession, Americans' love affair with Italy continues, with the country ranked first as top international destination for packaged travel, according to the U.S. Tour Operators Association, whose members send 11 million people a year on vacation packages and tours.

Italy and Egypt take top honors

In USTOA's annual informal polling of member companies, **Italy** – for the seventh consecutive year -- placed as the top international country for packaged travel in 2009 as well as the top destination overall for packaged travel.

For the second year in a row, **Egypt** ranked second to Italy in both categories as well as hottest up and coming country. Australia ranked third as most popular international destination.

Europe outpaced South America in 2009 as most popular continent for packaged travel, and Asia placed third. According to USTOA president Bob Whitley, Italy's popularity catapulted Europe into first place. Whitley cites a consumer survey conducted earlier in the year which indicated that three out of four Americans planned to travel in 2009, and of those, 20% were planning to go abroad. "While travel overseas was generally weaker than in previous years, it's important to keep in mind that people still traveled in 2009, and that Europe continues to be a big draw for international travel," he says.

Biggest Destination for 2009

A full quarter of survey respondents cited Italy as the biggest overall destination for 2009, with 20% citing Egypt. In third place was Ecuador's **Galapagos Islands**, cited by just under 15%.

Egypt, Latin America are hottest up and coming destinations

Latin America took top honors as hottest up and coming area, with USTOA respondents citing Peru, Argentina, Patagonia and the Atacama Desert in Chile specifically. Egypt, too, placed strongly, with South Africa also mentioned.

Domestically, Americans take to the national parks

Mirroring the growing trend toward more outdoor and adventure travel, as well as interest in the environment, for the second year in a row the most popular U.S. regions for packaged travel were the **National Parks**, followed by Alaska. USTOA members cited Glacier National Park and the western parks in particular as top destinations. And, for the first time **New York** was cited as the top city for vacation packages, planned itineraries and tours.

Latin America offers best value

Latin American countries outpaced China, last year's best value, in terms of offering the most for the dollar. Having devalued its Peso, **Mexico** took first place as individual country offering best value in 2009, with Egypt slightly edging out **Costa Rica**, **Ecuador** and **China**, which all tied for third place.

Survey results were based on responses from 47 representative USTOA brands. For more information and a listing of USTOA member companies by destination, visit www.ustoa.com or www.ustoa.travel. Or phone 1-800-GO-USTOA (1-800-468-7862).

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Contact: Linda Kundell

212-877-2798

LRKPR@aol.com or Kundellcom@nyc.rr.com

USTOA Member Survey 2009 Results

Top international country for packaged travel

1. Italy
2. Egypt
3. Australia

Top Continent

1. Europe
2. Latin America
3. Asia

Biggest destination of 2009

1. Italy
2. Egypt
3. Ecuador's Galapagos

Hottest up-and-coming destination for tours/packages

1. Latin America (over 1/3 citing Peru, also cited were Patagonia & Atacama Desert)
2. Egypt
3. South Africa

Top US destination for packaged travel

1. National Parks
2. Alaska

Top US City

New York City

Best Value Destination

1. South America – overall region
1. Mexico overall country
2. Egypt
3. Costa Rica/ Ecuador/China (tied)