



For Immediate Release

USTOA Survey Shows Consumers Underestimate Packaged Travel Savings USTOA Calls for Travel Agents to Help Educate Clients

A recent poll conducted by The U.S. Tour Operators Association (USTOA) reveals that only 17% of U.S. adults know that buying packaged travel can save them 20 - 30% over the cost of making the same arrangements themselves.

Among the 65% who believed that buying packaged travel could save them money, few knew how much they could actually save. At the same time, more than 60% of adults surveyed said that they would be more likely to take a tour or package if they knew that they could save money.

Survey Reveals Opportunity for Travel Agents

When survey respondents were asked to estimate how much they could save by purchasing a tour or package, slightly more than a quarter selected 10 – 19% savings. Only 17% said they could save 20 – 29%.

“In actual fact,” says Bob Whitley, USTOA president, the average savings are 30%, and can range from 10% to 40%, depending on time of year and destination. This is something that purchasers of travel clearly need to know.”

“These survey results indicate that we all need to do a stronger job educating the public about the savings of tours and packages,” says Whitley. “It’s also an excellent opportunity for travel agents to educate their clients,” he adds, noting that the USTOA web site – www.ustoa.com – is packed with consumer-friendly news and materials that can be adapted for use by travel agents.

Whitley suggests that agents ask their clients if they are aware of the time and money savings of buying packaged travel, and adds that some tour operators will provide marketing comparisons of how much the same itinerary or arrangements would cost if the client purchased all elements themselves.

“It’s also important to let clients know about the many options available through tours and packages. Packaged travel offers plenty of freedom and choice, and for travel agents it also offers one-step commissions., adds Whitley, saying that as a condition of membership, all USTOA Active Members must pay agency commissions.”

TNS Research conducted the telephone survey of 1,000 participants on behalf of USTOA in late May, 2006. Vacation packages were defined as buying hotel and airfare or other arrangements together.

USTOA members are responsible for the vacations of 10.7 million people yearly. The organization’s 130 brands have met the travel industry’s highest standards, including participation in the USTOA Travelers Assistance Program. This program requires, among other things, that each USTOA member set aside \$1 Million in security to reimburse consumer payments in case the company goes out of business. USTOA is the only travel industry organization with this requirement.

Contact:

Linda Kundell

(212) 877-2798

LRKPR@aol.com –or–

Kundellcom@nyc.rr.com