



press release

For Immediate Release
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**ITALY SCORES AS 2005 TOP DESTINATION
FOR VACATION PACKAGES & TOURS**

USTOA Poll Reveals Croatia, China Hot for 2006

The United States Tour Operators Association – whose members account for the vacations of more than 10.5 million travelers yearly -- has revealed the year's top destinations and trends for packaged travel. Italy once again ranks number one as this year's most popular international destination for tours and packages. Colorado and California tied with Alaska as most popular U.S. destinations, according to an informal 2005 survey of the organization's member companies.

Top Places

Despite the high Euro, Italy placed first as the single most popular destination for the third year in a row, with France a distant second. Most popular international cities for packages and tours were Rome and Paris. Among responding tour operators, California, Colorado and Alaska tied for top domestic destination, with the American West and Yellowstone in a tie for most popular region.

Significantly, when asked about prices compared to last year, 94% of responding USTOA tour operators serving Europe replied that 2005 prices to Europe had risen by 10 – 15%, while 70% of tour operators serving North America reported price increases of less than 10%.

Hottest Up & Coming and Top Value

China and South America were cited as the hottest up-and-coming destinations for packages and tours, with Croatia a close second. However, when asked what will be hot for 2006, Croatia led the way, followed by China. Greece came in first place for country and area representing the best value for the dollar, followed closely by Eastern Europe, Mexico, the U.S. and China.

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Top Trends

As for top trends in vacation packages and tours, three major areas were cited:

Inclusive resorts and vacations combining multiple elements such as meals and activities into one package;

Multiple destination itineraries visiting several countries, especially in Asia;

Family vacations.

Adventure is Up

Nearly 80% of responding USTOA members said they offer adventure components or experiences, and are adding more for 2006. Among 2006 offerings are explorations of Ethiopia, Aboriginal Australia, the Himalayas, and Mongolia. European cooking tours, new hiking, biking and sailing excursions; plus zip line and rappelling in Alaska are some of the new adventure experiences for 2006.

Families & Seniors

In recognition of the continuing trend toward family vacations nearly 65% of responding USTOA members said they offer family-oriented tours and packages. However, 45% have age limits for children. Of tour operators with age limits, 60% said children must be 6 years or older, 30% have 12 year old limits, and 10% allow children beginning at 2 years. While 55% of USTOA members have no age limits for children, 40% of responding tour operators said they also offer adults-only vacations, and 25% of members reported offering senior discounts.

Survey respondents represented 75 of the top brand names in packaged travel, or an estimated 60% of USTOA's membership. These companies have met the travel industry's highest standards. For more information and a listing of USTOA Member companies, visit www.ustoa.com.

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