



New Survey Finds Americans Seek Affordable Vacations in 2009 **Closer to Home Trips Rank High**

- Three out of four Americans plan to travel for vacation
- 42% plan to stay closer to home
- One out of five are going to Europe
- 60% believe packaged travel offers more value

Three out of four Americans are planning a vacation trip this year despite the recession, according to a new consumer survey of 1,000 adults commissioned by the [US Tour Operators Association](#). However, people are modifying their vacations by looking for affordable destinations and by traveling closer to home, the poll revealed.

Not surprisingly, economic factors were the most important factors influencing vacation decisions. Affordability and low price ranked as the most important consideration by more than 35% of respondents. More than 40% said they would modify their plans by traveling closer to home, and nearly 40% said they would avoid expensive areas. Nearly 30% said they were looking for destinations with more value, while 25% said they would plan more last minute trips, within three months of departure. Only slightly more than 25% of those surveyed said they would eliminate a vacation away from home altogether.

Looking at other ways to save money, nearly 20% were likely to book an all inclusive destination, while almost 15% said they would take advantage of the stronger dollar by traveling abroad.

On the international front, one in five going to Europe

While more than 45% of Americans said they were not planning to travel abroad this year, 20% --or one in five--said they are planning to go to Europe. Among those planning international trips, Europe ranked as the hottest destination overall, at over 40% of travelers, with Western hemisphere vacations outside the U.S. coming in a close second at 35%, and Australia/New Zealand/South Pacific third at nearly 20% .

Not surprisingly, those earning \$100,000 and more were the most likely to say they will travel abroad because of the stronger dollar, while they and 18-34 year olds were the groups most likely to travel to Europe this year.

Other qualities important

In addition to affordability, other qualities were considered important in planning a vacation. Time with family ranked second, and the destination itself came in third. Length of vacation was considered the least important factor.

Demographic Factors

Younger travelers seem undaunted by economic factors, as 18-34 year olds were the least likely to say they will eliminate a vacation away from home. This group was also the least likely to say they will stay closer to home on vacation or avoid expensive destinations. Paradoxically, when it came to affordability, the younger the traveler, the more important affordability was, with almost 40% of 18-34 year olds ranking affordability as the most important factor, compared to nearly 30% of those 65+.

While the highest income earners—those earning \$100,000+—were the least concerned about affordability, they were also the most value-conscious, according to the survey. High income earners were the most likely to say they look for destinations that offer more value, to book an all inclusive vacation, and plan a vacation within 90 days of departure.

Majority believe tours, packages offer more value

Across the board, the distinct majority of those polled (60%) believe that tours and vacation packages offer more value for the dollar. In fact, notes USTOA president Bob Whitley, “buying a tour or vacation package can save an average 20%-30% in general. In 2009, because of the stronger dollar, international travelers in particular can save an average 20% over last year’s prices in many destinations,” he says.

The telephone survey of 1,000 adults was conducted by TNS Research on behalf of USTOA.

Travelers can find more information on domestic and international vacations offered by USTOA members, as well as a list of member companies at: www.USTOA.com, or www.USTOA.travel. USTOA member companies have met the travel industry’s highest standards, including participation in the association’s Traveler Assistance Program, which among other things protects consumer payments up to \$1 million in case the company goes out of business. USTOA is the premier association of companies providing vacation packages, tours, and custom travel itineraries for more than 11 million people yearly.