



TRAVELERS REVEAL MOTIVATIONS FOR TAKING TOURS, PACKAGES

According to consumer research conducted for the U.S. Tour Operators Association, seeing new destinations and learning about culture and history are the main reasons most people would take an escorted tour or vacation package. Safety and convenience follow as motivating factors.

However, people who have actually taken tours and packages reveal a wider range of motivations, from planning weddings in exotic locations, to tracing family roots; from revisiting a destination in a new way to a family wildlife exploration. USTOA followed its consumer survey with interviews of 14 people who had actually taken a tour or package. Interviewees ranged in age from 18 to 74, and from single travelers to those with families, and from employed to retired. Most had taken at least several tours, usually with the same tour operator.

-Getting Married in Tanzania - Marc and Silvia Davidson, a Toronto couple in their mid-30s, wanted to marry in Tanzania, and looked to a tour operator for the arrangements. Their wedding ceremony became a memorable part of a small-group tour, and all 8 tour participants attended the traditional Masai ceremony.

- Woman pilot caught the touring bug 20 years ago - Caroline Adams, 45, a female military pilot from the Virgin Islands got hooked on tours when her college history teacher set up a trip to Paris in the early 90s. Since then, she has been on at least a dozen tours. "For me, it's all about the learning. And I have met some lifelong friends in the process," she says.

- Family vacation motivated by wildlife - Erica Weldon, 45, from New York, was motivated to take a Baja Exploration by the emphasis on exploring wildlife for her 8 and 11 year-old kids.

- Safety of group travel - Angela Pittman, a 53-year-old, single retired schoolteacher from Chapel Hill, NC, chooses tours after traveling alone in Thailand and a near-kidnapping by a cab driver en route to the airport. Says Angela, "I vowed then that I would always travel with a group and have a legitimate ride to the airport...I've learned that it's worth going on a tour."

- **Finding family heritage** - Gay Gagnon age 64, from Florida, was motivated to tour Ireland because of her half Irish heritage. “We went to the Cliffs of Mohair ...and people were sharing that feeling that they were in that country and connecting to their roots. “

- **Repeating a favorite destination a new way-** Carol Marasovich aged 56, from the Chicago area, returned to the Canadian Rockies on a heli-hiking tour. Carol may be typical of the more than 50% of people who say they prefer returning to a favorite destination on vacation (consumer poll of 1,000 people conducted for USTOA).

- **In search of James Bond** - A Minnesota woman in her late 50s, initially inspired by James Bond movies, has toured to all the film’s locales, and beyond.

- **Retirement leads to touring** -John Kirian and wife Marge, aged 65, from Ohio, says, “we decided we finally had the time and the means to travel.”

Brand and “experience” loyalty

According to Whitley, the interviews also revealed tremendous loyalty, not only to the packaged vacation experience itself, but to specific brands. “There is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for tours and packages, even for first-timers.”

As Marc Davidson said of his wedding experience, “My wife and I have both traveled extensively. This was our first time on a tour, and it went way beyond our expectations. Don’t discount a tour operator, it could be a great experience!”

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Editor Note:

The above and others are willing to be interviewed. Please contact us for their contact information.