

Travel Trends 2008 As Predicted By Travelers

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Green and Clean Freaks Dominate, Travelers Say No to Cell Phones in the Air

TripAdvisor announced the results of its annual travel trends survey of more than 2,500 travelers from around the world. Top trends identified in the survey are concerns about germs, the growth of green tourism, and opposition to cell phone use on planes. TripAdvisor also unveiled its TravelCast list of emerging hotspots for 2008 with Jerba, Tunisia topping the list.

Clean Conscious

Eighty percent of respondents are concerned about germs, bacteria and viruses when traveling. Airplanes are the most germey, according to 28 percent of those polled. Public transportation was next, followed by restaurants, hotels, and airports. Respondents outside the U.S. were particularly worried about the risk of germs at restaurants, while Americans are far more wary of airplanes.

Fifty-five percent of travelers said they tend to wash and disinfect their hands more often while traveling. In keeping with the germaphobia trend, 27 percent of Americans either bring their own disinfectant and cleaning supplies, shower shoes, pillows, towels or linens, when going on a trip. This number has climbed from 22 percent, when TripAdvisor first spotted the germaphobia trend in 2005. Forty-five percent of travelers said their worst experience at a hotel was a dirty bathroom or dirty sheets, and 17 percent said their worst experience was the presence of vermin. Travelers also cited clean restrooms as a top criterion for what makes an airport great.

Growing Greener

Twenty-six percent of respondents said they will be more environmentally conscious in their travel decisions in the coming year. The green trend may be evident in their choice of transportation -- 22 percent said they'll go biking while on vacation this year, compared to 13 percent, last year. Forty-seven percent of travelers plan to go hiking this year, up from 43 percent, last year.

Tech Turn-off

Seventy-eight percent of travelers believe that mobile phones should not be allowed on flights. When asked if they think they have a right to tell an airline passenger sitting next to them to turn off video content they deem inappropriate, 58 percent said "no."

Weak Dollar Woos Outsiders

Fifty-four percent of respondents from outside the U.S. said that favorable exchange rates will inspire them to travel to the U.S. more in the next 12 months. On the contrary, 41 percent of Americans said the unfavorable exchange rates will either prevent them from going, or limit their travel to Europe in the coming year.

Waste Not, Want Not?

Fifty-four percent of Americans have four or more weeks of vacation time each year, and 47 percent believe they "need" six weeks of vacation or more. But, they are not even spending all the time they currently have. Only 64 percent of Americans used all of their vacation time in the past year. Asked why they won't take all of their vacation time, 28 percent of U.S. respondents said they can't afford to be away from work. Forty-eight percent of Americans check their work voicemail or email on a long weekend, which jumps to 78 percent when taking a trip of a week or more.

Head of the Class

Thirty-two percent of travelers (and 34 percent of Americans) are planning to engage in educational activity on vacation this year, such as a cooking or art class, up from 25 percent (and 28 percent of Americans), last year.

Outside Influences

Sixty percent of respondents from the U.S. said that the possibility of terrorism is still a consideration when planning where to go on their next vacation. Forty-five percent of Americans said the possibility of natural disasters (such as a hurricane, tsunami or earthquake) is on their mind, and 36 percent said the cost of fuel influences where to go on their next vacation, despite the recent decline in gas prices. Five percent said uncertainty with mortgage rates is affecting the way they plan travel in the next year, and six percent said the volatile stock market is affecting their travel decisions.

Loosening Up

Fifty-three percent of travelers said it takes them less than a day to unwind when on vacation, while 35 percent take 1-2 days to relax. Twenty-four percent of travelers said they are likely to dress more provocatively while on vacation and 19 percent of travelers have had to impose the "whatever happens in X destination, stays in X destination" rule with their travel partners. Twelve percent of respondents have been to a clothing-optional or adults-only resort.

New Airlines Are Hot

Seventeen percent of travelers are planning to try a new airline this year. Virgin America is the most popular choice of new airlines among respondents.

Golden Wings: Top Airlines

American Airlines was the favorite airline among worldwide respondents, and British Airways and Southwest tied for second favorite airline. British Airways was selected as the top airline by travelers outside the U.S. Travelers selected these airlines as their favorite primarily because of their friendly and helpful staff, good on-time arrival and departure records, and comfortable seats. U.S. Airways was the least favorite airline, according to respondents.

Golden Gates: Top Airports

The favorite airport in the world, according to travelers, is Schipol International Airport in Amsterdam. Las Vegas McCarran and Orlando International tied as second favorite. Eighty-one percent of travelers said the primary factor that makes an airport great is it's easy to navigate and get to your gate. London Heathrow and Chicago O'Hare tied as the least favorite airport in the world, according to travelers.

Additional Travel Tidbits

Travelers will average about three vacations in the coming year. Beaches continue to get hotter, as 64 percent plan to vacation to a sandy destination this year, compared to 59 percent last year. Florida is the most popular U.S. state that worldwide travelers intend to visit in the next 12 months, and internationally, 34 percent of Americans are planning to visit Europe in the year to come.

Jerba, Tunisia, TravelCast's Next Hot Spot in 2008

TripAdvisor(TM) TravelCast is a barometer of what's hot in travel destinations. TripAdvisor engineers have developed a proprietary algorithm that looks at several criteria including changes in search activity and postings throughout the world's largest travel community, <http://www.tripadvisor.com/>. The TravelCast then predicts the rising stars in travel. The top three emerging world hotspots for travel are Jerba, Tunisia, Makadi Bay, Egypt and Phangnga, Thailand. The complete world and U.S. top ten lists are provided below.

TripAdvisor TravelCast Top Ten World Destinations for 2008

1. Jerba, Tunisia
2. Makandi Bay, Egypt
3. Phangnga, Thailand
4. Kovalam, India
5. Sabaudia, Italy
6. Asilah, Morocco
7. Ko Phangan, Thailand
8. La Plagne, France
9. Yangshuo, China
10. Kotor, Montenegro

TripAdvisor TravelCast Top Ten U.S. Destinations for 2008

1. Sunny Isles Beach, Florida
2. Kitty Hawk (Outer Banks), North Carolina
3. Seward, Alaska
4. Kailua, Hawaii
5. Blue Ridge, Georgia
6. Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania
7. San Marcos, Texas
8. Paso Robles, California

9. Rockport, Texas

10. Copper Mountain, Colorado

"The major trends we're observing are that travelers value cleanliness above all else and are becoming more environmentally conscious," said Michele Perry, director of communications for TripAdvisor. "Based on TripAdvisor's TravelCast, the top emerging world destination is Jerba, Tunisia, and Thailand is the hottest country, featuring two destinations in the world's top ten."

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