

Traveler's Frustrations Down to 3.9 (out of 10) Says Latest Quarterly Index

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Access America survey finds gas prices and airline security hassles are the biggest sources of frustration for travelers

The quarterly index that measures the frustration levels of U.S. travelers found that most Americans navigated the last three months of 2007 with sober acquiescence. Based on a survey of more than 1,000 adults -- all of whom had traveled for business or leisure in the past quarter -- the aggregated hassle factor came in at 3.9 out of a possible 10, down from 4.1 in the year's third quarter.

The Traveler Frustration Index, commissioned by Access America, one of the world's leading providers of travel insurance, and conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs, an independent, leading global research company, measures travelers' frustrations over a range of travel-related categories, from costs associated with travel to security issues to service levels. The overall 3.9 rating represents a weighted average of survey responses.

The latest survey was conducted between November 26 and December 3 and is slightly lower than the first Index, completed in the third quarter in August 2007 at the height of the summer travel season. The August Index resulted in a 4.1 frustration rating.

In order to gauge how frustration levels might impact future travel plans, the survey also asked travelers to estimate how frequently they planned to travel in 2008. When asked if they plan to travel more, less or the same amount more than one in five travelers (21 percent) indicated they plan to travel more in the New Year. Among those who travel primarily for business, more than one quarter (26 percent) plan to travel more in 2008. Leisure travel will remain steady, with 62 percent planning to travel about the same.

'We surveyed travelers immediately following the Thanksgiving travel period,' said Mark Cipolletti, vice president for Access America. 'We anticipated frustrations peaking as a result of the hassles associated with holiday travel, but the survey found that was not the case. The lower rating, along with the growth indicators for 2008, is a surprise. And the results are good news for the travel industry. The consistency of frustration levels from the third quarter to the fourth validates the view that Americans expect to travel, are reasonably satisfied with the services they receive and will continue to incorporate travel into their leisure and business plans in the year to come.'

According to the survey, travelers were most irritated with the price of gas. A total of 78 percent indicated some degree of frustration with the cost of filling their tanks. This number was equally high in the third quarter and was by far the most frustrating aspect of travel identified by respondents. When asked: 'what is the most frustrating thing you've encountered while traveling' nearly one in four recent travelers said gas prices.

Forty one percent of travelers reported frustration with Homeland Security issues (airport security, passport rules, terrorism fears and border crossings) -- that's up from 38 percent in the third quarter. When asked to identify the 'most frustrating thing encountered while traveling,' 10 percent of respondents reported frustration with security issues, suggesting the long lines, increased security protocols and things like carry-on restrictions are wearing thin on some travelers.

The cost of lodging and attractions rated a bit higher on the frustration scale in the fourth quarter. In the third quarter, 44 percent of travelers identified some level of frustration with costs associated with lodging and attractions. More recently, that number is up to 48 percent. Airline service was ranked just below gas prices as one of the most frustrating aspects of travel (55 percent), consistent with the third quarter results which ranked airline service second to gas prices at 54 percent.

By far the least frustrating aspect of travel was booking the trip in the first place. Less than one in five travelers (16 percent) said they found making reservations a nuisance. That number was consistent among business and leisure travelers, whether booking online or through a travel agent. It is also down considerably from the third quarter when 20 percent of travelers reported frustration with booking travel.

The level of service provided by travel-related providers other than airlines also scored high. Only 23 percent of those surveyed said that the service at hotels, cruise lines, attractions and travel agencies was trying.

Finally, Mother Nature continues to be a non-issue for most travelers. Just one in three travelers indicated frustration with the weather while on a trip, the same number as during the third quarter's mild hurricane season.

Complete results appear below.

About the Survey

The Access America Traveler Frustration Index was conducted November 26-December 6, 2007 by IPSOS Public Affairs, an independent global, survey-based research company owned and managed by research professionals. As part of its weekly U.S. Telephone Omnibus Study, IPSOS interviewed 1059 adults ages 18 and older, who indicated they had traveled for business or leisure at least once during the previous three months. The margin of error for the entire survey is 3.01% at a 95% confidence level.

The quarterly frustration index was created by first asking each of ten individual potential frustration items on a four point frustration scale to past three month travelers. The responses were then summed by each respondent. The sums were then aggregated and recalculated to a ten point index scale across all respondents.

About Access America

Access America provides travel insurance and assistance to millions of travelers each year and is a division and service mark of World Access Service Corp. A global leader in travel insurance and emergency assistance, Access America uses cutting-edge technology to deliver customized solutions to enhance value for resorts, airlines, travel agents, credit card companies and more. Access America is a division and service mark of World Access Service Corp., which is a member of the Mondial Assistance Group and part of the Allianz family of companies. Visit www.accessamerica.com.

Survey Results Summary:

Recent travelers reported frustration with the following issues (percentages show number of respondents who were frustrated with the issue):

The cost of gas

-- 78%

Airline/airport service

-- 55%

The cost of airline, cruise line or train tickets

-- 49%

The cost of lodging and/or attractions

-- 48%

Homeland security/safety

-- 41%

Illness or injury that affects you or a family member causing cancellation or interruption of trip

-- 35%

Labor actions

-- 32%

The weather

-- 30%

Service by other travel suppliers

-- 23%

Difficulty booking trip

-- 16%

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