

A Cloudy Outlook for Summer Travel?

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Access America's National Survey Finds 2008 Summer Vacation Plans Down Seven Percent Compared to 2007

A national survey by Access America, a leading travel insurance and assistance provider, has found that summer vacations will likely be down seven percent this year compared with 2007. The survey of 1,000 adults, ages 18+, found that 40 percent of respondents took a vacation last year, while just 33 percent plan to take one this year.

Though more than half (57%) of respondents who took a vacation last year say they plan to travel again this summer, four in ten (41%) say they've decided not to travel - and most of those (55%) point to the uncertain economy.

'If there was ever a summer when, as a nation, we needed a vacation, it's got to be this one,' said Mark Cipolletti, vice president for Access America. 'Given gas prices, food prices, the home mortgage crisis and the fierce election cycle, some rest and relaxation seems in order. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem likely to happen any time soon for many Americans.'

The survey, conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs via telephone interviews, found that among the one third (33%) of Americans who are planning a summer vacation this year, nearly half (48%) say the uncertain economy has caused them to scale back their plans, either by planning to eat out less (27%), staying closer to home (24%) or taking a shorter vacation than planned (12%).

'The striking thing is how evenly this is distributed across demographics,' Cipolletti noted. 'All people, across all social and regional demographics, are cutting back in near equal ratios. And things could still get worse. With weeks left before the heart of summer travel season and gas prices on the rise, even more families may decide they just can't afford a vacation this year.'

Of those respondents choosing not to go on a 2008 summer vacation, more than half (55%), point to economic concerns such as gas prices, the uncertain economy and the weak dollar. Among that group, those who drove to their destination last year are more likely to cite gas concerns as their reason for not traveling this year. Equally, among those who flew last year, one quarter (25%) say they 'just can't afford it' this year.

Among those who do plan to travel, the most popular destinations are the southern United States (21%) including Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina, the West (19%) and those leaving U.S. soil for travel abroad (19%) which included travel to Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. As for how they plan to get there, 61 percent plan to drive, while 30 percent will fly and 8 percent will take a cruise.

The survey was conducted April 7-14, 2008 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 1000 adults ages 18 and older. The margin of error for the entire survey is 3% at a 95% confidence level.

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