

## Best Western, CAA, Aeroplan Executives Instill Optimism at Annual Leisure Travel Summit

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### Companies Discuss Ways to Cope With Summer of Fare Increases, Flight Decreases, Rising Gas Costs

Despite record fuel costs, a weak U.S. dollar and a drop in cross-border tourism, confidence remains high that the 2008 summer travel season will still thrive, albeit with modifications to the travel patterns of the past few years. Industry experts recently convened at the annual Leisure Travel Summit hosted by Best Western International and moderated by Tony Pollard, president of the Hotel Association of Canada, to address a number of issues and offer suggestions on how to have a great vacation in spite of the challenges. The panel included senior executives representing Best Western, the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) and Aeroplan, as well as travel expert and television personality Rudy Maxa, host of 'Rudy Maxa's World.'

'Canadians are a discriminating group who understand the value of travel and how important it is to their overall well-being,' said Dorothy Dowling, senior vice president of marketing and sales for Best Western International. 'The unprecedented challenges facing travelers this summer are not deterring people from taking their vacations. People are simply going to adjust the distance from home that they will travel while also shortening their stays in order to maximize budget.'

Families in particular will be changing the way they travel this summer. 'One-tank trips and weekend getaways are increasing in popularity as families explore their own backyards,' Dowling said. 'In addition, Best Western is uniquely positioned to provide value-conscious travelers with the amenities they expect without being surprised by extra fees upon check-out.' All North American Best Western properties offer free high-speed Internet access and a breakfast option. The World's Largest Hotel Chain's annual summer promotion, which runs through August 17, rewards guests who stay at least six nights with a \$50 Best Western Travel Card that can be used at any Best Western hotel worldwide. Members of CAA earn the Travel Card after just five nights.

According to Pat Rotz, CAA Niagara's vice president of auto club & travel, the weak U.S. dollar and the resulting decline in U.S. visitors crossing the border are among the biggest issues facing the Canadian travel industry this year. However, the summer travel forecast is looking positive as consumers utilize a number of different tools to research and book a cost-effective trip.

'Taking a vacation is seen as a right than rather than a privilege to be given up,' Rotz said. 'People who plan ahead and do their homework to find the best values will be rewarded with a trip that will be attainable, within their budget, and most importantly, fun.'

Among the tools CAA offers to help its members manage their road trips and costs is the TripTik(R) Travel Planner, available at [www.caa.ca](http://www.caa.ca). TripTik maps out itineraries, spots the location of gas stations that are on the route and provides information on fuel prices at those stations.

'TripTik Travel Planner was designed to map your route to a destination so you can adjust your time on the road accordingly,' Rotz said. 'It gives you driving directions, estimated drive time, total trip distance and turn-by-turn directions.'

Members of the Aeroplan loyalty program can leverage their earned miles in a number of different ways beyond just flights that can ultimately have a positive impact on their summer vacations, according to Nathalie Belanger, the company's general manager of rewards.

'Choice and value are the two most important factors our members look for when redeeming their Aeroplan miles,' Belanger said. 'While we know that many members redeem miles for flight rewards, there are also hundreds of additional rewards to take advantage of that can greatly offset travel costs.'

With more than 70 corporate partner affiliations that represent more than 150 brands such as Best Western, Avis and Esso, redeeming miles for hotel stays, rental cars, and vacation activities like a round of golf, theatre tickets and gift cards are just some of the ways travelers can benefit from membership, she said.

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