

Amidst Economic Woes, Americans Hitting The Brakes on Travel

2008-07-17

Leisure travel expectations off sharply. Staycations on the horizon.

The tourism industry risks being hit with significant declines in leisure travel volume and spending according to the findings of Destination Analysts' bi-annual The State of the American Traveler survey released today. The survey of 1,000 American leisure travelers shows that 45.8% expect to reduce the number of leisure trips they will take in the coming year in direct response to the overall economic climate. General travel spending expectations are also depressed, with 29.8% saying they will spend less for leisure in the next 12 months, a figure that has more than doubled from just six months prior.

In the past 12 months, nearly one-in-four (23.6%) say they have taken a "staycation" -- a vacation spent at home -- in response to gasoline prices. 28.5% of survey respondents said they plan to take a staycation in the next 12 months.

"We expect to see travelers taking fewer leisure trips and visiting destinations that are closer to home. With more than half of travelers saying they will actively look for travel bargains and discounts and another third saying they will visit less expensive destinations, affordability is certain to be top-of-mind. In this climate, destinations, hotels, and others that market to leisure travelers must provide compelling offers that promise and deliver value," says Erin Francis, Managing Partner of Destination Analysts.

The average number of trips the typical American has taken in the past 12 months has already fallen 7.3% to 5.1. The top impediments to travel continue to be high gasoline prices (57.8%), personal financial reasons (49.5%) and expensive airfare (35.2%). The percentage of survey respondents who have cited these factors as having prevented them from traveling as much as they would have preferred have all grown significantly since the survey was first conducted in July 2006.

Destination Analysts is a San Francisco-based market research company specializing in the travel, tourism and lifestyle industries. Founded in 2003, the company provides innovative research solutions to organizations charged with growing the economic impact of tourism to their business or community.

The State of the American Traveler survey is conducted every six months by Destination Analysts. The summer 2008 survey was conducted online amongst a nationally representative sample of adult Americans. From June 27th-30th, surveys were collected from a group of respondents who had traveled at least once in the past 12 months for purely leisure or personal reasons. In total, 1,014 leisure travelers completed the survey, which has a reliability of +/- 3.1%.

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