



USTOA MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTES \$19 BILLION TO TRAVEL INDUSTRY

*Economic Impact of Membership, Industry Forecasts and
Travel Trends for 2019 Revealed in Member Survey*

NEW YORK – November 28, 2018 – A biennial economic impact study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) found that tour operator members of [the United States Tour Operators Association \(USTOA\)](#) project to close out 2018 with sales reaching \$18.7 billion dollars, representing 9.8 million individual travelers.

According to the study, Active Members of USTOA contributed \$17 billion to the U.S tour operator industry in 2017, serving 9.2 million individual travelers.

Furthermore, member operators are extremely confident about business in the year ahead: 100% of responding tour operator members anticipate growth in sales in 2019. “Since the first PwC study was commissioned in 2012, it’s the first time seen such a bullish response with our entire membership projecting growth ahead,” said Terry Dale, President and CEO of USTOA. “It’s even more encouraging that more than half of members (56%) forecast growth of sales ranging from seven to 10% or more in 2019, indicating a potential boom year.”

On the jobs front, Active Members report employing 14,160 people within the U.S in 2017. Total wages paid by members in 2017 amounted to \$1 billion. In 2018, members project an increase of 4%, or 14,760 jobs, and an increase of wages to \$1.2 billion. More than half (58%) of Active Members plan to increase staff in 2019 with one third projecting as many as 11 to 25 new hires.

Dale reinforced the critical role of travel agents in the continued success of members’ businesses: Active Members reported that travel agencies represented roughly two thirds (64%) of total packages sold in 2017.

The research was released at USTOA’s 40th Annual Conference & Marketplace, held at the JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge in Phoenix AZ, November 26-30, 2018. Among the other vital statistics revealed:

- USTOA Active Members were responsible for 19 million hotel room nights in 2017; in 2018 this is expected to grow to 21 million.
- Airline seats sold in 2017 were roughly 5.4 million; in 2018 Active Members anticipate growth of 7% to 5.8 million.
- Total packages sold in 2017 number 4.5 million; with 4.8 million projected to sell in 2018.
- Purchases of goods and services for travel packages, including air, rail, cruise, ground transportation, accommodations, dining and attractions, were \$11.6 billion in 2017; with a projected increase of approximately 10% to nearly \$12.9 billion in 2018.

Global Risks

While the Active Members of USTOA view the upcoming year with optimism, they also addressed the global risks that could impact the industry over the next three years. Terrorism topped the list with 17% of members responding they are “extremely concerned.” However, this level of concern is a considerable drop compared to the 2016 PwC study when more than half of member (59%) were “extremely concerned.”

Political instability and overtourism, a new category this year, were the next two global risks that members were “extremely concerned” about, as named by 13% of survey respondents.

Top Destinations and Trends

Italy was named the most popular destination for travelers in 2019. The top 10 “hot” destinations for next year also included Iceland, which ranked second, followed by Japan, Vietnam, Australia, France, Spain, Colombia, Cambodia and Portugal.

Active Members identified their top 10 off-the-beaten path or emerging destinations that they see gaining popularity in 2019: Iceland ranked first, Cambodia ranked second, followed by Croatia, Colombia, Vietnam, Portugal, Bhutan, Bolivia, Myanmar, and Ethiopia.

The top 10 U.S. destinations for 2017 based on sales were California, Hawaii, New York, Florida, Nevada, Arizona, Alaska, Colorado, U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Leading international destinations in 2017, according to tour operator members’ volume of sales, is Mexico, Italy, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, Switzerland and Australia.

“It’s interesting to see so many European destinations top the list this year,” said Dale. “This validates the strong interest in Europe among consumers, driven by both more product and more demand including the growing river cruise market.”

Demand for experiential travel programs continues to remain high. Roughly 82% of members offer art and culture travel experiences. The art and culture category is also the highest ranked experiential program for travelers in 2017, based on volume of sales. “Perhaps not surprising, given the strong 2017 European sales reported by members,” added Dale.

Two thirds of membership offer honeymoon and romance programs, 63% of members offer adventure programs, and more than half (56%) offer multi-generational family programs.

Traveler Profile

When asked whose traveling, tour operator members responded that about half (48%) of their customer base are 51 to 70 years of age. The next largest category was age 36 to 50 years representing 20% of customers. Gender is split evenly with 51% female and 49% male. Within the escorted/guided and custom tour category, female passengers were represented slightly higher at 59%.

For more information on USTOA, visit www.ustoa.com, call 212-599-6599, or email information@ustoa.com.

About USTOA:

Representing nearly \$19 billion in revenue, the member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow 9.8 million travelers annually unparalleled access, insider knowledge, peace-of-mind, value and freedom to enjoy destinations and experiences across the entire globe. Each member company has met the travel industry's highest standards, including participation in the USTOA's Travelers Assistance Program, which protects consumer payments up to \$1 million if the company goes out of business. As a voice for the tour operator industry for more than 40 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

Contact:

Gina Dolecki/Ashley Mindnich

Redpoint

212-229-0119

dolecki@redpointspeaks.com / mindnich@redpointspeaks.com