

USTOA MEMBERS REVEAL TRAVEL TRENDS FOR 2012

“E-Factor” Travel, Destination Recovery and Emerging Destinations Among Key Findings

NEW YORK – January 9, 2012 – An annual survey of active members of the US Tour Operators Association (USTOA) revealing forecasts and trends for 2012 travel confirmed that “experiential travel” – or the “E Factor,” as USTOA President Terry Dale calls it – continues to be a priority for travelers and was rated important/extremely important by 85% of survey respondents to their overall growth and sales. Baby Boomers 46 to 65 years of age comprised the largest age group of travelers seeking “E Factor” vacations. Boomers are also the largest market in general for tour operator members responding to the survey, representing nearly 60% of their customers.

The region of the world with the most “E Factor” options for travelers is Europe, according to 37% of members, followed by South America (20%). Within Europe, Italy was named the most frequently as the destination offering the most experiential travel options. In responding why, members cited food, wine and culinary tours, historical and educational opportunities, art and culture in general. France followed closely behind, for similar reasons.

The thirst for learning experiences is driving member tour operators to increase “E Factor” itineraries next year. More than half (53%) of the survey respondents plan to offer new experiential programs in 2012, with culinary tours topping the list at 26%; culture tours at 22%, and nature, adventure, photography and golf also cited.

When asked to name the top “off-the-beaten-path” or emerging destinations that will gain popularity in 2012, Vietnam was cited most frequently, followed by India, Ecuador and China.

“Europe provides such a wealth of cultural experiences it’s no wonder it continues to rank highly among our members’ customers,” said Dale. “At the same time, expanding programs to offer new and exciting experiences in more exotic destinations throughout the world will meet the growing demand for adventure from Baby Boomers and begin to attract the next generation of travelers.”

Encouragingly, more than half (53%) of the members surveyed anticipate increasing itineraries in 2012 to destinations recovering from events this past year that negatively impacted tourism. Egypt was named most frequently as the country operators plan to increase tours to, followed closely by Greece, Japan and New Zealand. In fact, nearly one

third of respondents (28.6%) have already seen an increase in bookings to those destinations for 2012.

“Consumer demand for truly rich experiences will continue to attract experiential travelers to these hard-hit destinations, and they can return with confidence when they book with a USTOA member,” said Dale. “Our members understand how rewarding these destinations are to their clients, and at the same time, the importance of tourism in helping to rebuild.”

Results of the survey of members were unveiled during USTOA’s Annual Conference & Marketplace, held in Marco Island, FL, December 10–13, 2011.

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

About USTOA:

The member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow travelers 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 40 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

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