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Despite Rising Hotel Rates, Many Holiday Travelers Would Prefer to Trade in Family Sofas and Guest Rooms for the Comfort of a Hotel

Expedia Travel Trendwatch finds 42 percent of adults would prefer hotels to relatives' homes if they were visiting family for the holidays

BELLEVUE, Wash. – Oct. 12, 2006 – Expedia.com®, the world's leading online travel service, today introduced the latest issue of its quarterly report, *Expedia Travel Trendwatch*™, focusing on the upcoming fall and winter travel seasons. In the latest report, 20-year travel industry veteran and *Expedia Travel Trendwatch*™ Editor, Chris McGinnis, reveals the findings of a recent Expedia.com consumer survey conducted by Harris Interactive®. It shows that more than 42 percent of U.S. adults would prefer to stay in a hotel than with their family if they were visiting family out of town for the holidays. The report also provides trend information, travel tips, and deals designed to help people make better travel decisions and navigate the upcoming busy holiday travel season. To view the complete report, please visit <http://www.expedia.com/trendwatch>.

“There’s no doubt the upcoming travel season will be a busy one, with millions of Americans leaving their homes to be with their friends and families,” said McGinnis. “Many people are looking to reduce stress by giving themselves more space and the privacy of their own hotel room, rather than crowding in with their family.”

Key fall and winter travel trends and tips reported in the current issue of the *Expedia Travel Trendwatch*™ include:

- 1) During the upcoming Thanksgiving/winter holiday season, crowding on airlines, at airports and on freeways will likely echo this past summer’s full loads.**
 - Smaller airline fleets and fewer seats, coupled with increasing demand, mean holiday flights this year may be as crowded as those this past summer, when planes were flying 90 to 100 percent full (typical load factors are in the 65-75 percent range). The addition of winter coats, shopping bags and holiday gifts carried on board will make flights feel even tighter.
 - Despite the crowds and frustrating changes in TSA carry-on rules, U.S. adults are still planning to travel this fall and winter. The Expedia.com consumer survey, reveals that of those who plan to travel by air this holiday season, 80 percent plan to travel as much (45%) or more (35%) than they did last year. The same poll indicates that nearly a quarter (23%) of U.S. adults (about 55 million people) plan to travel by air during the upcoming Thanksgiving and winter holiday seasons.

2) **Holiday hotel rates are rising with demand.**

- The hotel industry has enjoyed one of the best years on record in 2006, with occupancy and room rates soaring to record levels.
- Despite higher rates, more holiday travelers are bedding down in hotels. In fact, more than 42 percent of U.S. adults said they would prefer to stay in a hotel if they were visiting family out of town for the holidays.

3) **Look to off-peak travel for fall/winter travel deals.**

- While traveling during autumn's shoulder and low seasons can yield significant discounts in certain seasonal destinations, year-round peak pricing is emerging in popular destinations such as New York City, Boston, Las Vegas, Orlando, Honolulu, Miami, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.
- More international visitors and a relatively strong economy fueling growth in business and leisure travel mean increased demand and pricing in top destinations.

Expedia Travel Trendwatch™ Holiday Travel Tips

Smart Planning

- For those planning travel during peak holiday weeks, now is the time to make reservations — if you see a decent fare, grab it because it is unlikely that there will be much discounting as the holidays approach.

Getting There from Here

- When flying during peak weeks, opt for an early-morning flight to avoid crowds and delays. If possible, book a nonstop flight. As a second choice, route through hubs less likely to be affected by winter storms.

Booking the Right Hotel

- Seek out hotels that offer complimentary amenities like breakfast, parking or Internet access. For example, a family of four could start off the day saving almost \$40 by staying at a hotel with a complimentary breakfast.

Where to Go for the Best Deals

- Consider the Caribbean this winter. With fares to Caribbean destinations at a low point due to the recent entry by discount carriers, the region is increasingly affordable. Smart travelers have taken note of this, and at Expedia.com, the most popular Caribbean destinations for flight+hotel packages are Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Aruba.

About Expedia Travel Trendwatch™

Expedia Travel Trendwatch™ is a quarterly report on consumer travel trends, plus insight and tips from Expedia.com, the world's leading online travel service, and Chris McGinnis, a 20-year travel industry veteran who is the editor of the report. McGinnis' travel industry insight and expertise, coupled with unparalleled travel intelligence from Expedia.com®, can be found throughout each report, providing a treasure trove of data, trends, and tips designed to help empower and inform travelers.

About Chris McGinnis:

Chris McGinnis is the editor of the *Expedia Travel Trendwatch™*. Prior to teaming up with Expedia in early 2006, McGinnis covered the travel beat in a variety of roles, from travel correspondent on CNN Headline News and travel columnist for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *Entrepreneur* magazine, to producer of special travel sections for *Fortune* magazine. Based in San Francisco, he is also a speaker, consultant and the author of two books on business travel: *The Unofficial Business Traveler's Pocket Guide* and *202 Tips Even the Best Business Travelers May Not Know* (McGraw-Hill).

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About the Expedia.com Consumer Survey

This survey was conducted online by Harris Interactive on behalf of Expedia Inc., September 14-18, 2006 among 2,932 U.S. adults 18 years of age or older. Figures for region, age within gender, education, household income and race/ethnicity were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

With a pure probability sample of 2,932 adults one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of 3 percentage points. The sampling error for the sub-samples of adults who plan to travel by air this holiday season (n= 673) is 6 percentage points. However that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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