



HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION DES HÔTELS DU CANADA

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

Techno-Savvy Canadians are still Travelling in Canada in 2009

February 11, 2009 – Toronto, ON -- The Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) today released data from its 2009 Canadian Travel Intentions survey indicating that despite the current economic crisis in Canada, 74 per cent of Canadians intend to travel in Canada either for business or leisure in 2009.

“They may not stay at the same type of hotel they usually stay at, spend less on food and drink and stay for a shorter period of time, but Canadians are planning to travel in Canada in 2009,” said Tony Pollard, President of the Hotel Association of Canada. “Many people see travel as a ‘right’; something they do every year. They may cut their leisure or business budget, but they are still going to travel.”

Impact of Technology on Canadian Travellers

Twenty-two per cent of business travellers said that they travelled less from September to December 2008 than during the same period in 2007 and the main reason is the increase in the use of video and teleconferencing.

“We see by the data that 44 per cent of business travellers in Fall of 2008 used tele/video conferences instead of travelling to their business meetings,” said Gail Haarsma, Research Associate with Fleishman-Hillard Canada. “After an initial first meeting face-to-face, business people are now using video conferencing to connect with their clients and employees. It’s as easy as hooking an “eye” to your computer and people are taking advantage of the technology to make the best use of their travel budgets.”

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Canadian travellers are using internet information about hotels, motels and resorts in unprecedented numbers and indicated that on-line information will influence three quarters of travellers' decisions about where they choose to stay.

Seventy-two per cent of business and 75 per cent of leisure travellers said that star, diamond or 5 point ratings on internet booking services and other sites have a great deal of influence on their accommodation selection. Travellers said they perused on-line travel testimonials/comments and almost half of business travellers (48%) and more than half of leisure travellers (55%) said what they read will determine where they stay.

“What this tells me is that anyone with a keyboard can ruin or make your hotel's reputation,” said Pollard. “As a hotelier, if you're not dealing with your on-line presence, it will be to your detriment.”

Fifty-eight percent of leisure and 61% of business travellers are now using the internet for reservations. Ninety per cent of the travelling public go on-line to look at photos of their accommodations and 75 per cent take a virtual tour. Almost 90 per cent download maps and/or directions on how to get to their hotel. Canadians are also making the internet work for them with 86 per cent “looking for hotel specials” on-line.

Business travellers are starting to use Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to receive hotel marketing information and search out information on accommodations. Twelve per cent of business travellers are searching for hotel listings on their BlackBerry or iPhone, while 10 per cent use these PDAs to check a hotel's ratings and determine what services it offers. While only 6 per cent of business travellers are receiving hotel ads or notification of “special offers” on their PDAs, there is a growing trend to marketing directly to a person's phone or BlackBerry.

Core Services and “Perks” Important to Travellers

One third of business travellers still view the basic amenities such as business centres and express check-out as important. Friendly service is still vital, with 88 per cent of leisure and 80 per cent of business travellers indicating this is still important to them.

However, in times of restraint, “luxury items” such as spas, room service, bar/restaurant and gold/club floors are not viewed as important as in past surveys. There is a 10 per cent drop over 2008 data in the number of leisure travellers who say that a restaurant/bar is important to them, and an 18 per cent drop over 2008 data for business travellers. A similar drop in the percentage of Canadians indicating the importance of a spa at a hotel is noted in the 2009 survey data.

Travellers are looking for “perks”, with 54 per cent of business travellers indicating that reward points such as Air Miles and/or Aeroplan miles are important to them. Almost half of Canadians (47% leisure; 50% business travellers) noted that loyalty programs are important to them. This is up 15 per cent from 2008 leisure figures and up 23 per cent from 2006 figures.

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On the business travel side, this indicates a 13 per cent increase from 2008 business travel data and a 25 per cent increase from 2006 data.

“Loyalty programs may be something that people have taken for granted in the past, but in times of economic down turn, your points can make the difference between being able to take that vacation or that key business trip or not,” said Tony Pollard.

Environment Still Important

Despite the current economic challenges, environmental initiatives are important to almost 40 per cent of both leisure and business travellers. Forty-seven per cent of leisure and 39 per cent of business travellers will pay between \$1-\$5 per night to participate in a carbon off-set program.

Conducted by FH Canada Research, the survey of Canadian travellers is the fifth annual Canadian Travel Intention study undertaken by the Hotel Association of Canada. This study defines a traveller as someone who will stay at least one night in a hotel, motel or resort.

Hotel Association of Canada

The Hotel Association of Canada is the national organization representing the lodging industry in Canada. Our membership encompasses the provincial and territorial hotel associations, the corporate hotel chains, independent hotels, motels and resorts and the many suppliers to the hotel industry. Our objective is to assist both our national and international members as they endeavour to enhance their competitiveness and achieve their bottom line. HAC accomplishes this through the collection and dissemination of information, research, advocacy, education, and operational support services designed to assist its members. www.hotelassociation.ca.

FH Canada Research

FH Canada Research conducted the survey from December 18-22 among 1640 “likely travellers” with a margin of error of +/- 2.5%. Travel intentions data was refreshed on an omnibus survey conducted Feb 1-3, 2009 with 1008 members of the general public.

Fleishman-Hillard Canada specializes in strategic communications, government relations and opinion research. With offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, FH is the only national firm of its kind in Canada offering a comprehensive, integrated public affairs services.