

# Travelers Determined to Vacation Despite Uncertain Economy

Despite economic conditions many travelers won't stop taking vacations, at least according to two recent surveys, one by American Express Travel and the other by Virtuoso. Desires for culinary vacations, trips that include learning life-enriching skills, and active vacations are among the top reasons travelers interviewed want to vacation.

Of the 501 U.S. adults that American Express Travel surveyed recently, 87 percent indicated that the number of vacations involving one or more personal "passions" would either remain the same or increase over the next two years. "Given the uncertain economy, we wanted to see how people's passions drive behavior when it comes to travel," says Audrey Hendley, vice president of marketing, American Express Travel. From cooking and fitness to theater and the arts to fashion and spectator sports, the survey found that personal interests are key drivers in vacation decisions. Some 60 percent said the stronger they feel about a passion, the further they've traveled for it, and 71 percent said they discovered a "new passion" while on vacation. According to the survey, vacations that incorporate personal passions also tend to be longer by almost double the number of days compared to those trips that do not include personal passions. (16 days versus nine) and more expensive (\$3,900 versus \$2,400). Culinary vacations were the most popular among those interviewed, followed by sporting events, adventure trips, music and educational travel.

Virtuoso, a network of travel consultants and agents focusing on luxury travel, got feedback from readers of its *Virtuoso Life* magazine who entered the second annual Travel Dream Sweepstakes survey. Italy took top honors as the "dream destination" for the second year. But the affluent travelers who entered indicated they're interested in trips to Australia, South Africa and India, and trips with an active component such as hikes in Peru and biking and walking tours in Europe. The list of authentic and exclusive experiences included sailing the Mediterranean aboard a private yacht, photographing the big five on an African safari, and tracing the ancient trade routes in Asia.

## When traveling on a personal trip, do you bring your laptop (or other work-related materials) along?

Participate <http://www.globaltravelerusa.com/eflyerpoll.php> in our Weekly Survey for a chance to win a prize. Enter now <http://www.globaltravelerusa.com/eflyerpoll.php> .

## US Airways Charges for Soda; Jet Blue for Blankets \$ Pillows

The latest nickel-and-dime airline fees come from US Airways and Jet Blue. US Air is charging \$2 for soda, juice and bottled water, and \$1 for coffee or tea, except on trans-Atlantic, Envoy and US Air shuttle flights. Alcoholic drinks have jumped from \$5 to \$7. Jet Blue is charging \$7 for a pillow and blanket.

## Delta Introduces Broadband Access

Delta Air Lines is teaming with Aircell to install Gogo, the company's Mobile Broadband Network on the carrier's domestic fleet or more than 330 mainline aircraft. Passengers with

WiFi-enabled devices will be able to access the Internet, corporate VPNs, and email on Gogo. The charge will be a flat fee of \$9.95 for flights of three hours or less, and \$12.95 for longer flights.

## **TSA to Test Shoe Scanning Technology at LAX**

Passengers at LAX will be the first to test a new shoe scanning technology, according to the Transportation Security Administration. Testing of two units manufactured by L3 Communications begins soon, but these units will be used only to collect data and evaluate the technology's potential use. The shoe scanners, which resemble a ticket gate, will be placed in front of the walk-through metal detector. But, passengers will still need to remove their shoes to go through the screening process.

## **United's Reward Accelerator**

The new United Award Accelerator<sup>SM</sup>

[https://store.united.com/enhancements/control/product?product\\_id=UM\\_AXL&category\\_id=UM\\_MILES](https://store.united.com/enhancements/control/product?product_id=UM_AXL&category_id=UM_MILES) lets you double or triple your flight miles each time you fly. Pay a fee based on the number of miles you're flying and you can fatten your Mileage Plus account. For example, the Orange County (SNA) to Chicago (ORD) flight is 1,726 miles. Pay \$52 when you are checking in online and you'll get double the mileage. Pay \$104 to get triple mileage. Currently, this can only be done during online check-in.

## **More Airlines Add Check Baggage Fees**

The list keeps growing. American Airlines will be charging \$15 for the first checked bag for tickets bought since Sunday to Aug. 10. United will charge \$15 for the first checked bag for travel on or after Aug.18. US Airways is starting to charge \$15 for the first checked bag.

<http://www.globaltravelerusa.com/showbanner.php?id=169&action=show&mod=1>

## **Not Fancy But Friendly**

*Rafaelhoteles Orense*

*Pedro Teixeira, 5*

*Madrid, Spain*

*tel 91 597 15 68*

*www.rafaelhoteles.com* <http://www.rafaelhoteles.com>

After an overnight flight and an early-morning, gray November, arrival in Madrid, I was pleased when the taxi glided to a stop in front of the warmly lit window of Rafaelhoteles Orense's dining room. It had a casual appeal — more diner than fine dining — but I could see patrons inside sipping steaming coffee or hot chocolate while reading the morning newspaper and helping themselves to the ample buffet. From the outside looking in, the scene was as inviting as a kitschy Thomas Kinkadee painting (and I mean that in a good way).

But then we pulled away from the curb. "Wait. Isn't this the place," I thought. "The sign says Orense." Turned out we were at the right place, wrong door. The actual hotel entrance was just around the corner — unfortunately fronting a rather dismal side street and adjacent to an ugly, but at least not overflowing, dumpster.

Once inside the small lobby, the warm feeling took hold again. Rafaelhoteles Orense is a standard European business hotel. Nothing fancy. But the front desk staff was efficient and welcoming. My room wasn't ready for my early-morning arrival, so I left my bags with the clerk, strolled across a small, but pleasant sitting area, and descended three steps to the restaurant where I whiled away a half hour or so before a staff member summoned me to confirm my room was ready.

My small twin-bedded room (adjoining twins per European style) was pleasant and functional. An armchair located in the corner opposite the foot of the beds served as a mini sitting area. An ample desk — wired for high-speed Internet access — provided sufficient work space. The bath was, again, functional. Counter space was limited and the hair dryer was of the relatively powerless box-on-the-wall variety — but overall, it was adequate and clean.

While “adequate” and “functional” are apt descriptions of the property, the staff deserves kudos for its ready-willing-and-able attitude. I arrived without a power converter and — Presto! — the front desk had one I could borrow. I couldn’t adjust the heat in my room (it was stifling) and — Bang! — Julian (a jack-of-all-trades who did everything from carry luggage to unlock my tricky safe when I couldn’t get it open) — arrived on the scene and reset the thermostat. Despite using a hotel-supplied converter, I blew a fuse and — you guessed it — fixed immediately.

Rafaelhoteles Orense doesn’t pretend to be something it’s not. It’s a perfectly functional and pleasant business hotel. When called on, though, staff goes above and beyond the call of duty.

Score: x2022;x2022;x2022;x2022;x2022; Lisa Matte

## **Cathay Pacific’s Sweepstakes & \$1,197 Deal**

One lucky traveler will get round-trip air and hotel accommodations in a sweepstakes sponsored by Cathay Pacific Airways and Taj Hotels Resorts & Palaces. This month, Cathay Pacific Airways offers roundtrip flights from Los Angeles (LAX), San Francisco (SFO) or New York (JFK) to India’s top destinations including Bangalore (BLR), Mumbai (BOM), Delhi (DEL) and Chennai (MAA), starting at \$1,119. Cathay Pacific’s August Deal of the Month is available until Aug. 31, or until deemed sold out. Outbound travel starts Sept. 1 - Nov. 30. To get sweepstakes details and book flights visit Cathay Pacific  [<http://www.cathayusa.com/dotm>](http://www.cathayusa.com/dotm) .

## **Korean Air to China**

Book by Aug. 25 for outbound travel commencing between Sept. 1 and Nov. 30 to take advantage of Korean Air’s  [<http://www.koreanair.com>](http://www.koreanair.com) special offer for travel between San Francisco (SFO) and Beijing (PEK), Shenyang (SHE), Shanghai (PVG) or Hong Kong (HKG). Round-trip fares start at \$821. Maximum stay in China is three months. Other restrictions and fees apply.

## **Colorado’s RockResorts Deals While DNC is in Denver**

Discounts range from 10 percent off best available rate at Aspen’s Hotel Jerome to 15 percent off at the posh new Arrabelle in Vail or the Keystone Lodge, plus upgrade based on availability. Offer starts Aug. 14 at most properties and end dates vary according to hotel and range from Aug. 28-Oct. 4. Visit RockResorts  [<http://rockresorts.com>](http://rockresorts.com) or call 888 FOR ROCK for details.

## **Summer in the City at LHW**

Through Sept. 1, the Summer in the City  [<http://www.lhw.com/OfferPage.aspx?id=51>](http://www.lhw.com/OfferPage.aspx?id=51) package offers a savings of 25 percent off the regular room rate at Leading Hotels of the World’s city hotels including properties in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Mexico City, Miami, New York, Panama, Quebec, San Diego and Washington, D.C.

## Find Shangri-La In Santa Monica

After a \$30 million renovation the oceanside Hotel Shangri-La, an Art Deco architectural gem in Santa Monica, Calif. re-opens this October. Special opening prices start at \$265 for a deluxe oceanview room Oct. 31-Dec. 31. Visit Hotel Shangri-La  [<http://www.shangrila-hotel.com/packages>](http://www.shangrila-hotel.com/packages) .

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