

CENTRAL FLORIDA BUSINESS

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FLORIDA BACK ON TOP IN TRAVEL

The state is travelers'
No. 1 destination again.

By CHRISTOPHER BOYD
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Awidely watched survey of travel trends says Florida has regained its perch as the nation's most-coveted vacation destination, a year after dropping to second place in the wake of two traumatic hurricane seasons.

Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell, the Central Florida travel marketing and research company, said Tuesday that nearly a third of all leisure travelers are interested in visiting Florida sometime during the next two years, barely edging out California, which topped the favored-destination ranking last year.

"This is very good news for Florida," YPBR Chairman Peter Yesawich said. "Memories of hurricanes are short, and this illustrates that."

The 2007 National Leisure Travel Monitor surveyed 1,882 active travelers. It depicts a nation ready and willing to travel, but one that views itself as having little time to take a trip.

RATING PLACES

Favorite destinations of leisure travelers when asked where they would like to go in the next 2 years

State	Response rate
Florida	30%
California	28%
Hawaii	16%
Alaska	14%
Colorado	14%
Arizona	13%
Nevada	11%
New York	11%
N. Carolina	9%
Washington state	9%

SOURCE: Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell

destinations for a vacation in 2007

Response Rate || Reason

56%	Visiting family and friends
27%	Beaches and lakes
21%	Sightseeing
15%	Urban or city sights
12%	Cruises
12%	Camping and hiking
11%	Theme parks

SOURCE: Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell

Florida travelers' No. 1 destination

TRAVEL FROM CI

Six in 10 Americans have traveled at least 75 miles from home and stayed overnight somewhere during the past year. But the survey showed one change that would suggest lack of money is less of a deterrent than last year: Family budgetary considerations slipped from the second- to third-most-important reason for not traveling.

A third of those surveyed said they plan to take more trips this year than last, compared with 26 percent who said they would take fewer.

Shorter getaways — those of four nights or less — remain the most popular,

reflecting Americans' relatively small allotments of vacation time.

"The typical employed person in the United States has 14 days off," Yesawich said. "In Canada, the typical adult has 26 days, and in Italy it is 42 days."

Most domestic travelers, 56 percent, spend their vacation visiting friends and relatives. Twenty-seven percent said they prefer vacations at lakes or beaches, and 21 percent preferred general sightseeing. Theme-park vacations ranked behind six other alternatives, with 11 percent.

Yesawich said the study reaffirmed research that gas-

oline prices are significant only when they exceed \$3.50 a gallon.

As the Internet becomes more firmly entwined in people's lives, its use in planning travel has also increased. Sixty-six percent of leisure travelers who use airlines and stay in hotels now use the Internet to plan vacations, the survey said, and 56 percent book online. In 2000, by comparison, just 35 percent used the Internet to do travel research and 18 percent used it to make reservations.

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