

Outlook for Oklahoma Travel in 2010

National Tourism Week White Paper

Produced by the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department

National Statistics

- The United States Travel Association (USTA) estimates a modest recovery in 2010 with U.S. domestic travel rising about 2% this year followed by somewhat stronger growth in 2011.
- Domestic traveler spending increase of 4.7 % is expected for 2010.

Oklahoma Statistics

The Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department recently fielded a quarterly Consumer Travel Pulse survey which measures the intent to travel of consumers in Oklahoma's tourism marketing area. Here are the top line results:

- Close to one-third (31%) have taken a vacation or getaway weekend already— **that is almost double the March 2009 study where just 16% had taken a trip already.** That said, these were shorter trips where they “chose” to drive instead of fly... Which could be good news for Oklahoma since we are a drive-in destination.
- **The shift to shorter trips and get-ways continues.** In 2008, just 52% had taken a get-away (shorter stay) and closer to 60% (59%) had taken a vacation (longer stay). In 2009, vacations declined to 56% and getaways went up to 55%.
- What's in store for 2010? Vacation intent is the same as in 2009 but **planned get-away trips are on the rise (54% from 51%).**
- **People seem to have calmed down some about the economy.** In March 2009 *almost half (45%)* said they wanted to wait to see what the economy was going to do before planning their trip. Now just *one-third (31%)* say that.
- But... **Now they're more worried about gas prices.** 16% were concerned in March 2009 compared to 28% now.
- Those who are very/somewhat likely to take a trip to Oklahoma held steady at 43-44%.
- About half had heard the term “**Staycation**” before we defined it for them. This is the same as prior surveys. (Definition: When a family or individual either stays in his or her immediate area or takes a day trip to a nearby attraction.)
- Staycations are here to stay— about one-quarter (23%) say they're taking more staycations and staying closer to home.

-OVER-

Other Positive Signs for Oklahoma Tourism

- Responses to our spring tourism advertising campaign – especially on the new TravelOK.com - are reaching all-time highs.
- During the last week in April and the first week in May, we experienced daily record-breaking spikes in unique visits to TravelOK.com, ranging from 6,510 to a high of 8,412.
- TravelOK.com's ranking on quantcast.com (which measures and tracks the top one million websites in the United States) has risen to 17,000, climbing 30,000 ranking positions since launching the new site in January.
- Oklahoma's www.TravelOK.com is now ranked 13th out of the 50 state tourism sites in the nation.
- Oklahoma's state park system saw a slight increase in 2009 and reservations are strong so far for 2010.
- April 2010 collections for the sales and use tax apportionment that funds Oklahoma Tourism advertising and promotional efforts increased for the first time in 11 months. Collections were 5.65% higher than in April 2009.
- Year-to-date visitation to Oklahoma's Tourism Information Centers is up 3.9% over last year.
- Calls to our the travel counselors in our call center were up 113% this February over last February, indicating consumers are ordering Oklahoma travel brochures and beginning the summer trip planning process. Brochure orders were up 96% in February.

Outlook for Summer Travel in Oklahoma

- OTRD's operating and promotional budgets continues to face challenges due to revenue shortfalls at the state level. In FY 10, our agency experienced a 7.5% percent or \$4.2 million reduction in appropriated funds and addressed the decrease by downsizing some programs, implementing employee furloughs and a buyout, and not filling vacant positions. Additional cuts are anticipated for FY11. Approximately 42% of OTRD's budget is self generated by the agency.
- Because the economy is strong than the national average in our main feeder market of Dallas and North Texas and relatively strong in Oklahoma, we feel the travel season looks very promising, especially for getaways.
- Of course we will keep our eye on gas prices and continue to promote a value message that is resonating with travelers.

The Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department (OTRD) is working to advance the exceptional quality of life in Oklahoma by preserving, maintaining, and promoting our natural assets and cultural richness. The department is the steward of the state park system and also promotes Oklahoma as a travel destination through many award-winning programs. To learn more about Oklahoma's unique events and attractions, please visit www.TravelOK.com or follow us at [Facebook.com/TravelOK](https://www.facebook.com/TravelOK) and [Twitter.com/OklahomaTourism](https://twitter.com/OklahomaTourism).