

U.S. RESEARCH: LEISURE TRAVEL PREVAILS OVER BUSINESS TRAVEL



Recent Travel Trends Report for Q3 revealed that New York City remains the most popular travel destination for American travelers. Data gathered from over 520 million tourists across USA showcased a number of patterns, trends and traveling preferences.

The Travel Trends Report published by Sojern gathered data between July and September 2013 focusing on the top travel destinations, average trip duration, booking lead time, travel group size and other details. Consumer behavior is based on the data gathered by tracking hotel bookings and airline traffic throughout the country.

According to the research 51% of American travelers were female rather than male, with a **staggering prevalence for leisure travel (72%) as opposed to business travel (28%)**.

The prevalence of leisure travelers implies longer trips and mostly, individual bookings. Most tourists (41%) have been away for six days or longer in Q3, while only 19% of the travelers were on the road for short periods such as a weekend or a single day.

Short-term travel is mostly connected to business trips, since most meetings, conventions and similar events usually take one or two days. The declining trend in short-term trips is therefore representing a decline in business trips all over the country.

Some of the most visited destinations include New York City, Las Vegas, Washington DC, San Francisco, Chicago and Los Angeles - cities that are commonly associated with tourist attractions and leisure travels, another symptom of the positive trend towards longer leisure trips.

These cities set out to maintain their status as some of the most sought after destinations throughout the world, attracting tourists more than many other options. While New York City steadily remains on top, showcasing more flights and more hotel bookings than any other city, Las Vegas showcases a few idiosyncrasies that set it apart from the main national trends, although keeping within their lines. For example, Las Vegas attracted more male visitors than women travelers, and as opposed to the overall trends, last-minute flight bookings seem to be very popular for travelers heading to Las Vegas.

Another indicator of the growth of leisure traveling is the size of the party involved in the trip. Solo travellers are more common within the business travel sphere. On the other hand, those who travel for leisure and entertainment purposes are usually families and couples. In Q3, 74% of travelers booked their flights alone, 18% traveled in couples, 4% traveled in a group of three and 4% in a group of four or more. In Q2, 79% were solo travelers, 16% couples, 3% in group of three and 2% in groups of four and more. The research thus suggests that as the economy recovers, more people engage in leisure travel.

As more and more people get up in the air, the demand for coach, second-class, seats is actually dramatically and steadily increasing, counting over 98% of their total flights booked.

Booking lead time, the time between the actual booking of the trip and the trip itself, is actually steadily increasing, mainly because passengers who book in advance are able to access cheaper flights and even cheaper accommodation. **73% of trips were booked more than a week in advance compared to 65% in Q2.**

The current predominance of leisure travelers as opposed to business travelers is also reflected in statistics representing the actual periods when most flights are booked. Most airline bookings (31%) occurred more than 30 days in advance in Q3. Last-minute bookers consist mainly of business travelers. However, most of hotel bookings (74%) occurred in the week leading up to the day of stay.

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