

For Second Year Italy Is Top Choice For Vacations

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Italy is followed by English-speaking countries: Great Britain, Australia and Ireland

Few Americans have both the financial wherewithal and scheduling flexibility to take a vacation anywhere in the world on a whim, but that makes it no less fun to think about.

When American adults were asked where they would choose, if they could spend a vacation in any country in the world outside of the U.S. and not have to worry about cost, the country named most often-for the second year in a row-was Italy. In fact, Italy has been a top pick for Americans for some time - it has ranked as either the first or second choice for the past 8 years.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,183 adults surveyed online between July 11 and 18, 2011 by Harris Interactive.

This year Great Britain comes in at the number 2 spot, followed by Australia in 3rd. This is the lowest ranking Australia has seen since this question was first asked in 1997; last year and in 2008 Australia was 2nd on the list and every other year until now it has been 1 st. Rounding out this year's top 5 are Ireland (4) and France (5).

Greece holds steady at its ranking of 6 from last year, while it seems Spain has become slightly more popular, moving up from 9 last year, and 10 before that, to 7 this year. Germany has dropped from a tie for 6th last year to 8 this year, and Japan dropped one spot to number 9.

America's neighbor to the north, Canada, comes in at number 10 this year, followed by the much farther away New Zealand, at number 11. Rounding out the top 15 vacation destinations are Switzerland (12), Israel (13), and returning to the list after an absence last year is Brazil at 14 and China at 15; China was last in the top 15, also at number 15, 4 years ago.

Mexico and the Netherlands dropped off of the top 15 list this year - they were listed at 13 and 14, respectively, last year.

Looking at the chosen countries for vacation, over half of Americans would choose somewhere in Europe (53%), two in five would choose to go to a country in Asia or the Pacific region (19%) while one in ten prefer a country in the Americas or Caribbean (10%). Much smaller numbers say they would choose to vacation in a Middle Eastern country (2%) or Africa (2%) while 3% say they would not leave the U.S. and 6% are not sure where they would choose to go.

Not surprisingly, different groups of people have different vacation priorities. While the top vacation destination for both men and women is Italy, the rest of their top 5 falls out somewhat differently: for men the 2nd top pick is Australia, followed by Great Britain (3) and then France & Spain (which are tied for 4th).

The female top 5 list includes Great Britain (2), Ireland (3), Australia (4) and France (5). There seems to be an age divide in vacation preferences as well - younger Americans including Echo Boomers, aged 18-34, and Gen X, aged 34-46, both say Italy is their top pick, while for older Americans-Baby Boomers, aged 47-65, and Matures, aged 66 and over-the top pick is Great Britain.

So What?

Whether Americans are frequent travelers, voracious consumers of travel literature and news, or none of the above, most have an idea where they would go if they had the opportunity to do so without financial constraints.

While picking up and taking these kinds of trips is not a reality for most Americans, during this summer travel season-while continuing to dream about and possibly work towards a major vacation-it is important to remember that small weekend trips, or even a specially planned afternoon, can satisfy some of the needs met by vacations, which could be a realistic possibility regardless of schedule or budget.

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between July 11 to 18, 2011 among 2,183 adults (aged 18

and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading.

All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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