

# THE WEEK

## Americans aren't looking North for their vacations

Americans could well become accidental tourists in Canada unless the industry adjusts to major market changes, the Canadian Tourism Research Institute says.

An aging population, cheaper air fares and a trend toward shorter vacations are affecting where US vacationers take their holidays. And statistics show they are spending less time here, says the institute, part of the Conference Board of Canada.

"One disturbing trend is their increasing vacation travel abroad and to Mexico at the expense of visits to Canada, particularly Ontario," the institute says in a recent newsletter. "US travel to Canada appears to have reached a point of little growth."

That's bad news for tourism operators because Americans are by far the most numerous visitors here. In 1987, they accounted for two-thirds of the \$6.3 billion spent by tourists in Canada.

Last summer, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan experienced a decrease in US automobile visitors staying two nights or more. Some resort operators reported a 60-per cent drop in bookings in Ontario, which normally accounts for 57 per cent of such travellers.

The picture is not all gloom and doom. During the same period, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta and B.C. enjoyed "healthy increases" of five to 13 per cent in the same category of visitors.

But the institute says Canada is beginning to slip as a vacation choice for Americans, who last summer spent \$2 billion here. While overseas travel by US citizens will likely grow by five per cent this year, travel to Canada will be up only one per cent.

The biggest factor causing a shift in US travel patterns is the ubiquitous baby boomer. Born between 1945 and 1965, boomers now make up one-third of the US population, up from 25 per cent in 1979.

### MORE FLYING

This huge chunk of potential tourists is now reaching the "prime flying age," that statistical point when most people do much of their travel by air. At the same time, deregulation of the US airline industry has brought about cheaper fares.

The combination means more Americans are inclined to take overseas trips.

That could hurt Canada because the traditional and largest group of US visitors has been families touring by car or recreational vehicle "with kids in tow." The rubber-tire traveller accounted for 80 per cent of the market, the institute says.

The changing nature of the US family is also playing a role in tourism. With more families headed by two working parents, arranging long vacations is more difficult.

Vacations are getting shorter, although Americans are travelling more. Weekend trips are increasing at a faster pace than longer excursions, the institute says.

"If the trend towards more frequent but shorter trips continues, we can expect to see in Canada a corresponding decrease in the traditional family travel market. Businesses which cater to the touring traveller, such as rural motels and urban hotels, are likely to see less business from Americans in the future."

Boomers are having fewer children and having them later in life, which alters the traditional "family-touring-type vacation." These couples "appear to be better targets" for get-away vacations of three-to-five nights rather than two-week marathons.

### FURTHER AWAY

Another factor affecting US tourism here is the exodus of retired Americans to the warmer climate of the Sun Belt.

"This presents a tremendous challenge for our tourism industry. Not only is the US population in some cases moving further away from Canada, they are moving to areas which have a highly competitive advantage over the tourism products Canada has to offer."

Within a decade, some 80 per cent of Americans will live within an hour's drive of a coast. When they decide to vacation at a resort, they are less inclined to look towards Canada.

"While Canada has developed first-class resort areas, it is difficult to compete with the beaches, sunbathing and climate that the majority of Americans now have within an hour's drive."

The institute says Canadian tourism operators have to rethink marketing strategies in light of all these changes. Among those areas with "good growth potential" are the package-tour bus market, get-away city vacations and high-quality hunting or fishing expeditions.

Canada's image among US travellers as a country of safe, clean and relatively inexpensive cities should help to draw more get-away business. But the tourism industry and governments have "much promotional work to do" to draw more Americans.

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## HOME FEATURES MASTER SUITE

Additional brick veneer, multipaned windows and primitive wood boards create a Tudor exterior for this 9 square foot home. The weather protected entry leads to a two storey foyer. The vaulted ceilings continue through the living room and master bedroom enhancing spaciousness of this open plan design. The living room, with warming masonry fireplace and floor to ceiling beams, adjoins the dining room. The master bedroom the main floor provides added privacy and avoids the need to climb stairs to the second level. The master ensuite boasts a spacious walk-in closet, whirlpool spa with light above, twin vanity and shower. The informal area lives around the kitchen/family room. The kitchen, centre cooking island and roomy counters, flows to a breakfast bay and family room. A powder room and dry room, off the two car garage, complete the first floor.

Stairs the railed gallery views the foyer below. The additional bedrooms, each with wall closets, share a bathroom with two vanity areas and separate tub. A bonus room provides 210 additional square feet for game room, media centre or an additional room. Ample storage facility off the gallery. For Canada's largest plan book with over 300 plans, only \$9.95, including shipping. To build Plan No. 1189-2208, order an 8 set blueprint package for \$395.00, sets for \$345.00, plus \$14.00 shipping. Send payment TO THE WEEK, c/o The Halton Hills Herald, Unit 24 Dunwin Drive, Mississauga, Ontario L5L 3T5. For best service, use Visa/MasterCard and call toll free 1-863-6739, 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday to Saturday. Metro Toronto residents, please call 828-5657, a.m.-5:00 p.m.

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