

Adventure travel not limited to daredevils: study

BY KARINA IOFFEE, REUTERS AUGUST 21, 2010

Adventure tourism, long considered the milieu of a small group of daredevils, is becoming more mainstream, with tourists more likely to rappel down mountains, cycle or volunteer while on vacation.

These adventurers are young, affluent and spent \$89 billion last year, excluding the cost of airfare and gear, according to a study by researchers at George Washington University's School of Business.

"You have a lot of people who want to roll up their sleeves, get involved in a culture and have a more authentic experience than just lying in the sun," said Dr. Kristin Lamoureux, an author of the study, which was conducted with the Adventure Travel Trade Association, an industry group.

The researchers questioned 850 travellers from North and South America and Europe. Seventy per cent of international travel originates in those regions. Countries with the most travellers are the United States, Argentina, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain.

Although overall tourism figures were down by six per cent in 2009, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the study showed that when people travel, they are more likely to engage in physical activities, providing a new revenue base for tour operators.

Based on their findings and data from the UNWTO, the researchers estimate that 150 million adventure trips will be taken next year.

"There is a perception that the adventure tourism market is a very limited group of people who are seeking high-risk activity, but the reality is that it's a much broader market than we thought ... and they are willing to spend," Lamoureux said.

The typical adventure traveller was 36 years old and spent between \$450 and \$800 per vacation, excluding airfare, according to the researchers.

The biggest source of news for adventure tourists was their local newspaper and information found through Google and Facebook.

Adventure travellers tend not to own cutting edge technology like iPhones, a crucial point, Lamoureux said, in helping tour operators maximize their advertising dollars, especially in times of recession.

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