

## Mission Programs

Center for Sustainable Destinations

### Profile of Geotourists

In 2002, National Geographic *Traveler* commissioned NFO Research, in partnership with Travel Industry Association of America, to collect and analyze data to determine American travelers' attitudes about trip preferences; importance of different aspects of leisure trips; opinions relating to culture, heritage or the environment; and tourism in their own area. **The Geotourism Study** identified unique attributes of the 154 million adult American travelers have taken at least one trip 50 miles or more, one way, away from home and/or including one night or more away from home, within the past three years.

- 71% of this traveling public said it is important to them that “their visits to a destination not damage its environment;”
- 61% agree that their travel experience is better when the destination preserves its natural, historic, and cultural sites and attractions;
- 58% support controlling access to National parks and public lands for preservation and protection.
- 53% consider their travel experience is better when they have learned about their destination's customs, geography, and culture.

Travelers can be segmented into eight markets, each with unique Geotourism profiles. The size of the market is provided, followed by average annual household income and average number of total trips taken per year.

- Three markets share similar income, amount of travel and strong inclinations toward Geotourism values:
  - Geo Savvys (16.3 million travelers): \$68,200, 7.2 trips
  - Urban Sophisticates (21.2 million travelers): \$76,600, 6.4 trips
  - Good Citizens (17.6 million travelers): \$70,600, 5.8 trips
- Three other markets have similar income and travel behaviors, yet vary in age, lifestyles, and attitudes.
  - Traditionals (16.1 million travelers): \$53,100; 4.2 trips
  - Wishful Thinkers (the largest group at 22.3 million): \$53,400, 3.9 trips
  - Apathetics (19.9 million travelers): \$64,100; 4.6 trips
- The final two segments have extreme attitudes and travel behaviors, therefore very low potential for Geotourism.
  - Outdoor Sportsmen (21.0 million travelers): \$54,000; 5.0 trips
  - Self-Indulgents (19.9 million travelers): \$68,800, 5.7 trips

At least 55.1 million Americans can be classified as “sustainable tourists” or “Geotourists.” The three main market segments are profiled here:

### **Geo-Savvys: 16.3 million adults**

- 43 years average age; More likely to be women (54%); 41% have kids in household
- 50% Baby Boomers (53% women; 47% men); one in four is a dult under age 35
- \$68,220 average HH income; 38% \$75K +
- 61% have a college degree; 25% has a graduate degree
- Half (51%) live in large cities or urban areas
- 26% live in the Pacific region; 10% live in the Mountain region
- 73% say that the educational experience is very important to them
- 84% do not want to damage the environment when they travel
- Three times more likely to enjoy primitive travel to wilderness areas
- 83% visit destinations with authentic historic and archeological sites
- 81% travel to experience people, lifestyles, and cultures very different from their own
- 80% visit small towns and rural areas
- 73% feel it is important to learn about their destination's people, history, and culture

### **Urban Sophisticates: 21.2 million adults**

- 45 years average age; 50% Baby Boomers
- \$76,630 average HH income; 46% \$75K +
- 73% work full/part time; 12% retired
- 4.3 leisure trips last year; most likely of all markets to travel internationally
- 73% prefer trips to destinations offering authentic historic or archeological sites
- 86% take trips to spend time exploring historic and charming towns/locations
- 74% prefer destinations with a wide variety of cultural/arts events and attractions
- 74% want to experience the outdoors, but with comfortable accommodations
- Most concerned of all groups about living in harmony with nature (88%)
- 54% feel that tourism enhances the strength and vitality of their local economies
- At home, they dine in ethnic or specialty restaurants (74%), attend festivals and ethnic celebrations (55%), attend performing arts events (51%), and visit art museums and galleries (45%)
- Feel strongly about importance of learning about different cultures (84%), passing on our history to future generations (90%), and need for more funding for preservation of historic sites (73%), and the cultural, visual, and performing arts (63%)

### **Good Citizens: 17.6 million adults**

- 55 years average age; 51% Matures
- \$70,650 average HH income; 42% \$75K+
- 54% work full/part time; 34% retired
- Strong involvement in community activities, plus a heightened level of cultural and environmental awareness and sensitivity, although not always evident in their travel
- 88% want high levels of cleanliness; 79% want high levels of safety and security
- 60% want high quality visitor services and personnel
- 43% want to meet travelers who share their interests

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