



THE RESIDENCES®
AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, DALLAS



Zagat's 2009 U.S. Hotels, Resorts & Spas Survey Finds More Options Available for Cost-Conscious Travelers

And the Winners Are: New York City (Favorite Destination); Palazzo Resort, Las Vegas (Top Newcomer); Four Seasons (Top Chain); Ritz-Carlton, Dallas (Top Large Hotel); Twin Farms, VT (Top Small Hotel); Best Value: Homewood Suites, Disney's Fort Wilderness, and Timberline Lodge; Expedia and TripAdvisor (Best Websites)

NEW YORK, Nov. 12 /PRNewswire/ -- According to Zagat Survey, the economic downturn, accompanied by a decline in business travel, may have an upside for leisure travelers: hotels are responding by dropping rates,

ramping up promotions and negotiating deals. Zagat's 2009 U.S. Hotels, Resorts & Spas survey released today, also shows great progress in the industry, with numerous major renovations and newcomers entering the market.

"The travel industry is certainly affected by the economic crisis," said Tim Zagat, CEO of Zagat Survey. "But our survey shows that the hotels and resorts that continue to provide quality at fair prices are reaping rewards in the form of an extremely loyal consumer base."

The 2009 guide covers 1,001 hotels, resorts and spas nationwide based on input from 14,049 frequent travelers and travel professionals, such as meeting planners and travel agents. 76% of surveyors report booking their travel online. More specifically: 82% book airline tickets, 74% book room reservations, and 65% book car rentals. Only 33% of surveyors book restaurant reservations online.

Decline in Business Travel: Travel for business purposes declined with 30% of surveyors saying they are traveling less on business and only 21% saying more. The main reasons for this change were company travel policies (26%), personal economics (15%), economic uncertainty (12%) and high airline prices (11%).

The Bad and the Good: The main complaint about the hotel industry is poor service according to 48% of surveyors. This is followed by poor room conditions (25%), and noisy fellow guests (15%). On the positive side, respondents say they like in-room Wi-Fi (56%), in-lobby flight check-in (29%), and eco-friendly practices (26%).

Green Talks: This year, the Zagat national average cost for a room at these top hotels comes in at \$396.92 compared to \$361.01 just two years ago. New York City is the most expensive venue (\$593.98) with Las Vegas at the other end of the spectrum (\$252.38). While price is a major consideration for travelers in choosing vacation lodging (35%), this year almost as many people say they'd pay more to stay in an eco-friendly property (31%).

Winners: And the winners are: New York City (surveyors' favorite destination); Expedia and TripAdvisor (best websites); Homewood Suites, Embassy Suites and DoubleTree (best value chains); and Disney's Fort Wilderness in Orlando and Timberline Lodge in Oregon (best value for large and small lodgings respectively). **No. 1 large hotel and resort respectively are the Ritz Carlton, Dallas and the Four Seasons, Hualalai.** The survey's No. 1 Small Hotel is Vermont's Twin Farms and its Best Newcomer is the Palazzo Resort & Casino in Las Vegas.

Economics 101: For several years hotels enjoyed a sellers' market, with high prices and healthy occupancy rates. But that picture is changing - which is good news for leisure travelers who might otherwise have opted for "stay-cations." Already, resorts from Florida to Hawaii are offering free-night deals, along with meal, spa or golf credits. According to Nina Zagat, "we're now in a buyers' market. Never have we seen the scales tip so fast."