

## **U of M survey: Minnesotans predict higher leisure travel spending in 2012**

**Contacts:** Julie Christensen, University of Minnesota Extension, [reuve007@umn.edu](mailto:reuve007@umn.edu), (612) 626-4077

[Kristin Anderson](mailto:kma@umn.edu), University News Service, [kma@umn.edu](mailto:kma@umn.edu), (612) 624-1690

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL (01/23/2012) —A majority of the state's residents spend their leisure time in Minnesota, and 78 percent said they plan to spend as much or more money on leisure travel in 2012 compared to 2011, a new survey by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center reveals.

Among respondents surveyed during the fourth quarter of 2011, a majority (54 percent) said they plan to spend the same amount of money on leisure travel in 2012 compared to 2011, while 24 percent said they plan to spend more. Previous visitor research indicates travelers spend nearly equal amounts on shopping, recreation and food.

"This demonstrates that travel and tourism-dependent communities and businesses can be optimistic for 2012," said Ingrid Schneider, director of the U of M Tourism Center. "Traveler dollars flow through economies at all levels, and tourism attractions and opportunities add to Minnesotans' quality of life."

Beyond their own leisure spending, nearly 70 percent of respondents said they view tourism as "important" to their local economy. This is a first-ever focus on importance to the local economy.

Previous Tourism Center surveys found that 99 percent of Minnesotans saw tourism as "important" or "very important" to the state's economy. "These numbers indicate that travel continues to be an important part of consumer behavior," said John Edman, director of Explore Minnesota Tourism. "Travel means huge dollars for every region of our state."

The tourism industry generates \$11.3 billion in leisure and hospitality sales in Minnesota, including \$732 million in sales tax, and accounts for close to 250,000 jobs, according to Explore Minnesota Tourism.

The research study was supported by the Carlson Chair of Hospitality, Travel and Tourism, and was conducted as part of the 2011 Minnesota State Survey by the Minnesota Center for Survey Research. More than 800 telephone interviews were conducted with state residents aged 18 or older from October to December 2011. The margin of error was 3.5 percent.

The University of Minnesota Tourism Center is a collaboration of University of Minnesota Extension and the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. For more information on tourism research and Extension programs, visit [www.tourism.umn.edu](http://www.tourism.umn.edu).