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Camping Closer to Home

by Dennis Gaub, for KOA Kompass

If a dour economy has made you delay making your summer vacation plans, you're not alone, according to travel experts.

Yet, those experts say you have alternatives to more-expensive trips.

And, budget-savvy travelers' options include making KOA Kampgrounds -- there are almost 500 across North America -- their base for exploring scenic, historic and cultural attractions that are close by.

"Camping closer to home definitely has its benefits," says Mike Gast, KOA director of communications. "You don't have to take off as many days for traveling, spend as much on gas, you can run home if you forgot something, and many people live near attractions that they haven't taken the time to explore."

According to the Travel Industry Association of America's (TIA) Summer 2003 forecast, Americans will take 275.4 million leisure person-trips during June, July and August 2003. That represents a 2.5-percent increase over last summer.

(A person-trip is one person on one trip traveling 50 miles or more from home, one way, according to TIA.)

"The rather dramatic shifts that Americans have made in their travel preferences in the past 20 months, such as more driving trips, closer-to-home travel and more rural destinations are still apparent," said Dr. Suzanne Cook, TIA's senior vice president of research and technology, in a press release. The release said auto travel will continue to be stronger than air, and recreational vehicle travel is expected to remain "very strong" this summer.

Families trying to limit their vacation expenses are on the right track when they choose RV travel. A study by Pennals Kerr Foster Consulting found that an RV vacation costs:

- Half as much as driving a car and staying in hotels,
- 60 percent less than traveling by bus or train and staying in a hotel, and
- 60 percent less than flying to a vacation destination and staying in hotels.

The American Automobile Association provides another perspective. AAA's annual Vacation Cost Survey found that the average national cost for a family of four (two adults and two children) was \$244. That included \$132 per night for lodging plus \$112 per day for meals. AAA also reported that the average family traveling by car this summer will spend \$13.52 per 100 miles for gas, oil and maintenance, based on a gasoline price of \$1.50 per gallon and average fuel economy of 23 mpg.

KOA Kampgrounds across the country offer daily rates substantially lower than typical motel and hotel rates. The KOA offerings range from less-expensive tent and RV sites to more-expensive Camping Kabins and Camping Cottages. For specific rates, check the [Kampgrounds of America 2003 Published Directory](#) or browse the [online listing of campgrounds](#).

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