

Canadians Have a Lust for Life Says American Express Survey
Points Programs Seen As A Way To Indulge Our Love Of Travel And Excitement

Toronto, ON (September 14, 2005) – Life is good, say most Canadians...and we enjoy living it to the fullest.

A recent study by credit and charge card company **American Express** that looked at the attitudes and perceptions of Canadians towards happiness and what constitutes a rewarding life, shows that as a nation we have a real lust for life and a strong desire to add to our collection of memorable experiences.

The survey, compiled by pollsters **Leger Marketing** showed that many of us would love to have adventurous experiences like going on an African safari or climbing the Himalayas.

“We are definitely not a nation of couch potatoes - we have a work hard and play *harder* attitude” says Trevor Van Nest, VP of Customer Relationships Marketing for Amex Canada.

Overwhelmingly, the survey showed that while the vast majority of people are generally pretty happy (93%) with the way their life is going, they're still looking for opportunities that will help them do even more to make their lives happy and fulfilling.

And while there are some who feel they are working simply to pay the bills, most feel they are living life to the fullest (77%) and say the reward for working hard is the ability to enjoy a nice lifestyle and new life experiences.

For most, real happiness remains rooted in family, good friends and good health. Beyond that, the research reveals that people are also seeking to take part in fun types of activities like going to concerts or playing golf on a more frequent basis. Clearly, Canadians are placing an emphasis on planning and experiencing special and unique events that will provide life's highlights.

For Canadians, travel is considered the biggest reward with more than half saying it is the greatest thing in life. The number one ranked most memorable experience for those surveyed was connected to a trip – even more so than their wedding or the birth of a child.

Van Nest sees a definite move away from the cocooning theme of a few years ago. “What we're seeing from this survey and from our own business is that most of us are getting out more and treating ourselves, whether it's simply for a night out at a good restaurant, or going out to a concert or sporting event.”

More than half in the survey (51%) said they supplement their main vacation with regular weekend getaways and two-in-five (41%) said once a month or more they do something different to break their regular routine.

“People are definitely saying ‘I want more out of life than just the day-to-day’. Particularly, Canadians are looking to experience more of the interesting and exciting activities that add up to a rewarding life”, says Amex’s Van Nest. “It’s experiences and memories they want to collect, not just possessions”.

Canadians Play The Points Game To Indulge Themselves

According to the survey, half of the respondents said they participate in a credit card rewards program. Of those, 43% said they have used points for an experience type reward, while a full 80% say they are looking to use their points for something special in the future.

Van Nest says that points collectors fall into a couple of distinct categories – those people looking for quick and easily accessible reward options like theatre tickets, fine dining or a round of golf and those who use their points for flights or packaged vacations. Van Nest adds that in addition, a new points collector is starting to emerge - those saving a large bank of points to experience a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

For this reason, American Express has focused a lot of marketing attention on building points programs that meet the demand for activity-based rewards. And it has proven to be a huge motivator in building lasting customer loyalty. Amex offers its own Membership Rewards Program, and is also the only company with cards linked to Canada’s two most prominent rewards programs, Air Miles and Aeroplan.

Amex estimates that Canadians are holding onto close to 100 billion in unused points.

Dream Rewards

The survey asked people to identify special activities that they would love to experience at some point in the future. The most popular of these include:

- Exploring the Mayan ruins (54%)
- Safari in Africa (52%)
- Attending a major international sports event like the Olympics or soccer World Cup (49%)
- Wine tasting tour of Tuscany (46%)

Other popular special events included having the chance to meet their favourite celebrity, fly-fishing in BC, and taking cooking classes in France. An adventurous 20%-30% would love to go on a trip to either the North or South Pole, climb the Himalayas or go sky-diving.

These may be at the extreme end of the scale, but Van Nest says they point to a real shift in attitudes.

“Compared to our grandparents’ and even our parents’ generation, we’re living a lifestyle that is more accessible than ever before. Greater levels of disposable income and a more optimistic attitude towards life and the future means greater access to International travel and a host of leisure and entertainment opportunities.”

What Do We Want More Of?

Not surprisingly, the big factors are still time and money. Eighty percent say they wish they had more money to enjoy the things they want to do, and 73% wish they had more time.

And even though people are generally happy and feel they are living the life they hoped for (57%), a sizeable number would still like to make some changes to make their life even better (60%).

About Membership Rewards

Membership Rewards is the world's largest payment card loyalty program offering the most choice and flexibility for customers. In Canada, the Membership Rewards program offers over 350 airline, travel, merchandise, dining, entertainment and lifestyle reward options. It also continues to be one of the fastest points earning programs available, offering one point for virtually every dollar spent on purchases and an option to accelerate the rate of points earned. Plus, American Express Platinum Charge Cardmembers automatically receive 1.5 points for every dollar spent on purchases.

American Express in Canada operates as Amex Bank of Canada and Amex Canada Inc. Both are wholly-owned subsidiaries for the New York based American Express Travel Related Services Company, Inc., the largest operating unit of American Express Company, which provides a range of financial and travel related services for consumers and companies. Amex Canada Inc., operates the Travel Service Network, Corporate Travel and Travellers Cheque division in Canada. Amex opened its first offices in Toronto and Hamilton in 1853 and now employs 3,700 Canadians coast to coast.

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