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**Where's Hot and Where's Not?
ILTM reveals Italy to be a winner for luxury travellers**

New research released by International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM), has revealed Italy to be the most popular country for top end travel. Thanks to its quality tourism offering, range of cultural and gastronomic experiences and uniquely iconic style, the European hot spot is also tipped to be the most sought after destination in the coming 12-18 months.

The leading luxury travel show ILTM surveyed over 1,500 of its VIP buyers on issues relating to general luxury travel trends, changing demographics within the luxury travel client base, as well as environmental and security issues. Respondents included a broad cross section of global tourism and travel companies, from high street travel agents to events organisers.

Brad Monaghan, Marketing Manager of ILTM, commented; "Our research reveals that luxury visitor numbers and expenditure are on the rise globally, with companies experiencing an average 17.5% increase in client numbers and a 16% increase in client expenditure. Despite the number of emerging luxury travel destinations around the globe, it's interesting to note that Italy remains the leading choice for discerning travellers, with Europeans as well as amongst developing luxury travel markets such as China, Russia and India."

As a designer of luxury group travel experiences based in Canada, Flavia St.Clair, President of Exclusive Travels International, has had more requests for programmes in Italy than any other destination. "Italy offers the perfect combination for many travellers, especially those wishing to experience true luxury, which comes not from the price of the trip, but rather from the quality of the travel experience," she said.

"From the exquisite fashions of Valentino to the heart-throbbing design of Ferrari, Italy offers the best of what life has to offer. The Italians know what it means to enjoy la dolce vita and are willing to share this way of life with their visitors," Ms St.Clair added.

According to the ILTM research, other destinations tipped to be in strong and growing demand over the coming year include the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Vietnam and China.

In contrast, the destination experiencing the biggest decrease in requests by luxury travellers is North America, despite other markets rebounding to the States with renewed confidence. Security concerns, issues with immigration, difficulty



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obtaining Visas and a general negative perception of the US were the major reasons cited for the country's plummeting popularity on a global level.

"Travel to the USA is definitely experiencing a downturn among affluent travellers from Spain", said Francesc Escánez, Director at Atlantida Viatges. "Strict and dubiously effective security measures at American airports involving long queues, do not put luxury travellers at ease. They are thus travelling to alternative places offering fewer inconveniences."

The UK and Ireland also fared badly in the research, as the strength of the British pound pitched them as being too expensive against their competitors. London's airports also came under criticism, as Suzanne Duzenman, Managing Director of Global International Travel Services P.L in Australia commented, "It's increasingly frustrating that one of the largest airports in the world has so many issues with delays, lost baggage and cancelled flights. My clients would love to visit London if they didn't have to travel through Heathrow."

ILTM is conducting a further survey about luxury travel trends amongst its global exhibitors, the results of which are expected next month.

ILTM retains its competitive advantage by inviting over 1,300 of the 'A-List' luxury travel buyers and private travel arrangers from seventy countries from throughout the globe to meet with the leading luxury travel suppliers familiar to providing the star treatment for their clients. ILTM also features an invitation only policy to ensure that levels of business and networking remain consistently high as the market grows at such a fast pace.

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ILTM will take place 3-6 December 2007 at Le Palais des Festivals et des Congrès in Cannes.

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