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Maine entices cruise ship passengers to return with a free night's lodging for future visits

Augusta, Maine-CruiseMaine and several tourism partners have recently launched a new direct marketing campaign designed to entice cruise ship passengers to return to Maine for extended land based vacations. Passengers will receive a voucher that will prompt them to explore lodging options on www.FreeStayMaine.com. The value of the lodging promotions will be worth a minimum of one free night's stay and special packages are available throughout Maine's entire coastline as well as interior locations.

The website www.FreeStayMaine.com features a search engine of participating properties. The website also features active links to the websites of all the participating partners as well as the regional tourism associations.

The FreeStayMaine program is endorsed by CruiseMaine as well as the Maine Innkeeper's Association, the Maine Office of Tourism, the Maine Port Authority, and the Greater Portland and Casco Bay, Down East Acadia, The Maine Highlands and the Mid-Coast tourism regions.

The State of Maine expects to host 118,000 cruise ship passengers to varied Maine ports beginning May 8th, 2006 and ending on November 2, 2006.

The program partners feel there is feasible supporting information for such a program based on the article "*The Likelihood of a Passenger to return to a Visited Port*" *The Case of Bar Harbor, Maine* authored in 2002 by the University of Maine's Department of Resource Policy and Economics and CentRO (the new Center for Tourism Research and Outreach) and published last year in the *Journal of Travel Research*.

This research indicates:

- ≈ *1/3 or 33.9% of the 598 respondents indicated that they expect to return to Bar Harbor within the two years following the cruise ship visit. It was estimated that 32,993 cruise ship passengers from the 2002 cruise season returned to Bar Harbor between the fall of 2002 and 2004.*
- ≈ *36% of the respondents indicated that they had annual household incomes of \$100,000.00 or more.*
- ≈ *The average respondent lives in a US city or town that is located app. 1,297 miles from Bar Harbor.*

"This is a captive market that visits Maine from non-traditional market source areas such as Texas, California, Ohio and Florida," according Amy Powers, Director of CruiseMaine.

"We are really excited to be providing an extra incentive for these passengers when they are considering their next vacation, an indication to return is just that, a voucher for a free night's stay may place Maine at the top of their list."

To download the study, please go to CentRO's website
(http://www.umaine.edu/centro/research/PDF%20reports/CruiseShips_BarHarbor.pdf).

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