



For Immediate Release

Contacts: Ally Demos
303-917-8396
ademos@mtrip.org

Joan Christensen
970-509-0710
jcc@rkytmtnhi.com

MOUNTAIN TRAVEL AT ‘HALFTIME’ (Reservations and occupancy inching toward the goal line)

Denver, Colorado, Feb. 17, 2010—Data released by the Mountain Travel Research Program (MTRiP) with results as of Jan. 31, the designated “halftime” of the ski and snowboard season for most major resorts, showed that reservations and occupancy in mountain resorts continued to edge up though remaining slightly behind last year’s low figures. Actual winter occupancy measured from November-April, is down one percent—a slight improvement from Dec. 31 when it was down three percent. The most positive indicator showed that reservations taken during the month of January for the next six months is up 9.5 percent compared to January 2009, the strongest pace seen in the past three months. Varying increases were also reported in five of the upcoming six months.

The report revealed another sign of progress in January as it became the first month since April 2009 that actual occupancy increased compared to the same month last year. “It’s nice to finally be in a position to say something positive,” said Ralf Garrison, industry analyst and director of MTRiP. “February and March are also looking good,” he added.

The report also identified several economic indicators that may be influencing the modest improvements measured during January. Unemployment rates dropped unexpectedly to 9.7 percent and the Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) rose 4.3 percent. This is the third consecutive month of modest increases for the CCI and was its highest level since September 2008. On the downside, the Dow Jones lost value during January for the second consecutive month--down 4.9 percent. Its high visibility and familiarity to most Americans may impact consumer behavior.

“When comparing this year to previous years, our analysis showed that as of Jan. 31, approximately 40 percent of winter guests have already come and gone, 40 percent have made their reservations, but the final 20 percent is still up in the air,” said Garrison. “So, it is a bit like halftime at the recent Super Bowl where second half strategies can determine the outcome of the game and the season.”

Currently, bookings for February are up 2.4 percent compared to February 2009 and the trend for short-lead bookings appears to remain in effect as the next two months are strengthening while reservations and bookings beyond March remain relatively weak.

“While most properties and destinations are trailing behind last year’s admittedly disappointing performance, the New Orleans Saints in this year’s Super Bowl demonstrated how a daring strategy or brilliant fourth quarter play can turn an underdog into a winner,” mused Garrison. “We’re just getting into the second half and there is still time to change the outcome of the season.”

###

*Data is derived from a sample of 201 property management companies in 15 mountain destination communities, representing 22,000 rooms across Colorado, Utah, California, and British Columbia. Data is representative of a comprehensive cross section of the community and may not reflect the entire mountain destination travel industry.