*This is a sample editorial that you can send to your local media. It is available electronically at www.traveliowa.com/epiciowaroadtrip*

**Travel: It’s not just for vacation anymore**

For most of us, “travel” invokes ideas of boarding a plane or cruise ship, maybe loading a cooler, tent and the family dog into the back of the minivan. But lately, a picture has emerged of travel as a health regimen—for our bodies and minds, for our family relationships, even for our workplaces and our country’s economy.

Take, for instance, jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the U.S. travel industry recovered faster than other economic sectors, already restoring 111 percent of the jobs lost to the recession while the rest of the economy has only recovered 90 percent.

But unless you work for the airlines or own a hotel, does the travel rebound mean much to the average American? The answer is a resounding yes.

Travel is among the top 10 employers in 49 states, directly employing about eight million people at a payroll of $209 billion. Throw in jobs supported by travel and the number almost doubles to 15 million workers: one of every nine American jobs.

Every household in America would have to pay about $1,100 more in taxes annually to make up what the travel industry alone brings to our schools, roads, search-and-rescue teams and other public programs.

For an example closer to home, tourism in Iowa generates more than $7.6 billion in expenditures, employs 64,400 people statewide and generates $328 million in state taxes.

Unfortunately, Americans leave 429 million paid days off unused every year. We give lip service to time spent with family and friends, yet one in three workers gives up paid leave. That culture needs to change. As Iowans, we should also recognize that “vacations” can be spent in our own state. When was the last time your family experienced a cultural festival like Pella’s Tulip Time? Tasted fresh milk and cheese from a farm like Hansen’s Farm Fresh Dairy in Hudson? Plunged down hills on a wooden coaster like The Legend at Arnolds Park? [Please also use this area to talk about your own local travel destinations.]

For at least a decade now, there’s new research every two or three years that comes to the same conclusion: Experiences, not things, make us happy. Based on that data, it’s pretty safe to say that travel makes us happy. Because really, what better way to pick up new experiences than through travel?

The fact is, Americans do work hard. We have one of the longest workweeks of any industrialized country. And yes, work earns money, and money can add to our happiness. But not through more stuff.

Our challenge to you this summer is to take a long weekend, a day here or there, even just an afternoon off of work. Pack up the kids and hit the road for a unique destination only an hour or two from home. We promise you’ll come back just as refreshed as if you had jumped on a plane and headed to the beach. And you’ll support your state’s economy at the same time.

In honor of National Travel and Tourism Week (May 3-11), the Iowa Tourism Office, along with the Central Iowa Tourism Region, Eastern Iowa Tourism Association and Western Iowa Tourism Region, are embarking on our own road trip – the Epic Iowa Road Trip – to bring awareness of the impact travel has on our state and to inspire your own family to travel Iowa. If you miss us while we’re out and about, our website is always ready to inspire you at [www.traveliowa.com](http://www.traveliowa.com).

Take a few minutes this week to think about how you can support and encourage travel — perhaps as an employer, maybe as a leader in your community or even just for you and your family. It’s worth our investment, and the travel effect pays back in spades.