

Recent Developments in International Tourism to the United States

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Certain recent developments have [led](#) some [observers](#) to express concern about the state of international tourism to the United States. These developments include lengthy visa interview wait times, stricter border and immigration policies, potential tariffs, the dollar's strength, and U.S. [travel restrictions](#) for certain countries.

There are indications that international tourism to the United States, at least from some places, may be slowing. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce's [International Trade Administration](#) (ITA), [through May 2025](#), year-to-date international arrivals to the United States were down 2.4% from the prior year. In April 2025, the head of the U.S. Travel Association, a travel industry trade group, [testified](#) before the House Homeland Security Committee that the United States was no longer the top global tourist destination.

Trends in International Tourism to the United States

In recent years, the number of international visitors to the United States grew after dropping severely during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to ITA, 72.4 million international visitors came to the United States in 2024. This was up from 19.2 million visitors in 2020 but short of the 79.4 million international visitors recorded in 2019. Nevertheless, through 2024, the number of international visitors to the United States increased each year since 2020.

Data on international tourism to the United States over recent months suggest a slowdown. As noted, through May 2025, year-to-date international arrivals to the United States were down 2.4% from the same period in 2024. That was a decline from April 2025, when year-to-date international arrivals figure were 1.1% below 2024 levels.

At a more granular level, there are mixed trends. Among the 20 countries with the [most arrivals](#) to the United States year-to-date through May 2025, nine had more arrivals than in 2024, and 11 had fewer. The percentage increase was highest for Argentina (24.6%) and Israel (16.8%). Canada (-16.8%) and South Korea (-11.3%) had the biggest decreases. In 2024, [Canada and Mexico](#) had, respectively, the most and second-most arrivals to the United States. Year-to-date through [May 2025](#), Canadian arrivals to the United

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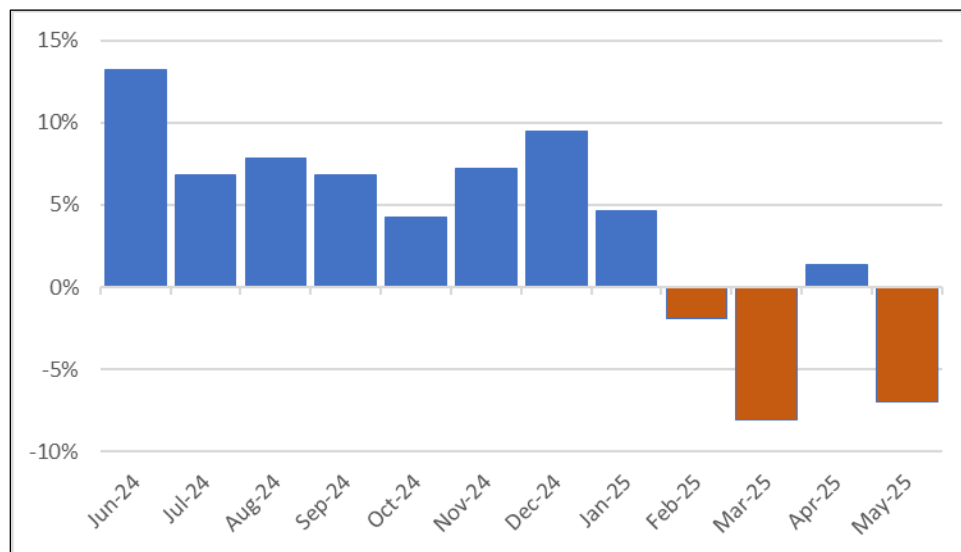
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States were down as referenced above, and arrivals from Mexico were 13.9% higher than over the same period in 2024.

Figure 1 presents the monthly percentage change of international arrivals to the United States compared to the same month in the prior year for June 2024 through May 2025.

Figure 1. Percentage Change in International Arrivals to the United States
Compared to same month in prior year



Source: International Trade Administration, *I-94 Monthly Summary and Analysis Reports, Final Release (Overseas, Mexico, and Canada)*, <https://www.trade.gov/i-94-arrivals-program>.

Note: Orange bars denote declines.

Potential Economic Impacts

Declining numbers of international visitors could impact the U.S. economy. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2023, travel and tourism (both domestic and international) accounted for approximately 3% of U.S. gross domestic product. In May 2025, the World Travel and Tourism Council, a nonprofit organization that advocates for and researches global tourism, predicted that international visitor spending in the United States would be approximately \$169 billion in 2025, a \$12 billion decrease from 2024. The council forecasted that the United States would be the only country in which international visitor spending would decrease from 2024 to 2025. Another study, published by the consulting firm Tourism Economics in April 2025, estimated a 9.4% decline in international visitors to the United States for 2025 compared to 2024—a revision of its initial prediction of an 8.8% increase. The organization also assessed that international visitor spending in the United States in 2025 would be 5.0% less than in 2024.

Recent Actions and Considerations for Congress

Recent Congresses, as well as executive agencies, sought to help the U.S. tourism industry recover from the pandemic. The Visit America Act (Subtitle A, Title VI, Division BB of P.L. 117-328) authorized the creation of a new Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism within the Department of Commerce. The June 2022 interagency [National Travel and Tourism Strategy](#) called for increasing annual foreign visitors to the United States to 90 million by 2027.

Other recent actions may impact tourism. In recent years Israel (2023) and Qatar (2024) became participating countries in the [Visa Waiver Program](#), allowing their citizens to travel to the United States visa-free for tourism. In the 119th Congress, P.L. 119-21, the FY2025 reconciliation act, reduced the cap on annual federal matching funds for Brand USA, a public-private entity promoting travel to the United States, from \$100 million to \$20 million. The law also added [new visa and admission fees](#).

Congress may wish to assess trends in international tourism and what dynamics may impact those trends going forward. Following COVID-19-related delays in visa processing, visa interview wait times at most U.S. consulates around the world decreased. Some posts, however, continue to experience lengthy [backlogs](#) for tourist visas. In addition, in February 2025, the Trump Administration [narrowed](#) eligibility for waivers of the in-person nonimmigrant visa interview requirement. Some [Members of Congress](#) and [others](#) have expressed [concern](#) about timely visa processing for athletes and fans wishing to travel to the United States for the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics, citing the economic value and the “[diplomatic and soft power opportunity](#)” of hosting these large international sporting events.

The Trump Administration’s continued focus on immigration enforcement has led to [concerns](#) about a [dampening](#) effect [on travel](#) to the United States, including for tourism. The “travel ban” that took effect on June 9, 2025, [suspends the entry](#) into the United States of certain nationals from 19 countries. Although individuals traveling for participation in the World Cup or the Olympics are not subject to the suspension, spectators and other tourists from affected countries are. [Moreover](#), reported [incidents](#) of [tourists](#) and other noncitizens (including [lawful permanent residents](#)) being [detained](#) while traveling to the United States may contribute to a [decline](#) in tourist arrivals and have led some countries to [adjust travel advisories](#) for their citizens wishing to visit the United States.

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