

USA: RECORD NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL VISITORS



The U.S. Department of Commerce recently revealed data which indicated that the international visitors to the United States have spent an estimated \$82.2 billion over the last year on travel and tourism-related services. The year-on-year figures show an 11% increase, according to the International Trade Administration data reports.

The new set of data has confirmed that the travel and tourism industry in the United States is right on track to yet another record-breaking year. If the growth continues at the current rate, according to the Commerce Department, **overseas visitors to the country would be increasing the revenue to a figure exceeding \$169 billion at the end of the year.**

Rebecca Blank, acting U.S. Commerce Secretary, expressed hope over the newly released Q2 travel and tourism export figures of 2012. She observed that the results set new records for the tourism industry which is in the number one position in the services export category.

She also explained that the idea of implementing the National Travel and Tourism program was a strategic measure aimed at attracting over a hundred million visitors by the year 2021. She said that this kind of a tourist flow will help to generate over \$250 billion in revenue annually.

Year-on-year expenditure in 2012 by overseas tourists on travel activities for the month of June showed a 7% increase (\$860 million) to \$13.8 billion. The figures on exports related to tourism have increased by more than \$ 1.3 a billion on an average every month in the first half of the current year, as observed by the Commerce Department.

Purchase of travel and tourism related services by the overseas visitors have shown a 7% year-on-year increase, totaling \$10.6 billion during the month of June 2012. The revenue figures that were released in this connection by the Commerce Department included purchases regarding food, lodging, gifts, entertainment, recreation, local transportation, and other incidental expenses.

American carriers and vessel operators reported increased revenues of 6% at \$3.3 billion for the month from overseas visitors. The first half of 2012 has generated revenues of \$19.6 billion, from international tourists, for the United States' carriers.

The new strategic National Travel and Tourism program, presented to the president in May by the Department of Commerce and U.S. Department of the Interior is seen as a blueprint that would serve to increase the number of tourists traveling to the country and improve the economy. In addition, the program is designed to take progressive and clear steps in five important areas that would help to improve overall revenues.

Roger Dow, President and CEO (U.S. Travel Association) opined that the **travel and tourism industry is seen to be playing a major role in driving the economic recovery of the nation.** According to him, each international visitor to the country played a small but significant part in supporting local small businesses and communities. He felt that the big-sized opportunity should be taken full advantage of by encouraging travel of overseas tourists to the United States.

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