

Top 10 Tourist Sites in the USA



The Grand Canyon or the Empire State Building? Which one of them is the most popular tourist sight of the USA? The answer is: none! Both of them ranked in the U.S. top ten; they are far from being number 1 though. The winner is Walt Disney World in Florida with more than 17 million visitors per year. Thanks to Disney and other amusement parks, Orlando, Florida holds the record in the number of visitors per year - it rises up to 48 million. Even the Big Apple is not so popular (46 million) and the tourist Mecca Las Vegas can boast "only" about 39 million visitors.

10. Walk of Fame, L.A.

Though the "gold times" of Hollywood film making are long gone, the dream factory keeps going on and takes advantage from its former fame. From the 18 million visitors who come to Los Angeles every year, every tenth (about 1,8 million people) comes to have a stroll on the pavement, where the biggest Hollywood stars left their traces. There are more than 2,300 stars on the Hollywood Boulevard star walk, founded in 1958. In 1978, the city of Los Angeles designated the Walk of Fame as a Cultural/Historic Landmark.

9. Mount Rushmore

Most of us remember the film scenes from Alfred Hitchcock's Thriller „North by Northwest“, where Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint fight for their lives with the beautiful Mount Rushmore on the background. Not just in the movie does the monumental granite sculpture by Gutzon Borglum, picturing left to right George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln amaze us. It is even bigger, taller and more unbelievable when seen live and it is thus no surprise that it attracts more than 2 million visitors per year.

8. Yellowstone National Park

The oldest National Park in the world, founded in 1872 by the US President Ulysses Simpson Grant, occupies 9000 square kilometres and is situated mostly in Wyoming, with little areas in Montana and Idaho. About one half of all the geysers in the world, exactly 250 of them, can be found here. Yellowstone Lake is one of the largest high-altitude lakes in North America and is centred in the Yellowstone Caldera, the largest supervolcano on the continent. There is for sure a lot to see in this beautiful area of unspoiled nature and the numbers of visitors correspond to the exceptionality of the park. About 3 million people come to see it every year.

7. Yosemite National Park

The park, situated 300 kilometres east from San Francisco, covers an area of 3,081 square kilometres. It is the third oldest national park in the United States and counts with 3,5 million visitors to the most popular ones. Yosemite is recognized and appreciated for its granite cliffs, waterfalls, clear streams, Giant Sequoia groves, and great biological diversity. Of California's 7,000 plant species, about 50% occur in the Sierra Nevada and more than 20% within Yosemite.

6. Empire State Building, N.Y.

Big Apple is in a boom: last year, there were 46 million visitors, which is New York's record. Its most visited sight is the Empire State Building. It was built in 1931 after only one year and 45 days of construction and was basically a toy for Jakob Raskob, the founder of the GMC, who desperately wanted HIS building to be taller than the skyscraper of Walter Chrysler Company, one of his competitors. And Raskob made it - before the construction of the two WTC towers, the Empire State Building was with 443.2 meters the tallest building in New York.

5. Grand Canyon

Millions years ago, the Colorado River carved this steep-sided, 450 kilometres long and 1,6 kilometres deep gorge in Arizona and parts of Nevada. The average width of the canyon is 16 kilometres, on some places it is up to 30 kilometres wide though. If you do not want to get in touch with most of the tourists visiting it every year, choose one of the North Rim viewpoints - e.g. the Bright Angel Point. For the adrenalin lovers, in Grand Canyon West (5 hours away from North Rim) there is the so called Skywalk (see the pic), the horseshoe-shaped glass walkway, at a 1,200-meter height above the floor of the canyon it exceeds those of the world's largest skyscrapers.

4. Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Fascinating and beautiful, that is what San Francisco looks like from above. The main reason is its position on the coast of the Pacific Ocean and the Golden Gate National Recreational Area - the biggest city park complex in the world. This large spot of green occupies an area of 300 square kilometres and is thus larger than the city itself. More than 14 million people a year, both the locals and the tourists, admire and appreciate the recreational area of a size that has no other one to be compared to.

3. Washington D.C.

There are two major groups in the ca. 15 million people who visit the capital of the United States every year. First, there are the patriots, and second, many foreigners, who want to see the "hub of world" - the White House, the seat of the American president, and the Capitol, the seat of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Because of the safety measures, the White House can only be admired from without and especially from quite a distance. It is nevertheless easier to get into the Capitol - at least if you are willing to get up early in the morning and wait in a long long queue in front of the „Service Kiosk". If you are patient and lucky enough, you might get one of the tickets.

2. Las Vegas

Glitter, Glamour, Illusions - that is Las Vegas. It all began when a Gangster Bugsy Siegel opened a casino with an integrated hotel in the 1940's and thus started a massive development of the city in the direction of hazard, that made the city what it is nowadays - a gigantic crazy Mecca of gamblers and fun-lovers, visited by more than 39 million people a year. The most important and most prestigious address in the city is The Strip, where the biggest casino hotels can be found - the Venetian with channels and singing gondoliers, the Luxor with a 30-meter-tall pyramid, or the MGM Grande.

1. Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando

No one could have guessed that a small town, profiting mainly from lemon plantations, would once become the most important tourism site and would attract more than 48 million visitors every year. And who is to "blame"? Orlando, a city of about 2,6 million inhabitants, can thank Walt Disney for its incredible boom, who bought an enormous acreage of swamplands in 1960's and built the world's second Walt Disney World Resort there (the first can be found in Anaheim, California), that now attracts more than 17 million people a year and is thus the most visited theme park in the world. This year, there should be one more gigantic project getting open - a new Harry Potter Theme Park.

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