

ALASKA TOURISM LOOKING BLEAK



Alaskan tourism officials fear notable recession of up to 30 per cent. Some local businesses experience drop in bookings even now.

Alaska had in the past its fair share of setbacks in the tourism industry. There were the 1967 floods, which virtually put **tourism on a standstill**, and the infamous terrorist attacks of 2001, leading to a general collapse in confidence of the American tourism industry and security measures as a whole.

However, this year and next year are expected to be even more brutal and some have even mentioned the potential decline of 30%. Others have suggested less but a minimum of 10% has been generally agreed on.

The main problem is, of course, the worrying economic cloud, which is circling above the planet. Americans, especially, are extra concerned about parting with their dollars and are exercising an extra degree of caution. Meanwhile, cuts in the industry, cruise lines stopping their services around Alaska and a shortage of government funding for marketing campaigns are all factors, which are making the situation a lot worse. The government has been blamed for giving a lot more money for marketing to Hawaii, as an example, and not to Alaska where the funds are desperately needed.

The tourism industry in Alaska provides around **40.000 jobs** and was worth **\$1.7 billion** to the state economy in 2008. The average visitor used to spend around \$1.000. However, they are far more likely to now buy a t-shirt with 'I have been to Alaska' written on it than take a more expensive helicopter flight through the Alaskan wilderness. This attitude has dire consequences for the economy. Advance bookings for next year are already down for many tour operators and the **Royal Caribbean Cruise** company recently announced to take away one of its ships in 2010. The outlook, so far, for Alaska, is as bleak as its winters can be.

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