

# ORLANDO WELCOMED 62 M VISITORS - NEW RECORD FOR U.S. DESTINATIONS



Visit Orlando, the destination's official tourism association, announced that Orlando had over 62 million visitors in 2014. The announcement sets a new all-time record for the United States travel industry, consolidating Orlando's position as the destination that is most visited in the country.

Visitation increased by 5% from 2013 in Orlando. George Aguel, CEO and President of Visit Orlando, said that this historic achievement is the latest evidence of the leadership of Orlando in tourism.

**A record 32 million room nights were sold in Orlando in 2014, this resulted in the bed tax collections topping 200 million dollars** for the first time in Orange County, Florida, home to the Central-Florida tourism district.

Teresa Jacobs, Orange County Mayor, said that the positive effect of tourism on the community is amazing, and in fact, the tourism and travel industry is the greatest generator of economic impact and jobs for the region. Teresa added that in addition to delighting families and visitors from all over the world, the hospitality and travel industry assists in supporting a high quality of life for the resident of Orlando; this includes the amazing outstanding sports venues and new performing arts center.

To meet the needs of an increasing number of visitors, Orange County has made several investments in infrastructure; this includes investing in an important renovation and expansion of the nationally-renowned Orange County Convention Center.

Roger Dow, CEO and President of United States Travel Association, said that passing the 60 million annual visitors mark is a substantial achievement for Orlando and the United States travel industry that generates 2.1 trillion dollars for the United States economy every year. Dow also said that thanks to the close-partnership among the members of the tourism community of Orlando and strong leadership by Visit Orlando and public officials, this popular tourist destination that is known worldwide, is well-positioned to continue setting new records in tourism.

In 2014, Walt Disney World Resort completed The Wizarding World of Harry Potter Diagon-Alley and New Fantasyland, at the Universal Orlando Resort. In 2015, visitors to Orlando will experience the first full-year of these amazing expansions that were launched in 2014 and be the first to view some of the new attractions, which include the I-Drive 360, which features a group of three new attractions from Merlin Entertainments, as well as a multiyear transformation of the Downtown Disney into Disney Springs.

**In the recent years, the Orlando experience has additionally become more diversified, attracting an ever increasing wide variety of visitors.** Gourmets find an astonishingly sophisticated culinary destination, that is recognized with more "Best of the South" chef nominations by the world-renowned James Beard Foundation than any other city in Florida for 3 consecutive years. Luxury travelers are attracted to the 5-star service at the Four Seasons Resort Orlando that was opened 6 months ago, as well as the Waldorf Astoria Orlando and Ritz-Carlton Orlando.

Visitors are also finding thrilling new venues where they can enjoy professional sports and the arts, such as the Major League Soccer stadium that is coming to Downtown Orlando in 2016 and the Dr. Phillips Center for Performing Arts.

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