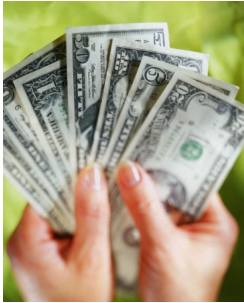


TOURISTS TO PAY \$14 WHEN ENTERING THE USA



On 8th September 2010, the United States started charging visitors from 36 world countries upon entry. The aim is to raise funds to support promotion and improve tourist appeal of the U.S., though sceptics note the fee may have an opposite effect.

Over the past ten years, the US Department of Commerce has been carefully collecting data on tourism and number of foreign visitors, and the outcome is not very positive. **Compared to 2000, the annual visitor rate dropped by approximately 633,000 by 2008.** Naturally, economical and political factors are playing a major role in the decrease in tourism, nevertheless, the industry is a very important source of income and each country has to make the most of it. An international promotion campaign is quite an investment; for that reason **from 8th September on, citizens of 36 selected countries are expected to pay a \$14 fee when visiting USA.**

The Congress officially approved the fee in March 2010; **the income from it is expected to reach \$100 million which will be invested in promotion campaigns all over the world.** The Electronic System of Travel Authorization (ESTA) will charge \$14 - \$4 will go back to ESTA to cover its operating costs, and the \$10 will be used toward US marketing campaigns. While this simple idea is welcomed by many, critics mention that this is a very contra-productive move. While trying to lure more visitors to the USA, a fee is introduced which may have the opposite effect. Many tourists will ask: 'Why should I go to a country that charges me to see it?'

Countries which are affected are for example the United Kingdom, Singapore, New Zealand, Japan, Iceland, Norway, and France. The new arrangement is very recent and experts cannot confirm what impact it is likely to have in the long run; however, **no one expects a significant drop in visitors this year due to \$14 fee** they are required to pay.

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