

U.S. TOURISM BOOST EXPECTED IN COMING MONTHS



As countries continue lifting Covid-19 restrictions, the world of tourism is preparing to restart an industry decimated beyond recognition over the last two years.

In this context, one of the biggest tourism markets worldwide - the United States - is expecting a significant boost in traveling in the coming months, as per the latest data.

Over 80% Americans to Travel

The last two years have been very difficult for U.S. tourism, **but as restrictions are being lifted, the willingness to travel among Americans is higher than ever.**

According to a recent report by The Vacationer, over 80 % of U.S. adults (208 million people) are looking to make at least one trip this summer. This is an increase of 12 % and 35 million compared to last year's figures.

Booking platforms like Vrbo, Hopper and Kayak have also registered the increased demand amid easing restrictions. Additional costs for plane tickets and car trips due to rising fuel prices are apparently not an obstacle either.

Data reveal that the booking pace for spring travel is 49 % faster than this time last year and 26 % faster than before the pandemic. Vrbo, for example, has already exceeded last summer's demand by 15 %.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the ongoing war in Ukraine has impacted American travel behavior, with more tourists now preferring domestic travel (74 %). Generally, the younger the respondent, the more likely he or she is inclined to travel abroad this summer.

It must be noted, however, that Americans seem to prefer destinations like Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean rather than Europe. Hopper, for example, has noted that US bookings to Europe have fallen from 21 to 15 % since mid-February.

Financial Package on the Way

Besides an increase in travel demand, U.S. tourism will also receive a significant financial boost for a steady recovery in the post-pandemic period.

A few days ago, the US Congress passed an "Omnibus Bill" (a law covering a number of separate or unrelated issues) allocating \$1.5 trillion in government funding to various institutions across the country.

Among other things, Brand USA, the tourism marketing agency of the USA, was granted \$250 million in funding. The US Travel Association (USTA) described this as a "great victory for the entire US travel industry".

But not only Brand USA benefited from this legislative boom. Numerous other initiatives with a direct impact on travel have been considered in the Omnibus Bill.

For example, The US State Department has been ordered to improve the sometimes-excessive waiting times when processing visa applications. A report must be submitted to Congress detailing the factors behind the delays and examining the feasibility of interviewing less face-to-face or using videoconferencing.

Furthermore, the Federal Highway Administration was directed to designate future alternative fuel corridors to support travel and tourism traffic and be consistent with the National Travel and Tourism Infrastructure Strategic Plan.

At the same time, the Transport Security Administration (TSA) will have to submit a report to Congress identifying airports with and without CAT (Credential Authentication Technology) and a plan for the acquisition and deployment of CAT systems at all airports of the nation.

Finally, **funding for national parks has been increased by \$142 million** and the Department of the Interior has been authorized to transfer funds to the Federal Highway Administration for transportation projects in national parks.

All in all, this is indeed a move in the right direction for the industry in America. As the desire to travel increases again and additional funds are on their way into the relevant coffers, better days are most definitely ahead for American tourism.

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