

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON TOURISM IN AMERICA

Before COVID-19, travelling and tourism had become one of the most important sectors in the world economy, accounting for 10 % of global GDP and more than 320 mln jobs worldwide. In the past decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and become one of the fastest growing economic sectors globally. The sector witnessed a 59 % growth over the decade in international tourists' arrivals from 1.5 bn 2019 compared to 880 mln in 2009. Tourism is also a key driver for socio- economic progress in America, with tourism specific developments in an increasing number of national and international destinations.

However, after lockdowns and tough restrictions the situation has changed a lot. Airport closures, the suspension of incoming and outgoing flights, and nationwide lockdowns are just some of the measures that countries are implementing in an effort to help contain the pandemic. Hawaii, for example, suffered the most of any state (-60 % y/y), and Mississippi suffered the least (-26 %). In total, 18 states and territories experienced a greater than 40 % downturn in travel spending.

In general, since the beginning of March and through the end of 2020, the pandemic has resulted in \$492 bn in cumulative losses for the U.S. travel economy, equating to a daily loss of approximately \$1.6 bn for the past 10 months. International tourism can recover under the optimistic scenario no earlier than the third quarter of 2021. This forecast was presented on October 27, 2020 the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It also concerns the situation of tourism in U.S.A.

For the present moment *vaccination* is a main hope and solution for recovery. For instance, the vast majority of Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) members and stakeholders (84 %) say they would be comfortable traveling for business after being vaccinated. Following the May 1 goal to open vaccine eligibility to all U.S. adults, 60 % are confident we will ‘return to normal’ by summer. In revealing plans to welcome visitors back operators of some of the world’s largest theme parks painted a picture of what they expect a coronavirus-era “normal” to look like inside their gates. The scene: mandatory temperature checks; visitors and crew in masks; rides, lines and seats spaced to allow for social distancing; and characters that interact from afar, if at all.

Another way out of the crisis situation is a new form of tourism such as *staycation*, which is a form of domestic tourism. The World Tourism and Travel Council in a report on the future of the industry said the pandemic has shifted travelers’ focus to domestic trips or nature and outdoor destinations