

## US travel sector retains #1 status and grows despite trade tensions

The United States retained its status as the world's largest Travel & Tourism economy despite a standstill in international visitors from China, according to major new research released today by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

The research shows that the United States remained the biggest Travel & Tourism market in the world in 2018 with the sector contributing almost \$1.6tn to GDP. This translates to 7.8% of US GDP with the sector growing by 2.2% (accounting for inflation) last year.

After registering average annual growth of 23% over the previous decade, Chinese travel to the US was flat last year partly due to trade tensions between the two countries.

International visitors from China account for 4% of total US visitors but 11% of all spending, demonstrating their economic importance to the country.

WTTC President & CEO, Gloria Guevara, said: "The US continues to be the largest travel economy in the world registering growth of 2.2% last year. However, after recording ten years of stellar growth, international visitor numbers from China were flat year on year, caused in part by the deteriorating trade relations between the two countries. Given the economic importance of Chinese visitors, any thawing in the trade relations between the two countries would have a positive effect for the wider US economy."

For over 25 years, WTTC, which represents the global private sector of Travel & Tourism, has produced the authoritative research on the economic contribution of the sector across 185 countries and the impact of employment.

This year's analysis for the United States shows that the direct, indirect, and induced impact of Travel & Tourism accounted for:

- \$1,595 billion, 7.8% of United States GDP (2.2% real annual increase)
- 15.6 million jobs
- \$198.8 billion in spending by international visitors (0.9% annual decrease)

Guevara continued: "Travel & Tourism, has been a consistent driver of employment in the United States. The sector creates jobs, drives exports and generates prosperity. Its continued resilience and our projections for growth serve to highlight the importance of the industry to the US economy. The US is the biggest travel market in the world, the sector is integral to the country's broader economic performance and must be prioritised."

To strengthen the US travel sector and ensure it remains both robust and competitive, WTTC recommends that US policymakers focus on:

- **Preserving Brand USA:** We support the renewal of Brand USA this year—a program with broad bipartisan support—beyond its current 2020 authorisation to continue marketing the US as a premier global Travel & Tourism destination.

- **Expanding, rebranding the US Visa Waiver Program:** With its bilateral security and travel facilitation benefits, we support the rebranding of the VWP as the “Secure Travel Partnership Program” and its expansion beyond the current 38 participating nations to other qualified countries.
- **Modernising US airport and other infrastructure:** WTTC recognises the importance of world-class Travel & Tourism infrastructure – particularly airports.
- **Biometric passenger identification:** WTTC recognises and supports the biometric passenger identification and processing initiative, an area where the US is leading the world. The work being undertaken by US Customs and Border Protection for the roll-out of a seamless traveller experience is helping us to transform the passenger experience, enhance security and create jobs.

### **About the World Travel & Tourism Council**

WTTC is the body which represents the Travel & Tourism private sector globally. Members consist of CEOs of the world’s Travel & Tourism companies, destinations, and industry organisations engaging with Travel & Tourism.

WTTC has a history of 25 years of research to quantify the economic impact of the sector in 185 countries. Travel & Tourism is a key driver for investment and economic growth globally. The sector contributes US\$8.3 trillion or 10.4% of global GDP, and accounts for 313 million jobs or one in ten of all jobs on the planet.

For over 25 years, WTTC has been the voice of this industry globally. Members are the Chairs, Presidents and Chief Executives of the world’s leading, private sector Travel & Tourism businesses, who bring specialist knowledge to guide government policy and decision-making and raise awareness of the importance of the sector.