

Oh, Canada! Florida tourism numbers dip, driven by Canadian backlash over trade policies

OS orlandosentinel.com/2026/08/24/florida-tourism-numbers-dip-again-driven-by-canada-backlash-over-trade-policies

Jim Turner

August 24, 2026



Guests crowd Main Street USA as finishing touches continue on the repainting of Cinderella Castle at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom on April 14, 2026. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel File)

TALLAHASSEE — Tourism numbers in Florida dipped for a second consecutive quarter amid lingering inflationary conditions and a backlash from Canadian visitors over President Donald Trump's rhetoric and trade policies.

An estimated 34.01 million people visited the state [in the second quarter](#), bringing the number of tourists over the first half of the year to 73.5 million, according to numbers posted online by Visit Florida, the state's tourism marketing arm.

Domestic, overseas and Canadian travel into the state were all slightly down in the April through June period, compared to the same period a year earlier. The overall domestic and Canadian numbers for the first half of the year were also lower than in the same period of 2025, when the state handled about 74.5 million of its record 143.3 million visitors.

During an event last month to unveil a replica of the Liberty Bell in Bristol, Visit Florida President & CEO Bryan Griffin highlighted the agency's focus on historic aspects of the state as part of the America 250 celebration and a new concentrated effort to attract tourists to rural communities.

"Tourism and travel make such a big difference for something like a main street, a restaurant, a lodging or an attraction around the state," Griffin told reporters on Aug. 12.

The year-to-year decline is slight — 0.7% for the second quarter and 1.4% for the year so far — and the numbers posted by Visit Florida show that other than the figures for Canada, the state continues to surpass pre-COVID tourism.

An estimated 721,000 Canadians traveled to Florida in the second quarter, 4.2% fewer than in the same period of 2025. For the first six months of the year, there were 1.68 million Canadian travelers, a 13.9% drop from the same time in 2025.

In 2019, second-quarter numbers of Canadian travelers were 848,000, and for the first half of the year it was 2.29 million.

The drop may reflect an aversion from some Canadians toward Trump's repeated labeling of the country as the "51st state" and aggressive trade policy. The latest round of the trade tiff between the countries is heating up again, following a new round of Canadian tariffs imposed by the White House last month.

Noting a break in [trade talks](#), Prime Minister Mark Carney on Saturday [called the U.S. offer "a bad deal"](#) and stating that "We recognize that sometimes, its signature is written in pencil." But the renewed chill could affect the coming winter tourist season.

A July 22 report from Statistics Canada stated that return border crossings from the U.S. in early 2026 were at levels similar to the end of 2025, "signaling a persistent shift away from the United States by Canadian residents in their travel preferences."

"Excluding the COVID-19 pandemic period, the resulting 11-month streak of year-over-year declines was the deepest and most sustained on record for border crossings from the United States," the Statistics Canada report stated. "Since 1972, when digital recordkeeping began for the Frontier Counts program, year-over-year declines of more than 30 percent have been recorded for only one other occasion, in September 2001, following the September 11, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City."

Meanwhile, a panel of Florida economists known as the Revenue Estimating Conference, in updating state revenue forecasts on Aug. 14, noted inflation has exceeded wage growth, which has elevated the use of credit. They also reported the economic outlook “remains elevated” as federal economic forecasts highlight “continued deceleration in construction and real estate as well as slowing in tourism growth.”

Florida’s tourism industry, which was crushed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, had been on a steady rise. With an initial emphasis on people seeking to escape pandemic restrictions in other parts of the nation, the state since 2022 has annually surpassed the record 131 million travelers handled in 2019.

In the latest figures, domestic travelers accounted for 31.08 million of the second-quarter numbers and 67.33 million for the first six months. A year earlier, the second-quarter domestic number was 31.22 million and for the half year there were 68.2 million visitors.

Overseas travelers last year moved ahead the 2019 last pre-COVID year figures, accounted for 2.21 million second-quarter visitors and 4.5 million for the first six months of the year. The quarterly number is down 3.7% from 2025, but the sector for the year remains up 2.2% on 2025.