Looking for Disney magic elsewhere: Canadians lead declines in travel to US

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- Global tourism rises, but U.S. sees near 6% drop in foreign visitors
- Trump's policies cited as reason for reduced U.S. travel appeal
- Canadians shift to Disney vacations abroad amid U.S. travel decline

NEW YORK/AMSTERDAM, Feb 12 (Reuters) - More Canadians this year are seeking out Disney magic across the Atlantic Ocean, as fewer foreign visitors come to the United States even though worldwide travel trends remain robust.

Travel agencies and companies that specialize in Disney vacations - and other types of travel - are noting Canadians' decisions to hold steadfast in promises to boycott travel to the United States. President Donald Trump's ongoing trade war, threats to seize Greenland, and aggressive immigration enforcement efforts have made the United States a less desirable destination, travel agents said.

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For 2025, total foreign travel to the United States was down 5.4% through November, according to the U.S. Commerce Department's National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO), led by 4 million fewer visits from Canadian travelers, a 22% drop from the previous year.

Christine Fiorelli, owner of Canadian travel agency Fairytale Dreams & Destinations, said she’s seen a 30% shift in clients who normally book a U.S. Disney vacation, as they are now turning to places like Disneyland Paris.

"Many travelers are still eager for that magical Disney experience but prefer to avoid supporting U.S.-based parks at this time," said Fiorelli, “It still holds a place in their heart, but not now."

Walt Disney (DIS.N), opens new tab CFO Hugh Johnston said on the company's latest earnings call that it had less visibility into international bookings for the second quarter, and has shifted its marketing and sales efforts to domestic travelers.

Disney did not respond to an additional request for comment.

"We're huge Disney lovers, but given the current political climate, we're not traveling to anywhere in the U.S.," said Catherine Norris, 57, from the Toronto area, who has visited Disney World with her family every year since 2008. She and her husband have booked a Disney vacation in Europe and back-to-back Disney cruises departing from Singapore instead.

"It will probably be at least five to ten years before we will travel to the U.S. again," Norris said.

In 2024, Canada was the top market for visitors to Orlando, home of Walt Disney World, with a record 1.2 million visitors, according to Visit Orlando, the city's destination marketing firm. Visit Orlando has not released 2025 figures.

The outlook could shift, however, with the World Cup soccer tournament set to start in June.

A float with people dressed as characters from the Walt Disney movie "Peter Pan" is seen as people attend the "Festival of Fantasy" parade at the Walt Disney World Magic Kingdom theme park in Orlando, Florida, U.S. July 30, 2022. REUTERS/Octavio Jones/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab

“President Trump has done more for American tourism than anyone," said Anna Kelly, White House deputy press secretary. "His America First agenda has restored our country’s place as the leader of the free world once again – making it the best place to live or visit.”

However, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates a 6% drop in foreign visitors to the United States in 2025, even as global tourism rose 6.7%.

The chart shows how the countries with the most visitors to the United States have mostly declined in 2025, particularly Canada, India and Germany, while Mexico and UK visitors increased.

MIXED FEELINGS

The hit to travel is also affecting U.S. national parks, according to travel agencies. Australia-based Intrepid Travel, which offers over 300 U.S. national park tours, said bookings are down 42% for 2026, particularly from Canada, UK, and Australia, with Canada bookings plunging 93%. UK-based luxury travel agency Cazenove+Loyd said they scrapped plans for tailor-made itineraries centered around parks in states like Montana, Washington and California.

"It might not be quite the time to launch something that is dedicated to the States," said Christopher Wilmot-Sitwell, co-owner.

Hotel operator Hilton Worldwide's (HLT.N), opens new tab full-year results showed per-room revenue and occupancy rates fell in the United States in 2025 despite rising in every other region. At a conference in January, Marriott International (MAR.O), opens new tab CEO said the company was working to convince government officials to be more welcoming to international visitors, according to a report by CoStar, a hotel analytics firm.

Bookings by Europeans to the U.S. between October 7 and January 31 were down 14% year-over-year, according to flight analytics data firm Cirium, while bookings from Canada fell 17% in the same period.

The White House's recent proposal to require millions of travelers to submit social media data has added to the uncertainty, travel agents said. The U.S. Travel Association, an industry group, warned this could cause millions of vacationers to go elsewhere, as the

administration's immigration enforcement efforts have led to a perception that it's harder to travel to the United States, said Erik Hansen, the group's head of government relations.

"When you look at the data, the number of phone searches by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the number of denied entries has not gone up compared to previous administrations," he said.

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