

Orlando was the No. 1 U.S. tourist destination in 2014



By Mike Schneider, Associated Press
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Visit Orlando, the destination's official tourism association, today announced that more than 62 million people visited Orlando in 2014. The announcement marks a new all-time record for the U.S. travel industry, solidifying Orlando's position as the most visited destination in the nation. Visitation grew five percent from 2013 as visitors from around the world came to experience all that is new across the ever-expanding destination.

"This historic milestone is the latest testament to Orlando's leadership in tourism," said Visit Orlando President and CEO George Aguel. "It's a tribute to the steadfast commitment and continued investment by our tourism community, the special brand of service that greets our visitors and the global marketing and sales efforts of our Visit Orlando team and member companies."

A record 32 million room nights were sold in Orlando in 2014, resulting in bed tax collections topping \$200 million for the first time in Orange County, Fla., home to the Central Florida tourism district.

"The impact of tourism on our community is remarkable, and in fact, the travel and tourism industry is the largest generator of jobs and economic impact for our region," said Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs. "In addition to delighting visitors and families from around the world, our travel

and hospitality industry helps to support a great quality of life for Orlando's residents, including our amazing new performing arts center and outstanding sports venues."

In recent years, the Orlando experience has also become more diverse, attracting an increasingly wide range of visitors. Foodies find a surprisingly sophisticated culinary destination, recognized with more "Best of the South" chef nominations by the prestigious James Beard Foundation than any city in Florida for three straight years. Luxury travelers are drawn to the five-star service at the Four Seasons Resort Orlando that opened six months ago, as well as the Ritz-Carlton Orlando and Waldorf Astoria Orlando.

Visitors are also discovering exciting new venues in which to enjoy the arts and professional sports, like the Dr. Phillips Center for Performing Arts and the Major League Soccer stadium coming to Downtown Orlando in 2016.