

Media Q&A

Focus on Canada and Mexico

1. Let's talk about "tourism in the age of Trump." What impact is the new President having on international visitors?

First things first — Visit California is not a political organization. Nor are the marketing organizations we partner with and support throughout the state. We're here to inspire people from all around the world to come to California and experience the trip of a lifetime.

But there is a strong concern among the state's travel industry about a "Trump Slump" negatively impacting international visitor arrivals. And we are taking active steps to offset the potential impact of the new administration's policies and rhetoric.

2. Is politics on the radar of potential visitors?

Consumer research suggests there are bigger influences on why, where and how people travel than politics. The economy is the biggest — if people have disposable income to spend and transportation is affordable, they will travel. Personal safety and security are also critical decision factors.

Among Visit California's target international markets, Mexico is the most sensitive to the current U.S. political environment. As a direct result of proposed policies and Trump "build-a-wall" rhetoric, the United States is viewed as unwelcoming.

However, there are especially strong cultural ties between California and Mexico. California has a population of 12.6 million Mexican-Americans — the largest in the country. Governor Brown has repeatedly indicated a welcoming and inclusive message to our neighbors in Mexico.

California's tourism industry is incredibly resilient. We have survived and thrived despite a host of natural and manmade disasters over the years. There is a global desire to travel to America - and California in particular — and we will continue our marketing efforts to welcome the world to "Dream Big" in California.

3. Have you seen a drop in visitor arrivals since Donald Trump took office?

Official visitor arrival numbers from Mexico have not yet been released, but anecdotal evidence from travel trade professionals suggest there has been a significant drop in air arrivals (some estimates are as high as a 20% decrease) in the early days of the Trump Administration.

To the north of the U.S., over 3.6 million Canadians visited the United States in January 2017 — the highest single month in the past two years according to Statistics Canada. These early numbers are encouraging, but it is too early to tell if Canadian tourism to the U.S. and California will be negatively impacted by the impact of the new administration's policies and rhetoric.

4. What is the "All Dreams Welcome" initiative? Why is Visit California launching this now?

The state's tourism industry wants to send a clear and powerful message to potential visitors in Mexico, Canada and the rest of the world: California is an open, progressive and inclusive destination. And regardless of discussions about "travel bans" and "walls," a warm welcome awaits all international and domestic visitors to the Golden State.

America's "Left Coast," as we are sometimes called, welcomed 17.6 million international visitors in 2016. The state's tourism industry is wide-open for business.

5. How is the initiative being implemented in Mexico and Canada?

In the current fiscal year, Visit California will spend \$3.4 in Mexico and \$3.8 million in Canada to attract visitors to the Golden State.

An "All Dreams Welcome" campaign will celebrate the state's culture of openness and communicate a positive message of California's open doors. The program will include a Canada-Mexico marketing mission to embrace, consumers, the media and travel trade in both countries. The mission will visit both Mexico (May 21-24) and Canada (May 24-26).

Along with California's four gateway cities (San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and Anaheim), a consumer-facing initiative from Visit California will showcase the state's "everyone is welcome" culture.

6. Where is funding for the initiative coming from?

The sole source of Visit California's budget is from assessed business (e.g. hotels, rental car companies, restaurants and others) in the travel and tourism industry. Visit California does not receive any government funding.

7. How many Mexican and Canadian visitors travel to the California each year?

An estimated 7.9 million "person-trips" from Mexicans visited California in 2016 with 554,000 of those visitors arriving via air. Over 1.6 million Canadians arrived in California last year.