

Essay Contest 2015/16 Zentrum für Kanadastudien

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Why do more people travel to the USA than to Canada?

This opinion essay will aim to analyse why more people travel to the USA than to Canada.

Tourist numbers in both countries, reasons for traveling to Canada or the USA and main differences for tourism will be described.

How many tourists come there every year?

The most popular travel destinations of tourists worldwide are France followed by the USA, China and Spain.¹ Canada, however, is not under the top ten destinations, although both countries, Canada and the USA, are almost equal in size. Canada still has a large domestic and foreign tourism industry, though, and has no shortage of beautiful landscapes and unique sites for travellers to explore. The largest metropolitan areas are Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa.² Canada had approximately 17.13 million international visitors in 2014. This was an increase of 3.2 % over 2013, but was still below the global average growth rate of 4.7%.³ Tourism in the USA also has a long tradition. In the USA, tourism is either the first, second or third largest employer in 29 states.⁴ In 2014, there were 1,133 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide, thereof 74.8 million to the US, which was an increase of 6.8% compared to 2013.

What do tourists visit in Canada/USA?

Canada, the second largest country in the world after Russia, is home of natural wonders and culturally rich cities. The most famous natural attraction are the Niagara Falls. These giant waterfalls drop approximately 57 metres. Banff National Park and the Rocky Mountains are in second place of the top-rated tourist attractions. The jewel of Banff National Park is Lake Louise. Other must sees there are the Icefields Parkway and the giant ski resorts, which are famous for heli-skiing. Third place on the list is Canada's largest city, Toronto, with 2.7 million inhabitants and its 533 metres high CN Tower followed by Old Quebec, the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Whistler is not only a famous ski resort, but has developed into a popular summer destination and gained international attention in 2010, when it became one of the locations of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Other destinations are Ottawa's Parliament Hill, St. John's Signal Hill National Historic Site, Old Montreal, the Polar Bears of Churchill in Northern Manitoba and the Bay of Fundy in Eastern Canada to name just the top ten destinations.⁵

According to travel agencies, one of the major reasons for the popularity of the United States as a travel destination is the huge variety. As one of the largest and most diverse countries in the world, the USA offer an amazing amount of tourist attractions ranging from the skyscrapers of New York and Chicago, the natural wonders of Yellowstone and Alaska to the sunny beaches of California, Florida and Hawaii. There are 59 national parks, ranging from Acadia in Maine to Zion in Utah⁶ and you find the Grand Canyon on top of most of the various tourist attraction list.⁷ The theme and amusement parks attract millions of visitors every year. In 2014, the Walt Disney World Magic Kingdom theme park near Orlando in Florida had almost 53 000 visitors per day. So, it's not surprising that you find a mixture of

natural wonders, theme parks and big cities in various lists of the most famous tourist attractions.⁷

Why is there a difference and how could Canada improve tourism?

Although both countries offer a large variety of tourist attractions, far more people prefer to travel to the United States. One reason for this could be because it's simply more convenient to travel through the USA than to travel through Canada. By area, Canada is the second largest country in the world, but you could fit the entire population into the single state of California. In Canada just 3.87 people live in a square kilometre, in the USA there are 33 people every square kilometre. This might have a major influence on factors that favour mass tourism like easy transportation, accommodation, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment that are more frequently available in the US compared to Canada.

And in Canada there is no such thing as Las Vegas or the Walt Disney theme parks. So Canada might address another group of visitors. Canada is so clean – they claim that even the air tastes cleaner - no wonder that Greenpeace was founded in Vancouver in 1971.⁸

Another big difference might be the climate. For Canada, travel agencies recommend to bring rubber boots and raincoats, as Canada is often associated with cold weather and snow, even though this is not really true for the whole country. But when it comes to beach holidays in North America, people only think of Florida, California and Hawaii.

No doubt, there is room for more tourists in Canada, but Canada should not copy the USA model because Canada is just different. They should try to attract more individual tourists and maintain sustainable tourism to preserve their wonderful nature.

- 1) World Tourism Ranking – Wikipedia
- 2) Tourism in Canada – Wikipedia
- 3) Tourism Snapshot December 2014 – Canadian Tourism Commission
- 4) Tourism in the United States – Wikipedia
- 5) 15 Top-Rated Tourist Attractions in Canada by Lana Law, PlanetWare
- 6) List of National Parks of the United States – Wikipedia
- 7) 10 Top Tourist Attractions in the USA – Touropia Travel Experts
- 8) www.greenpeace.org