

# WELCOMING THE WORLD

*MAKING FLORIDA THE TOP  
INTERNATIONAL TOURISM DESTINATION*

FEBRUARY 2016

Florida  
**TaxWatch**





**Michelle A. Robinson**  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

**Dominic M. Calabro**  
President & Chief Executive Officer

Dear Fellow Taxpayer,

Tourism is Florida's largest industry, employing more than one million Floridians, contributing more than \$50 billion to Florida's Gross State Product, and generating almost one-fourth of Florida's sales tax revenue.

In recent years, increased public and private investment in Florida tourism has resulted in record numbers of visitors, who have added billions of dollars and thousands of jobs to the state's economy. Florida is a global leader in tourism and in attracting new and return visitors, and in 2015, Florida attracted 105 million visitors.

However, we as a state cannot rest on our laurels. The state has plans to attract 129 million annual visitors and \$100 billion in visitor spending by the year 2020, but the competition for tourists, especially international tourists, is fierce.

International tourists are particularly valuable for the state's economy because they stay longer and spend more money. Florida must continue to invest in tourism marketing, especially marketing toward international tourists, to maintain and grow Florida's natural competitive advantage for tourists from competitors, both foreign and domestic.

Florida TaxWatch undertook this research report to help the public and Florida policymakers better understand the global market for tourism, including the competition, the potential benefits, the return on investment, and the need for more resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dominic M. Calabro".

Dominic M. Calabro  
*President & CEO*

# INTRODUCTION

Florida's tourism industry is vital to the state's economy. The industry has a major impact on businesses in various sectors of Florida's economy, as well as on the revenue provided by the state's sales and business taxes.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, the travel industry was responsible for more than 826,000 jobs in 2013, or nearly 13 percent of the private industry employment in the state of Florida.<sup>1</sup> These employment numbers ranked second in the nation, trailing only California. Understanding that tourism has such a positive impact on the state of Florida, the question becomes how does Florida best capitalize on our standing as a premier tourist destination?

One area that Florida can target is international tourism. With the recovery of the world economy, international travel across the world is reaching record highs.<sup>2</sup> This, coupled with data showing the major positive impact international tourists have on economies, provides evidence that Florida should expand its efforts when it comes to attracting foreign visitors to the state.

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1 2013-2015. Travel Economic Impact: Expenditures. <http://travelfanalytics.ustravel.org/Travel/Map#tab:travel>

2 World Tourism Organization UNWTO. (20 Jan. 2014). International tourism exceeds expectations with arrivals up by 52 million in 2013 [press release].

# INVESTMENTS IN TOURISM

The competition to bring international tourists to the state of Florida is a battle between some of the U.S.'s largest states and some of the world's premier tourist destinations. Estimates from the U.S. Travel Association show that the United States had nearly 75 million<sup>3</sup> international travelers visit in 2014. The most popular destinations for these travelers were California, Florida, and New York City.

## INTERNATIONAL VISITORS (2013 TO 2014)

| AREA           | YEAR | INTERNATIONAL VISITORS (MILLIONS) |
|----------------|------|-----------------------------------|
| California     | 2014 | 16.5 <sup>a</sup>                 |
| Florida        | 2014 | 15.3 <sup>b</sup>                 |
| New York City* | 2014 | 12.0 <sup>c</sup>                 |

Sources: a. Visit California Data; b. VISIT FLORIDA Data; c. NYC and Company Data (\*note: This data only reflects international visitors to New York City; however, the city is overwhelmingly the main tourist destination in the state)

The competition among states and cities to attract visitors has led to aggressive promotional efforts from marketing agencies affiliated with their respective areas. Visit California, an agency similar to VISIT FLORIDA, has been making a push to expand its promotional reach, spending roughly \$53 million on marketing in 2013.<sup>4</sup> In 2015, the agency significantly increased its budget from \$60 million<sup>5</sup> to more than \$100 million.<sup>6</sup>

New York City also employed a strong marketing effort in 2015; the city's marketing agency, NYC & Company, spent more than \$35 million.<sup>7</sup> While \$35 million pales in comparison to the \$100 million in California, the state of New York as a whole spent \$60 million on tourism in FY2013-14, and it is worth noting that the notoriety of New York City, coupled with private promotional efforts, allows the city to invest less than its competitors.

3 U.S. Travel Association. 2014. "Inbound International Travel to the U.S. (2014)"

4 U.S. Travel Association. 2014. "Survey of US State Tourism Office Budgets"

5 U.S. Travel Association. 2014. "Survey of US State Tourism Office Budgets"

6 *Skift*. 2015. "How California Doubled Its Tourism Budget to More Than \$100 Million." March 02, 2015.

7 NYC & Company. <http://nycandcompany.org>

Florida has also remained competitive in terms of promotional efforts through VISIT FLORIDA. In 2013, the state's investment in VISIT FLORIDA was nearly \$70 million, rising to a record \$74 million in 2015 (increased from \$24.7 million in FY2006-07 to \$74 million).<sup>8</sup>

Promotional efforts over the years from VISIT FLORIDA have led to consistent growth in tourism, breaking consecutive visitation records in recent years. In fact, data from the first half of 2015 show that Florida saw more than 54 million tourists, the most ever over any six-month period in state history.<sup>9</sup>

Florida also faces foreign competition in terms of attracting international tourists. Florida's two largest international competitors are France and Spain, who brought in roughly 85 million and 61 million<sup>10</sup> international tourists respectively in 2013 (the U.S. as a whole brought in about 70 million).<sup>11</sup> While Spain and France tend to be considered two of the most desirable tourism destinations in the world, their tourism numbers are aided by their respective locations and the ease of travel within the European Union. In France, for example, 83 percent of international in-bound arrivals were from Europe.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of promotional efforts, both European countries make a strong push to attract visitors to their respective nations. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation's (OECD's) 2014 report on tourism trends and public policy, France spent roughly EUR 80 million (\$105.5 million USD) in tourism promotion at the national level in 2013.<sup>13</sup> However, this figure does not measure the entire scope of the tourism efforts throughout the country.

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8 WTXL News. 2014. "VISIT FLORIDA given record setting \$74 million budget." May 5, 2014.

9 Sun Sentinel. 2015. "Record 54.1 million tourists descend on Florida." August 19, 2015.

10 The World Bank. *International Tourism, Number of Arrivals*. Accessed at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL>

11 Ibid.

12 OECD (2014), "France", in *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2014*.

13 Ibid.

An excerpt from the OECD's report of tourism trends and public policy breaks down the substantial amount of money being spent at the regional level for tourism promotion:

*It is also necessary to take account of expenditure incurred by local and regional authorities. The combined budget of the 22 RTCs would be between EUR 120 (\$159.6 USD) and 140 (\$186.2 USD) million, depending on the year. That of the departmental tourism committees would amount around EUR 190 (\$252.7 USD) million. The tourist offices may have a budget of about EUR 520 (\$691.6 USD) million of which EUR 290 (\$385.7 USD) million would come from public financing.<sup>14</sup>*

In Spain, promotional efforts and responsibilities fall onto a number of autonomous agencies and regions.<sup>15</sup> However, at the national level, the 2013 tourism budget for the State Secretariat for Tourism was approximately EUR 394 million (\$524.02 million USD).<sup>16</sup> Funding for the Spanish tourism efforts come from various sources, including the Spanish Ministry, commercial transactions, paradors (hotels), and more.

Both Spain and France invest heavily in their tourism industry and, in recent years, it seems that their investments have paid off. In 2013, international tourism receipts for France totaled \$66.064 billion USD.<sup>17</sup> Spain also saw a strong return in 2013 as its international tourism receipts were just above France's mark, bringing in \$67.608 billion USD.<sup>18</sup> The tourism industry has provided a major economic boost to both France and Spain in recent years. Their persistent and strong support and investment in the industry have created millions of jobs<sup>19</sup> and help bring in billions of dollars to the national economies.

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14 Ibid.

15 OECD (2014), "Spain", in *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris

16 Ibid. \*Note: Conversations from Euro to Dollar amounts were created using exchange rate averages for their respective years.  
\*Note: Tourism figures only represent overnight visitors, and do not include same-day travelers (excursionists)

17 World Bank. *Global international tourism revenue from 2000 to 2014 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved from Statista

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

# WHERE DOES FLORIDA RANK?

Many different variables can be used to rank global tourism competitiveness, including the number of tourists per year, total amount of time spent in a respective state or nation by tourists per year, etc. While there is no definitive variable that tells the whole story, some metrics can give a baseline on how Florida tourism compares to other areas.

## *OVERSEAS VISITORS*

Florida currently has two of the most popular overseas<sup>20</sup> tourist destinations in the nation. Data released by the U.S. National Travel & Tourism Office ranked the top 20 cities in the U.S. for international tourism in 2014. Miami came in ranked number two with nearly 5 million visitors and 14.1 percent of the market share for international tourists.<sup>21</sup>

Orlando also had a strong showing, ranking fourth in the nation with more than 4 million visitors and 12 percent of the market share for international tourists.<sup>22</sup>

Florida ranks highly in terms of overseas visitation compared to the rest of the nation. The U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration ranked Florida second in the U.S. by overseas visitation for the year 2014. Florida saw more than 8.5 million overseas visitors during 2014, and held a market share of 24.7 percent.<sup>23</sup> While data show Florida also ranked second in 2013, the state saw great improvements over the previous year. In 2014, Florida saw an increase of roughly 1.3 million overseas tourists, the largest improvement in the nation.<sup>24</sup> Florida also saw its market share improve by 2.2 percent; in comparison, the number one ranked New York saw its market share fall by 1.6 percent over that same span.<sup>25</sup>

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20 Excludes travelers from Mexico and Canada.

21 U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, National Travel and Tourism Office. 2014. "Overseas Visitation Estimates for U.S. States, Cities, and Census Regions: 2014."

22 U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, National Travel and Tourism Office. 2014. "Overseas Visitation Estimates for U.S. States, Cities, and Census Regions: 2014."

23 Ibid.

24 Analysis of U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration Data

25 Ibid.

## MARKET SHARE CHANGE (2013 to 2014)

| STATE      | MARKET SHARE 2013 | MARKET SHARE 2014 | CHANGE |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|
| New York   | 30.60%            | 29.00%            | -1.60% |
| Florida    | 22.50%            | 24.70%            | 2.20%  |
| California | 20.20%            | 20.80%            | 0.60%  |

While these results show how strong Florida's overseas tourism market is compared to the rest of the nation, it also underestimates the true impact of international tourists on the state of Florida. This is due to the fact that data from the U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration do not include travel from Canada or Mexico, two of the most popular origin destinations for international tourists visiting Florida.<sup>26</sup>

### *INTERNATIONAL VISITORS*

In terms of international tourism as a whole, Florida has proved to be one of the top destinations in the world. For example, if Florida were a country, it would be ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of the amount of international tourists (not including the U.S.).<sup>27</sup> However, it is important to note that international travel to Florida is not the same as international travel in Europe. International travel between European countries is quite simple, cheap, and takes relatively little time. For example, one could drive from Milan, Italy to Lyon, France in roughly the same amount of time it would take one to drive from Tallahassee to Tampa. The ease of international travel within Europe helps boost European countries' visitation numbers. In fact, of the sixteen countries that rank ahead of Florida in terms of international tourist arrivals, half are located in Europe.

Data show that Florida is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. With approximately 105 million visitors<sup>28</sup> and nearly 16 million international tourists visiting each year, it is clear that tourism has a major impact on jobs and the growth of the Florida economy. While Florida is ranked near the top in most tourism and international tourism metrics, it is clear that there is room to grow if Florida expands its efforts to attract more international tourists.

26 U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, National Travel and Tourism Office. 2014. "Overseas Visitation Estimates for U.S. States, Cities, and Census Regions: 2014."

27 Florida Taxwatch Analysis of World Bank Data

28 "Gov Scott: Florida Welcomed a Record 105 Million Tourists in 2015." News Release. February 18, 2016.

# THE VALUE OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISM TO FLORIDA

International tourism is a valuable asset to the Florida economy. While international travel makes up a relatively small percentage of tourism in Florida, international visitors have a resounding effect on Florida's economy. In fact, per capita, international travelers have more of a positive effect on the economy than domestic travelers. This result comes from the fact that international travelers tend to spend more money when they travel, while also staying longer in one location.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of estimating the economic impact that international tourism has on the Florida economy, there are a few different factors to consider. For one, how much do international travelers spend in Florida each year? Answering this question gives us a baseline on how to measure other factors that affect Florida's economy, such as the amount of jobs created from international tourism, how much tax revenue is collected from international tourists and how that money cycles through the economy.

In regard to how much money is spent each year in the Florida economy, we turn to the study of international visitors to Florida published by VISIT FLORIDA in 2014. In 2014, it was estimated that international tourists spent more than \$17.5 billion dollars in Florida.<sup>30</sup> That makes up more than 2 percent of Florida's total GDP for that year.<sup>31</sup> Comparatively, in 2014, international tourism receipts in California (excluding Canadian visitors) made up 0.61 percent of the state's GDP.<sup>32</sup> Internationally in 2013, receipts in France made up 2.3 percent of the country's GDP, and 4.85 percent in Spain.<sup>33</sup>

Two percent may not seem like a large amount in Florida, but when one considers that only includes international tourism and it still makes up more than 2 percent of the total dollar value of all goods and services produced that year in the diverse Florida economy, a small amount becomes significant.

Given the amount that international tourists spend each year, Florida TaxWatch is able to estimate the amount of jobs created from international tourism. The U.S. Travel Association

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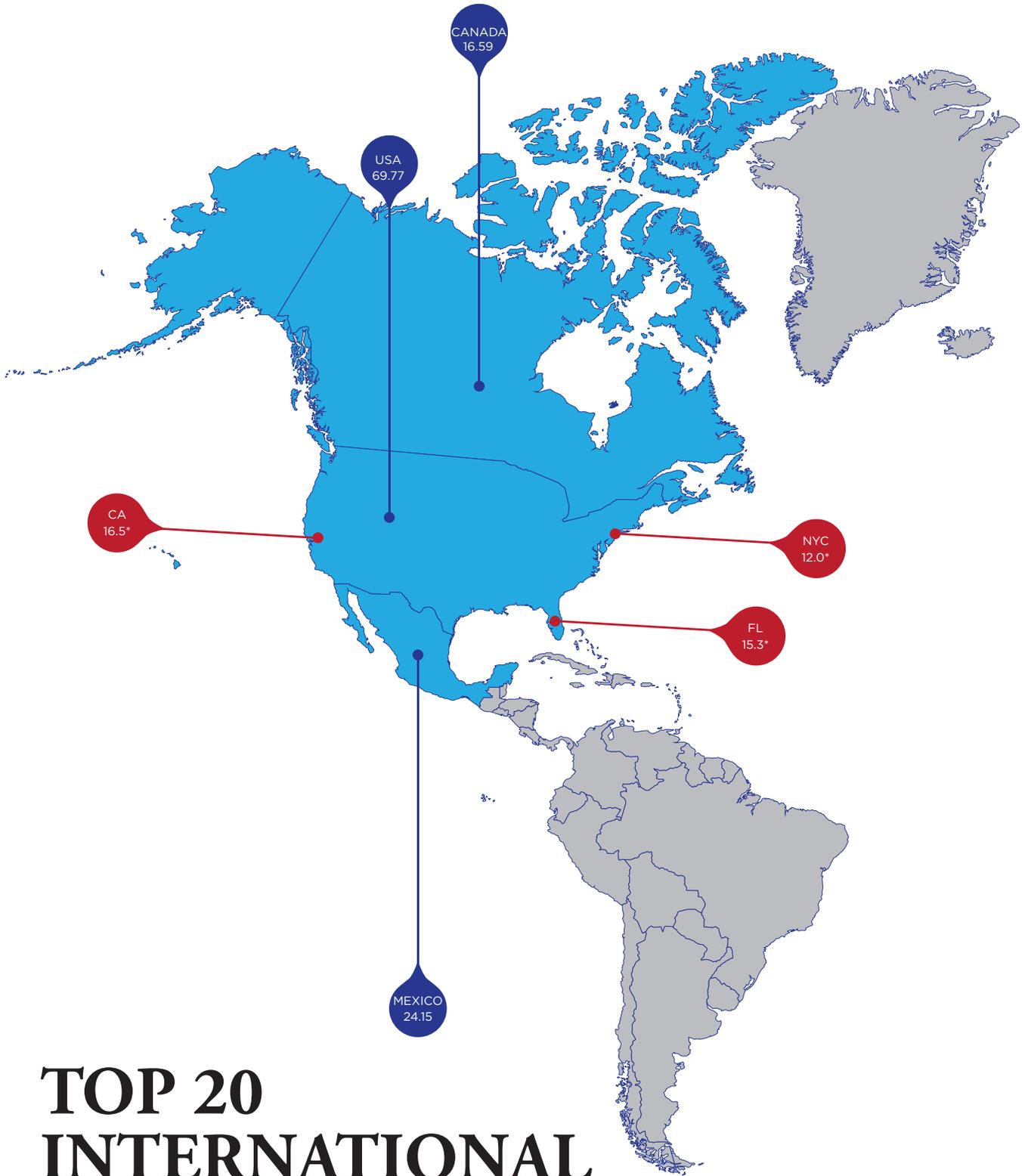
29 U.S. Travel Association. VWP FACTS.

30 VISIT FLORIDA *2014 Florida Visitor Study*

31 Florida TaxWatch analysis of Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Data

32 Florida TaxWatch analysis of Visit California data.

33 Florida Taxwatch Analysis of World Bank Data



# TOP 20 INTERNATIONAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS

MILLIONS OF VISITORS IN 2013

\* DENOTES 2014 DATA



published a report that credited tourism for creating 10.5 jobs for every \$1 million<sup>34</sup> spent by tourists,<sup>35</sup> meaning that nearly 184,000 jobs were created in 2014 due to spending from international tourists.<sup>36</sup>

International travel also impacts Florida's tax revenues; in fact, the taxes collected from tourism are one of the key reasons why Florida does not have a personal income tax. In 2013, tourism in Florida generated \$11.5 billion in federal, state, and local government tax revenue.<sup>37</sup> While the exact amount of tax revenue contributed by international tourists is unknown, a conservative estimate can be established using available data. Looking at the total amount of taxes attributed to tourists and dividing by the number of tourists we are able to get a base of how much each tourist contributes in taxes, roughly \$121. From there, we can multiply that number by the total number of international tourists (15.7 million) to estimate that approximately \$1.9 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue each year is due to international tourism. While this is a simple base estimate, it is likely to be a conservative one, because it assumes that each tourist is responsible for the same amount of tax revenue. However, evidence shows that international tourists tend to stay in the state longer, and spend more money while visiting,<sup>38</sup> so it is likely that international tourists are responsible for even a greater amount of tax revenue.

Lastly, it is important to see how the money spent by international tourists in Florida affects all parts of the economy. A 2001 study addressed variations in multipliers in the tourism industry for different regions. Multipliers explain how money flows through the economy after it is spent originally. In this case, the multiplier explains how money is spent in other sectors of the economy after it is spent by tourists in Florida. The study found that the type two sales multiplier<sup>39</sup> was 1.67.<sup>40</sup> This means that every dollar spent by tourists in the state of Florida yielded \$1.67 in total sales effect (economic impact). This multiplier shows that businesses in Florida are reinvesting in the Florida economy by spending the money they collect from tourists at the tune of \$0.67 for every \$1.00 they bring in. It is clear that international tourism has a great positive impact on the Florida economy. It starts with attracting international tourists to the state, which Florida has had some success in, but there is still room to grow.

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34 (Total tourist expenditures / total tourism employment)

35 2013-2015. Travel Economic Impact: Employment. <http://travelfanalytics.ustravel.org/Travel/Map#tab:travel>

36 Florida TaxWatch Analysis of VISIT FLORIDA and U.S. Travel Association Data.

37 2013-2015. Travel Economic Impact: Employment. <http://travelfanalytics.ustravel.org/Travel/Map#tab:travel>

38 U.S. Travel Association. VWP FACTS.

39 ((direct sales + indirect sales + induced sales) / direct sales)

40 Chang, W.H. (2001) *Variations in Multipliers and Related Economic Ratios for Recreation and Tourism Impact Analysis*.

# EXPANDING FLORIDA'S MARKET SHARE

Worldwide, international tourism revenue in 2014 was more than \$1.2 trillion.<sup>41</sup> Due to the fact that the United States is one of the most sought after tourism destinations in the world, the country was able to stake claim to nearly 9 percent of the world's market share for international tourism expenditures in 2014 (nearly \$111 billion). While Florida has positioned itself well to benefit from international tourism, there are a few ways in which the state can grow its market share in international tourism.

To understand how the state can best grow its market share, it is vital to first look at the state's strengths in terms of international tourism. In 2014, nearly 80 percent of international visitors to Florida originated from Canada, South America, or Europe.<sup>42</sup> Almost 60 percent came from the top countries of origin, which were Canada, United Kingdom, Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia. While the strong presence from Canada, the UK, and South America has driven Florida's international tourism for years, these data also shows that Florida is missing out on some of the world's major travel markets.

One major market that Florida could target is Asia. In 2014, tourists originating in Asia made up 28 percent of international travel to the United States, while the combined travelers from Asia and the Oceania region (Australia and New Zealand) made up only 8 percent of travel to Florida. The Asian market not only travels, but they spend while they are abroad. Within the Asian market, one country stands out from the rest in terms of spending while abroad: China. In 2014, Chinese travelers led the world in terms of expenditures while abroad, spending \$165 billion (or 27 percent of all international travel expenditures).<sup>43</sup> It is estimated that a Chinese tourist spends more than \$1,000 a day when traveling internationally.<sup>44</sup>

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41 World Bank. *Global international tourism revenue from 2000 to 2014 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved from Statista

42 VISIT FLORIDA 2014 Florida Visitor Study

43 World Tourism Organization UNWTO. 2015. *UNTWO Tourism Highlights: 2015 Edition*. Retrieved from World Tourism Organization

44 *CNBC*. 2014. "Hey big spenders! Chinese travelers spend over \$1,000 a day." July 17, 2014. <http://www.cnbc.com/2014/07/17/hey-big-spenders-chinese-travelers-spend-over-1000-a-day.html> (accessed 12/10/2015)

Another top spending country in terms of international travel is Germany. Germany ranked third in the world behind China and the United States in terms of international tourism expenditures, spending just above \$92 billion in 2014.<sup>45</sup> In 2014, roughly 6 percent<sup>46</sup> of inbound international tourists to the United States originated in Germany; however, only 3 percent of Florida's international tourists were from Germany, and spending from German tourists made up only 2 percent of international travel expenditures in the state.<sup>47</sup>

Another way to expand Florida's market share in terms of international tourism is to invest more in specifically attracting international tourists. In a sense, tourism marketing is an arms race. Florida's top international competitors like France and Spain are spending more than a half a billion dollars each to attract tourists.<sup>48,49</sup> Within the United States, Florida's top competitor, California, is spending more than \$100 million, and has shown a willingness to increase investment as a way to achieve results.<sup>50</sup>

While investment in Florida's tourism marketing has increased in recent years, the fact is, Florida's main competitors are outspending the state. Some may argue that increasing spending may not necessarily lead to an increase in tourism; however, a performance review of Florida's tourism marketing agency, VISIT FLORIDA, found that the nonprofit is instrumental in attracting visitors to the state. A return on investment study conducted by the Office of Economic & Demographic Research found that VISIT FLORIDA's marketing campaign generated a positive return on investment of 3.2, meaning that for every \$1 spent on marketing by VISIT FLORIDA, the state saw a return of \$3.20 in increased tax revenues.<sup>51</sup>

VISIT FLORIDA has also been successful in terms of maximizing available private resources throughout the state. For example, in FY2014-15, VISIT FLORIDA was able to bring in nearly \$142 million in private revenue.<sup>52</sup>

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45 World Tourism Organization UNWTO. 2015. *UNTWO Tourism Highlights: 2015 Edition*. Retrieved from World Tourism Organization

46 U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, National Travel and Tourism Office. 2014. "Profile of Overseas Travelers to the United States: 2014 Inbound."

47 VISIT FLORIDA 2014 Florida Visitor Study

48 OECD (2014), "France", in *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2014*, OECD Publishing.

49 OECD (2014), "Spain", in *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2014*, OECD Publishing.

50 *Skift*. 2015. "How California Doubled Its Tourism Budget to More Than \$100 Million." March 02, 2015.

51 *Return on Investment for VISIT FLORIDA*. Florida Office of Economic & Demographic Research. January 2015

52 VISIT FLORIDA. *2014-15 Annual Report*.

Increasing funding to VISIT FLORIDA is a prudent and necessary measure to keep pace with investments made by Florida's top competitors. VISIT FLORIDA has proven that it is a wise public investment that improves Florida's economy.

## CHALLENGES FACING FLORIDA

While Florida is currently one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, the state faces some challenges in respect to becoming the top international tourist destination in the world. These issues manifest themselves in a few different ways. For one, Florida's tourism marketing agency, VISIT FLORIDA, is a non-profit public private partnership that has to lobby for resources each year.

This leaves the organization with a bit of uncertainty. In any given year, VISIT FLORIDA cannot be sure of its budget more than 12 months out, which can make it difficult to plan and execute long-term marketing strategies. Some Florida legislators have acknowledged this issue and proposed creating a dedicated funding source for VISIT FLORIDA. Supporters argued that the change in funding for VISIT FLORIDA would "increase the stability of tourism and marketing for years to come."<sup>53</sup> While the proposed legislation faces a significant uphill battle, creating a reliable and predictable funding source for VISIT FLORIDA could allow the agency more stability when planning long-term marketing campaigns.

Another challenge Florida must overcome is our geographical location. While Florida's geographical location allows for great winter weather and some of the world's best beaches, it can be a disadvantage in terms of international travel. Florida does not border any country, making international travel more difficult than it is, for example, in Europe. Florida also must make sure it is prepared for an increase in visitors. Florida must plan ahead to make sure our state's infrastructure can handle the influx of visitors the state would see from increased tourism efforts.

When one examines the top international tourist destinations in the world, most of the states and countries have one thing in common: they all border at least one country. In the United States, New York borders Canada and California borders Mexico. Internationally, France borders Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Spain, which also borders

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53 Panama City News Herald. 2015. "Proposal shifts bed tax money to police, VISIT FLORIDA." Nov 29, 2015. <http://www.newsherald.com/article/20151129/NEWS/151129309> (accessed 12/14/2015).

Portugal. The fact is, when a country or state borders another country, it becomes much easier for tourists to travel internationally. When someone takes a trip to Europe they have the opportunity to visit 3 or 4 countries in a week.

The same can be said for someone visiting Toronto, which site only a little over an hour from Niagara Falls and Buffalo, New York. Florida cannot provide that same opportunity; however, the state is unique in the fact that within our borders we can provide many different experiences. Florida has the ability to market the fact that tourists can experience many different types of vacationing while staying within the state. An international tourist can come to Florida and visit some of the most popular amusement parks in the world. The very next day the same tourist can be sitting on one of Florida's pristine beaches watching the sun set over the Gulf of Mexico. From there visitors can take a drive down the coast and experience the exceptional cuisine and nightlife offered on South Beach, and then hopefully wake up in time to catch their tee time at one of Florida's many exceptional golf courses.

Success in attracting more tourists from around the world will bring its own challenges, namely that Florida will need to invest in and improve every aspect of the Florida transportation network. From increasing capacity at Florida's major airports, to reducing congestion on the state's highway system, to taking advantage of our deepwater ports to increase shipping and cruise traffic throughout the state, Florida's transportation infrastructure will have to be ready to accommodate any additional visitors.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To continue Florida's effort to become the most popular tourist destination in the world, Florida TaxWatch recommends the Florida Legislature and Florida's taxpayers increase marketing and promotional efforts. Currently, most of the tourists visiting Florida are repeat visitors. It is clear that once tourists visit the state, they truly see all of the experiences and opportunities the great state of Florida has to offer. However, to compete with some of the world's most popular international tourist destinations, the state must focus more resources in an effort to attract them to the state. Research shows that some of the major players in the international tourist market, like France and Spain, spend upwards of a half a billion dollars or more in an effort to attract tourists. Nationally, Florida ranks second in international tourism behind only California, the only state in the nation that allocates more to tourism marketing.

## *CREATE A SECURE AND CONSISTENT FUNDING SOURCE FOR VISIT FLORIDA*

VISIT FLORIDA could also benefit from a consistent and secure revenue source. If the agency could reasonably predict the amount of funds that would be allocated to them on a yearly basis, VISIT FLORIDA would be able to participate in more long-term marketing campaigns that could benefit the state's international tourism numbers.

## *ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE CONCERNS*

Florida must address infrastructure concerns in regards to airports, roadways, and cruise ports. The state must be sure to stay ahead of the curve on these issues, as the consequences will be felt once tourism traffic increases in the state.

## *TARGET UNDER-REPRESENTED TRAVEL ORIGINS*

Florida should target advertising to countries that are known for their travel, yet are being underrepresented in Florida. For example, Chinese and German travelers are known for their international travel, however in Florida, visitors from these countries are underrepresented compared to their travel to the U.S. and our domestic competitors.

Overall, Florida's policy leaders have succeeded in positioning Florida as one of the top twenty popular international tourist destinations in the world. However, to get over the top, the state must focus on how to best market the state and its amenities in a way that will extend its reach throughout the world, and ultimately increase Florida's international visitors.

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## ABOUT FLORIDA TAXWATCH

As an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit taxpayer research institute and government watchdog, it is the mission of Florida TaxWatch to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and analysis of issues related to state and local government taxation, expenditures, policies, and programs. Florida TaxWatch works to improve the productivity and accountability of Florida government. Its research recommends productivity enhancements and explains the state-wide impact of fiscal and economic policies and practices on citizens and businesses.

Florida TaxWatch is supported by voluntary, tax-deductible donations and private grants, and does not accept government funding. Donations provide a solid, lasting foundation that has enabled Florida TaxWatch to bring about a more effective, responsive government that is accountable to the citizens it serves since 1979.

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All Florida TaxWatch research done under the direction of Dominic M. Calabro, President, CEO, Publisher & Editor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.FLORIDATAXWATCH.ORG](http://WWW.FLORIDATAXWATCH.ORG)

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The findings in this report are based on the data and sources referenced. Florida TaxWatch research is conducted with every reasonable attempt to verify the accuracy and reliability of the data, and the calculations and assumptions made herein. Please feel free to contact us if you feel that this paper is factually inaccurate.

The research findings and recommendations of Florida TaxWatch do not necessarily reflect the view of its members, staff, Executive Committee, or Board of Trustees; and are not influenced by the individuals or organizations who may have sponsored the research.

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