



Trump's actions a blow to American tourism

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The US has long been a popular destination for tourists around the globe. From the nation's varied environments to the plethora of tourist attractions that cater to every possible interest, the US can be said to have it all. In 2015, tourism accounted for 2.6 percent of American GDP and employed nearly one out of every 18 American workers. Of these tourists, foreigners accounted for nearly \$246.2 billion in revenue for 2015, supporting hundreds of thousands of American jobs, directly or indirectly.

Also, many visitors came to the US on academic or business trips, taking part in symposiums or training courses that helps to link the US' academic and business establishments to the rest of the world. Many cities have invested heavily in world-class convention centers, specifically to attract foreign travelers and their tourist dollars.

However, the actions of the Trump administration may plunge the American tourism sector into the doldrums as potential tourists become convinced that they are no longer welcome in the US. From executive orders to an ever growing number of stories about the abuse of individuals by US Customs and Border Protection officials, many tourists feel that it may be wiser to avoid the country.

Besides the humiliation of being detained and possibly sent back home, many tourists must also weigh the consequences of having their social media examined, possibly after being forced to give up passwords to various phone and online accounts. For tourists whose online information may include proprietary business or government data, such a demand may put them at risk of violating their own nation's or employer's regulations, in addition to the insult of being declared a suspect by the mere act of attempting to enter the US.

In response, it appears that foreign tourists are voting with their feet. For instance, according to Time magazine, New York may be hosting 300,000 fewer foreign tourists in 2017, largely due to Trump's actions. Even worse, organizations such as the Toronto School District have decided to suspend excursions to the US. The potential annual economic losses from this tourism decline could rise to tens of billions of dollars.

As every tourist indirectly supports a vast network of American workers who depend on the

tourism industry for their livelihoods, such losses are a direct threat to the fortunes of hundreds of thousands of American citizens. Even worse, cities which depend on tourism for a large part of their revenue may be forced to cut their budgets, triggering a disastrous economic chain reaction.

At the same time, it is certain that other nations will attempt to lure these international tourists, and the money they bring, to their own shores. The longer Trump's unwise attitudes endure, the more likely it is that the US' tourism sector will suffer irreversible economic damage.

Beyond the economic cost, this is another example of how the Trump administration's ineffectual flailing is harming the US' soft power. A tourist who comes to the US, be it for a week or a month, will eventually return home, hopefully having gained a positive impression of the American people. Indeed, a common theme found across the rest of the world is the idea that whatever a nation may think of the US government, the opinion regarding the American people, especially among those who have visited the US, is a positive one. To be blunt, fewer tourists mean fewer opportunities to make friends who can then go and tell their neighbors about their experiences in the US.

Claims that these measures are needed to protect the US' security run aground on the fact that even before Trump's actions, the chances of an American falling prey to a foreign terrorist in the US were remote, to put it mildly. A 2016 Cato Institute report put the chances of an American being killed by a foreign-born terrorist in the US at an astronomical one in 3.6 million a year, while the chance of being killed by a refugee was even more infinitesimal, at one in 3.64 billion per year. Clearly, the threat to Americans by foreign terrorists was exaggerated by the Trump administration.

Ultimately, Trump's attitudes toward foreign visitors will only harm the US, being the act of a nation that has seemingly become terrified of shadows. Terrorism does exist, but US intelligence and security agencies have proven themselves equal to the challenge of protecting the country. There is no need to antagonize the very tourists who desire to come to our shores in order to take part in the American experience.