

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**COMMERCE DEPARTMENT FORECASTS INCREASE
IN TRAVELERS TO THE UNITED STATES**

International travelers should return to nearly peak visitation levels by 2007, according to the semi-annual Forecast of International Travel to the United States released today by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

After three challenging years for the travel and tourism industry, the United States is projected to see a 22 percent increase from 2003 visitation levels – attaining 49 million international travelers by the year 2007. Stronger global economies and pent up demand contributed to forecasted growth rates of 5 percent for 2004, 6 percent for 2005, and 5 percent for 2006 and 2007. Receipts generated by travelers to the United States are projected to grow steadily to nearly \$105 billion by 2007, a new record.

“As the global economy gains momentum, more international guests will visit the United States,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Service Industries, Tourism and Finance Douglas B. Baker. “This is welcome news for the travel and tourism industry as well for U.S. job growth.”

Baker announced the forecast with Travel Industry Association of America representatives at the Discover America International Pow Wow. The gathering is the U.S. travel industry’s premiere international marketplace. More than 5,000 U.S. suppliers and international tour operators from 70 countries are attending the event at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Forecast Highlights by region

North America – The top two markets generating visitors to the United States are Canada and Mexico. They are forecasted to grow by 17 and 15 percent, respectively, from the base year of 2003 to 2007.

Europe – The real growth in terms of arrivals for the next several years will come from overseas markets. Visitors from Europe are expected to return significantly in 2004 and show a projected 29 percent growth during the forecast period, generating 11.2 million European travelers in 2007. The United Kingdom will maintain its rank as the top overseas market, increasing by 30 percent from 2003 to 2007. Healthy growth rates from Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium are expected to support a solid European regional performance.

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Asia Pacific – A strong fourth quarter in 2003 has indicated the return of Asian travelers to the United States. The forecast shows on average 7 to 8 percent annual growth each year, which would result in a projected 6.6 million Asian visitors to the United States in 2007. The largest Asian market and second overseas market is Japan, which is forecasted to reach 4.2 million by 2007 – up 32 percent from 2003. Matching or exceeding Japan’s growth would be South Korea, up 32 percent from 2003; India, up 37 percent from 2003; China, including Hong Kong, up 36 percent from 2003; and Taiwan, up 33 percent from 2003. Australia and New Zealand are forecasted with increases of 24 percent and 23 percent, respectively, from 2003 to 2007.

South America – South America will lead the regional growth rates for visitors through 2007, up 34 percent from 2003 to more than 2 million visitors. The fastest-growing markets in this region are expected to be Brazil, up 34 percent from 2003; Colombia, up 50 percent from 2003; Argentina, up 42 percent from 2003; and Chile, up 34 percent from 2003.

Travel and tourism represents the top services export for the United States and has produced a travel trade surplus since 1989. For more information, visit <<http://tinet.ita.doc.gov>>.

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