

# Record tourism arrivals and spending bolster Toronto regional economy

*Most international visitors ever, most hotel nights sold as Toronto's global appeal expands*

TORONTO, Feb. 8, 2016 /CNW/ - Tourism in Toronto increased for the sixth consecutive year in 2015 as the destination welcomed a record 14.03 million overnight visitors, Tourism Toronto announced today. A further 26 million people travelled to Toronto for day trips, totaling 40.4 million visitors for the year in Canada's most-visited destination. Visitors to Toronto spent \$7.2 billion during their trips, the highest amount of economic activity the sector has ever generated.

Toronto surpassed 4 million international visitors for the first time in 2015 as American and overseas travellers continued to visit in greater numbers. Overnight visitors from the U.S. increased for the fifth consecutive year to 2.48 million and produced direct spending in Toronto of \$1.32 billion. Overseas travellers, led by China and the U.K., numbered a record 1.75 million and spent \$1.49 billion.

"Our destination has never looked better or been more attractive to foreign and domestic travellers," said Johanne Bélanger, President and CEO of Tourism Toronto.

"Every day there are 110,000 visitors in our destination – 38,000 of them staying in a hotel. On average there are 6,800 American travellers and a further 4,800 visitors from other countries in Toronto every single day, and that speaks to the growing appeal of Toronto on a global scale. It also speaks to the hard work our team and our partners do selling and marketing Toronto in key world markets and the results those efforts are producing," said Ms. Bélanger.

While visits to Toronto by Americans have increased every year since 2010, the 10 per cent growth in 2015 is the strongest year-over-year improvement yet. Arrivals by air have driven the growth in U.S. travel to Toronto and now account for 65 per cent of all trips by Americans to Toronto. In 2015 both air and land crossings surged, resulting in a record number of American visits. Tourism Toronto has intensified marketing efforts in the U.S. including the new Toronto Stopover program for Americans flying overseas via Air Canada, and expanded marketing partnerships with national and provincial partners.

Apart from the U.S., China remained the top international market for tourism with 260,400 travellers visiting Toronto in 2015, an increase of 13 per cent over the prior year. Other key source countries were the U.K. with 237,800 visitors (+10 per cent), India (106,700, +13 per cent), Japan (89,740, +3 per cent), Germany, (83,900, -1 per cent), Brazil (58,600, +24 per cent) and Mexico (37,750, +24 per cent).

Hotels in the Toronto region sold a record 9,647,500 room nights in 2015, an

increase of 2.6 per cent. Over the past three years, increased tourism to Toronto has added 676,000 more annual hotel room nights.

There are more than 315,000 people employed in tourism and hospitality in the Toronto region, illustrating the significance of the sector to the broader economy and community.

"In addition to hotel stays, visitors spend money on meals, attractions, ticketed events like theatre, live music and sports, nightlife, taxis and shopping. Our meeting and events industry also generates widespread economic activity in businesses from convention centres and hotels to offsite venues, transportation companies, audio-visual and staging companies and many others who benefit every time Toronto hosts a meeting, conference or event," said Ms. Bélanger.

Last year Toronto hosted 725 meetings and events that brought 356,600 delegates to the region and generated spending in Toronto of \$417 million. At the same time, Tourism Toronto and its partners booked 751 new meetings and events for future years that will bring 351,900 delegates and \$376 million in direct spending to the region.

**About Tourism Toronto** Tourism Toronto, Toronto's Convention and Visitors Association, is an industry association of more than 1,000 members established to sell and market the greater Toronto region as a remarkable destination for tourists, convention delegates and business travellers around the globe. Tourism Toronto operates in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the Greater Toronto Hotel Association. For more information please visit [www.seetorontonow.com](http://www.seetorontonow.com).

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