

# Trump effect on US tourism? No Fukushima



Donald Trump waves from his plane after speaking during a campaign rally, Oct. 18, 2016, in Grand Junction, Colo. Source: AAP

Experts are split about the short-term effect a Trump presidency will have on US tourism, as new data from the ABS shows how fickle Australian holidaymakers can be.

UPDATEDUPDATED 10/11/2016  
BY JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE  
SHARE

The election of Donald Trump might divert some holidaying Australians to Canada, but it won't come close to the impact of the Bali bombings or the Fukushima nuclear disaster on Australians' getaway plans, according to tourism researchers.

Dr Patrick L'Espoir Decosta from the Australian National University believes there may be a short-term reaction from some, but that tourists typically don't hold grudges.

"I believe that some Australians will try to go to Canada in the short-term, let's say one-to-three months," he said.

"After three months, guess what - (they will think) 'we have friends, we have family there, we like the USA'. To what extent is this really going to concretise? I don't think it will."

Professor Lindsay Turner from Victoria University believes there will be no short-term effect, but depending on the reaction of Americans to Trump policies, the new President could ultimately have a major impact.

"If he is actually going to do things like introduce abortion laws - it won't influence Australians per se, but it would be a problem domestically in the United States," he said.

"That could lead to more civil unrest, and if it leads to civil unrest then there will be fewer Australians going."

Since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, Australians have more than doubled their trips to the US, from 41,000 per month to 87,000 per month, according to new ABS figures. Only trips to Indonesia have grown by more in that time.

The growth in Indonesia as a destination has been strong since approximately 2005, when the arrest of the so-called 'Bali Nine' for drug trafficking offences spooked would-be holidaymakers.

Dr Decosta said Australians at that time tended to divert to Thailand and elsewhere, but after a few months visits to Indonesia picked up again.

"Schoolies went back to Bali because it was much cheaper than going to the Gold Coast," he said.

A similar drop is evident following the Bali bombings in 2002.

Over one million Britons are reportedly [reconsidering their holidays to America](#), but head of the Australian travel agents sector Jayson Westbury [told Escape the appeal of the US will remain for Australians](#).

Whatever the case, a Trump presidency is unlikely to have the same effect as the Fukushima disaster had on Australians' travel to Japan.

Across one month in March 2011, following the nuclear catastrophe, Australian visits to Japan halved.

"The immediate reaction is one that's emotional, but then the rational part comes back," Dr Decosta said.

New Zealand and Indonesia are the top travel destinations for Australians, at around 100,000 departures per month.