

U.S. tourism hit hard by shutdown

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 06 October, 2025



Dhaka: The United States entered its 20th government shutdown since 1976 on Oct. 1 after Congress failed to reach a federal budget agreement.

The impasse triggered furloughs for hundreds of thousands of federal employees and halted many non-essential services.

Early impacts are being felt nationwide, particularly in the travel and tourism sectors, with disruptions affecting air travel, national parks, and museums.

Air traffic controllers and airport security staff are working without pay, preventing major disruption but raising concerns over delays.

Travelers are being advised to prepare for longer wait times and possible flight cancellations. Amtrak, which receives federal funding, said its operations remain unaffected.

National parks face widespread closures. A 2024 contingency plan warned that up to 433 sites, including the Grand Canyon, could shut. In 2013, 8 million visits were cancelled during a similar closure.

Utah has stepped in to keep its five national parks open with reduced services, and other states such as Colorado have previously done the same.

The Smithsonian Institution, which runs 21 museums in Washington and two in New York, has funding through Oct. 6.

An extended shutdown could force closures. The National Park Service has not confirmed whether the Statue of Liberty will remain open.

The shutdown comes as the cost of the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) doubled to \$40 on Sept. 30. Bookings for the All Saints' Day period are down 32.7pc year-on-year, according to data from Orchestra and Entreprises du Voyage.

Tourism officials are looking to 2026 for recovery, with the U.S. marking its 250th anniversary, the centennial of Route 66, and co-hosting the FIFA World Cup.

Until then, travelers are urged to monitor official channels for updates on parks, museums, and transportation services.

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