

If you pay them, they will come: the US city giving tourists cash to visit

Level: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. In 2019 (before the pandemic), these were the six countries which foreign tourists visited the most. Put them in order from 1 (the most visited) to 6 (the least visited).

_____ China

_____ Turkey

_____ the USA

_____ France

_____ Italy

_____ Spain

2 Key words

- a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

cash employee headquarters keeps non-essential

1. A company's _____ is the place where it has its main offices.
2. A / An _____ receives pay for working for a company.
3. _____ is money in the form of notes and coins.
4. _____ travel is not necessary or important.
5. If something _____ you going, it helps you continue to do something even though it is difficult.

excited reservation sold timing worried

6. If you are _____, you are unhappy because you are thinking about a problem or a possible future problem.
7. If tickets have _____ out, people have bought them all and there are no more to buy.
8. _____ is the period in which something happens.
9. If you are _____, you are very happy because something good is going to happen.
10. If you have a / an _____ at a hotel, you have already booked a room there.

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Hallie Golden

9 April, 2021

- 1 'The small city of Redmond is just east of the American city of Seattle. Microsoft's headquarters are there, as well as Nintendo's, SpaceX's and Facebook's. Before the Covid pandemic, business travel was very important for Redmond, and especially for its hotels.
- 2 On 4 March, 2020, Microsoft told its employees in the city to work from home. Other local companies did the same. "The hotels went from 65% to 85% full, down to 6% or 9%," said Redmond tourism manager Peter Klauser. "There were times when one hotel had just one guest."
- 3 Months later, Klauser was thinking of ways to attract visitors back to the city. He joked to colleagues: "Why don't we just give them some cash." The idea led to "You Stay, We Pay". It is a programme that gives a hundred dollars to the first five hundred visitors who stay two or more nights at a hotel in the programme.
- 4 Redmond is not the only city doing this. Glenwood Springs, Colorado, normally welcomes 1,500,000 visitors a year. But after its hotels closed to non-essential travel in April, 2020, the town started offering one-hundred-dollar certificates to visitors who booked hotel rooms.
- 5 Director of tourism promotion Lisa Langer said, "The programme didn't bring back the normal number of visitors but it kept us going through a very difficult time. I'm not as worried now as I was in April last year."
- 6 Santa Maria Valley, in California, has a similar programme. It presented the first five hundred visitors who booked at least a two-night stay in one of its hotels with a one-hundred-dollar Visa gift card. It sold out in two days, said tourism director Jennifer Harrison. The success was not just because of the money but also good timing. "People were ready to travel," she said.
- 7 In Redmond, about fifty businesses joined the programme, including restaurants, fitness centres and bookshops. After two weeks, they booked 750 of the 1000-room nights and they gave more than 30,000 dollars to visitors. "Hotel owners are saying that their phones haven't stopped ringing and they are very excited," explained Klauser. "They're getting more reservations than they've had in more than a year." Now Klauser is already thinking about starting a second "You Stay, We Pay" programme after this one finishes.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. Where is Redmond?
2. Which big companies have their headquarters there?
3. What happened on 4 March, 2020?
4. What happened to hotel reservations?
5. What is 'You Stay, We Pay'?
6. How many people normally visit Glenwood Springs each year?
7. How many nights do people have to stay in a hotel in Santa Maria Valley to get a one-hundred-dollar gift card?
8. How many businesses joined the programme in Redmond?
9. How much has the city of Redmond given to visitors?
10. What is Peter Klauser planning?

4 Using key language

a. Match the words in the left-hand column with the words in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| 1. fitness | a. stay |
| 2. non-essential | b. owner |
| 3. two-night | c. going |
| 4. gift | d. out |
| 5. hotel | e. company |
| 6. local | f. centre |
| 7. sold | g. card |
| 8. keep | h. travel |

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Giving money to visitors is a good idea."
- "Tourism will not be the same after the pandemic is over."

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6 In your own words

a. Write an email to someone who is planning to visit Redmond, explaining the 'You Stay, We Pay' programme and telling them which businesses are part of the programme. Use these sentence beginnings to help you:

- You can get one hundred dollars if you book ...
- You have to stay for ...
- There are about fifty businesses ...
- These businesses include ...
- Hurry because we have already booked ...
- We have given ...