

International Arrivals & Departures December 2016

Release date: 9th June 2017

	Dec 16	Nov 16	Oct 16	Sep 16
Total Arrivals	16,324	7,642	14,156	8,451
Total Departures	15,208	7,657	14,583	7,896

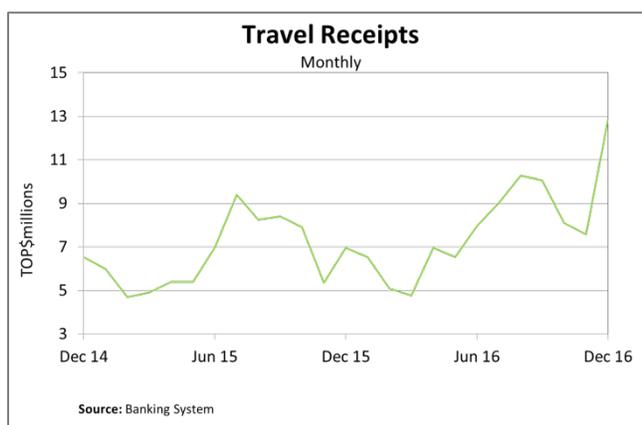
Note: Total Arrivals & Departures including air, cruise ship and yacht arrivals & departures

Source: Statistics Department

Christmas holiday drove the total arrivals and departures higher

Total international arrivals¹ increased significantly over the month indicating a vibrant tourism sector during the month. Majority of purpose of air arrival visitors' trip was to visit relatives and friends for the Christmas holidays, which is the usual trend for December each year as people come for the summer holiday season. In addition, there were visitors who were attending events scheduled for the month which included the 50th school anniversary of Channel College – Kelana.

Total international arrivals rose to 16,324 passengers by 113.6% during the month. Total visitors² increased to 13,275 by 220.3% from 4,145 passengers in November 2016. Four cruise ships arrived in December which brought in 5,155 passengers. Air arrival visitors also



¹ Includes Tongan residents and visitors

² Includes both air and sea arrival visitors only

increased to 8,108 passengers (108.9%) while yacht arrivals only recorded 12 passengers in December 2016.

The air returning residents decreased by 448 passengers (12.8%) while the resident departure of all age group increased by 1,923 passengers (52.7%). This reflected the holiday season from school and work.

Accordingly, the rise in total arrivals over the month is consistent with the 98.6% increase in total international departures to 15,208 passengers. Furthermore, the increased international arrival coincided with the significant \$5.2 million (69.4%) increase in travel receipts over the month which also recorded the highest travel receipts for the year of \$12.8 million.

In year ended terms, the total number of international arrivals grew by 19,392 passengers (18.6%). Air arrival visitors rose by 5,378 passengers (10.0%), followed by a 5,283 rise (16.8%) in air returning residents. Sea arrivals³ (assuming they are all visitors) increased by 8,731 passengers (46.4%) as a result of larger number of cruise ships arriving during the year. The number of celebrations and events that took place during the year to December 2016 supported this growth. This may have supported the transportation, trade and other sectors of the economy. The higher number of arrivals was also consistent with the \$16.0 million (20.1%) increase in travel receipts recorded over the year.

The total international departures also rose by 16,887 passengers (16.0%) over the year due mainly to a rise of 8,469 passengers (9.8%) in departures by air.

Outlook

The Reserve Bank remains optimistic that the tourism sector will remain vibrant in the upcoming months. The 21 cruise ships scheduled to arrive in 2017 and events will bring in visitors. Additionally, the signing of the mutual visa exemption agreement between Tonga and China, and the setting up of the Chinese group tours are expected to attract more tourists from China. The Reserve Bank will continue to closely monitor the country's economic developments to support economic growth.

³ Includes cruise ship and yacht

Total Number of International Arrivals & Departures												
	Arrivals						Departures					
	Monthly				Year Ended		Monthly				Year Ended	
	Dec 16	Nov-16	Oct-16	Dec-15	Dec 16	Dec-15	Dec-16	Nov-16	Oct-16	Dec-15	Dec-16	Dec-15
Total	16,324	7,642	14,156	11,374	123,462	104,070	15,208	7,657	14,583	9,949	122,265	105,379
Air	11,157	7,378	7,184	11,274	95,930	85,269	10,041	7,349	7,699	9,844	95,043	86,574
Visitors	8,108	3,881	4,298	8,444	59,130	53,752	4,467	3,698	4,937	4,192	58,544	53,496
Tongan residents	3,049	3,497	2,886	2,830	36,800	31,517	5,574	3,651	2,762	5,652	36,499	33,078
Cruise Ship*	5,155	176	6,630	100	25,714	17,375	5,161	176	6,626	100	25,703	17,383
Yacht*	12	88	342	-	1,818	1,426	6	132	258	5	1,519	1,422
Total	16,324	7,642	14,156	11,374	123,462	104,070	15,208	7,657	14,583	9,949	122,265	105,379
Visitors	13,275	4,145	11,270	8,544	86,662	72,553	9,634	4,006	11,821	4,297	85,766	72,301
Tongan residents	3,049	3,497	2,886	2,830	36,800	31,517	5,574	3,651	2,762	5,652	36,499	33,078

* All sea arrivals are assumed to be visitors
Source: Statistics Department