

International Arrivals & Departures February 2017

Release date: 23rd June 2017

	Feb 17	Jan 17	Dec 16	Nov 16
Total Arrivals	9,410	10,008	16,324	7,642
Total Departures	10,601	11,812	15,208	7,657

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

Source: Statistics Department

Less air arrival visitors driving total arrivals lower

Total international arrivals¹ continued to trend lower in February as it declined by 598 passengers (6.0%). Air arrivals decreased the most by 2,045 passengers (26.2%) driven by 1,630 (36.5%) decrease in returning residents. Additionally, there were no passengers arriving by yacht recorded for the month. However, the decline in air arrivals was partially offset by the cruise ship arrivals which rose over the month by 1,455 (66.5%) passengers.



The total international departures declined by 1,211 passengers (10.3%), in line with the decrease in total air arrivals. Air departure passengers fell by 2,660 passengers largely attributed to the 3,508 decline in non-Tongan passport holders leaving the country. It reflects the decline in air arrival visitors during the month, and the high number of visitors leaving the country in January.



¹ Includes Tongan residents and visitors

Furthermore, the decreased international air arrivals coincided with the \$4.0 million (39.6%) fall in travel receipts over the month. Although cruise ship arrivals increased but its has minimal impact on tourism earnings due to its usual one day stopover.

Over the year to February 2017, the total number of international arrivals grew by 16,518 passengers (15.5%). Sea arrivals² (assuming they are all visitors) increased by 8,971 passengers (47.4%) as a result of larger number of cruise ships arriving and a favourable whale season during the year. Additionally, air returning residents rose by 3,838 passengers (11.6%) followed by a 3,709 (6.8%) rise in air arrival visitors. The number of celebrations and events that took place during the year to February 2017 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 \$19.5 million (24.3%) increase in travel receipts recorded over the year.

The total international departures also rose by 13,921 passengers (12.9%) over the year due mainly to a rise of 8,521 passengers (48.6%) in cruise ship departures.

Outlook

The Reserve Bank remains optimistic that the tourism sector will remain vibrant in the upcoming months. The remaining 17 cruise ships scheduled to arrive in the upcoming months of 2017 and events taking place in the near term are expected to bring in more 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.

Total Number of International Arrivals & Departures

	Arrivals						Departures					
	Monthly				Year Ended		Monthly				Year Ended	
	Feb 17	Jan-17	Dec-16	Feb-16	Feb 17	Feb-16	Feb-17	Jan-17	Dec-16	Feb-16	Feb-17	Feb-16
Total	9,410	10,008	16,324	11,453	123,277	106,759	10,602	11,812	15,208	13,059	122,179	108,258
Air	5,768	7,813	11,157	5,979	95,382	87,835	6,960	9,620	10,041	7,592	94,590	89,330
Visitors	2,936	3,351	8,108	3,259	58,577	54,868	4,085	7,593	4,467	4,164	58,596	55,484
Tongan residents	2,832	4,462	3,049	2,720	36,805	32,967	2,875	2,027	5,574	3,428	35,994	33,846
Cruise Ship*	3,642	2,187	5,155	5,474	26,069	17,541	3,642	2,185	5,161	5,467	26,063	17,542
Yacht*	-	8	12	-	1,826	1,383	-	7	6	-	1,526	1,386
Total	9,410	10,008	16,324	11,453	123,277	106,759	10,602	11,812	15,208	13,059	122,179	108,258
Visitors	6,578	5,546	13,275	8,733	86,472	73,792	7,727	9,785	9,634	9,631	86,185	74,412
Tongan residents	2,832	4,462	3,049	2,720	36,805	32,967	2,875	2,027	5,574	3,428	35,994	33,846

* All sea arrivals are assumed to be visitors

Source: Statistics Department

² Includes cruise ship and yacht