

# International Arrivals & Departures March 2017

Release date: 15 August 2017

	Mar 17	Feb 17	Jan 17	Dec 16
Total Arrivals	8,490	9,410	10,008	16,324
Total Departures	8,135	10,601	11,812	15,208

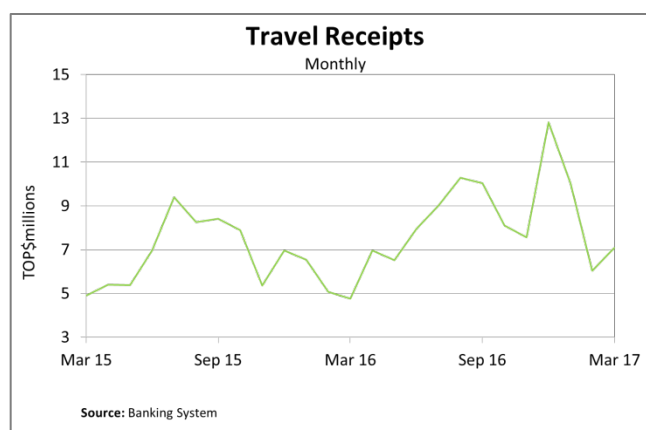
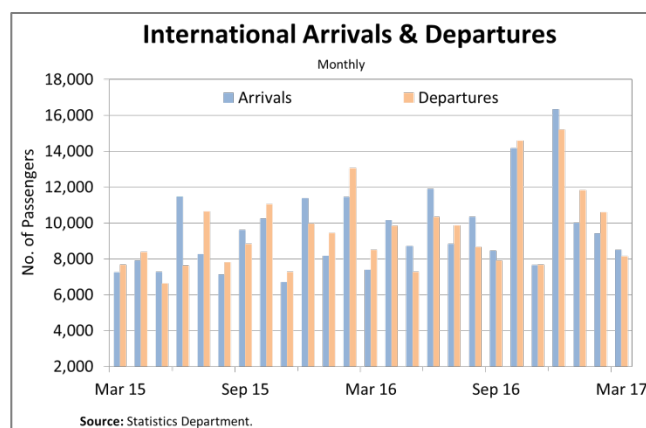
Note: Total Arrivals & Departures including air, cruise ship and yacht arrivals & departures

Source: Statistics Department

## Less air arrival visitors push total arrivals lower

Total international arrivals<sup>1</sup> continued to trend lower in March as it declined by 920 passengers (9.8%). This was solely driven by the decline in total air arrivals by 1,127 passengers (19.5%) due to 751 (26.5%) decrease in returning residents while visitors declined by 376 passengers (12.8%). The decrease in total returning residents coincided with the consistent decline in total residents departure in the past two months, and reflects less residents returning home as the Christmas and school holidays had ended last month. However, sea<sup>2</sup> arrival rose by 207 passengers (5.7%) which included 10 passengers who had arrived by yacht.

The total international departures declined by 2,466 passengers (23.3%), in line with the decrease in total air arrivals. Air departure passengers declined the most by 2,674 passengers largely attributed to the 1,775 decline in non-Tongan passport holders leaving the country which corresponded to the decline in air arrival visitors during the past two months.



<sup>1</sup> Includes Tongan residents and visitors

<sup>2</sup> Includes both cruise ship and yacht arrival

However, travel receipts over the month rose by \$1.0 million (17.0%) to \$7.1 million. Cruise ship arrival passengers, assuming all were first time arrival passengers into the Kingdom of Tonga, were estimated to derive a total \$0.4 million of tourism earnings over the month.

Over the year to March 2017, the total number of international arrivals grew by 17,480 passengers (16.4%). Sea arrivals (assuming they are all visitors) increased by 12,007 passengers (65.5%) as a result of larger number of cruise ships arriving and a favourable whale season during the year. Additionally, air returning residents rose by 2,890 passengers (8.7%) followed by a 2,583 (4.7%) rise in air arrival visitors. The number of celebrations and events that took place during the year to March 2017 supported this annual growth which may have supported the transportation, trade and other sectors of the economy. The higher number of arrivals was also consistent with the \$22.0 million (27.3%) increase in travel receipts recorded over the year.

The total international departures also rose by 12,735 passengers (11.7%) over the year due mainly to a rise of 11,549 passengers (68.2%) in cruise ship departures.

## Outlook

The Reserve Bank remains optimistic that the tourism sector will remain vibrant in the upcoming months. Tonga's busy season is expected to start in April due to national sports competitions, annual church conferences, and meetings scheduled for the upcoming months. Hence, total international arrivals and departures are expected to rise consecutively in the near term. 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	
	Mar 17	Feb-17	Jan-17	Mar-16	Mar 17	Mar-16	Mar-17	Feb-17	Jan-17	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-16
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,490</b>	<b>9,410</b>	<b>10,008</b>	<b>7,383</b>	<b>124,384</b>	<b>106,904</b>	<b>8,135</b>	<b>10,602</b>	<b>11,812</b>	<b>8,488</b>	<b>121,826</b>	<b>109,091</b>
Air	4,641	5,768	7,813	5,968	94,055	88,582	4,286	6,960	9,620	7,073	91,803	90,768
Visitors	2,560	2,936	3,351	3,315	57,822	55,239	2,310	4,085	7,593	3,534	57,372	56,223
Tongan residents	2,081	2,832	4,462	2,653	36,233	33,343	1,976	2,875	2,027	3,539	34,431	34,545
Cruise Ship*	3,839	3,642	2,187	1,411	28,497	16,941	3,839	3,642	2,185	1,411	28,491	16,942
Yacht*	10	-	8	4	1,832	1,381	10	-	7	4	1,532	1,381
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,490</b>	<b>9,410</b>	<b>10,008</b>	<b>7,383</b>	<b>124,384</b>	<b>106,904</b>	<b>8,135</b>	<b>10,602</b>	<b>11,812</b>	<b>8,488</b>	<b>121,826</b>	<b>109,091</b>
Visitors	6,409	6,578	5,546	4,730	88,151	73,561	6,159	7,727	9,785	4,949	87,395	74,546
Tongan residents	2,081	2,832	4,462	2,653	36,233	33,343	1,976	2,875	2,027	3,539	34,431	34,545

\* All sea arrivals are assumed to be visitors

Source: Statistics Department