

International Arrivals & Departures

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December 2015

	Dec 15	Nov 15	Oct 15	Sept 15
Total Arrivals	11,374	6,706	10,237	9,604
Total Departures	9,949	7,250	11,040	8,821

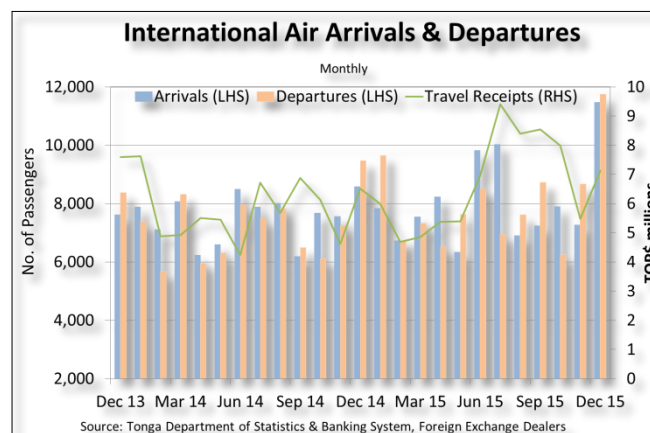
Note: Total Arrivals including air, cruise ship and yacht arrivals

Source: Tonga Department of Statistics

Annual festivities driven increase in air arrivals

Tourism activity for December 2015 increased over the month as both arrivals and departures rose by 69.6% and 37.2% respectively. The annual festivities contributed to the seasonal increase specifically the church conferences, school anniversaries, villages and various family re-unions that took place in December.

A total of 11,374 international arrivals¹ visited the Kingdom during the month, a significant increase from 6,706 last month. The majority of visitors arrived by air specifically from New Zealand, Australia and the US with the highest number of passengers at the age group of 45 – 49 years of age. This was driven by an increase in the number of arrivals for holidays and visiting relatives and friends. The increase in the number of arrivals also coincides with events taking place in December and the increase in prices for domestic food as a result from higher demand. The total number of departures also increased from 7,250 to 9,949 with the majority travelling by air at the age group of 15 – 19 years of age. This could be due to school holidays and children travelling overseas to spend time with families abroad. The highest number of arrivals were male whilst the highest number of departures were female.



¹ Visitors plus Returning Residents

2015 was an important year for Tonga, with a number of celebrations and events taking place that generated stronger economic activities such as the King's Coronation and also the annual festivities. As a result, the total number of arrivals for the 12 months to December 2015 increased by 12.7% compared to the previous year. This was driven by air arrivals mainly from New Zealand, Australia and the US and they were mostly visitors. There was a decline in the number of passengers visiting relatives and friends over the year but the increase in the number of passengers for holiday and other reasons offset the fall. The total departures also rose by 12.1%, most of which were Non-Tongan travellers.

The increase in the number of visitors is in line with the rise in travel receipts² over the month of December of \$1.6 million to \$7.1 million compared to previous month. Furthermore, the higher number of visitors is consistent with the \$11.0 million increase in the total travel receipts during the year to December 2015, compared to the previous year.

The transportation sector and the hotel and restaurants benefitted from the increase in visitors to Tonga. Rental cars and accommodation facilities were reported to be fully booked. Other sectors in the economy are expected to benefit from the spill over effects of this increase.

Outlook

Air arrivals are expected to fall in the coming months after the peak. However, with the committed Fiji Airways direct route from Fiji to Vava'u to commence in April 2016, it is anticipated that this will attract more visitors to the Kingdom. The NRBT will continue to closely monitor these developments and the country's economic developments and financial conditions to maintain internal and external monetary stability, promote financial stability and a sound and efficient financial system to support macroeconomic stability and economic growth.

² This is based on the Overseas Exchange Transactions data compiled by the NRBT