# **Cook Islands**

International Visitor Survey Annual Report July 2023 - June 2024





#### **Acknowledgements**

- ❖ The Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) expresses its gratitude to all contributors to this report on IVS data from July 2023 to June 2024, which provides insights into the visitor experience and tourism recovery in the Cook Islands post-border reopening.
- Thank you to the visitors for completing arrival and departure cards, enabling this analysis. Special thanks to the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CITC) for providing the visitor emails to enable survey invitations to be dispatched in a timely manner.
- ❖ We also extend our sincere thanks to the New Zealand Government for their support and collaboration.
- Appreciation goes to the SPTO researchers and analysts for their meticulous work on visitor profiles, decision-making processes, and expenditure and satisfaction.
- \* Further research is needed to refine economic impact estimates, particularly the rate of prepaid expenditure into the local economy. Your ongoing support is highly valued.
- Thank you to everyone involved.

#### **Executive Summary**

- ❖ The survey, conducted from July 2023 to June 2024, analyzed 1,881 responses out of 3,190 collected, representing 2% of actual visitors with a 9% response rate. Among the respondents, 57% were first-time visitors, and the average household income was NZD 154,948.
- ❖ Visitors were primarily attracted by nature attractions, cultural experiences, business opportunities, and connections with family and friends in the Cook Islands. Overall visitor satisfaction was high, with a rating of 4.7 out of 5. A substantial 98% of visitors indicated they would recommend Cook Islands to others, and 93% expressed willingness to return.
- The average prepaid spend per visitor was NZD 2,462 with an estimated 40% (NZD 984) flowing into the local economy. In-country spending per visitor per trip averaged NZD 2,197 with an average stay of 8.9 nights. This contributed to a total economic impact of NZD 520 million from July 2023 to June 2024.
- ❖ Visitors were most attracted to the clean environment, pleasant weather, friendly locals, and the relaxed atmosphere. On the other hand, they found public services, facilities and infrastructure, the prices of goods and services, and occasional unfavorable weather to be least appealing. To enhance the overall visitor experience, suggestions included improving accommodations and services, enhancing public services and infrastructure maintenance, as well as offering more entertainment, activities, and events.

#### **Background**

- ❖ The July 2023 June 2024 Cook Islands Visitor Survey is an initiative of the Pacific Tourism Data Initiative, funded by the Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZMFAT), and is conducted by the Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO).
- IVS data from July 2023 June 2024 is analysed to help us understand the visitor experience and gain insights into tourism recovery the Cook Islands after the border reopening.
- The report includes key sections on visitor profiles and characteristics, information and decision-making, visitor expenditure and satisfaction.
- N.B. The visitor emails were collected through the passenger arrival cards completed by visitors on their arrival into Cook Islands.
- N.B. The estimated rate of prepaid expenditure flowing into local economy is 40%, which is observed from other Pacific Island countries. Further research is warranted to establish more accurate estimates.
- All amounts are reported in NZD currency using average rates for the July 2023 June 2024 period.

#### **Disclaimer**

- Reproduction of Material Information contained within this publication, including all charts, information, and graphical representations, may be used, reproduced, or published without prior approval from SPTO and Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CITC). However, the information source must be explicitly referenced and acknowledged in all modes of representation.
- ❖ The survey instrument used to collect data for the July 2023 to June 2024 period was similar, but not exact, to the survey instrument used in the July 2023 to June 2024 period. New questions were added, a handful of existing questions were removed, and the response options for some questions were altered. In those instances where comparisons cannot be made, we report only the results for the July 2023 to June 2024 period.
- \* N.B. All analyses are based on the IVS respondents. No weighting was applied, as the sample data is representative. Therefore, the IVS respondents were not weighted to the actual arrival data.
- Please note that the Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) and the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CITC) do not accept liability for any loss or damage incurred as a result of the use of information contained in this report. Users are advised to exercise their own judgment in the use of any information provided.

#### IVS Respondents (July 2023 - June 2024)



1,881 TOTAL RESPONSES ANALYZED

9%
CONVERSION RATE

Note: 3,190 responses were received. After data cleaning, 1,881 responses remained.

#### RESPONSES COVERED



2%
OF ALL VISITORS IN THIS PERIOD

#### **Cook Islands International Visitor Survey**

Snapshot July 2023 - June 2024



**▼ 55**%

**△29**% **△8**%

**Others** 

**Business or** Conference

# Most Participated Activities









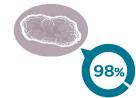








**RAROTONGA** 





**MANGAIA** 





-Accommodation

infrastructure

-Entertainment, activities and events

-Public services, and







**4.7**/5 **^** are satisfied





Economic impact

Environment.

cleanliness &

weather

Avg. local spend

**Least Appealing** 

Public services.

infrastructures

facilities and



Total Expenditure per person per trip



Average length of stay



Most appealing



Avg. prepaid spend per person per trip



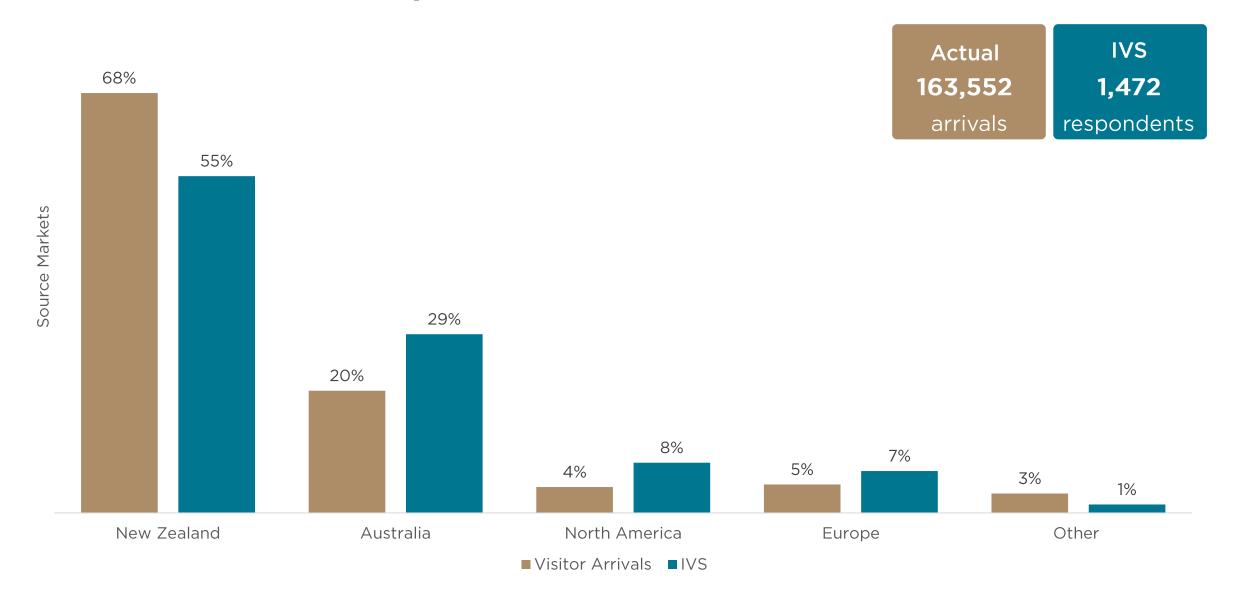
per person per trip

Note: The estimated flow-back rate into the Cook Islands for prepaid spend is 40%. With an average prepaid spend of \$2,462 per person per trip, this equates to \$984.

## **Report Structure**

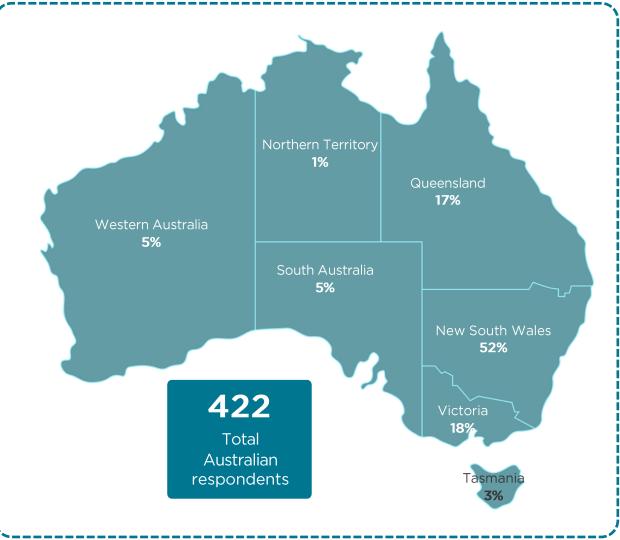


## Source Markets: IVS Respondents vs Actual Arrival

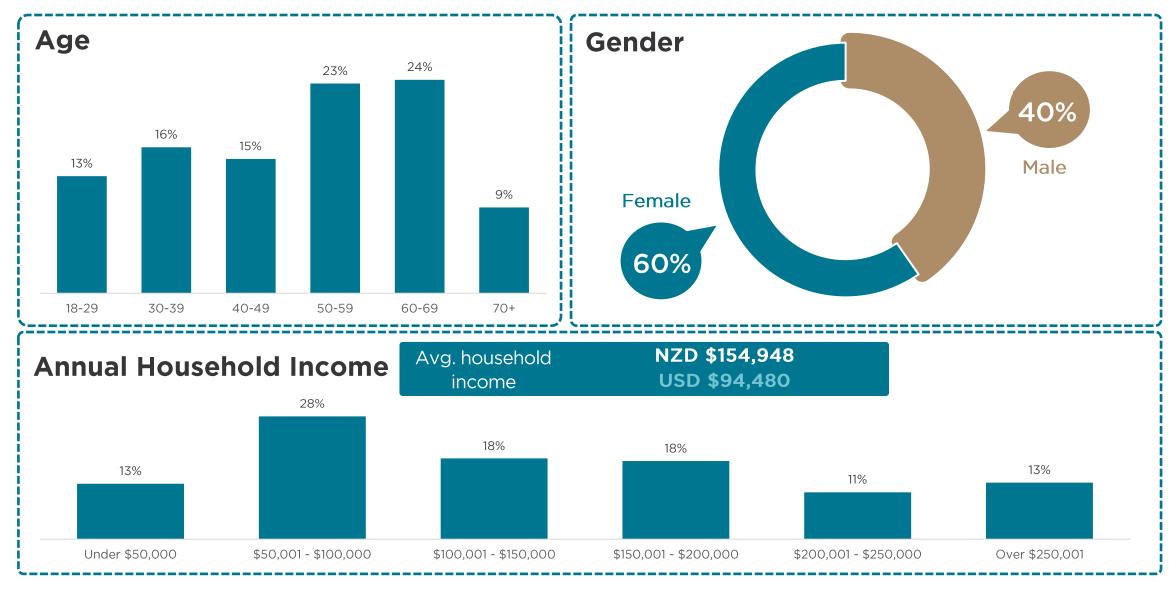


## **Top Source Markets**





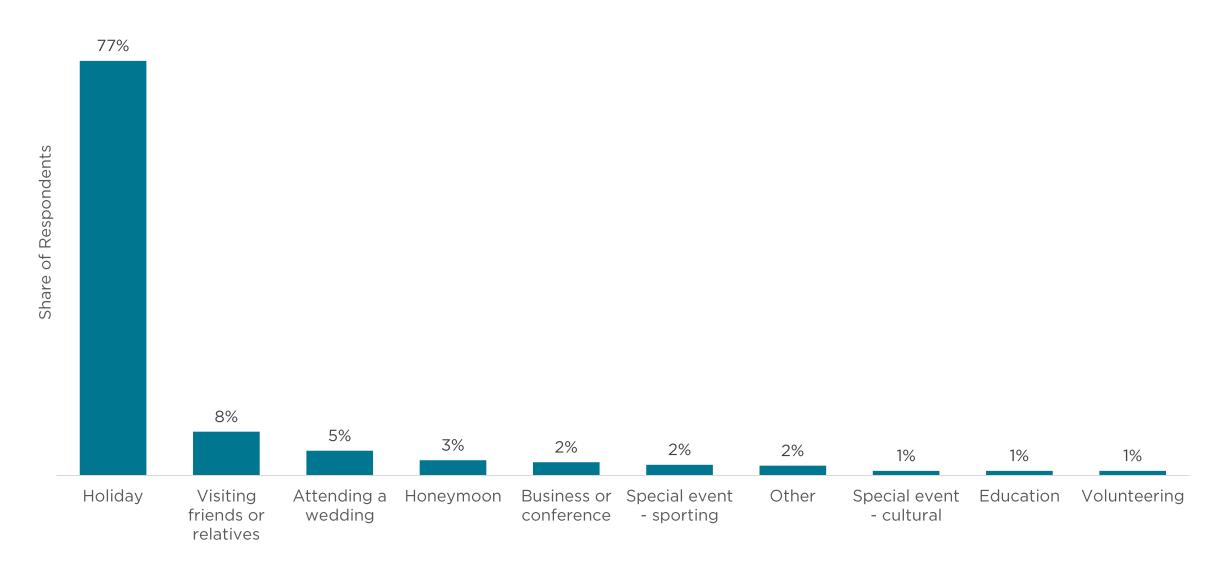
### **Respondent Demographics**



Note: % share of IVS respondents. \$ in NZD. The average exchange rate to NZD and USD for Jan - Mar 2024 was applied.

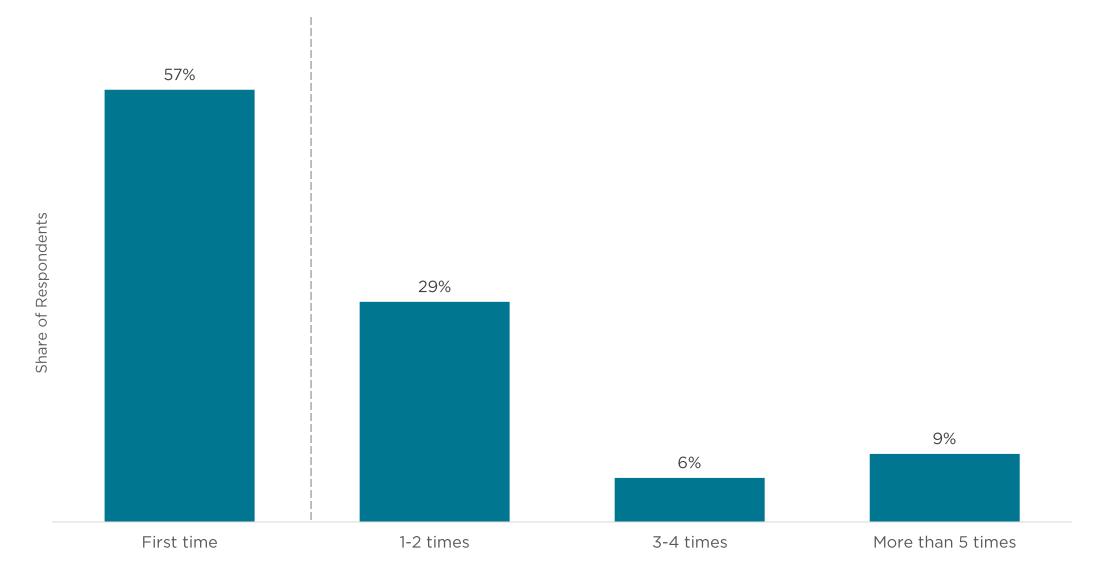
## **Report Structure**





#### **Previous Visits**

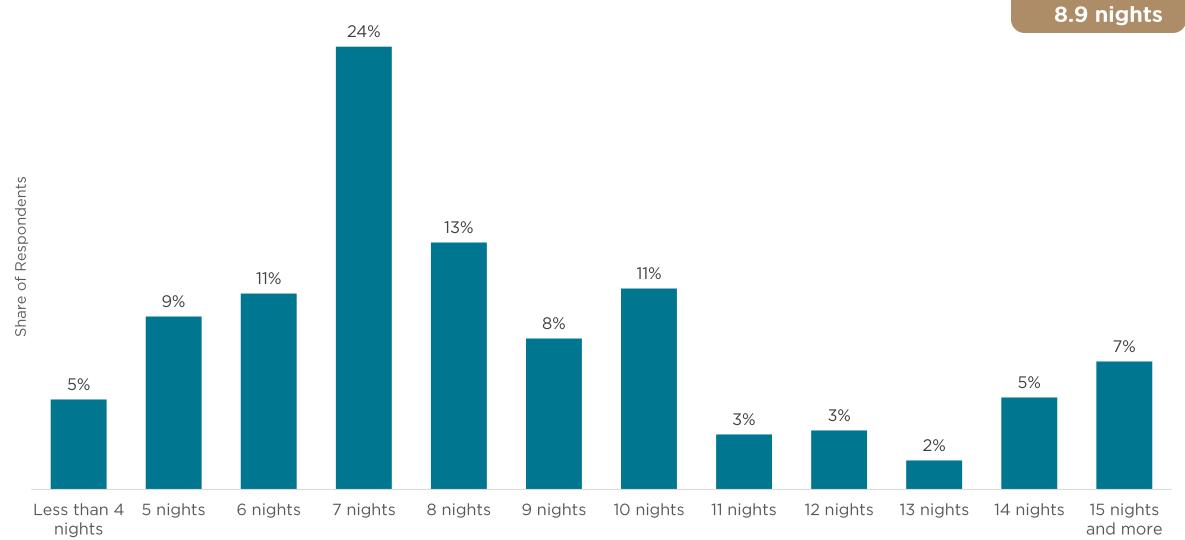
Q: How many times have you been to the Cook Islands not including this recent visit??



## **Length of Stay (nights)**

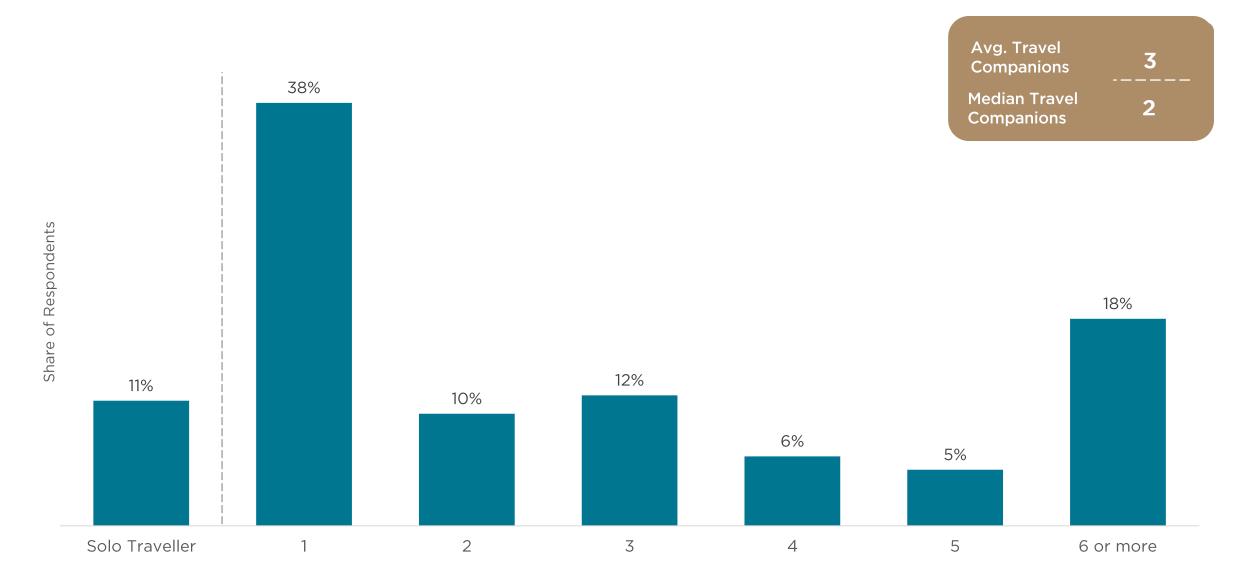
Q: How many nights did you spend in Cook Islands?

Avg. Length of Stay
8.9 nights

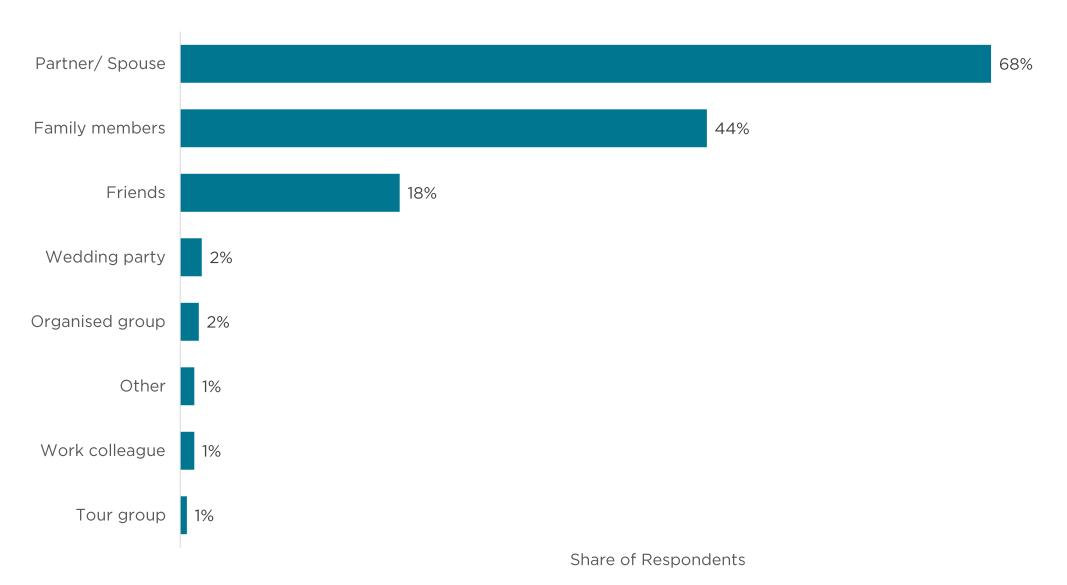


## **Travel Group Size**

Q: How many people accompanied you on this trip?

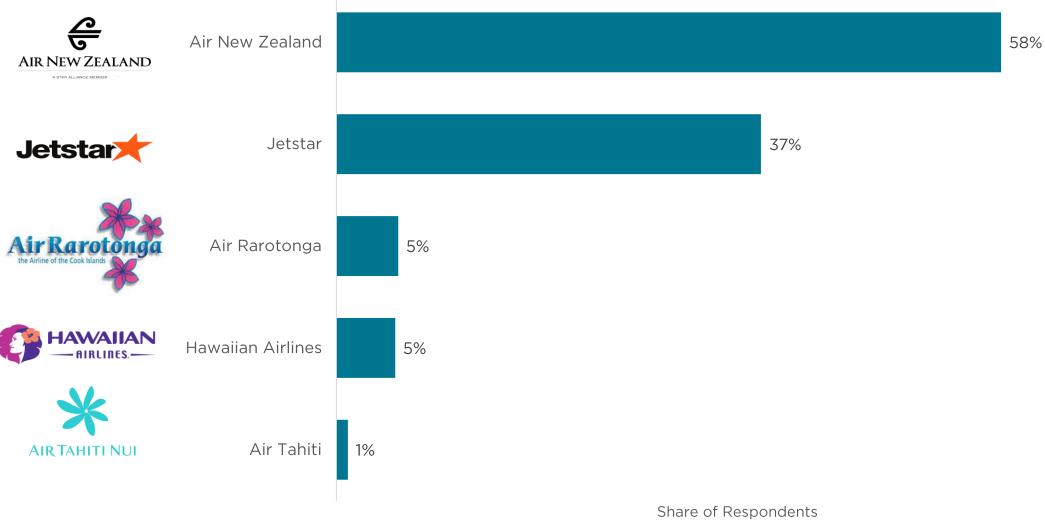


## **Travel Companions**

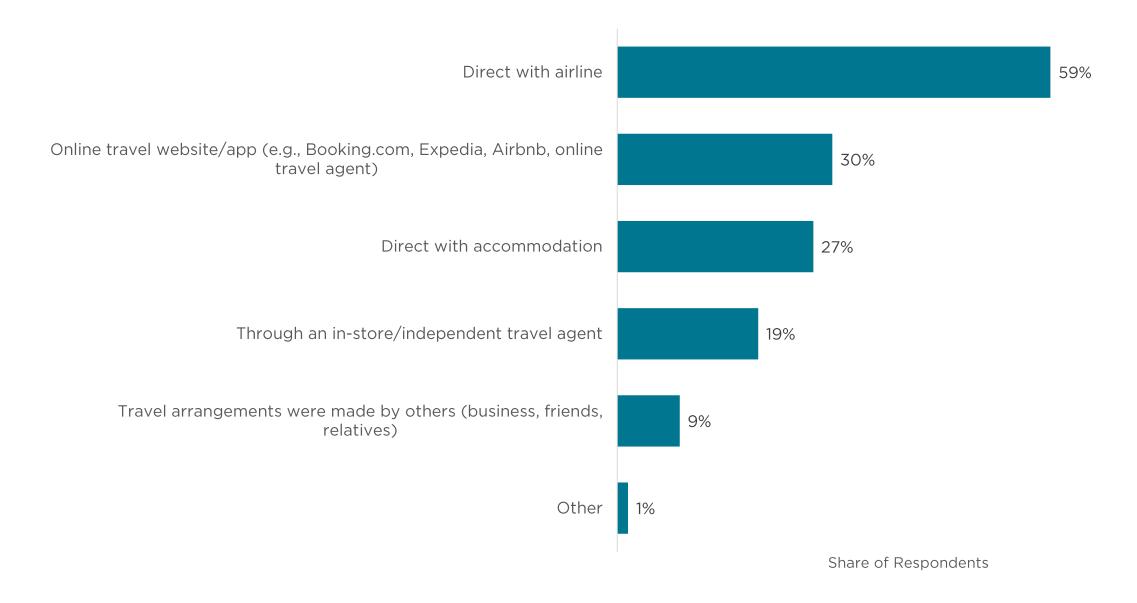


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

#### **Airlines Used for Travel**



## **Purchasing of Travel**

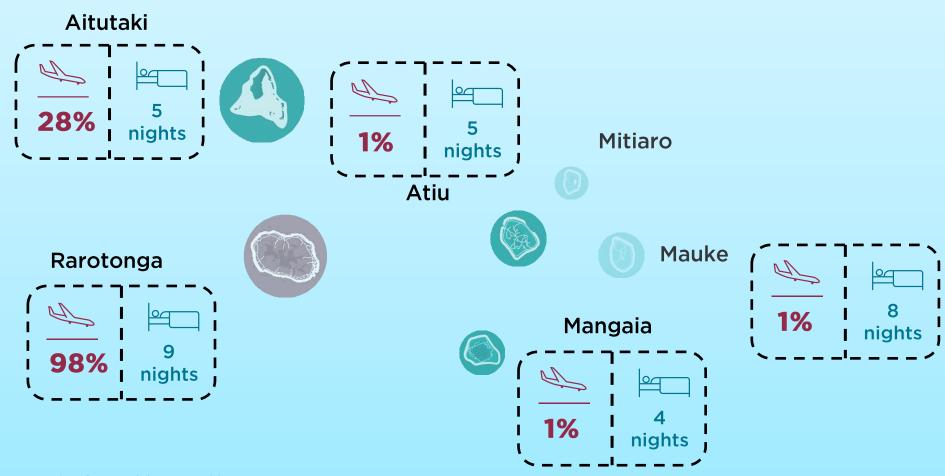


## Islands Visited & Avg. Length of Stay

Avg. Length of Stay 8.9 Nights

Q: Which island(s) did you visit?

Q: How many nights did you spend on each island you visited?



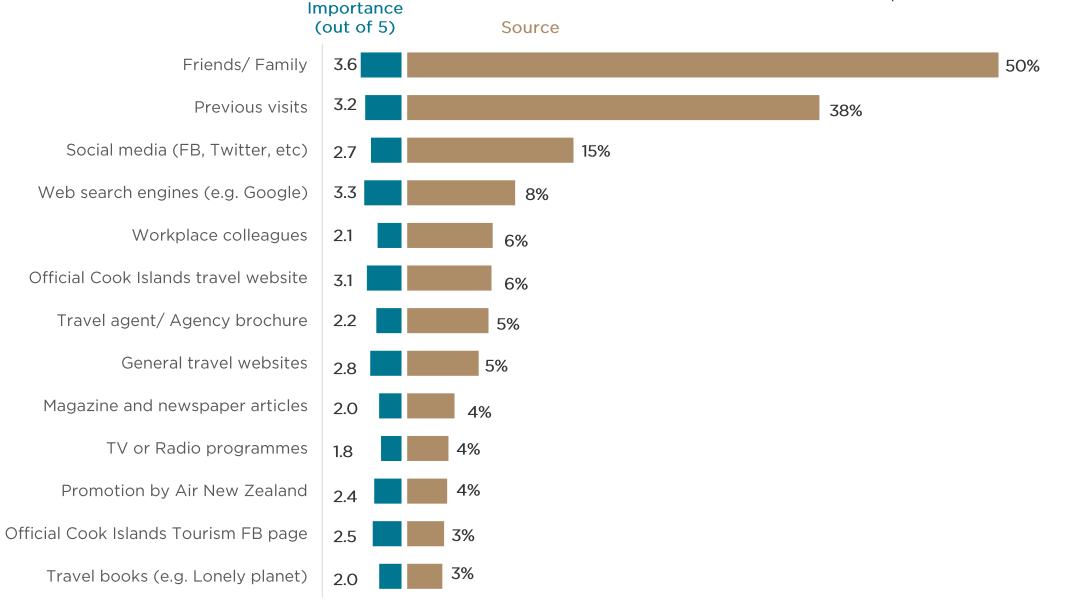
## **Report Structure**



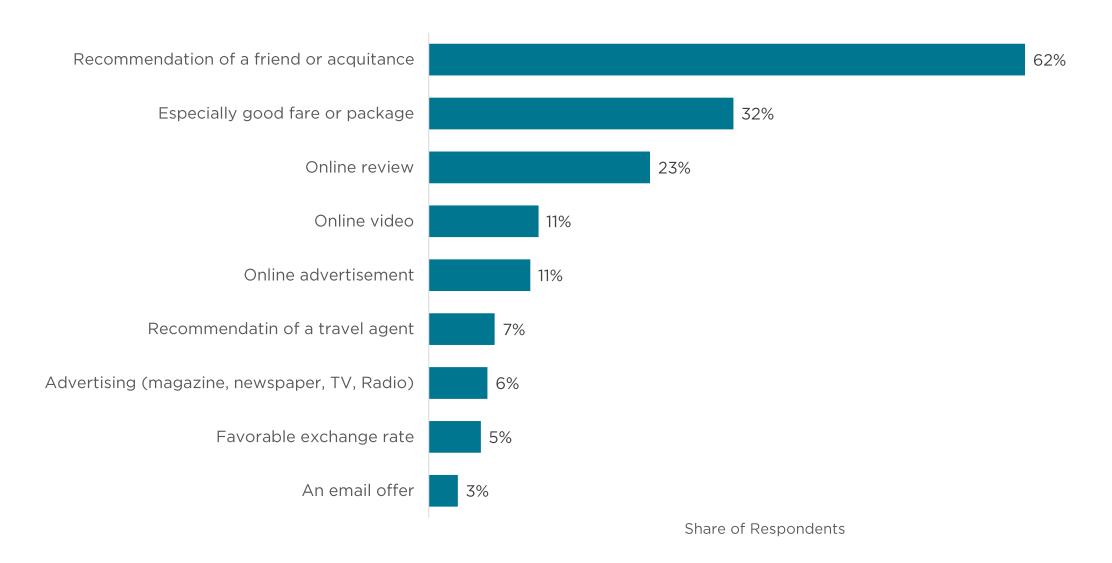
#### **Information Source**

Q: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination?

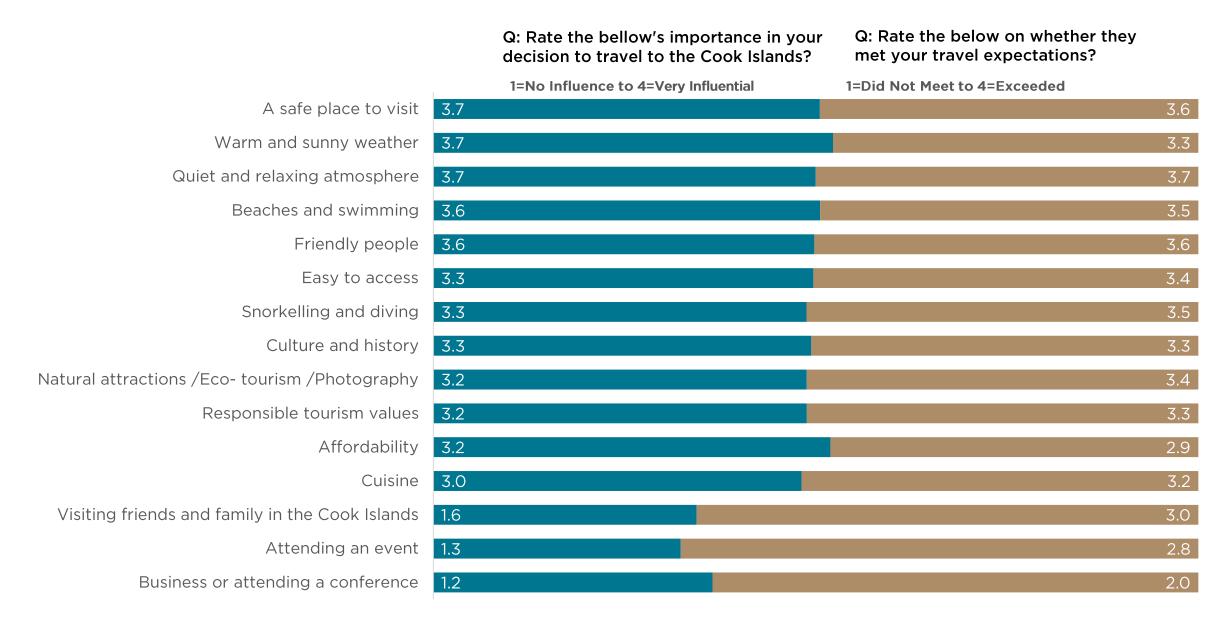
Q: How important was the information source?



# Important Promotion/ Advertising Channels that assisted in selecting to visit the Cook Islands

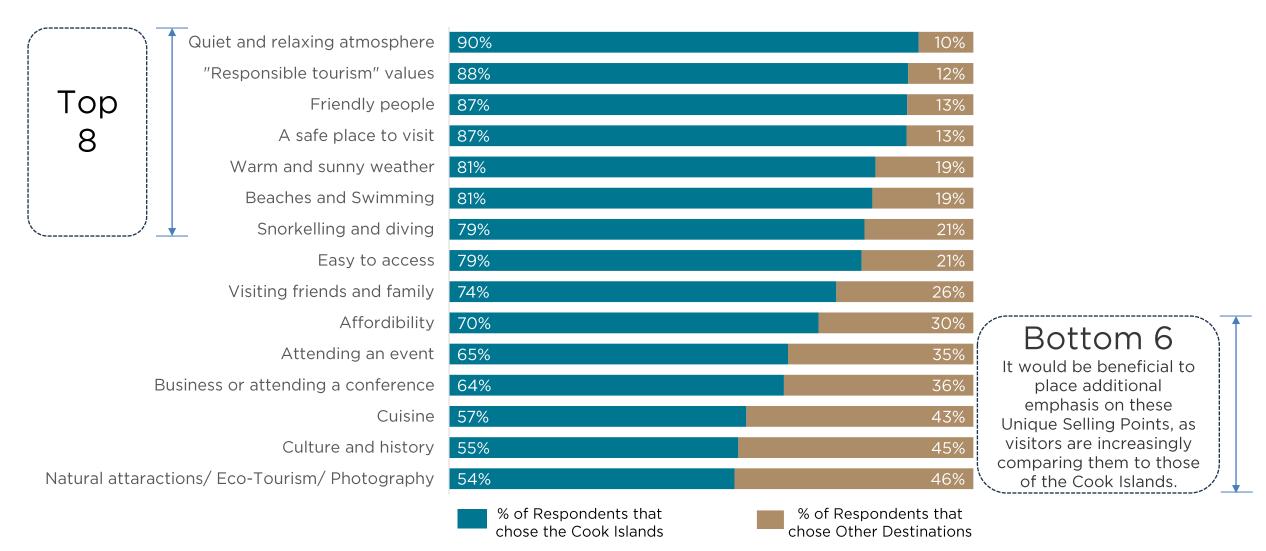


#### **Pre-Travel Perceptions Vs Expectations**

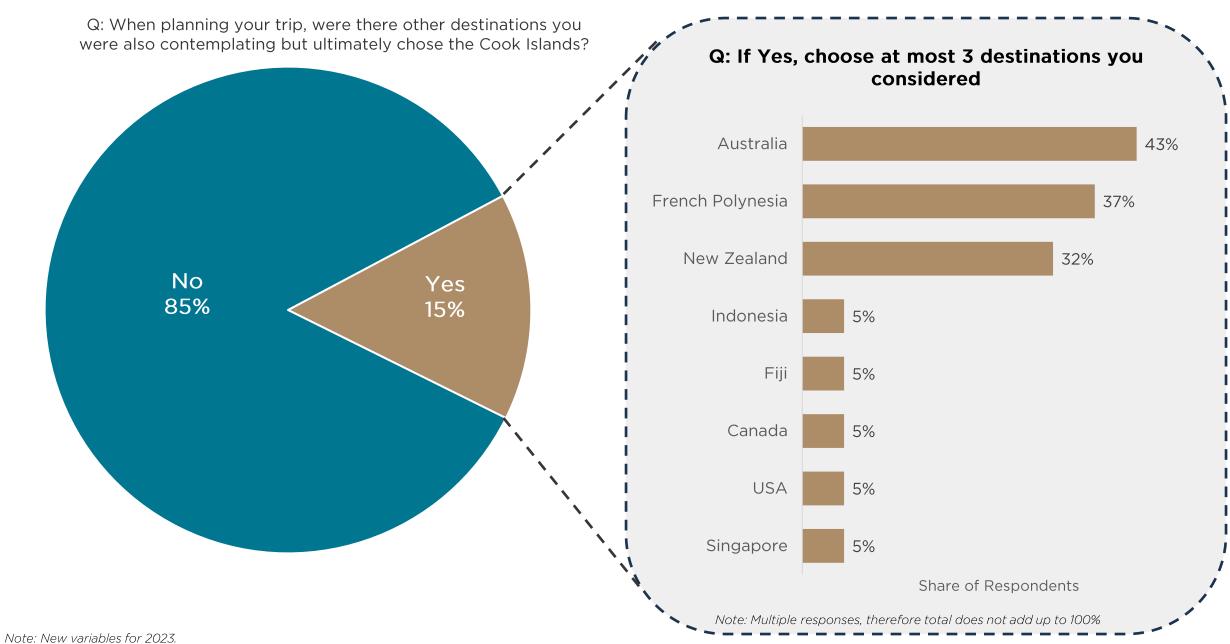


#### Unique Selling Points: Cook Islands vs Competitors (based on Visitor Perceptions)

Q: Please attribute each statement below to the country, Cook Islands or Alternative Destination, that best represents its unique appeal



#### **Other Considered Destinations**



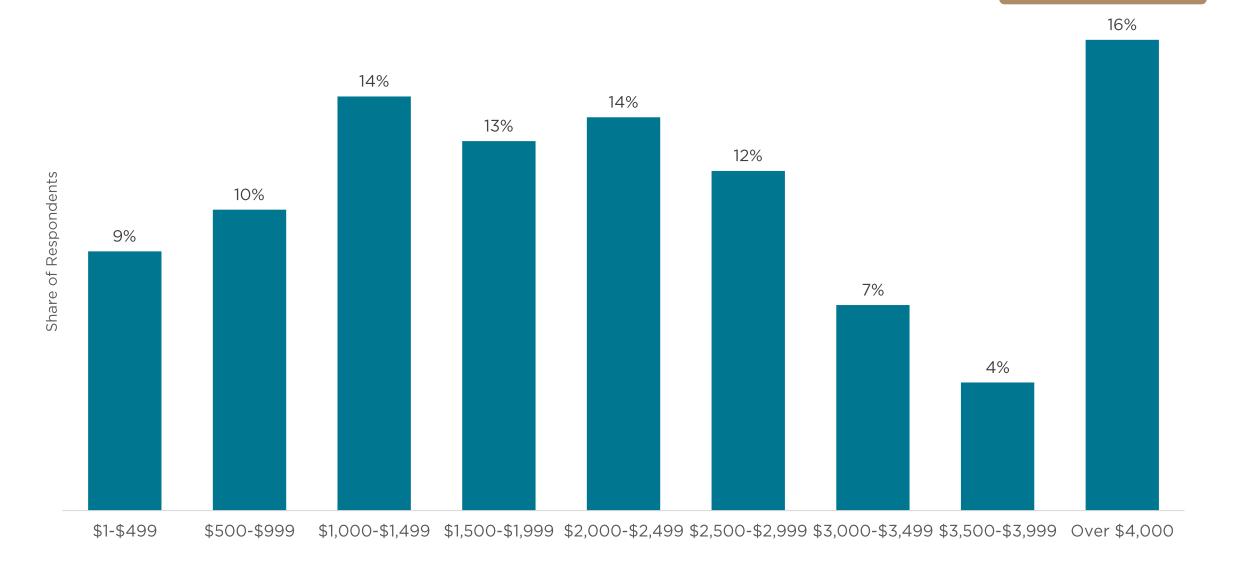
## **Report Structure**



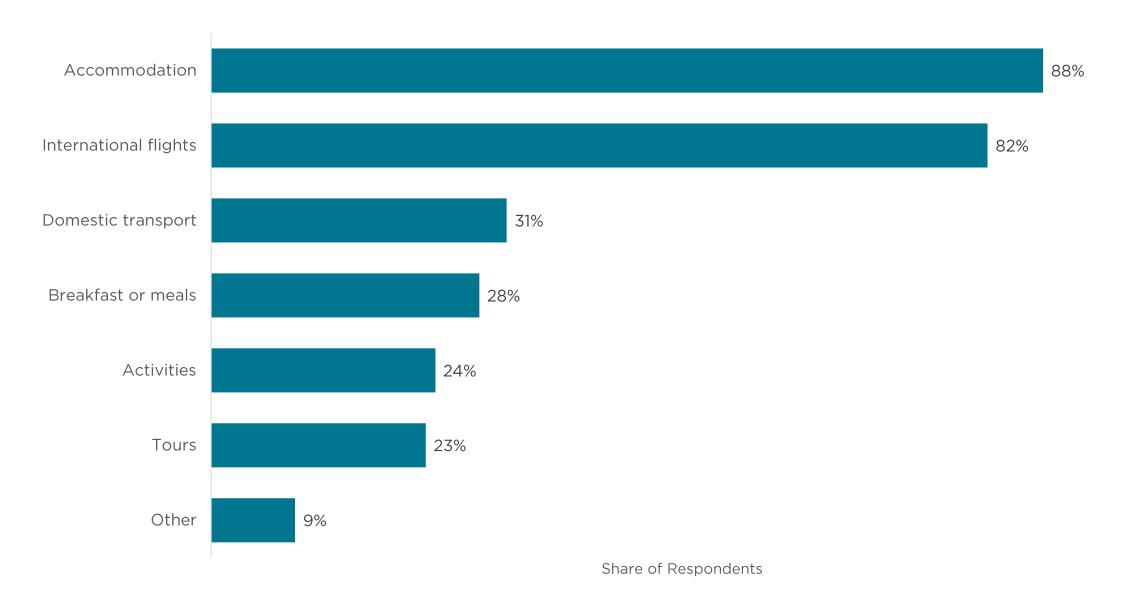


Avg. Prepaid per Person per Trip

NZ\$2,462



## **Prepaid Items**



### In-country Spend Per Person Per Day While in the Cook Islands

	Local Spend Per Person Per Day		
	% of sector	NZD	<u>USD</u>
Accommodation	41	100	25
Restaurant, Cafes & Bars	20	48	29
Vehicle Rental	7	16	10
Petrol	1	3	2
Domestic Flight	8	20	12
Public Transport	1	1	0.6
Internet Cost	1	2	1
Water-based activities	4	10	6
Land-based activities	2	6	4
Groceries	5	13	8
Shopping	8	19	11
Other	3	7	4
TOTAL	100	247	113

# **Economic Impact - Per Person and Total**

	Visitor Expenditure Per Person & Total		
	Jul23-Jun24	Jul23-Jun24	
Average Spend Prior to arrival	NZD	USD	
Per Person Per Trip	2,462	1,,501	
	Flowing into local economy rate - estimated 40%		
Per Person Per Trip	984	600	
Per Person per Day	110	67	
Average Local Spend			
Length of Stay (nights)	mean 8.9 nights		
Per Person Per Trip	2,197	1,339	
Per Person per Day	247	150	
Total Economic Impact-Per Trip	3,182	1,939	
Total Economic Impact-Per Day	357	217	

July 2022 - June 2023

# NZD 357 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 127,340





\$2,476

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$204

In-country spend per day



X **8.9** nights Average length of stay

\$989

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$1,814

In-country spend per trip



\$2,803 per visitor per trip \$315 per visitor per day July 2023 - June 2024

# NZD 520 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 163,522





\$2,462 **\** 

Prepaid per visitor per trip

**\$247** 

In-country spend per day





X **8.9** nights = Average length of stay

\$984

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$2,197

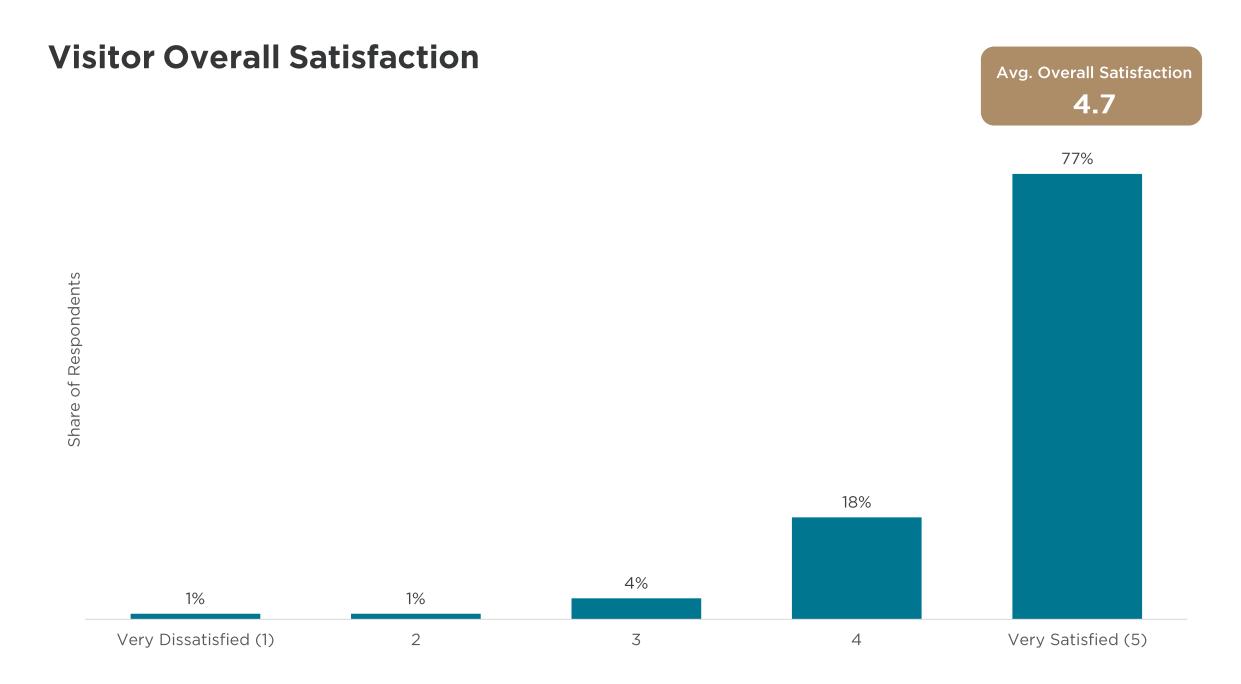
In-country spend per trip



\$3,181 per visitor per trip \$357 per visitor per day

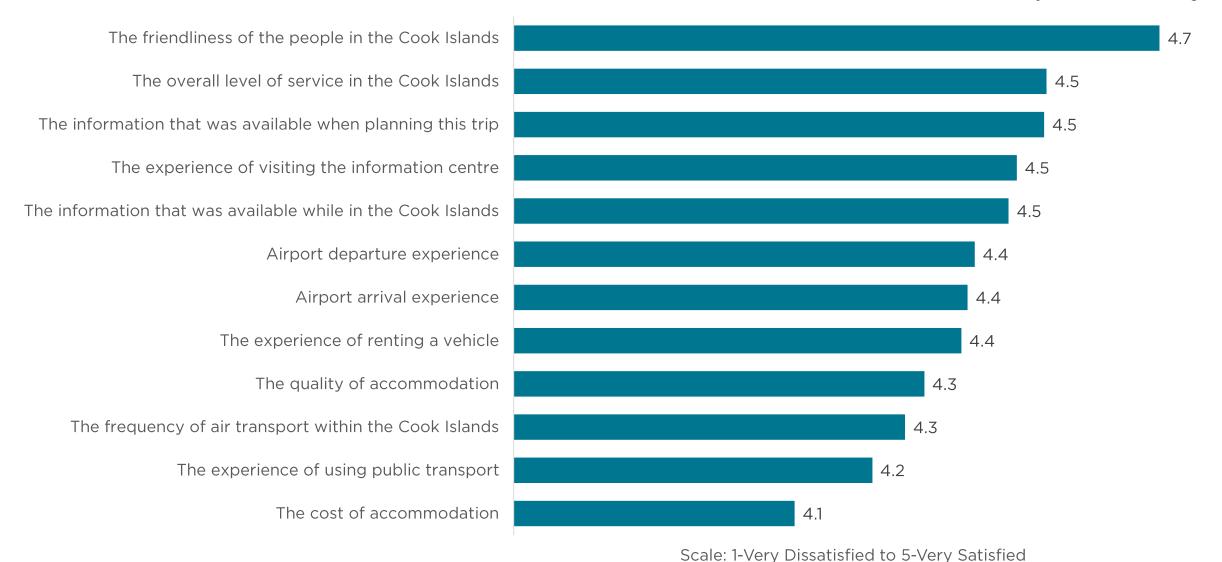
## **Report Structure**





#### **Satisfaction with Travel Experience**

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

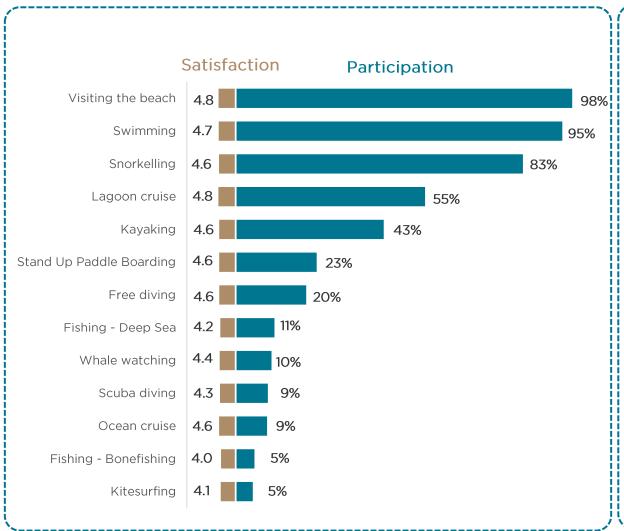


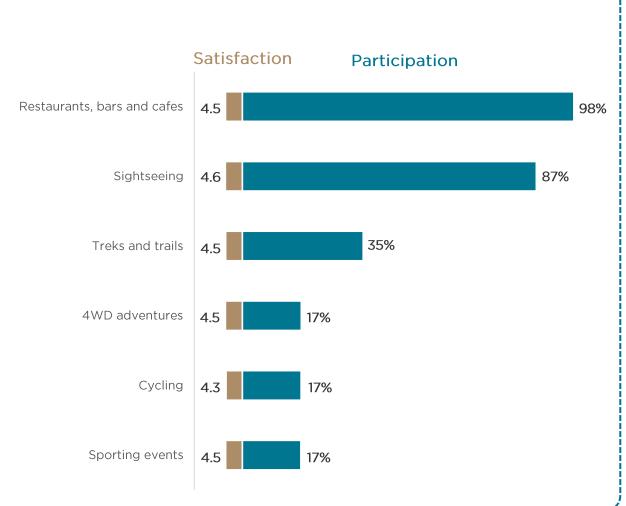
#### **Satisfaction with Activities**

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Land-based activities





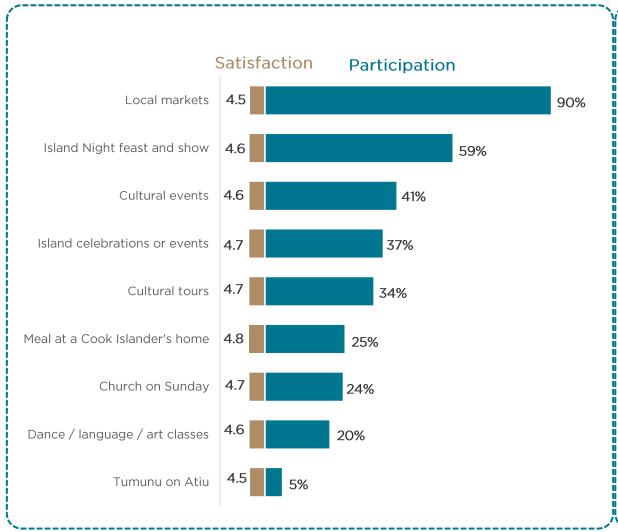


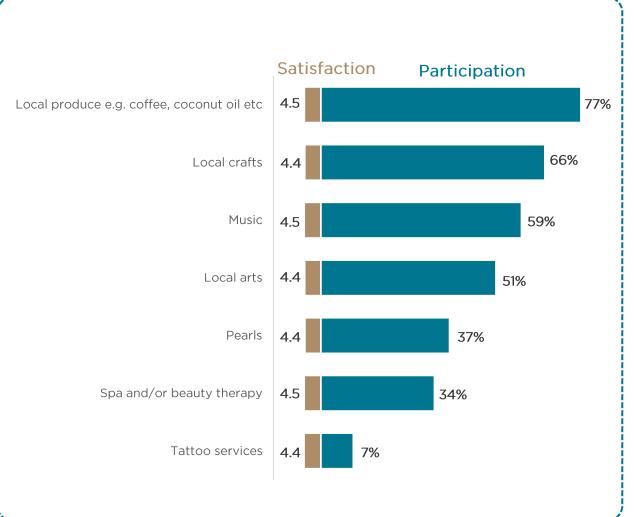
## **Satisfaction with Activities**

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Shopping activities

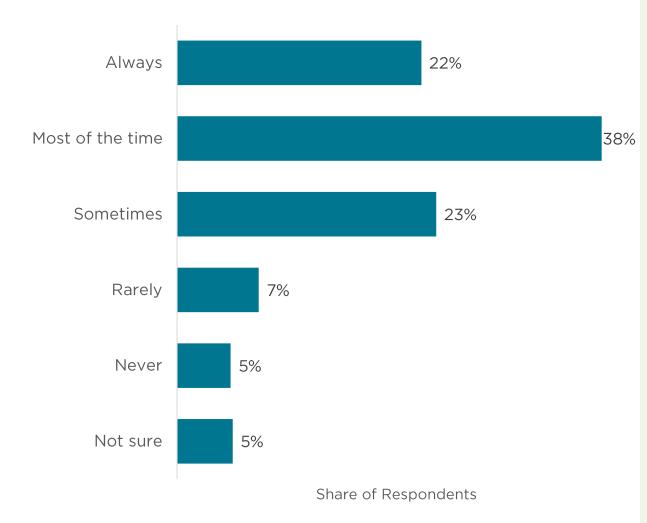




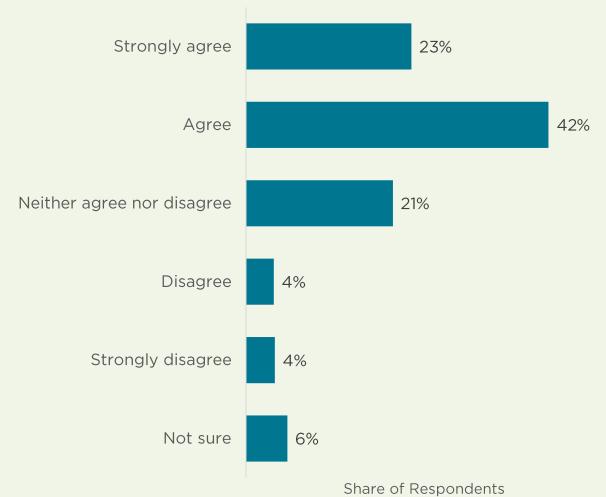


### Socio-Cultural and Environmental Awareness

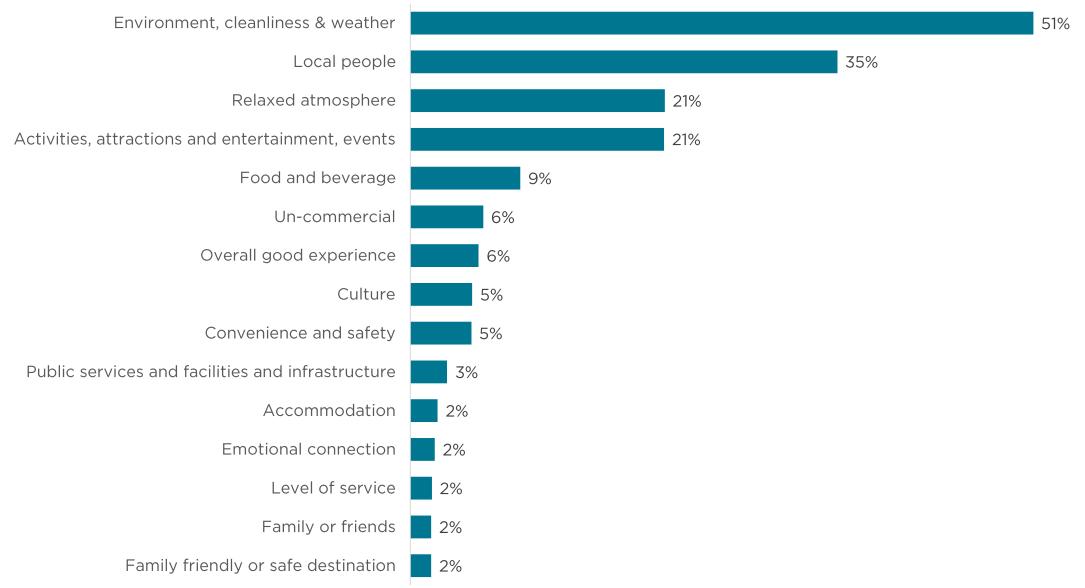
Q: During your trip to the Cook Islands, to what extent did you take sustainability, which includes the environment, the local community, and the culture, into account when deciding what activities to do, things to buy, or services to use?



"I am willing to contribute to a tourist visitor levy aimed at supporting social, environmental, and cultural regeneration in the Cook Islands, because I believe that tourism can have a positive impact, and I want to be part of the solution"



# **Most Appealing Aspects**

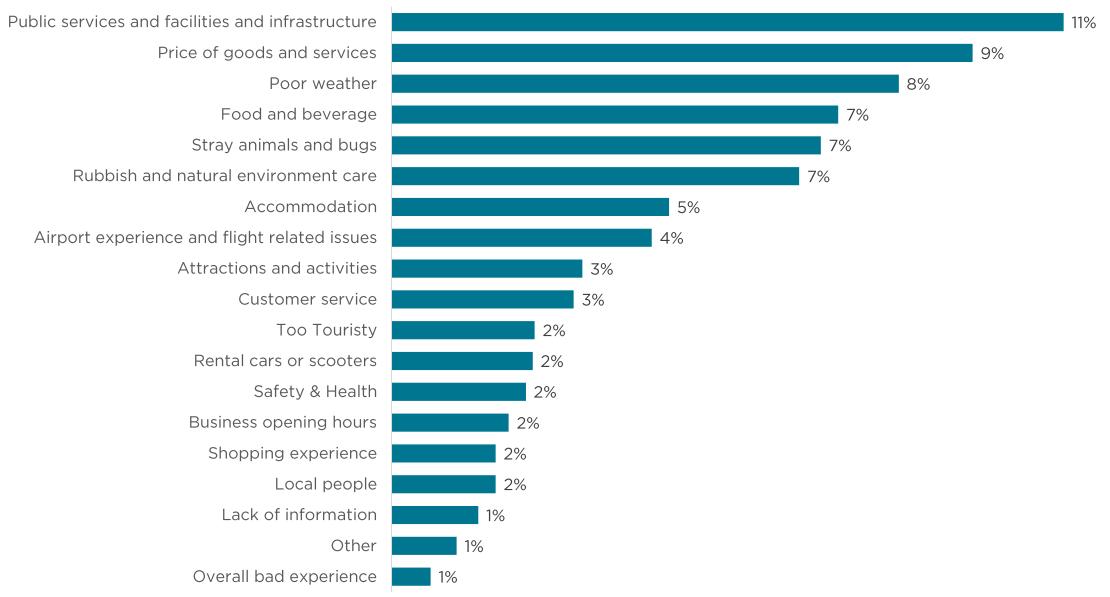


Share of Respondents

# **Quotes for Most Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands**

- + A new and diverse culture I didn't know much about, the sights and scenery, the amazing people willing to go out of their way to help people no matter what.
- + Absolutely everything lovely people and beautiful place. I could happily live in the Cook Islands and would come back in a heartbeat.
- + Access to beautiful beaches, not a lot of people and tourists, friendly and relaxed islander vibes, good food.
- + All locals had a high regard and respect in all contact cases in all class of employees and associates.
- + Always the local music is fabulous. How good would it be to have local music piped instead of whatever it is that gets played in a lot of venues.
- + Culture and how you become immersed within the lifestyle of the people of the Cook Islands, everything is carefree, and people are friendly and welcoming to all.
- + Ease of touring the island and going well anywhere. generally, very easy.
- + Everything was simple, no currency exchange, simple car booking, trusting locals, we were independent but supported when needed.
- + Everything. The relaxed nature of everything, the beauty and friendliness was amazing. And we have a gluten free child, the number of options was fantastic.
- + Overall laid-back attitude of the island and its people was perfect for us! The snorkeling was amazing.

# **Least Appealing Aspects**

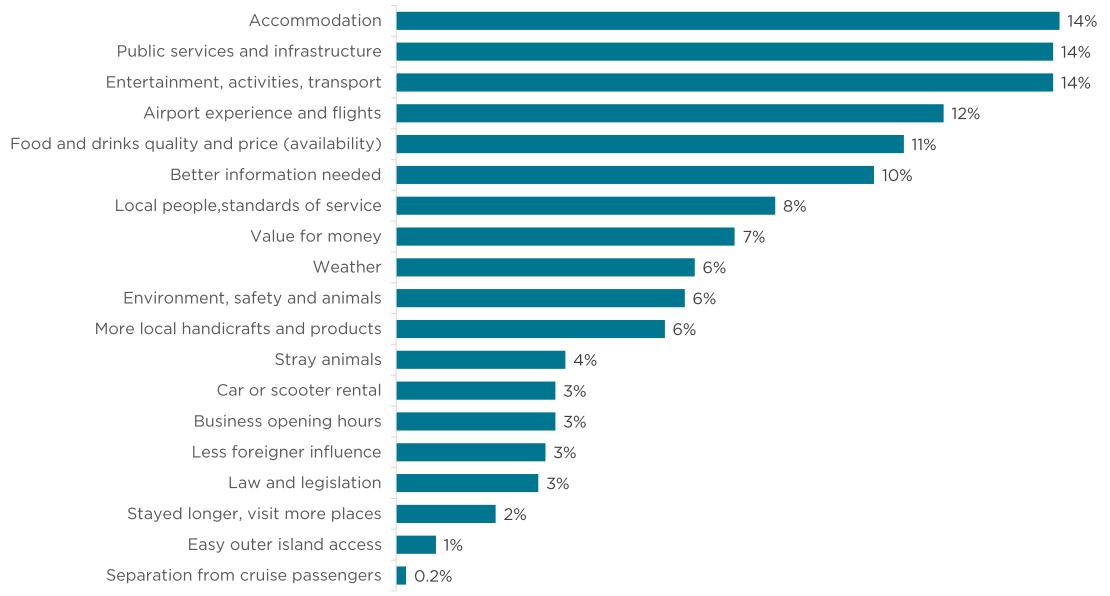


# Quotes for Least Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands

- + Hotels are outrageously over-priced. We could get much better quality and service for lower prices in Fiji, French Polynesia, the Maldives, and many other tropical destinations. Also, the snorkeling was shockingly bad. Most corals were bleached or dead, which was surprising, given that this is such a remote part of the Pacific. Also, there were relatively few fish compared to other tropical destinations, including many other islands in the Pacific. (For example, the snorkeling and diving in Fiji are amazing! So, the Cook Islands were really disappointing in this respect.)
- + The local people are so rude, the service, the food was bad. Nothing like when we were last there in 2008. The cost of everything vs quality. Guided tours were rushed and not good value for money.
- + Access to fresh produce and good fish ,island food. Need to promote selling of produce on the roadside or markets. Limited and hard to find island food. Too much chips on cafe and restaurant menus. Highlight the nice island food more please.
- + Air new Zealand and their incapacity to link timely connections from Australia. This put a real dampener on the lead up to the holiday, changing flight times and ridiculous waiting periods in Auckland. Then delays coming home. I absolutely loved the Cook Islands. But the carrier is not helping tourism.
- + Burning of garbage on rural properties, it smells and smolders for a long time. Access to the beaches not clearly marked, I felt like I was walking through someone's yard. roads and pavements not too good.
- + Decaying/deteriorating Chinese Lighting installations. Rusting, nonoperational and an eyesore!
- + Public transport it was inconsistent and infrequent. I want not to have to hire a car but only take taxis when needed.



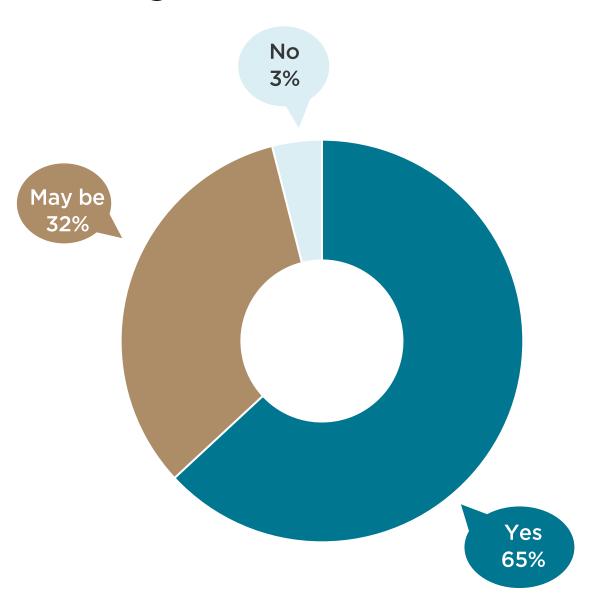
## **Suggestions for Improvement**

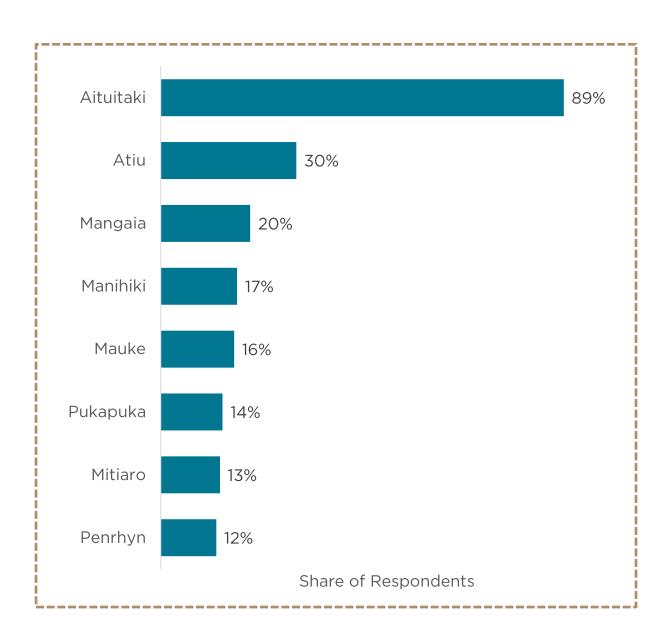


# **Quotes for Suggestions for Improvement**

- A little more self-contained services in the accommodation and slightly cheaper prices at the supermarket would have been good for a long stay with 9 people.
- + Access to island food and fresh produce, coconuts, veggies during the week and at market, roadside. People want to experience island food more not just European food.
- + Airport needs expanding. the que when a B777 arrives are too much and consistent airport transfers.
- + Better service, especially at big hotels like Pacific Resort, where a lot of employees just didn't seem to care, even though we were paying more than \$1000 per night (five times as much as we pay elsewhere in the world!
- + Better servicing of rooms, better upkeep of rooms (outside doors didn't lock) and better food at resort, with better cleanliness.
- + Dog control. We love dogs and we befriended the dogs near our accommodation, but the dogs are overly territorial and would chase and bark at us. For this reason, it wasn't safe to walk around, even during the day. We had to hire a car to get around this.
- + Ease in obtaining access to Wi-Fi or network connections. Many trips to the airport with limited hours of service and SIM card limitations made staying connected on the islands very difficult.
- + I didn't like the over commercialism of the turtles and the snorkeling. It was sad to see locals anchoring boats on reef, moving clams and having too many people in the water near turtles.
- + It is hard to get/find a map of Rarotonga itself. There seems to be only one map and that was not freely available apart from online. Would have liked to see more detailed updated maps of Rarotonga available online and at the airport itself upon arrival. There were no maps at the airport upon arrival there really needs to be.

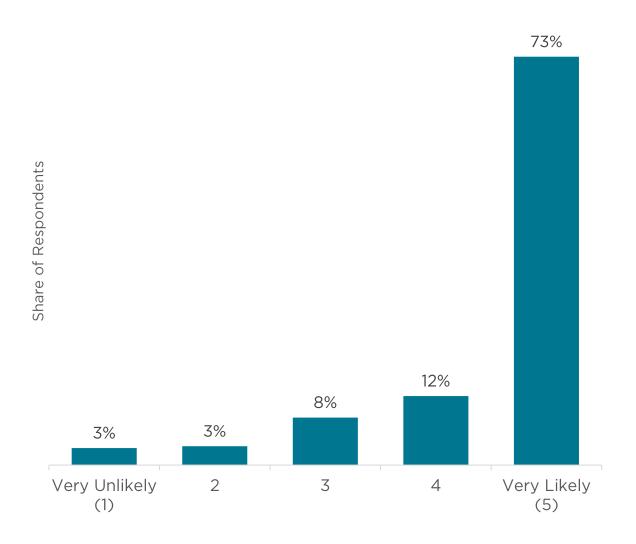
# Willingness to Visit Outer Islands





## **Future Motivations**

Q: How likely would you return to the Cook Islands?



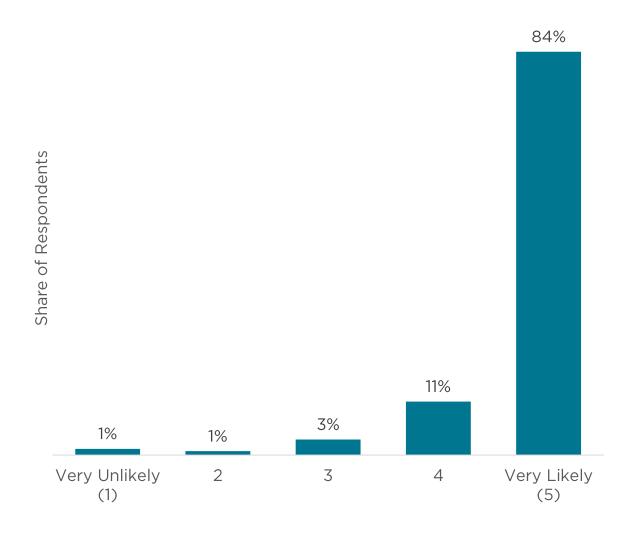
### **Quotes: Reasons to not return**

- + We have been to Cook Islands so many times it is always our first choice. I have advised so many friends to visit I give everyone a mini map etc. I basically market the Cooks but last time our departing flight was delayed by 6hrs which meant arrival in Auckland at 1am. We were put in an airport hotel for 4hrs then an early flight to Christchurch. My husband needed a wheelchair at the airport it was a nightmare. Even though I will still recommend the Cooks I'm sad that I won't make the trip again until there is a direct flight from Christchurch for people from the South Island.
- + Was way too expensive for such little to do with children. It felt more of an Adult accommodating country.
- + Very expensive for little value experiences. Was also very dated.
- + Very boring and overpriced place and polluted water in the lagoon.
- + Too far from France and too expensive trip but we really enjoyed our stay.
- + Too expensive for what you get in accommodation/ meals etc. No need to return. Other places to visit.
- + This was a wonderful but once in a lifetime experience due to our age and the distance from UK.
- + Not happy travelling Jetstar took 22 hours from when we left home to arrive at resort 7am and then be told we couldn't go to our room until 2pm afternoon.
- + Many other destinations available. Personally prefer the Asian Beachside locations that offer better value for money.
- + I had a wonderful holiday. The people were amazing. The island was beautiful but the accident I had there has affected my life. It was an unfortunate accident but could have been prevented if maintenance was carried out. I think for the price of going there it's a once in a lifetime trip.
- Didn't enjoy the food rental was really dangerous. Accommodation dated. Some money needs to be spent in the Cook Islands remodeling.

Note: Total response N=1,488

## **Future Motivations**

Q: How likely would you recommend the Cook Islands?



### **Quotes: Reasons to not recommend**

- + The value of going to the Cook Islands is much worse than the value of going to other Pacific islands like those in Fiji and French Polynesia. We stayed in much better hotels in Fiji and French Polynesia for maybe 30 percent of the price of our hotels in the Cook Islands.
- + Overpriced. Poor quality. Cold. Windy. Disappointing service.
- + Overpriced, complicated return flight (via New Zealand), but nice tropical weather and warm water in the lagoon.
- + Did not enjoy the experience, we have travelled to many countries and destinations within Australia and would recommend others, especially if they are not as financially sound as we are, to spend their money travelling Australia or go to Bali for a 3rd of the price.
- + Better islands to go to with more things to do and more luxury.
- + I mostly enjoyed the swimming and weather, but you can find that in many islands.
- + To expensive, Fiji has more entertaining resorts then just a pool.
- + Very miserable experience.











Mailbag, Suva.



SPTO's Head Office is located at Level 3, FNPF Place, 343-359, Victoria Parade, Private