Cook Islands

International Visitor Survey Report April - June 2024





Acknowledgements

- The Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) expresses its gratitude to all contributors to this report on IVS data from April 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 April to June 2024, analyzed 569 responses out of 611 collected, representing 2% of actual visitors with a 14% response rate. Among the respondents, 14% were solo travelers, and the average household income was NZD 144,641.
- ❖ 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 2,544 with an estimated 40% (NZD 1,018) flowing into the local economy. In-country spending per visitor per trip averaged NZD 2,071 with an average stay of 9.5 nights. This contributed to an estimated* economic impact of NZD 142 million from April to June 2024.
- ❖ Visitors were most attracted to the activities, attractions, entertainment, events, and the welcoming hospitality of the friendly, humble locals, as well as the relaxed island atmosphere. However, they were less impressed with public services, facilities, infrastructure, and the high costs of food, beverages, and other goods and services. To improve the overall visitor experience, they suggested enhancements in public services and infrastructure maintenance, upgrades to accommodations and services, and improvements in airport and flight experiences.

Background

- The April 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 April 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 April June 2024 period.

Disclaimer

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- The survey instrument used to collect data for the April to June 2024 period was similar, but not exact, to the survey instrument used in the April 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 April 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 (April - June 2024)



4,102 TOTAL VALID EMAILS SENT

569 TOTAL RESPONSES ANALYZED

14% **CONVERSION RATE**

Note: 611 responses were received. After data cleaning, 569 responses remained.

RESPONSES COVERED





2% OF ALL VISITORS IN THIS PERIOD

Cook Islands International Visitor Survey

Snapshot April - June 2024



△35% **△6**%

Business or



Most Participated Activities























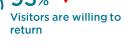






4.7/5 **^** are satisfied









Activities,

Attractions,

and Events

Entertainments



Least Appealing









Public services, facilities and infrastructures







9.5 nights A Average length of stay









per person per trip

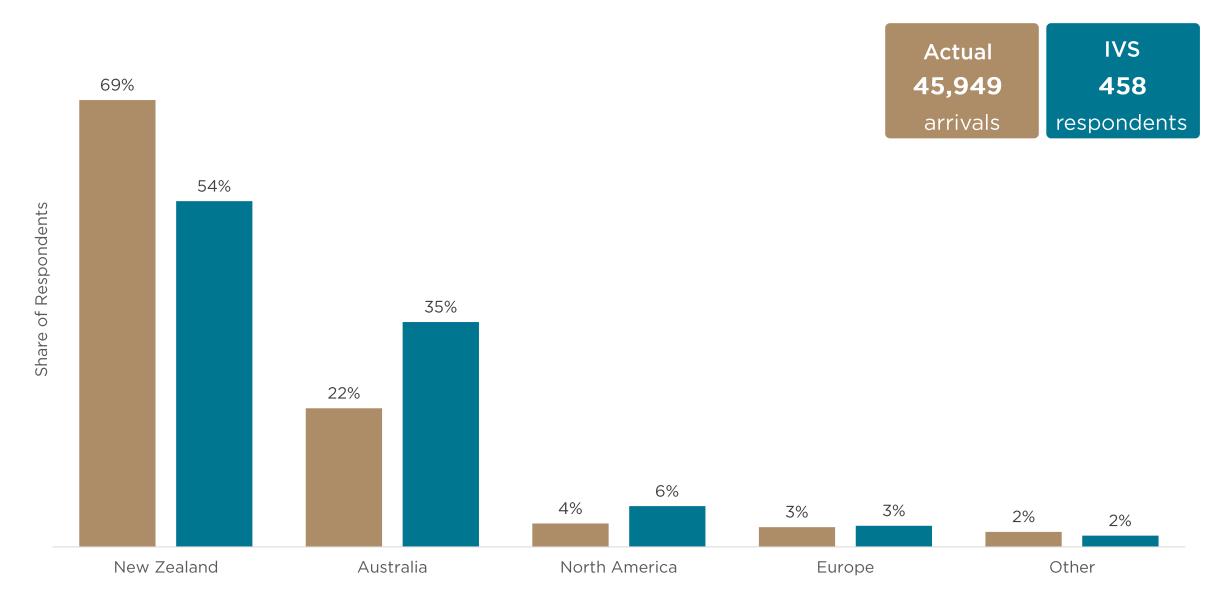


Note: The estimated flow-back rate into the Cook Islands for prepaid spend is 40%. With an average prepaid spend of \$2,544 per person per trip, this equates to \$1,018.

Report Structure

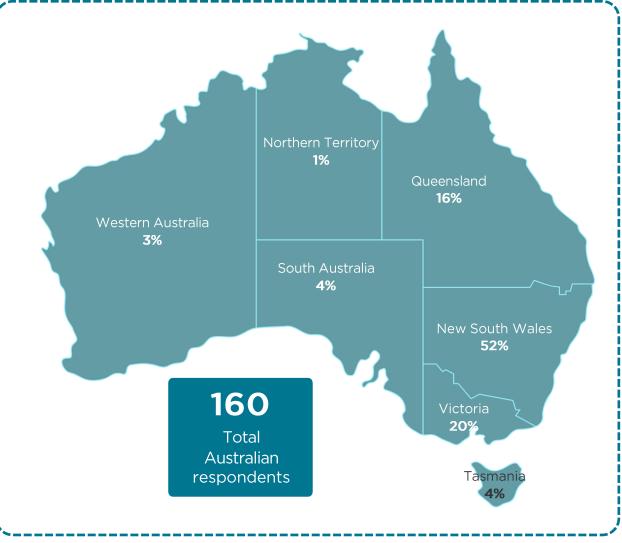


Source Markets: IVS Respondents vs Actual Arrival

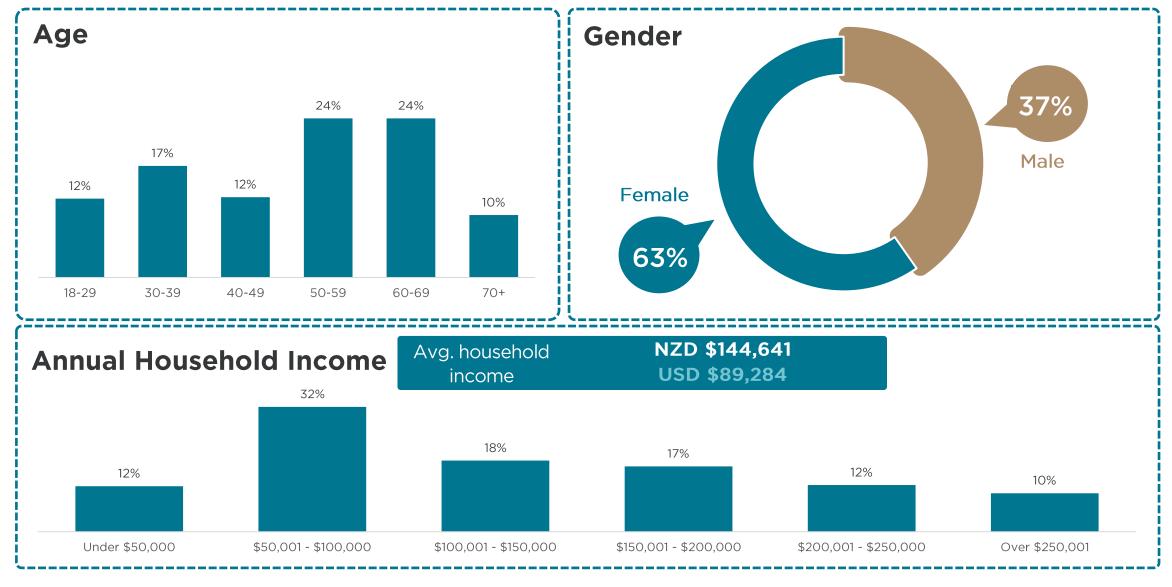


Top Source Markets





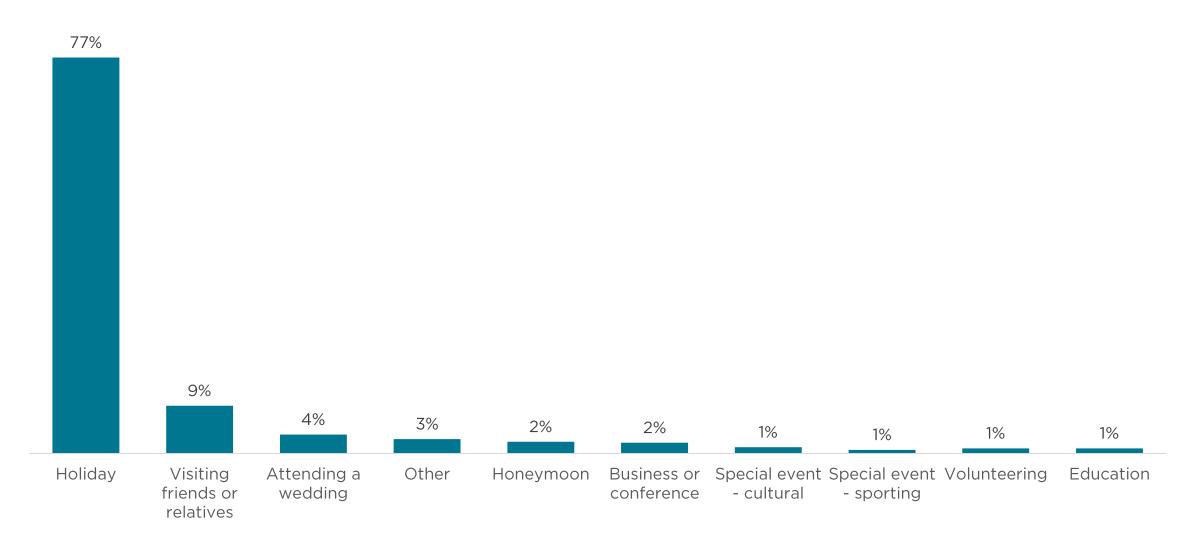
Respondent Demographics



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

Report Structure



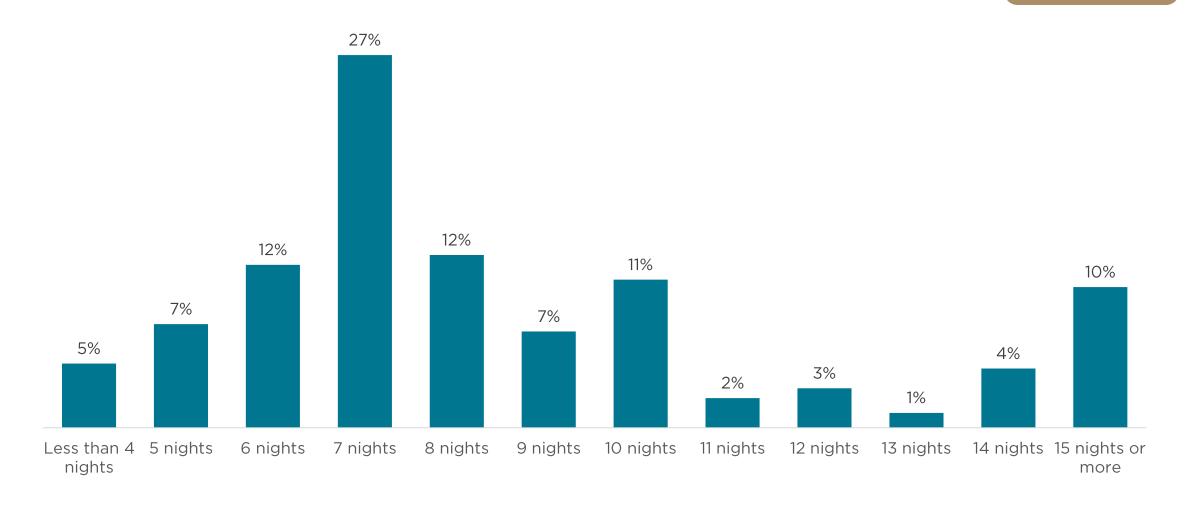


Length of Stay (nights)

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

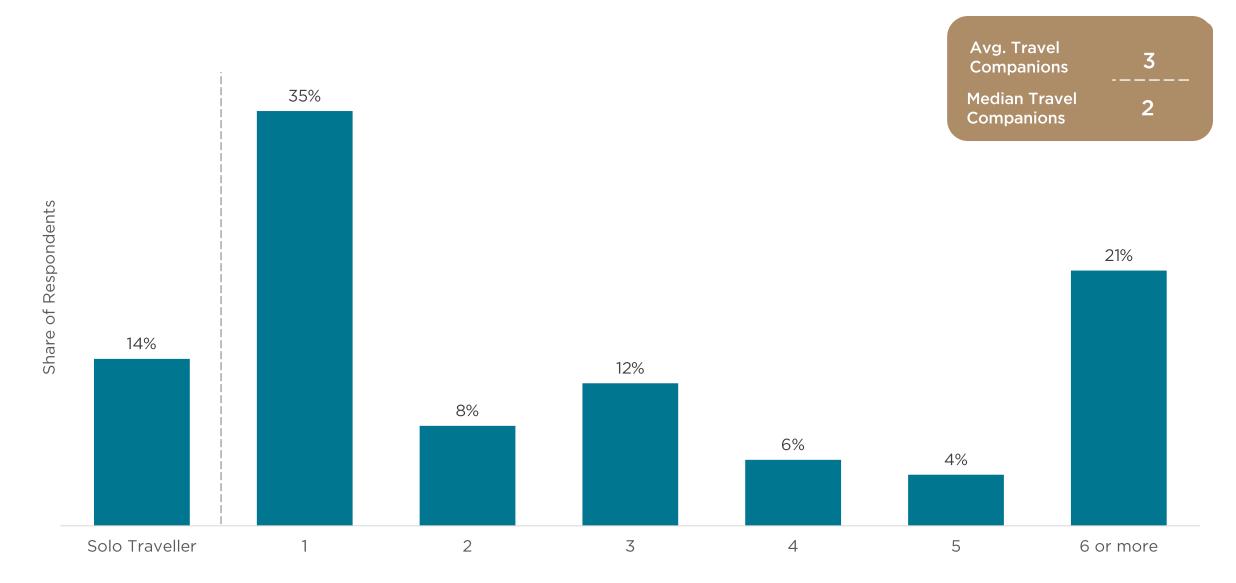
Avg. Length of Stay

9.5 nights

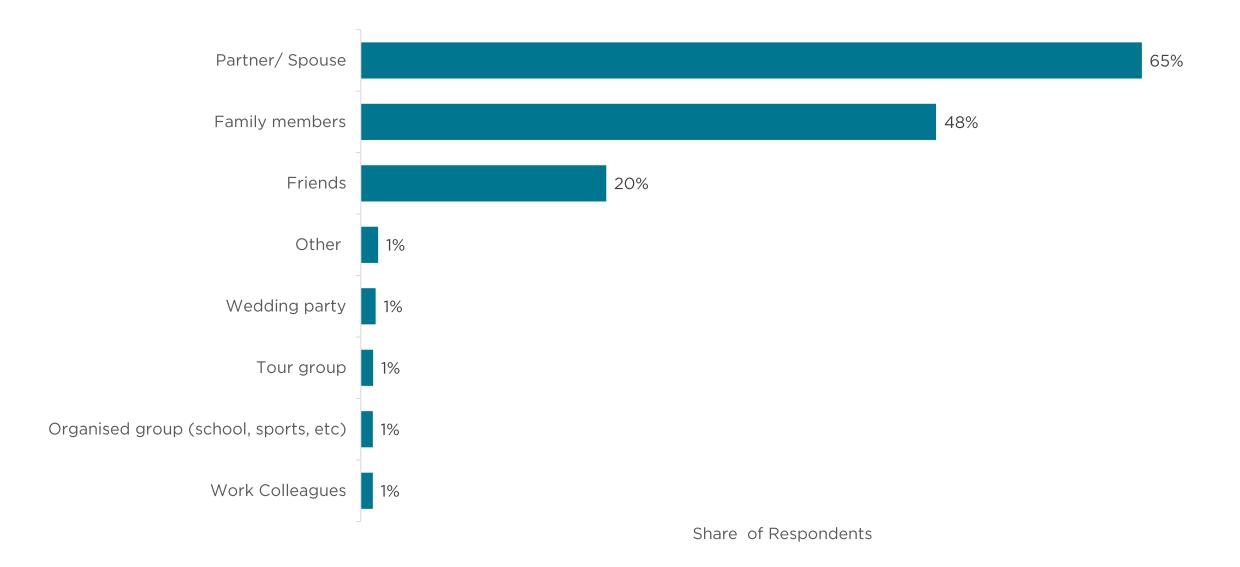


Travel Group Size

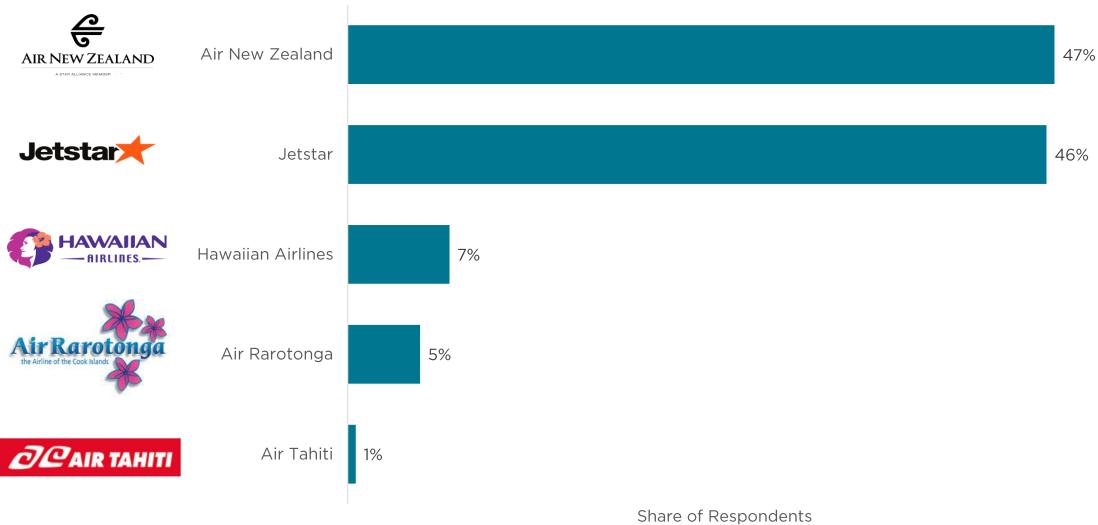
Q: How many people accompanied you on this trip?



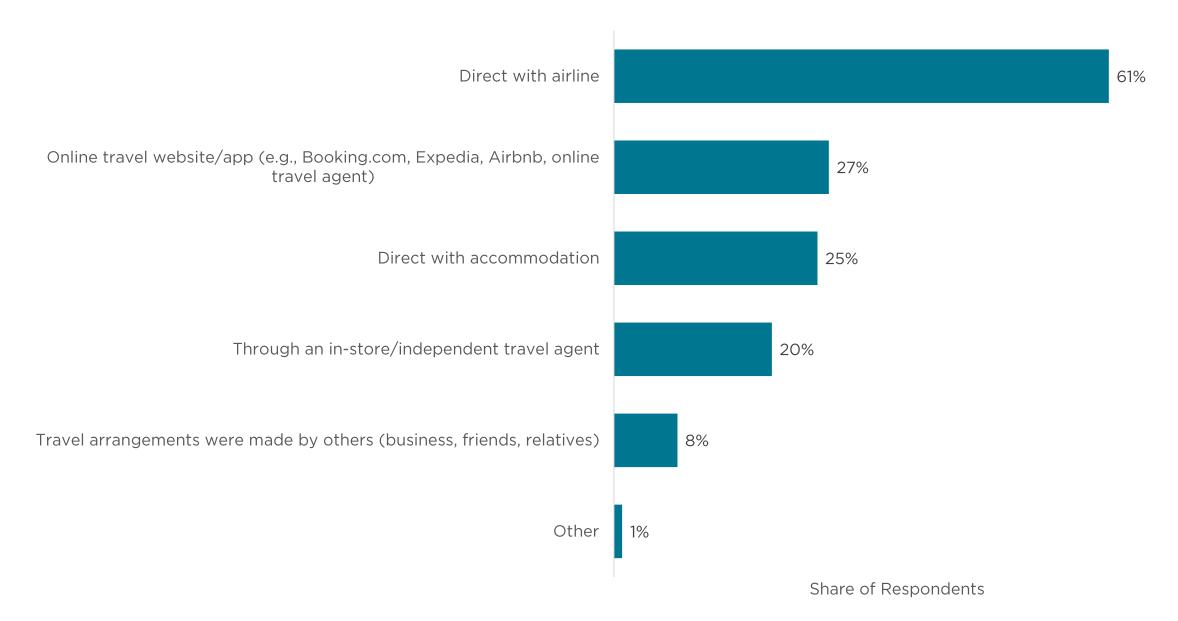
Travel Companions



Airlines Used for Travel



Purchasing of Travel



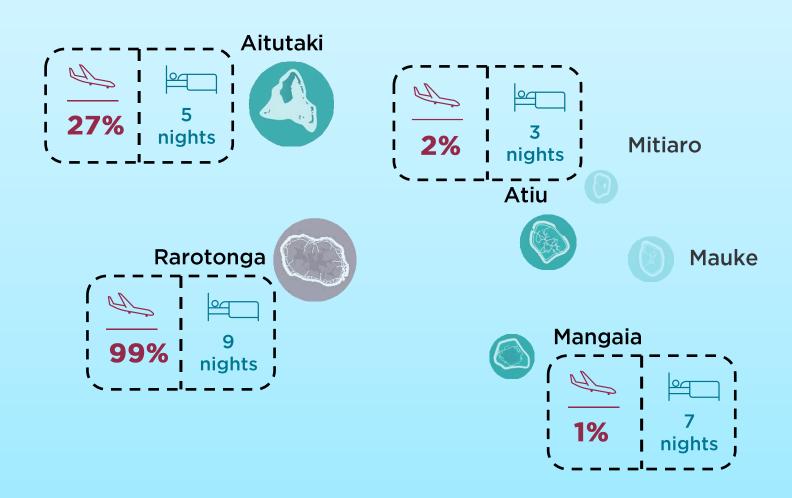
Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Islands Visited & Avg. Length of Stay

Avg. Length of Stay 9.5 Nights

Q: Which island(s) did you visit?

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

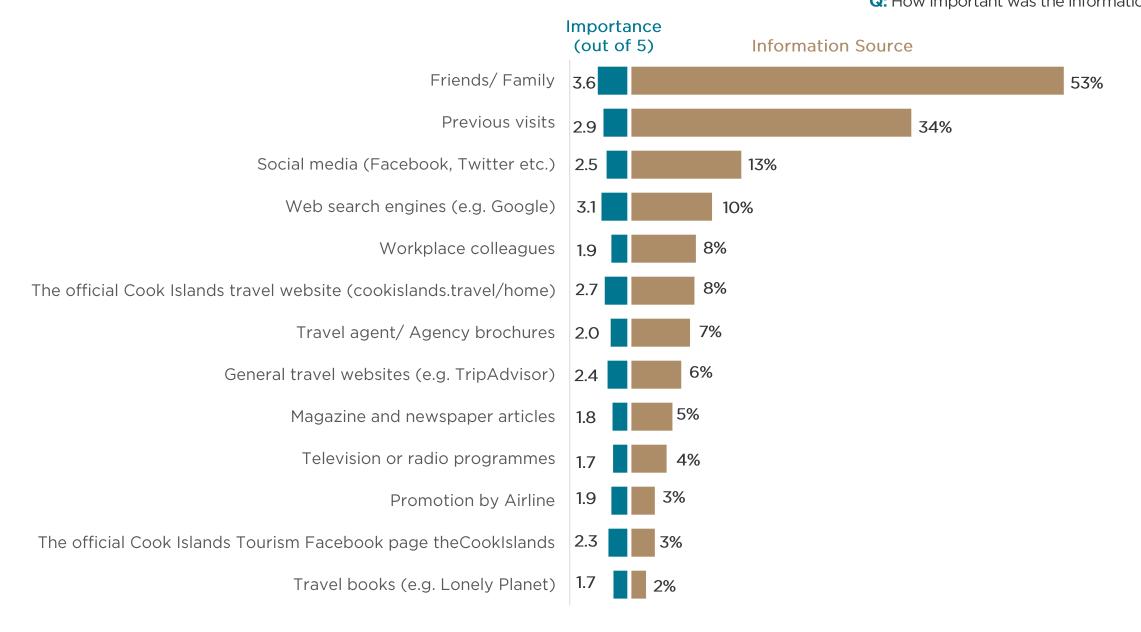


Report Structure

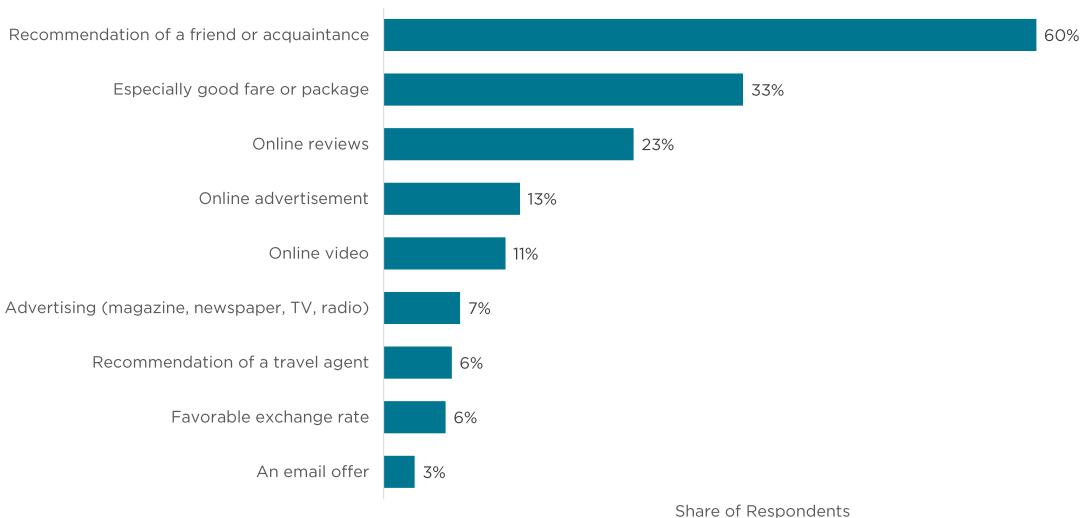


Information Source

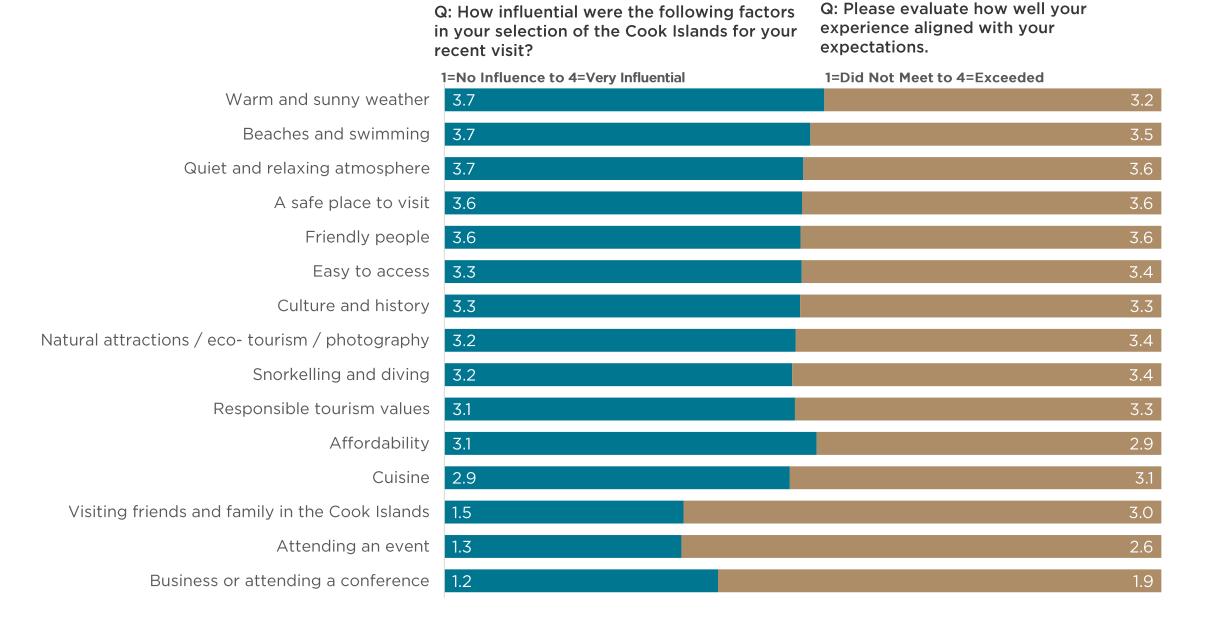
Q: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination?
Q: How important was the information source?



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

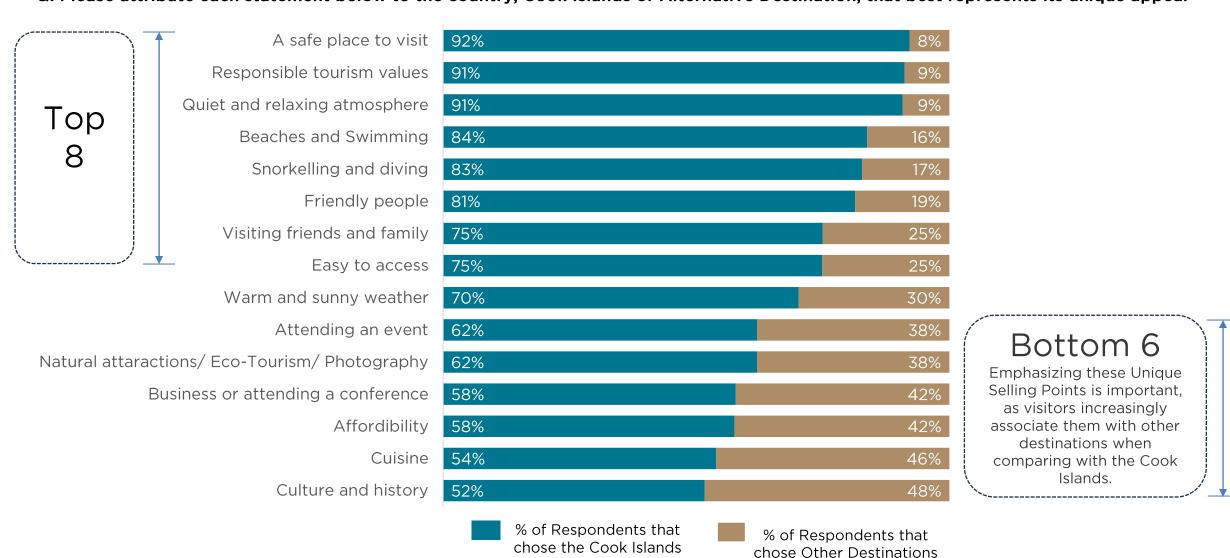


Pre-Travel Perceptions Vs Expectations



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



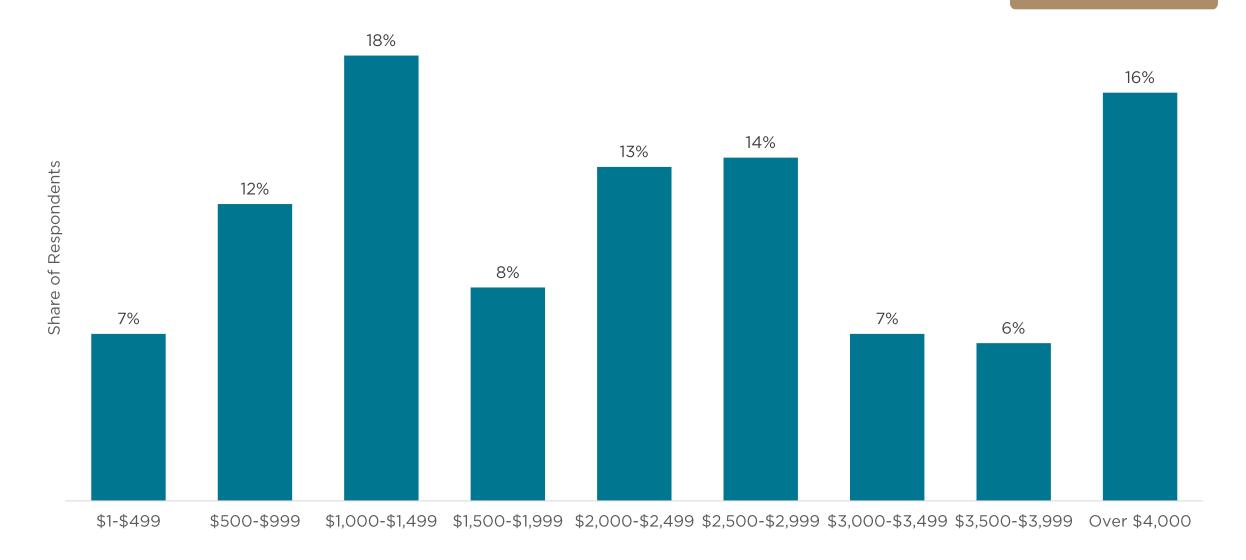
Report Structure



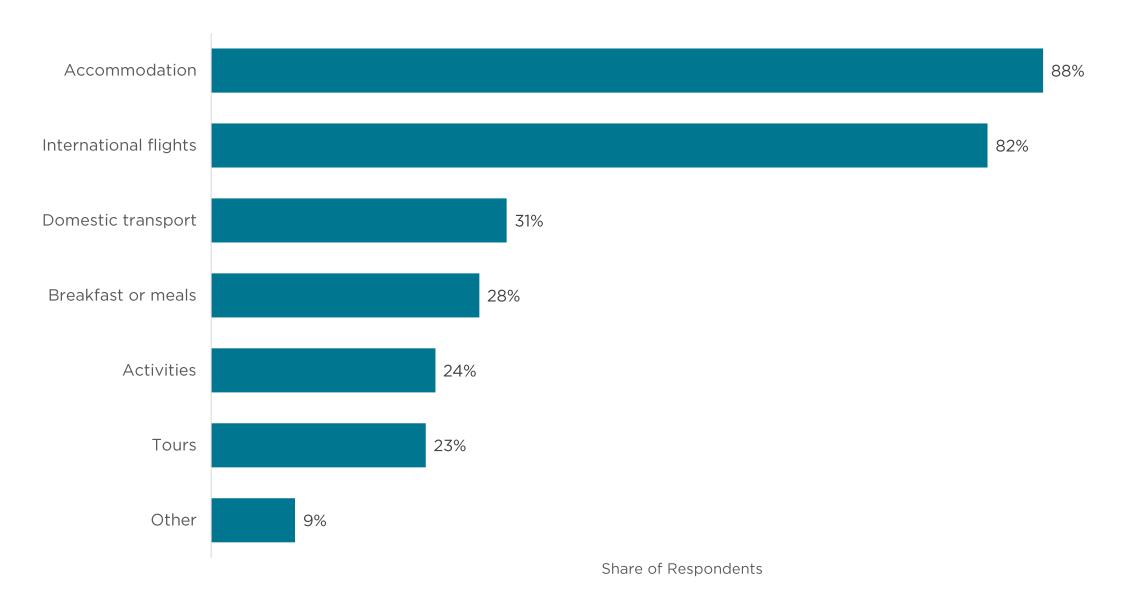
Prepaid Expenditure

Avg. Prepaid per Person per Trip

NZ\$2,544



Prepaid Items



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

	Local Spend Per Person Per Day		
	% of sector	<u>NZD</u>	<u>USD</u>
Accommodation	41	90	55
Restaurant, Cafes & Bars	22	48	30
Vehicle Rental	6	13	8
Petrol	1	3	2
Domestic Flight	9	19	12
Public Transport	1	1	1
Internet Cost	1	2	1
Water-based activities	5	10	6
Land-based activities	3	6	4
Groceries	5	11	7
Shopping	6	13	8
Other	2	3	2
TOTAL		218	134

Economic Impact - Per Person and Total

	Visitor Expenditure Per Person & Total		
	Apr-Jun24	Apr-Jun24	
Average Spend Prior to arrival	NZD	USD	
Per Person Per Trip	2,544	1,570	
	Flowing into local economy rate - estimated 40%		
Per Person Per Trip	1,018	628	
Per Person per Day	107	66	
Average Local Spend			
Length of Stay (nights)	mean 9.5 nights		
Per Person Per Trip	2,071	1,278	
Per Person per Day	218	134	
Total Economic Impact-Per Trip	3,089	1,907	
Total Economic Impact-Per Day	325	201	

NZD 100 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 34,435





\$2,570

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$200

In-country spend per day



x **9.4** nights Average length of stay

\$1,024

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$1,880

In-country spend per trip



\$2,904 per visitor per trip \$309 per visitor per day April - June 2024

NZD 142 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 45,949



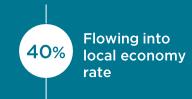


\$2,544****

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$218

In-country spend per day





X 9.5 nights
Average length of stay

\$1,018

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$2,071

In-country spend per trip



\$3,089 per visitor per trip \$325 per visitor per day

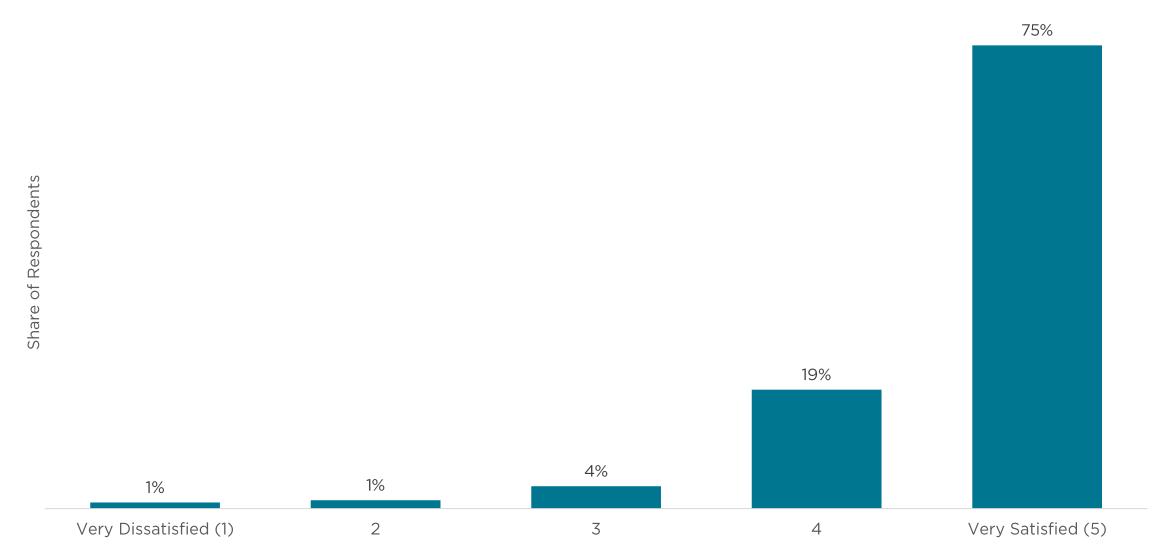
Report Structure





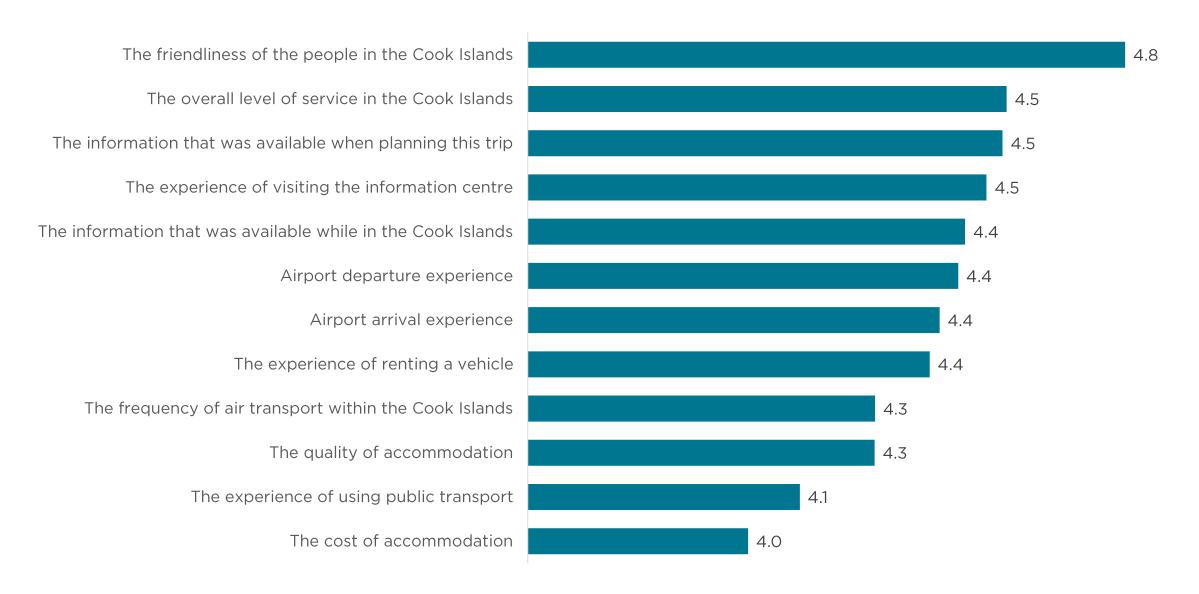
Avg. Overall Satisfaction





Satisfaction with Travel Experience

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?



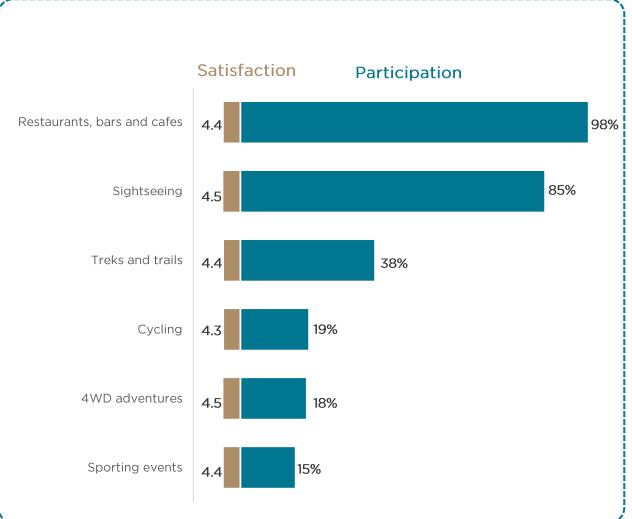
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Land-based activities





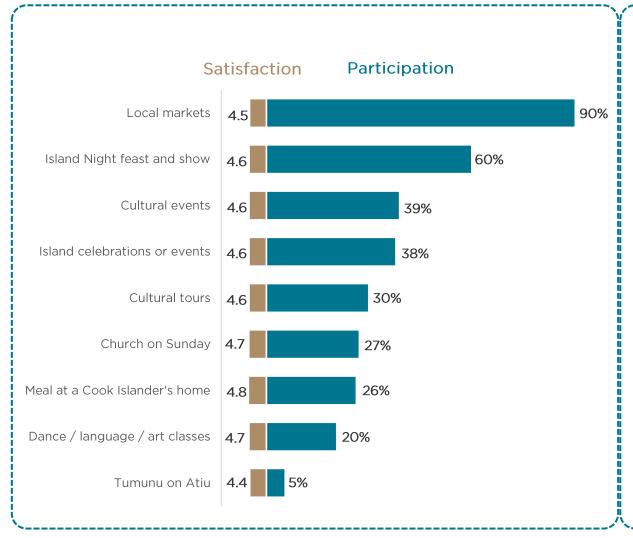


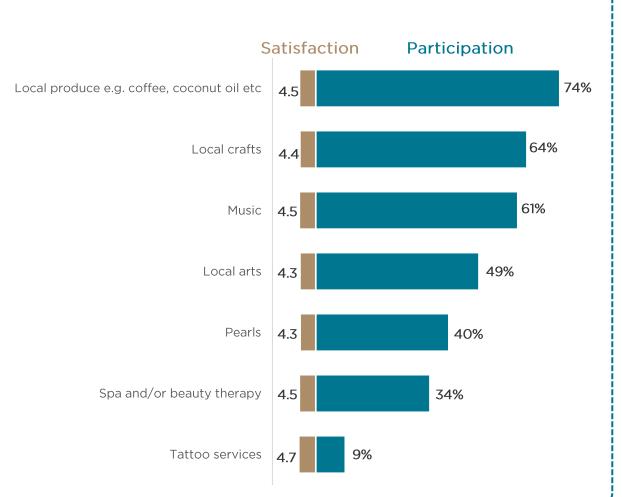
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Shopping activities



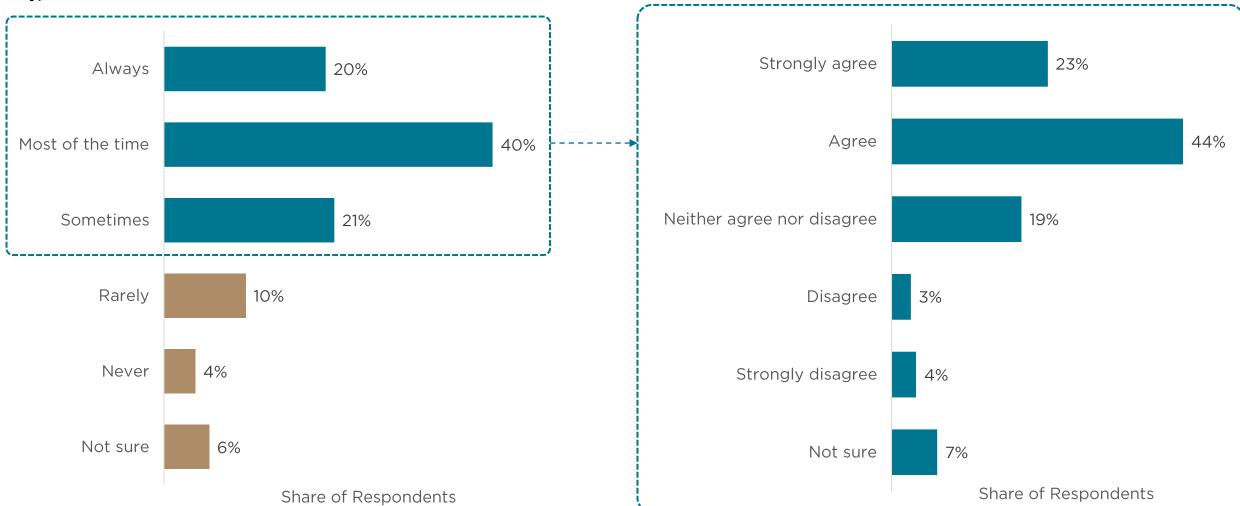




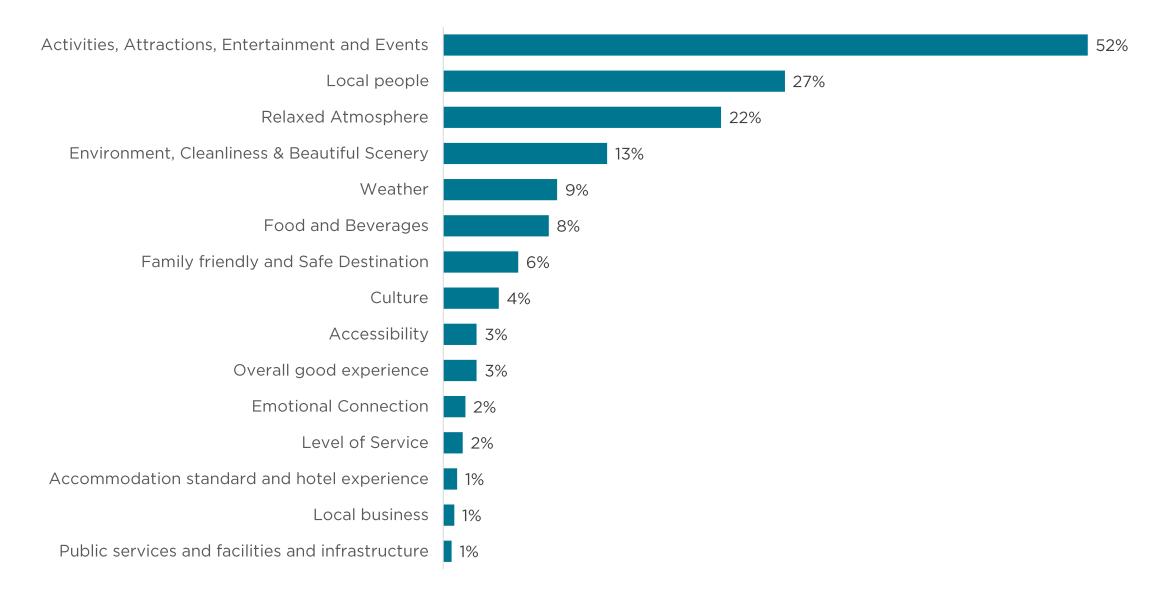
Socio-Cultural and Environmental Awareness

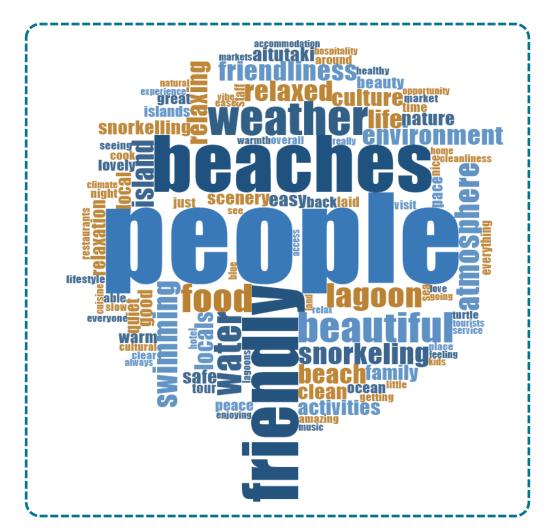
Q: During your trip to the Cook Islands, to what extent did you take sustainability, which includes the environment, the local community, and the culture, into account when deciding what activities to do, things to buy, or services to use?

"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

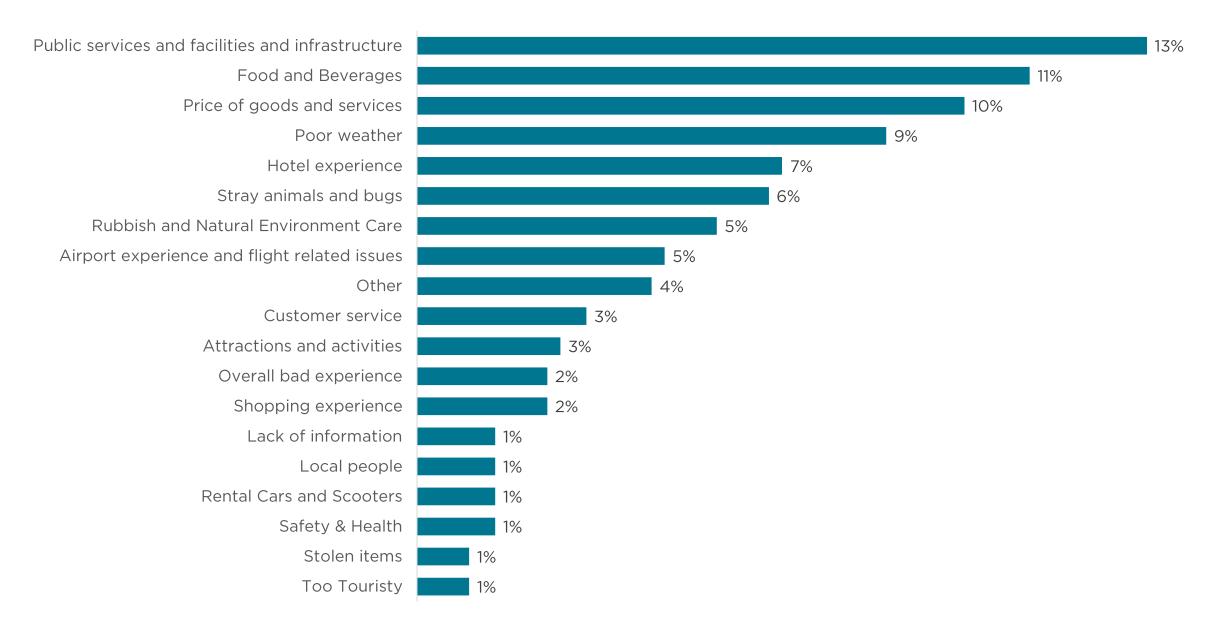




Quotes for Most Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands

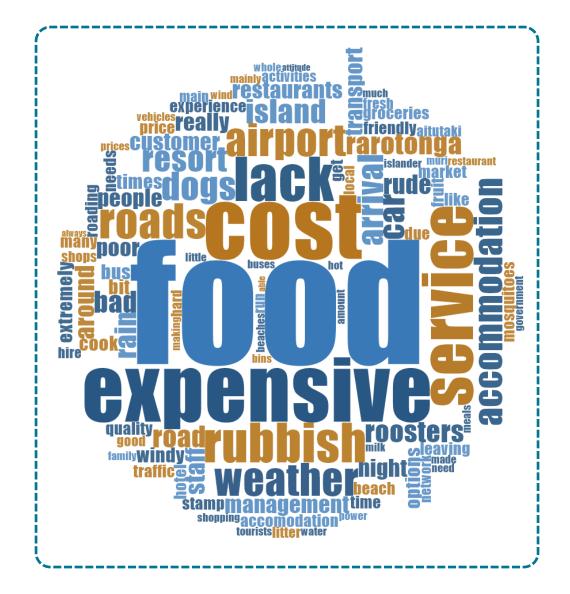
- + Everything was perfect, the people were friendly the atmosphere and weather was golden.
- + Friendly locals, easy to get around with a family, safe, beautiful looked after beaches and reef.
- + I loved the way how everyone was responsible to keep their whenua and trees clean and tidy. Providing water stations. Having a sugar tax to allow locals are looking within a long healthy lifestyle and didn't consider tourists you are looking at your own people absolutely love and support you.
- + The sea, vegetation, the friendly local people, the music, cultural centers the easy arrival into the Cook Islands, lovely immigration staff.
- + Variety of activities happening most of the time allowing flexibility in planning and relaxation.
- + The snorkeling was a highlight for me but overall, the whole Island is breathtakingly beautiful.
- + The variety, and the outer islands hospitality and beauty.
- + The people, the snorkeling, the Vaka tour, the Saturday market, the night food market, the Te Vaevae.
- + The opportunity to volunteer with Te Are Manu and the need to relax and wind down. Island life was the most appealing to me.
- + The Local Businesses either on the sides of the roads, at the markets, their own business and love supporting them.
- + The friendliness of the people and the singing as well as all the cultural activities. Nothing was a problem to them, and they do the same thing with tourists so many hours every day and still have the same energy and make it fun for everyone. The pace of life (especially driving & traffic levels).
- + The food has really improved since our visit post-Covid. And cycling on the smooth roads is a very fun. Snorkeling continues to be amazing.

Least Appealing Aspects

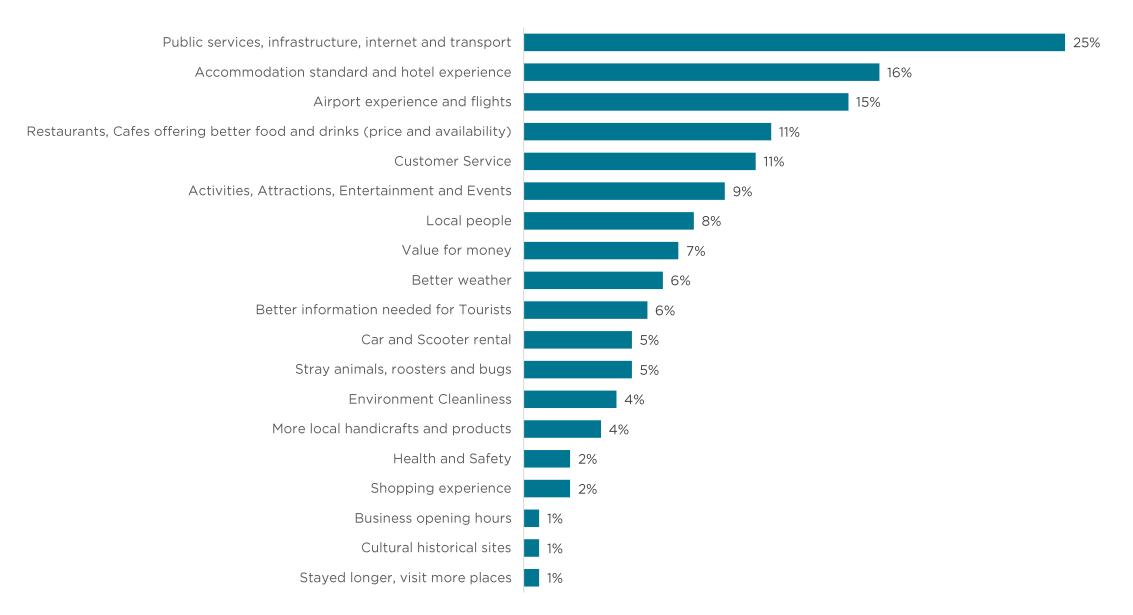


Quotes for Least Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands

- + As a Cook Islander myself, I was disappointed the way I was treated because I was not born in the Cook Islands. The customer service towards Cook Island people is pathetic.
- + Half the island had poor roading making it extremely dangerous. The arrival staff were rude stating that u less I had a stamp in my passport I was not deemed a returning cook islander such an insult. A stamp does not define who I am.
- + Lack of variety in cuisine overall. Too much fried foods. More healthy vegetarian options would be nice.
- + Not enough parking spaces to some shops, streetlights on the main road and location of places need to be updated on Google earth.
- + Our arrival was horrible due to a certain airport staff member (a short haired Rarotongan women)who was extremely rude and grumpy to myself and my whole family for no reason at all. It really made a bad start to our holiday, and I hope we do not have to experience this again in future.
- + The amount of garbage laying around was disgusting, mainly due to your poor management of infrastructure. Useless bins filled or over flown with extensive or mixed materials.
- + Some items were stolen from outside our property.
- + Taxis were expensive but had to be used at times because buses either didn't run at all or an inconvenient times. The frequency of island buses needs to be increased as they are insufficient at times with user numbers exceeding availability of buses.
- + Those naughty ones stealing from our tourist visiting our shores, The Government need a Rehabilitation Unit to stop this bad habits. Don't blame them, they need your help.
- + We were so hot and humid. I know you can't help that, but we should have travelled later in the year.
- + Must have been the wrong season for tropical fruit, I really wanted nice fruit but there wasn't much at all even at the market. Restaurants were hit and miss, some ok some not. Beaches not great for swimming with kids.



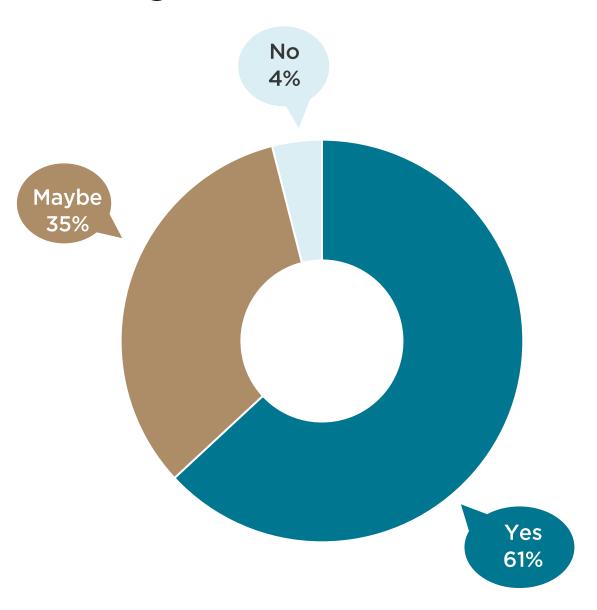
Suggestions for Improvement

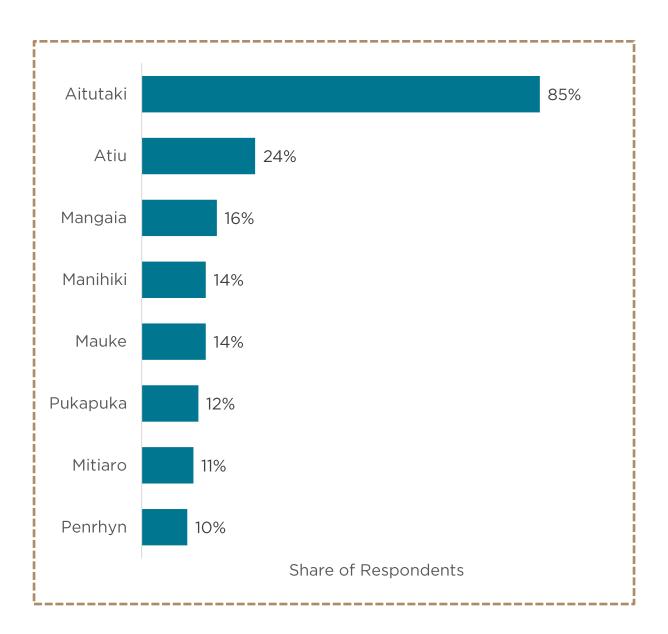


Quotes for Suggestions for Improvement

- + 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.
- + Avarua main shopping area needs maintenance, make footpath areas more attractive, noticed population mainly older people roads and footpaths unstable for them to walk and/or travel on. half the island has potholes on road and half island seems to be maintained and has not potholes.
- + Better flight arrival & departure times for Hawaiian Airlines flight. We got in late, and our departure was late.
- + Better marketing in local goods to take home for tourist souvenirs more quality items/ maybe that will come as the tourists' base increases or becomes more sophisticated. The items that stood out were the quilts and the woven hats at the market were beautiful.
- + Better transportation options, reasonably priced taxis, more food options. I celebrated my birthday on Aitutaki, but there was not a single restaurant on the island that felt nice enough for the occasion.
- + Customer service in Rarotonga is very poor. People are not friendly and seem burnt out and just irritated by questions when asked. I am a local girl, and I found this appalling and embarrassing. The representation of our people has decreased, and as a local, watching tourists who contribute to the economy, be ignored when asked questions in the supermarkets was just distasteful. This happened throughout my stay.
- + 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.
- + Have more variety of foods. We were expecting lots of fresh fruit & veggies but only found options of burgers/deep fried foods. The closest we got to "healthy" food was coleslaw from a bag.
- + To rent a scooter, it was mentioned that we need to pay for a whole new license even though the scooter license is part of the normal car driving license "in Germany". That's a lot of money for renting a scooter for one day and unnecessary!
- + Knowing about the dengue pandemics in advance of travel. It would be helpful if dengue related information and warning popped up when booking flights. Only found out about dengue from the information warning at the airport upon arrival to Rarotonga but information was still limited. Had to research online further upon arrival to hotel to understand that the breakout is in fact over and there haven't been new cases for a few weeks.

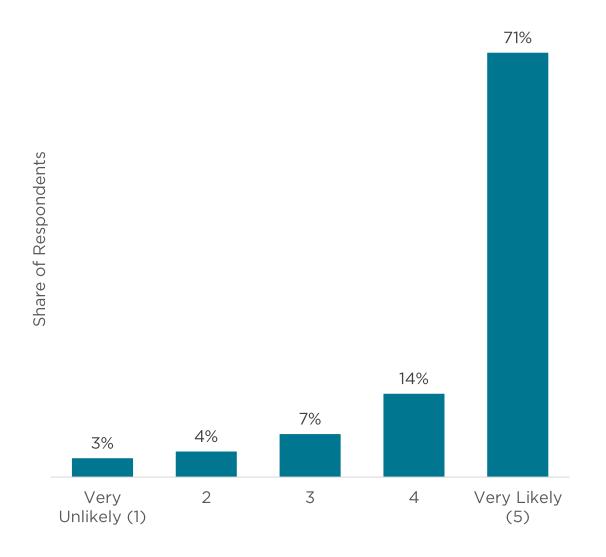
Willingness to Visit Outer Islands





Future Motivations

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



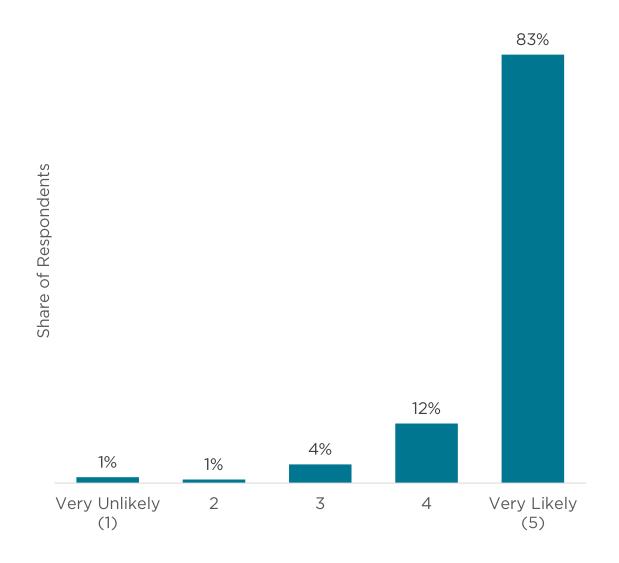
Quotes: Reasons to not return

- + Too far away and very expensive to get too and have done island.
- + Too expensive, dislike nasty New Zealander locals, prefer authentic Polynesian local.
- + Too expensive for what you get in accommodation/ meals etc. No need to return. Other places to visit.
- + Roads are rough, nothing is signposted well, lack of healthy foods.
- + People weren't as friendly as I thought. Not enough convenience stores.
- + Overpriced. Crap quality. If I want a frozen pizza heated up, I'm not flying to Rarotonga and paying 30 dollars. So many reasons.
- 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.
- It was a nice experience, but the world is big. Lot s of other places are there to visit.
- + I thoroughly enjoyed it, but I don't feel I need to return, as I did what I wanted to do in the Cook islands. If I wanted a similar type of holiday, I would probably try a different destination.
- + I really loved this trip, but I never come back to the same place, there are so many places to visit. And is very far from Italy.
- + Basic grocery items very expensive. Little variety in fresh fruit and vegetables. Other options to try.

Note: Total response N=443

Future Motivations

Q: How likely would you recommend the Cook Islands?



Quotes: Reasons to not recommend

- + The weather.
- + Overpriced. Poor quality. Cold. Windy. Disappointing service.
- + Distance and affordability.
- + Cold, windy and expensive. Poor food, little option. Everything closed on Sundays.
- + Due to what happened to us Beautiful place, but horrible memories of the last few days spoiled it.
- + Japan cheaper in food and transport and everything.
- + Been there done that loved it but must try other things.

Note: Total response N=442











Mailbag, Suva.



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