



## Foreword from the CEO



Malo e Lelei! Welcome to the first edition of the Ministry's monthly update.

I am indeed grateful for the opportunity bestowed on me by the Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism as well as the Tourism Industry in my appointment as the new CEO for the Ministry commencing on 25 January.

While the 2009 global financial crisis effected tourism development in the Kingdom of Tonga, we still maintained a small growth of 2.52% in air arrival numbers. 2010 should see an expected growth of about 10%, though the challenges of the financial crises may continue to impact tourism. The expected growth will be stimulated by existing and new initiatives.

Many exciting projects have been planned (as you will see in this newsletter) by government, industry and aid donors for the tourism industry. The Ministry is looking forward to working closely with the industry to represent the Kingdom of Tonga in the upcoming events and boost the potential of tourism for the benefit of the country as a whole.

The Ministry will focus on creating a healthy business environment for potential investors in the Kingdom; developing and upgrading tourism development sites throughout Tonga, and promoting policies to ensure sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, our marketing and promotional efforts will be focused on our bread and butter markets of New Zealand, Australia and North America.

The Ministry will continue to work closely with everyone in this important industry. We welcome your inputs, comments and contributions to improve this monthly newsletter.

Wishing you all the best this new year!

**Sakopo Lolohea**  
 CEO  
 Ministry of Tourism



February 2010

**"Tourism is everyone's business."**

Out soon



## This issue

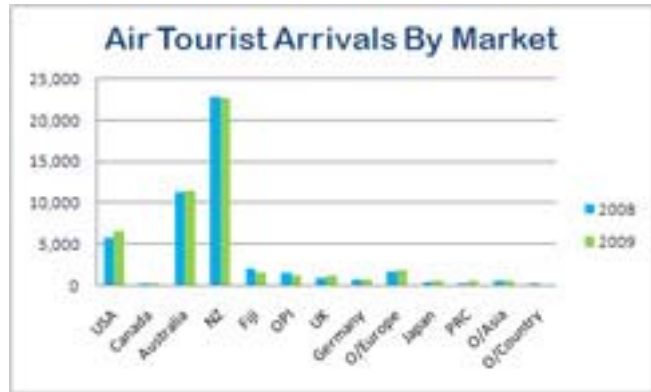
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# 2009 tourist arrivals reach the 50,000 mark

The Kingdom of Tonga's tourism industry faced a very tough year in 2009, with the tsunami in Niuatoputapu, the Princess Ashika accident and, of course, the global economic conditions. Despite the tough conditions, tourist arrivals reached the 50,000 mark for the first time ever. Additionally, the Kingdom of Tonga welcomed 2.52% more visitors in 2009 (though this growth is slow compared to the 7.3% increase in air tourist arrivals in 2008).

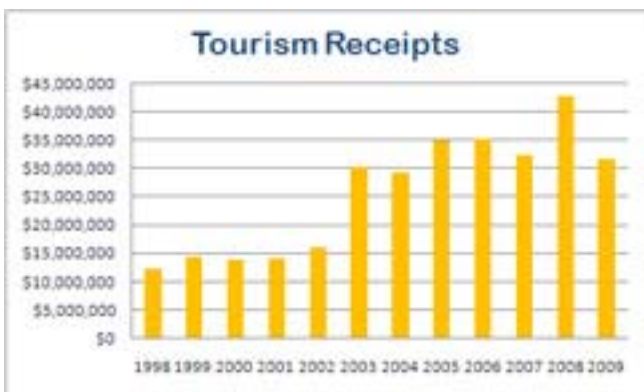


Six of the 12 months showed positive growth, with February and August showing the highest growth compared to the same month in 2008. The month of July showed the largest drop of 10.13%, along with December of 9.04% decrease. "July and December are traditionally tourism's two busiest months of the year", said Mr Sakapo Lolohea.



New Zealand showed a slight drop of 1%, Australia showed a small growth of 1.46% and the US saw an increase of 14% from the previous year. The long haul markets from Europe showed positive growth with the United Kingdom leading with an increase of 44% and the Asian markets also showed positive growth with China showing the largest increase of 66%.

"The performance of the New Zealand and Australian markets are a disappointment and a concern, and herein lies the challenge to the Kingdom of Tonga's tourism industry for 2010", said Mr Lolohea. It will be a tough year again but the Ministry of Tourism is aiming to see a 10% growth in air tourist arrivals in 2010.



Despite the small growth in air tourist numbers, tourism receipts shows a significant decrease falling by 25.70% in 2009. This is the lowest reported foreign exchange earnings in the last five years. Ten of twelve months in 2009 showed an overall decrease, with March showing the largest decrease of 45.64%. Only the month of April and May showed positive growth with April being 15%. One of the conclusion that we can draw from these figures is that visitors were spending less in 2009.

Mr Lolohea said "Despite these challenges, the spending issues can be overcome. Many good projects have been planned for the tourism industry and are being executed by the industry, the Government and aid donors. These tourism projects need to be streamlined with a total focus on boosting the potential of the industry for the benefit of the country as a whole."

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## World Expo in Shanghai China

The Kingdom of Tonga is showcasing its unique culture and traditions to an expected 70 million people at the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, China from 1 May – 31 October, 2010.

With only 85 days to go before World Expo, the National World Expo Committee is busy finalising the look and feel of the Kingdom of Tonga's stage.

A replica 10 metre humpback whale and a small calf will hang above Tonga's stage and visitors will be attracted by their spectacular aerial display. Visitors will enter Tonga's stage through a life size replica of the Ha'amonga 'a Maui Trilithon and will walk into the middle of rows

of Tongan dancers performing the Lakalaka for the King. The Lakalaka, depicted on six 2.4 by 1.2 metre vertical panels, will be life size and will create an intimate atmosphere. Plus, the cultural significance of the Lakalaka will be explained by UNESCO's 2003 proclamation that the Lakalaka is "Masterpiece of Humanity".

A giant tapa cloth (8m x 6m) backdrop will create a traditional atmosphere and accentuate the quality handicrafts and found objects mounted on shelves on the wall. Other elements of Tongan culture, history and trade will also be represented elsewhere in the exhibition via im-

ages and stories printed on smaller panels and photographic slide-shows on an LCD screen.

Display and exhibition items, along with the handicraft products to be sold from the Pacific Pavilion Shop, will be packed and shipped on 15 February, 2010. Anyone wishing to contribute should contact Manatu Vivili ([manatupv@tvb.gov.to](mailto:manatupv@tvb.gov.to)) for more info.



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## Emerging Pacific Leaders Dialogue (EPLD)

Tonga and Samoa will host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Emerging Pacific Leaders Dialogue (EPLD), which runs from **11 - 23 March, 2010**. EPLD 2010 is an important leadership development initiative that is funded by government agencies (particularly by the Australian Government) and the private sector from the Pacific.

EPLD will open in Samoa and close in Tonga on **22 - 23 March**. EPLD will bring together 120 high caliber participants selected through an open application and selection process from more than 20 Pacific region countries/territories. EPLD's theme is

'Navigating our Future Together' and the conference will focus on the significance of leadership in the context of economic growth, regional co-operation and infrastructure, good governance, security, stability and strengthening communities, and environment, industry, education and health.

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## 'Eva Mai Tourism Exchange (ETTE)

The Ministry of Tourism and the Tonga Tourist Association ([www.TourismTonga.to](http://www.TourismTonga.to)) are organising the 'Eva Mai Tonga Tourism Exchange (ETTE), which will be held in Tongatapu on **1 - 6 March, 2010**. The Exchange focuses on inviting trade (ie tour wholesalers, travel agents, media) from key markets such as New

Zealand, Australia and the US. During the Exchange, the agents will be able to experience and see what the Kingdom of Tonga has to offer as a desirable tourist destination. The six day program includes pre-scheduled appointments and land and sea tours in Tongatapu.



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# Industry Training, Learning and Development

The Ministry's Education & Training Division's main role is to facilitate training all stakeholders involved in the tourism industry.

A recent training needs analysis identified that the tourist facilities urgently need training in customer service. The Ministry's two education officers are very happy to facilitate workshops and short courses. The Education & Training Division now offers training in customer service and soon will offer courses in landscaping and guiding tours (which were approved by NZAID in 2009). Plus, for those who already have a website, the Ministry is happy to provide training in online marketing.

The Ministry can also assist stakeholders in seeking further training in tourism and hospitality. The APTC (Australia Pacific Technical College) in Apia, Samoa take candidates that meet their entrance criteria. There are Colleges and Technical Institutes here in the Kingdom of Tonga where current or prospective employees in tourism can further develop skills and knowledge.

## Modules

## Learning Objectives

Work with Colleagues & Customers	Develop interpersonal, communication and customer service skills.
The Tourism Industry	Develop knowledge and skills to access, increase and update knowledge of the tourism industry.
Health, Safety & Security	Develop knowledge of basic health, safety and security procedures.
Tourism Cultural Awareness	Develop cultural awareness required for serving customers and working with colleagues.
Communicate on the Telephone	Develop skills to effectively communicate on the telephone.
Deal with Conflict Situations	Develop knowledge and skills required to handle difficult customers and colleagues.
Information & Advice: Tonga	Develop skills to provide destination information and advice about Tonga to visitors.
Visitor Market Knowledge	Develop knowledge of the location and features of the major visitor markets to Tonga.
Airport Operations & Facilities	Review the operation of passenger facilities and services within an airport environment.
Promote Tourism Products/Services	Develop skills to promote products and services to customers.
Housekeeping	Provide guests with housekeeping services.
Tour Guiding	Develop the knowledge and skills required to work as a tour guide.
Google Adwords	Learn how to manage your paid online advertising account.
Google Analytics	Learn how consumers behave on your website and why.

## New Tourism Tonga Site



Tourism Tonga (TTI) have launched their new site. Check it out at [www.TheKingdomOfTonga.com](http://www.TheKingdomOfTonga.com)

## 2010 Events

30 Jan	Flight Centre Travel Expo	Christchurch	NZ
7 Feb	Flight Centre Travel Expo	Wellington	NZ
13-14 Feb	Flight Centre Travel Expo	Auckland	NZ
13-14 Feb	LA Times Travel Show	Convention Centre	USA
20-21 Feb	Adventure Travel & Backpacker Show		AU
27-28 Feb	Sunday Mail Escape Holiday & Snow		AU
1-6 Mar	'Eva Mai Tourism Exchange	Nuku'alofa	TO
6-7 Mar	Sydney Travel Expo		AU
10-14 Mar	ITB,	Berlin	DE
11-14 Mar	Auckland International Boats Show		NZ
13-23 Mar	Emerging Pacific Leaders Dialogue		TO
1-11 Apr	Melbourne Travel Expo		AU
1 May - 31	World Expo Shanghai	China	CN
8-21 May	BFTE Port Denarau	Nadi	FJ
10-11 Jun	Tourism Forum		TO
14-17 Sep	PATA Travel Mart	Macau	MC
6-7 Nov	Adventure Travel & Backpacker Expo	Sydney	AU
17 Nov	DEMA	Las Vegas	USA
TBC	House of Travel Expo	Auckland	NZ

## Warwick Resort in Vava'u



Mr Richard Chiu and Ms Tammie Tam, President and Director of Warwick International Hotels (based in Paris), arrived in the Kingdom of Tonga on January 30. The PM (Hon Dr Feleti Sevele), along with other Government officials, accompanied Mr and Mrs Chiu and Ms Tam to Taunga Island for an inspection of the site of Warwick's new resort. Development is anticipated to commence in December 2010.

## Stay In Touch In 2010!

Come see us at the Tonga Visitors Bureau (Ministry of Tourism), located on Vuna Road just 3 minutes from Nuku'alofa town centre.

Opening hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30am - 4:30pm and Saturdays and public holidays, 10am - 1pm.

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