

**1 March 2016**

## **Missing: 176,000 cruise visitors**

Tens of thousands of visitors are missing from New Zealand's official annual tourism statistics, with the result that tourism's value to the economy is understated.

Official visitor counts fail to include as many as 176,000 cruise passengers a year. Led by Cruise New Zealand, tourism industry organisations are calling on the Government to fully record the cruise sector's contribution to New Zealand's economy.

Cruise arrivals are now New Zealand's third largest holiday market behind Australia and China, with an estimated 267,800 passengers landing here during the 2015-16 cruise season.

However, official visitor arrival and spending statistics are collected only at New Zealand's international airports, so cruise passengers who arrive and leave on their ships (known as transit passengers) are overlooked, Cruise New Zealand Chairman Kevin O'Sullivan says.

"The irony is that while cruise transit passenger arrivals are excluded from the official count, the New Zealand Customs Service and the Ministry for Primary Industries are charging them the new Border Clearance Levy when they enter and depart New Zealand," he says.

More accurate measurements of the size and value of the cruise sector would assist with local and regional government funding, infrastructure investments and resource management.

"Cruise New Zealand has been working on this issue with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. MBIE's recent release of the [New Zealand Tourism Dashboard](#) is a significant step forward in the dissemination of tourism statistics, but a sizeable amount of insight is missing due to the non-inclusion of cruise statistics."

Cruise New Zealand's call is being supported by the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA), the Tourism Export Council of New Zealand (TEC) and Regional Tourism Organisations New Zealand (RTONZ).

TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says that it is only thanks to research commissioned by Cruise New Zealand that we know the cruise sector added \$436 million to New Zealand's economy in 2014-15 and supported 8365 jobs. In the 2015-2016 season, the number of passengers is expected to increase by 33% to 267,800 with 176,000 estimated to be transit passengers.

"The missing 176,000 is equivalent to all the annual visitors we get from Germany, France, Holland, Spain, Italy and Ireland combined," Mr Roberts says.

“Cruise is playing an important part in helping the tourism industry achieve the [Tourism 2025](#) goal of growing annual revenue to \$41 billion by 2025. Other than where they board and leave a cruise ship, transit passengers are like any other visitors to New Zealand and should not be excluded from the official count. Doing so distorts the overall picture of international arrivals and their value. ”

TEC Chief Executive Lesley Immink says it is important for regional ports like Tauranga, Napier and Nelson to understand the local impact of the cruise sector.

“If Cruise New Zealand did not do its own research, then we as a country and an economy would have no idea of the value of the cruise sector to New Zealand,” Ms Immink says.

RTONZ Executive Officer Charlie Ives says the lack of information makes it difficult to reliably measure the full impact of cruise visits to 20 ports around the country.

“Even though the tourism industry is smashing records this summer, it is still significantly under-valued because of the lack of cruise data,” he says.

## **About Cruise New Zealand**

Cruise New Zealand is the industry association of New Zealand’s cruise sector. Cruise New Zealand has been the driving force in attracting cruise lines to New Zealand since 1994, and has played a major part in building New Zealand’s world renowned reputation as a cruise-friendly destination.

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