



Kia Orana

from Cook Island Tourism
Te Mata Manava Turoto

Who Are We

The Challenges We Face

The Journey – Part A

The Journey – Part

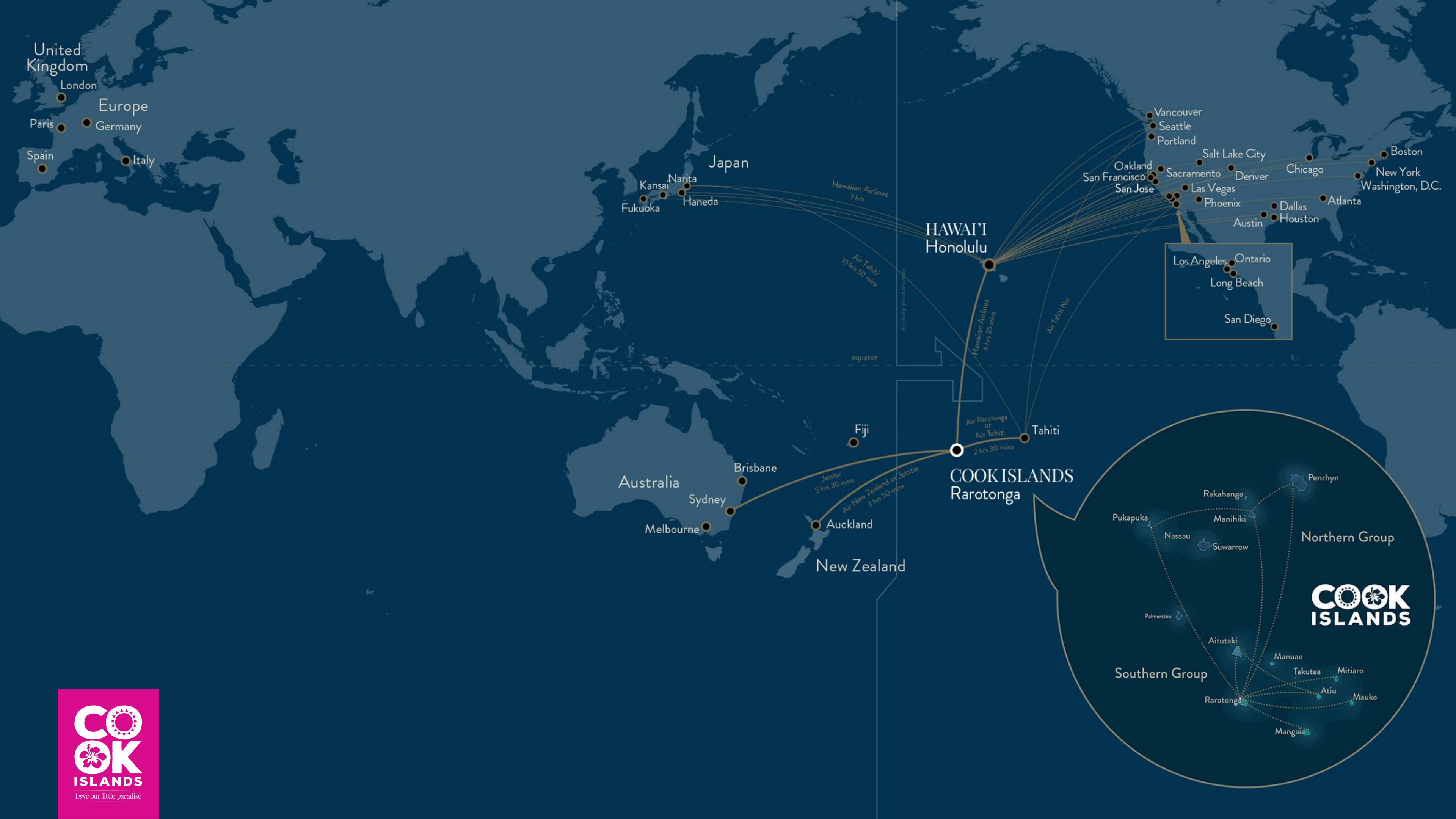
B
The Journey – Part

C



Who Are We







Cook Islands

Rarotonga



Aitutaki

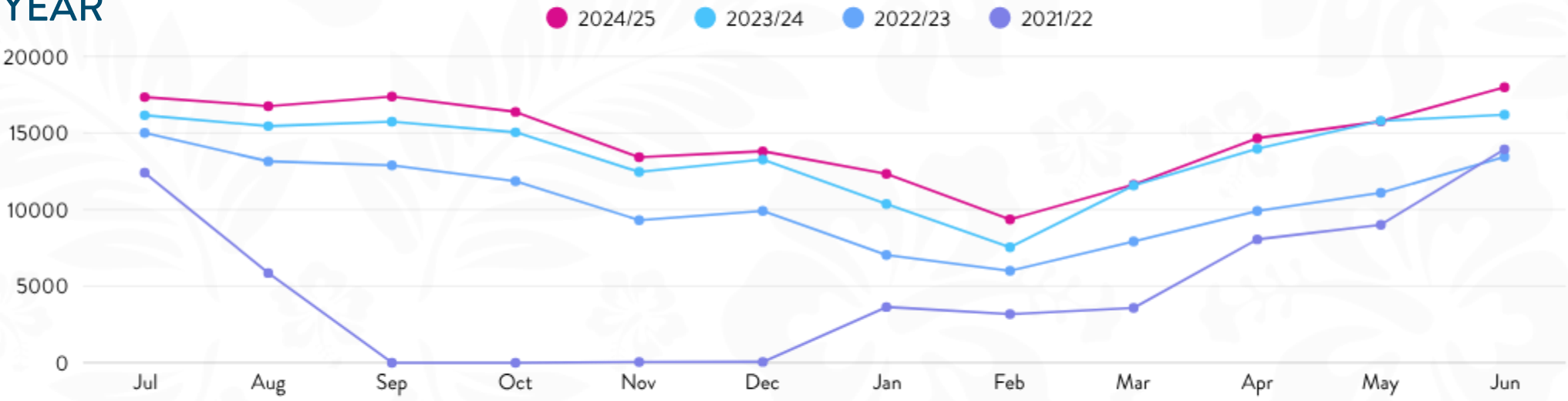


WHO ARE WE

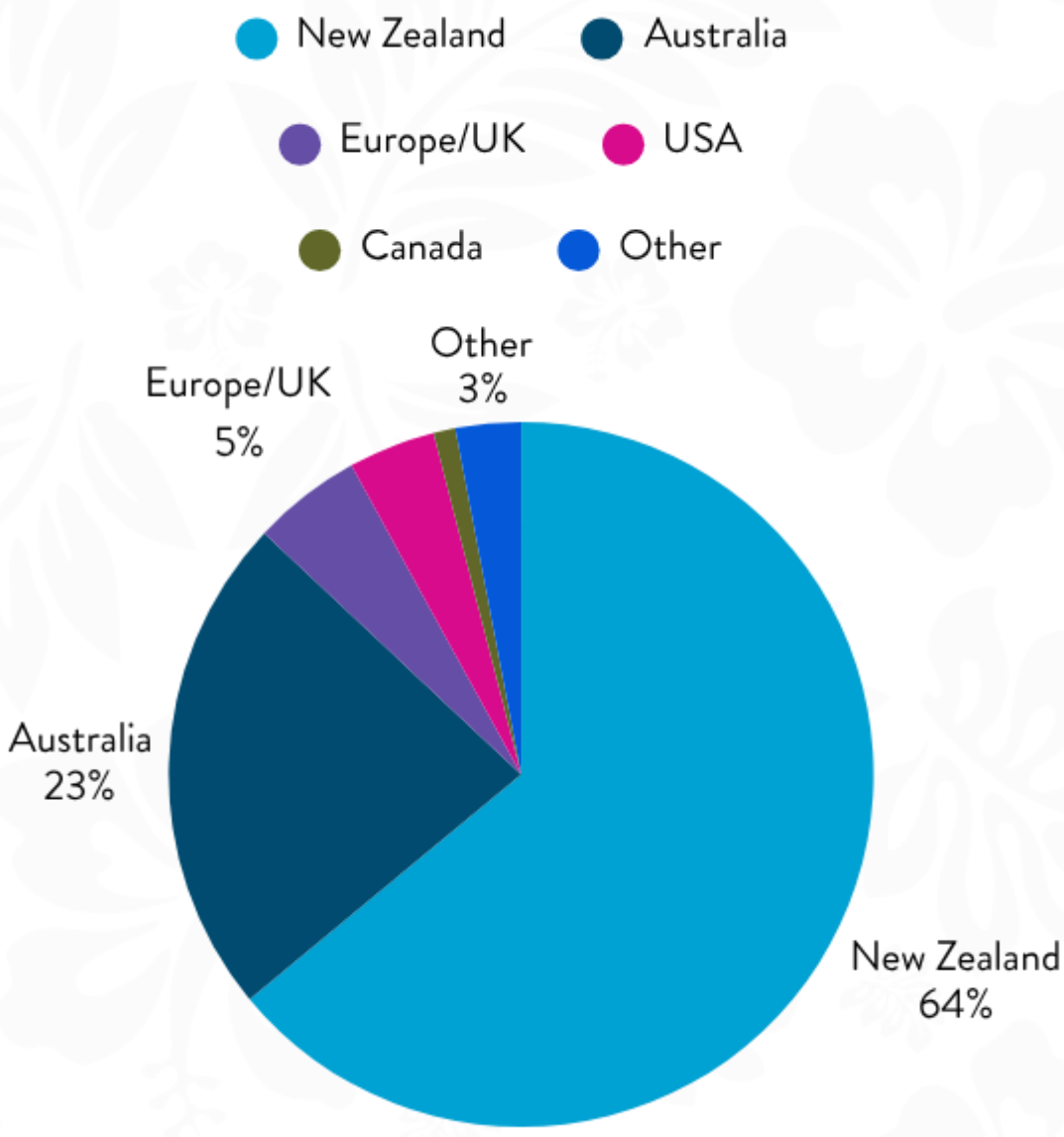
Tourism Snapshot



FINANCIAL YEAR



MARKET SHARE



VISITOR SENTIMENT



WHO ARE WE

Meet The Team (Rarotonga)





COOK ISLANDS
TOURISM CORPORATION
TE MATO MANAVA TUROTO



Tourism advances the well-being of resident Cook Islanders in a way that is socially acceptable, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable.



WHO ARE WE

Kia Orana Values



KIA ORANA

May we live long
and fulfilling lives.

Saying Kia Orana means more than hello. Kia Orana is meant as a blessing or a wish for your future.

We want to help visitors to the Cook Islands learn how to live a long and fulfilling life the way we do. We want them to share in helping us make our homes happy and our lives long and fulfilling too.

Kia Orana is the spirit of our way of life in the Cook Islands and we want to ensure the Kia Orana spirit is forever alive in our community and in our industry.



MEITAKI

Here everything
is good and well.

Meitaki means everything is good, well, okay and thank you all in one.

Meitaki also refers to how we are feeling. To be 'Meitaki' is to be feeling great. It is

how we share how happy we feel. Meitaki is about how we want our visitors to feel when visiting the Cook Islands. Our products and services will run efficiently, and our experiences will be memorable.



MANA TIAKI

We are proud
guardians of
these islands.

Mana translates as influence or power. Tiaki means keeper or guardian.

It means guardianship with a sacred purpose, to preserve it for future generations. The keeper has the power or the ability to keep the Cook Islands culture and heritage alive. Mana Tiaki also refers to our responsibility

as guardians of these islands and the environment which both nourishes and protects us.

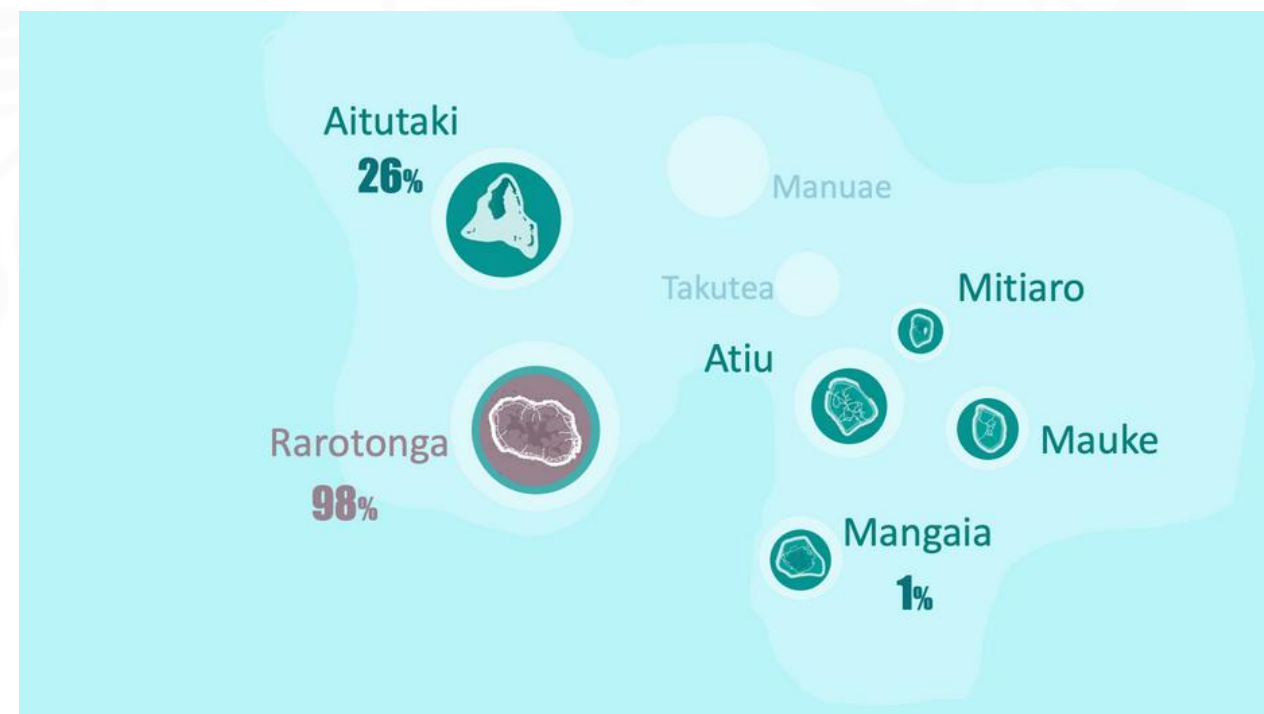
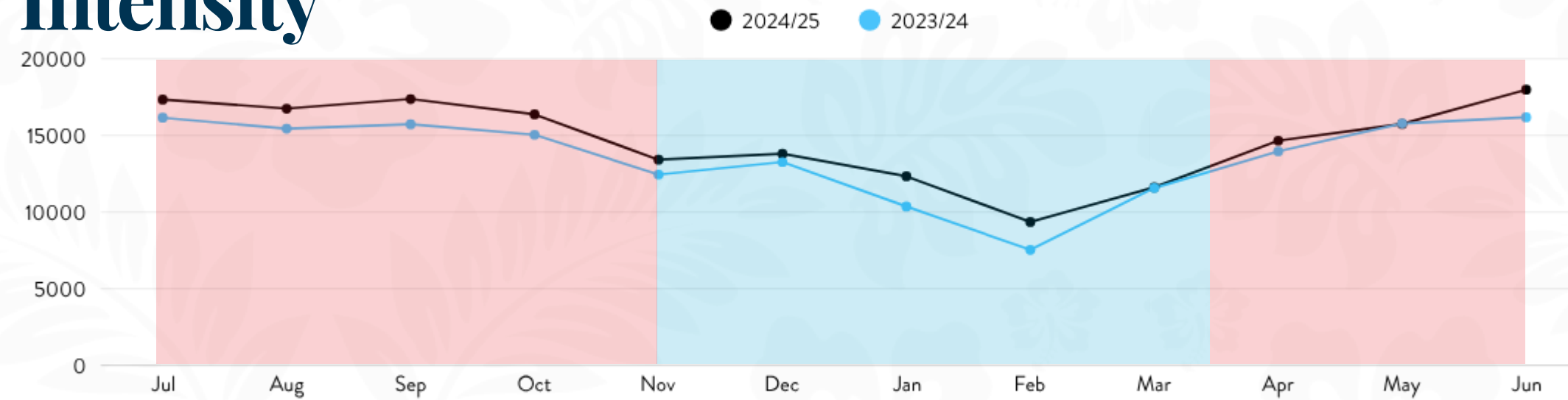
This value guides our development so that growth and change are tempered with our responsibility to minimise and manage impact.

The Challenge We Face



THE CHALLENGE WE FACE

Tourism Intensity



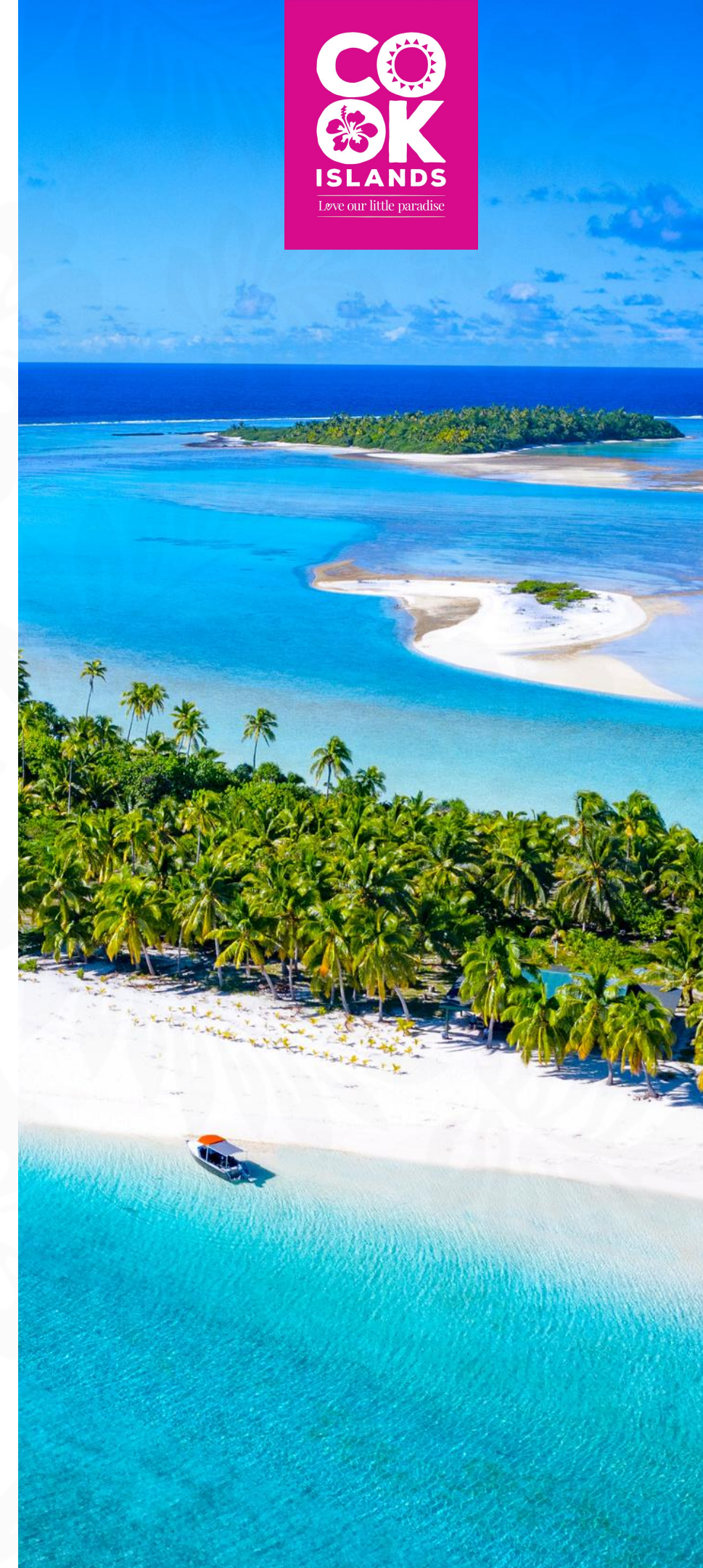
~75%
GDP
(FIJI ~40%)



10:1
VISITOR VS RESIDENT
(FIJI ~1:1)



~2,500/km²
TOURISM DENSITY -
RAROTONGA
(VITI LEVU ~ 85/KM²)



The Good, Bad & Ugly

THE GOOD

- Visitor numbers = post-Covid recovery
- Low barriers to entry = shared benefits
- Land tenancy (lease only) & foreign enterprise (CI part-ownership) laws
- High level of visitor demand & satisfaction

THE BAD

- Over-reliance on tourism economy
- Benefits restricted to Rarotonga & Aitutaki
- Unmanaged growth
- Labour shortages
- Invisible burden (housing/infrastructure)
- Over-reliance on airlines
- Becoming crowded during peak (Rarotonga)

THE UGLY

- Lack of tourism legislation/ regulations (e.g., Turtle tours)
- Growing waste management issues
- Migrant worker exploitation
- Commodification of culture

Evolving Role



COOK ISLANDS
TOURISM CORPORATION
TE MATO MANAVA TUROTO

DESTINATION MARKETING

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

PAST

- Visitor Welcome/Assistance
- Community Support/Engagement
- Industry Engagement

PRE-COVID

- Delivery Partner ID & Engagement
- Visitor + Industry Insights
- Visitor Welcome/Assistance
- Infrastructure (small scale)
- Event Support
- Quality Assurance
- Industry Engagement
- Community Support & Engagement

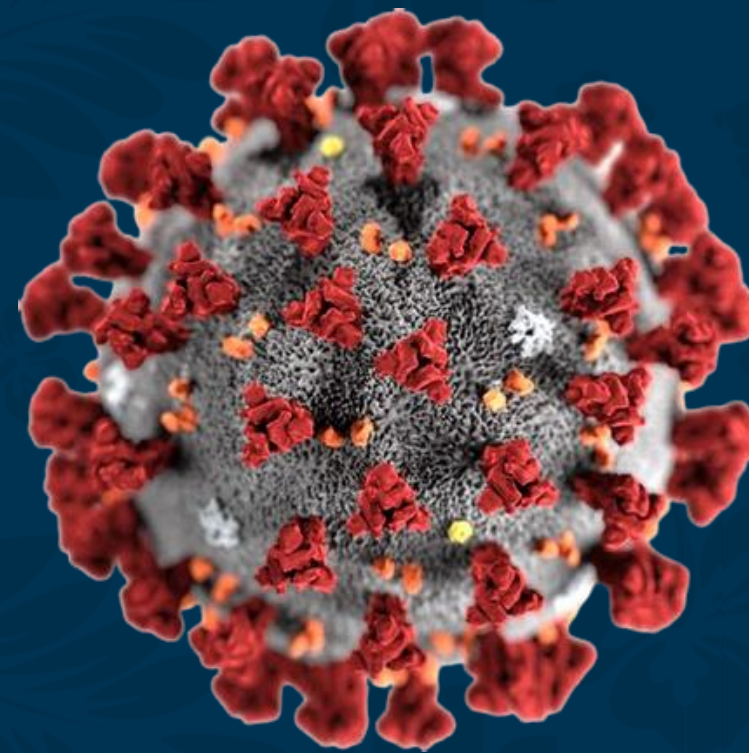
NOW

- National Communications
- Resource Mobilisation
- Aviation Strategy
- Visitor Welcome/Assistance
- Visitor Experience Management
- Sustainable Tourism/Wellbeing Performance Reporting (NSDA)
- Carrying Capacity Optimisation (Infrastructure & Services)
- Risk & Crisis Management
- Community Support & Engagement
- Sustainable Tourism Standards (Accreditation + Capacity Building)
- Business/Product Development
- Event Development
- Pa Enua Tourism Development
- Workforce Development
- Governance/Regulation/Policy
- Cross-Government Collaboration
- Visitor Economy Optimisation
- Climate Change Mitigation/Adaptation
- Cultural Storytelling
- Agri-tourism
- Sustainable Supply Chains
- Regional Governance
- Diplomatic Relations
- Human Rights

Part A: Our Journey



The Catalyst For Change



OUR JOURNEY: PART A

Recovery Vs Sustainability



Internal Alignment

Our New Business Goal

The Cook Islands is one of the world's largest ocean states, but we are very restricted in terms of usable land. Because of this, our ability to consistently deliver a high-quality visitor experience without causing unacceptable damage to our community or environment is restricted to a relatively small number of people we can host at any one time (known as our 'carrying capacity').

There is definitely still room to move, particularly outside of peak season and across our Pa Enua. But as we continue to recover post-Covid, we have to accept that eventually (all going well) perpetual growth of visitor numbers is no longer going to be an appropriate objective - eventually we will be 'carrying' too many people. When that happens, the experience for everyone (visitors & locals alike) will deteriorate, our brand/reputation in the market will be damaged, and our tourism sector will start to spiral downwards.

Our goal for a tourism sector that is both beneficial and sustainable in the long term has to start evolving towards one where we maximise the value gained from the limited number of visitors that we can successfully host.

Maximise
VALUE
Not Volume

Brand Aspirations

The 'Love a Little Paradise' brand tagline has been extremely successful for Cook Islands Tourism since 2015, and there is certainly no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

But LALP primarily focused on driving visitor demand, which is now only 1/3 of the job required. We now need a brand platform that focuses on driving holistic value by working hard across all three of our identified strategies.

Find our North Star.
Something we can all connect to and strive towards

Destination Marketing

- Aligns with the Kia Orana Values (Kia Orana, Mana Tiaki, and Meitaki).
- Appeal to & inspire the right type of traveller (quality not quantity).
- Instil a sense of pride in offering a high quality visitor experience.
- Encourage regenerative tourism practices across all stakeholders (CIT staff, visitors, industry, community)
- Allows us to effectively communicate the Cook Islands' unique selling points (USP's).

Destination Management

- Create an inclusive movement - something everyone can feel a part of and work towards.
- Something that is simple, easily understood across markets, and stands out from the crowd.
- An evolution (not revolution) of 'Love a Little Paradise'.

Rational for Sustainable Annroach



PROTECTING THE GOLDEN GOOSE

Refreshing our brand to be more sustainably minded isn't just a savvy marketing initiative or a feel-good, 'nice to have'. This is a critical business decision to protect our most important economic sector in the long-term by ensuring the sustainability of our people and place (the very reason why people want to visit in the first place).



SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL TRENDS

Globally we are in the midst of a genuine paradigm shift towards a more responsible approach to travel. In general, travellers are seeking more eco-friendly, authentic and sustainable experiences, with a growing avoidance of anything perceived as 'mass tourism'. While the people solely influenced by these responsible principles may still be a minority, being seen as 'sustainable' and 'eco-conscious' has undoubtedly become a mainstream trend with significant influence and value within the travel industry.



HONOURING COOK ISLANDS CULTURE

The concepts of sustainability and regeneration are nothing new to the Cook Islands. The LOLP brand platform is guided by, and aligns closely to the cultural beliefs of 'Kia Orana', 'Mana Tiaki' and 'Meitaki'.



POINT OF DIFFERENCE / DISRUPTOR

There is still an opportunity to own the 'responsible travel' market position within our Pacific competitor set. In a marketplace crowded with beautiful beaches, sparkling lagoons and vibrant cultures, creating a fun and feel-good social movement will help the Cook Islands develop a clear point of difference and avoid the trap of promoting the wider category of a 'tropical island holiday'.



DONOR & DELIVERY SUPPORT

Whether we like it or not, the appetite of donor/delivery partners has moved from supporting the destination marketing function (creating demand) to destination management (ensuring sustainable supply). By creating a brand platform that achieves both of these in a sustainable manner, we create an opportunity for future support to sit across all three of the business strategies mentioned previously.

COOK ISLANDS

Love our little paradise

COOKISLANDS.TRAVEL

Brand Positioning

LOVE A LITTLE
PARADISE
(2015)



LOVE A LITTLE
PARADISE... FOR REAL
(2022)



LOVE OUR LITTLE
PARADISE
(2024)



“

If you look after our little paradise, she will look after you too.

Akaperepere ia to tatou parataito,
kia vai ruperupe te reira.

”

Love

A deep, active appreciation and care for the Cook Islands, urging Cook Islanders, residents and visitors to cherish and protect its natural beauty and cultural richness.

our

Shifting from ‘a’ to ‘our’ represents a collective commitment among Cook Islanders, residents, and visitors, reinforcing a shared responsibility for our little paradise.

little

Rather than being about size, ‘little’ speaks to the intimate, personal experiences that the islands provide, where everyone can feel a personal connection to the place and its people.

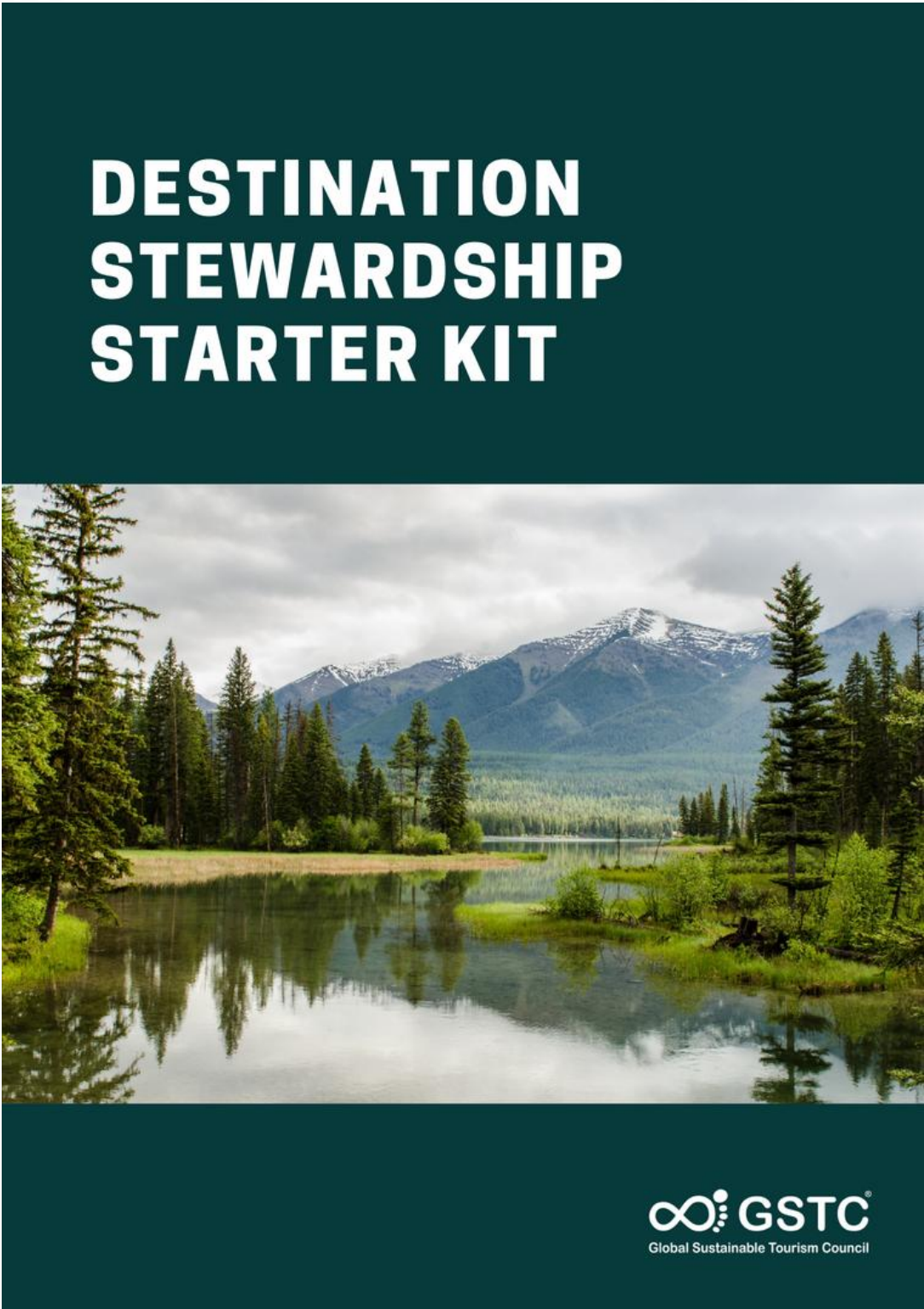
paradise

What the Cook Islands offers; a tropical, idyllic escape, complete with friendly locals, lush landscapes, vibrant culture, and white sandy beaches - a place to do as little or as much as you like.

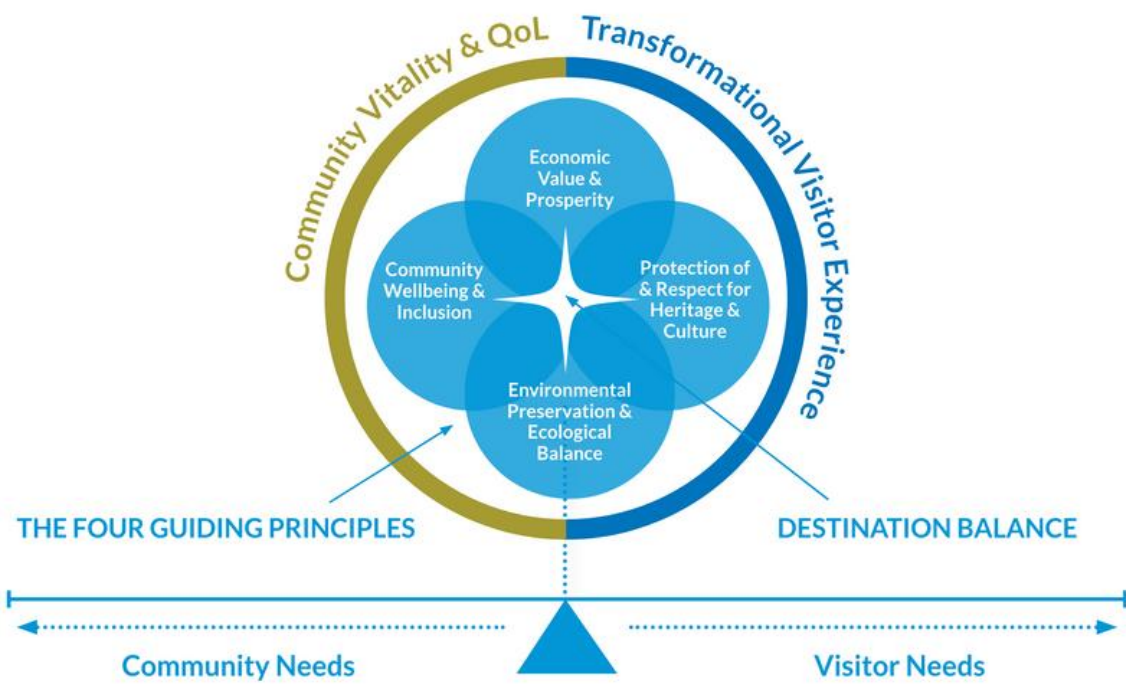
Part B: Our Journey



Destination Stewardship



“ Destination stewardship can be defined as an approach to destination governance that seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social-cultural needs of a destination; whilst operating within a legitimate governance model with active participation from the public and private sectors, as well as the local community. ”
-The Travel Foundation



Our Journey: FY2024/25

Q1 (JUL - SEP)

- Internal Sign-off
- Joined GSTC
- Donor Partner Intro
- Destination Capacity Colab

Q2 (OCT - DEC)

- GSTC Destination Assessment
- Staff Training Workshops
- Wayfinder Sign-up
- Initial Stakeholder Workshops

Q3 (JAN - MAR)

- Cabinet Mandate
- Project Management Unit (PMU)
- Destination Stewardship Advisory Group (DSAG)
- Tourism Policy Mapping (PSDI)
- DSP: Situational Analysis & Goal/Pathway Development
- Wayfinder Baselines

Q4 (APR - JUN)

- CIT FY26 Work Programme Approvals
- LOLP Marketing Strategy
- Travel Foundation Climate Risk Scan
- DSP Finalisation (technical + public versions)

Destination Stewardship

GLOBAL



REGIONAL



NATIONAL



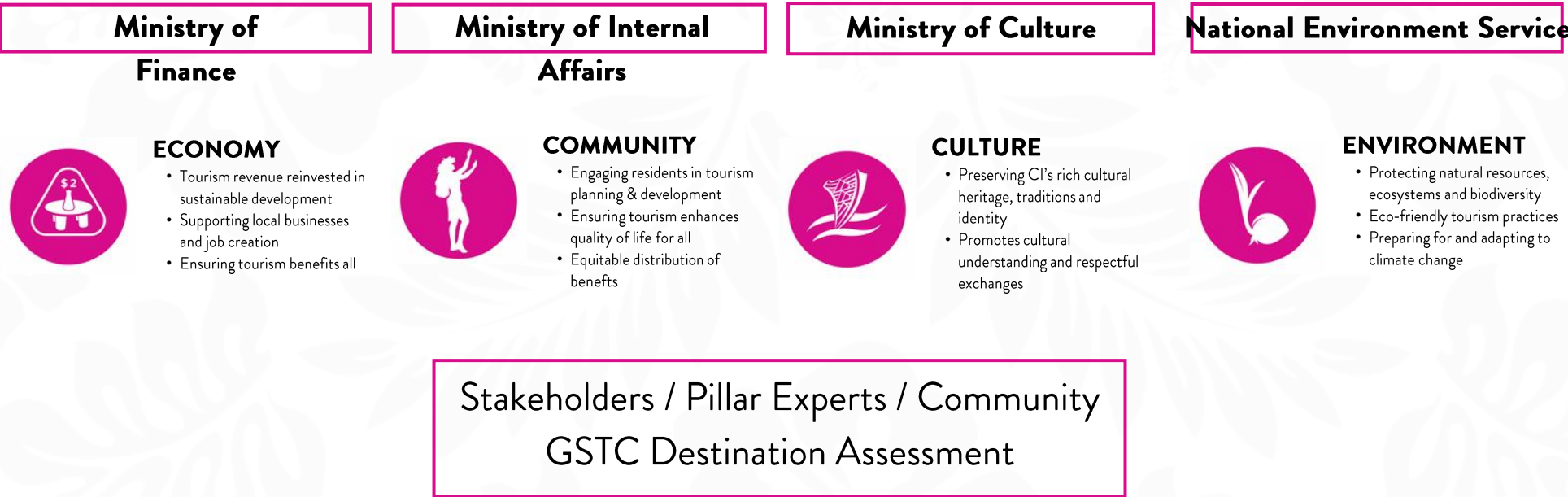
SUB-NATIONAL



Minister of Tourism (PM)

Destination Stewardship Advisory Group (DSAG)

OPM	CLO	TOURISM	CIIC	MFEM	INDUSTRY	SUPPLY
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Marketing Strategy



Setting the **B.A.R** to **S.E.L.L** the value of the Cook Islands

B.A.R = Brand Awareness, Audience Fit, Responsible Growth | **S.E.L.L** = Strengthen, Engage, Leverage, Lift

OBJECTIVES: B.A.R



Brand Awareness

Create a global brand that represents the Cook Islands' unique identity and values.



Audience Fit

Attract the right mix of visitors who share in our value proposition.



Responsible Growth

Promote experiences that balance cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

PRIORITIES: S.E.L.L



Strengthen Global Brand Awareness & Positioning

Boost global reach with unified branding, short videos, influencers, virtual tours, and a central assets hub.



Engage Target Audiences with Tailored & Sustainable Messaging

Promote culture and sustainability through authentic stories, better content, targeted campaigns, off-season deals, and aligned messaging.



Leverage Data & Technology for Marketing & Engagement

Use data and tech like AI and AR/VR for personalised experiences, loyalty, real-time tracking, and gamified engagement.



Lift Low-Season Travel & Reduce Seasonality

Encourage off-peak travel with seasonal campaigns, exclusive experiences, airline partnerships, and cultural or wellness highlights.

Destination Wayfinder

Wayfinder
powered by Miles Partnership

Dashboard Assessment Survey Hub Workspace Reports Files

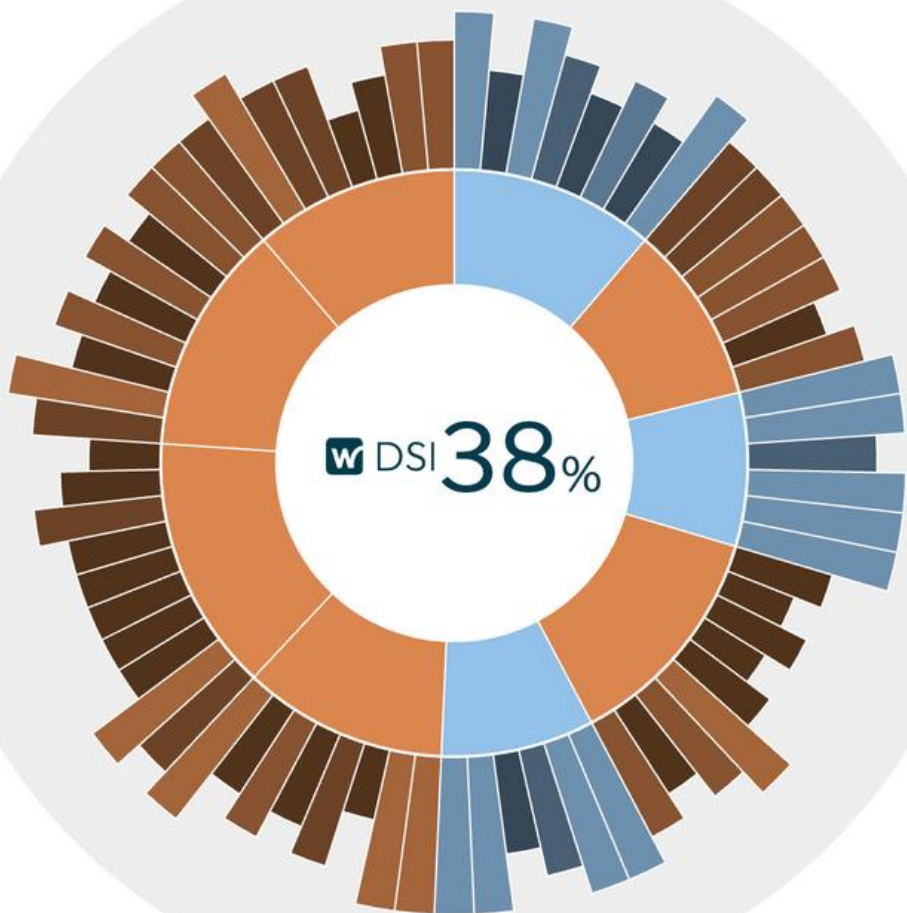
WDSI 38%

Brad
Cook Islands

Hi Brad

Welcome to the Destination Wayfinder, your personalized continuous improvement pathway to measure, monitor and improve destination capability and outcomes for your destination.

About the DSI



Improve Capability



Modules

Management Structure & Framework



Stakeholder Engagement



Brand, Marketing & Communications



Destination Development



Resiliency, Risk & Crisis Management



Economic Prosperity



Environmental Preservation &
Ecological Balance



Identification & Preservation of Culture
& Heritage



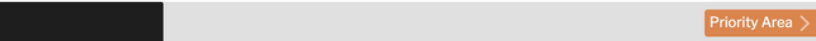
Social Well-Being



Area results

This module is made up of 9 areas. Making improvements in these module areas will improve your Destination Development rating.

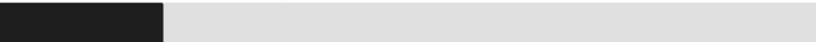
1. Amenities and Infrastructure



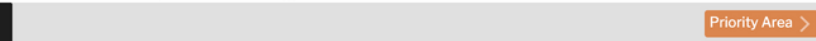
2. Visitor Journey & Touchpoint Mapping



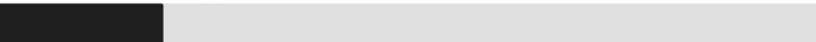
3. Visitor Flow Assessment & Tracking



4. Attractions and Experiences Strategy



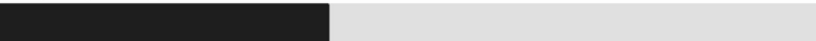
5. Digitalization & Technology



6. Access and Connectivity



7. Capability Building



8. Quality of Experiences



9. Event Organization and Support



How does the destination organization measure and improve the quality of tourism experiences in the destination?

As you complete improvement actions identified in your digital action plan, remember to revise your score selections and see your DSI improve.

[Learn more](#)

☐ No Quality Measurement, Yet

The destination organization does not measure the quality of tourism experiences across the destination, yet.

☒ Basic Measurement

Basic measurement of the quality of a few tourism experiences is undertaken for the destination organization to better understand options for visitors.

☒ Limited Measurement

The destination organization measures the quality of most tourism experiences to better understand current offerings across the destination and how these align with local stakeholder aspirations.

☐ Comprehensive Measurement

The destination organization has established comprehensive measurement processes, in-house or through partners, across tourism experiences to assist in the formulation of continuous improvement plans and ensure experiences align with local stakeholder aspirations.

☐ Strategic Measurement

The destination organization has implemented strategic measurement processes to better understand the quality of existing experience and alignment with visitor and local stakeholder aspirations. The destination organization encourages national or international certification programs for high-achieving businesses and operators to increase their capability and ability to provide high-level experiences for all groups and individuals.

☐ Industry Leading Process

The destination organization supports integrated measurement strategies incorporating sustainability, resilience, adaptation and quality of tourism experiences on an ongoing basis to ensure the sustained value of these experiences is available to visitors and local stakeholders alike. The destination organization utilizes or recommends a range of certification programs to further leverage experiences across the destination and showcase best practice standards implemented by local businesses and operators by publishing a list of certified businesses.

Getting Noticed

Cook Islands establishes Destination Stewardship Advisory Group

Monday 27 January 2025 | Written by [Supplied](#) | Published in [National](#), [Tourism](#)

Share    

The Cook Islands Government has taken a bold step towards a sustainable and inclusive future with the establishment of the Destination Stewardship Advisory Group (DSAG).

Led by Prime Minister Mark Brown, this initiative will drive the nation’s transition to a Destination Stewardship model, ensuring tourism continues to deliver long-term benefits for all Cook Islanders while protecting its natural and cultural heritage.

Tourism has long been the backbone of the Cook Islands’ economy, supporting livelihoods, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship. Following the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation rebuilt its tourism sector, achieving strong performance in 2024. Building on this momentum, the Government is focused on ensuring tourism remains resilient, sustainable, and inclusive.



Tourism Cook Islands chief executive Karla Eggelton, Cook Islands Tourism Corporation Board, Chairman Ewan Smith with Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism Mark Brown, Assistant Minister for Tourism Tai Herman and also pictured are Cook Islands Tourism Corporation Board members Rohan Ellis, Diana Clarke-Bates, Halatoa Fua, Apii Porio, Ani Thompson (absent: Teonu Hewitt) and the Cook Islands Tourism Senior Team: Noeline Mateariki, Brad Kirner (absent; Marcelle Rossouw). SUPPLIED / 25012613

Striking a delicate balance in the Cook Islands, the tourism dollar vs environmental sustainability

Scott Waide for [Politok](#)
Posted 23 Jun 2025, updated 23 Jun 2025



Paradise under pressure — as tourism booms in the Cook Islands, the challenge is balancing economic growth with protecting culture and environment. (AP: Christina Almeida/File)

Part C: Our Journey



Our Journey: FY2025/26

Q1 (JUL - SEP)

- DSP Launch & Establishment
- Implement Priority Projects
- CIT Work Programmes

Q3 (JAN - MAR)

- Tourism Governance
- FY27 Business Planning
- DSP Application (Industry Level)
- DSP New Initiative Development

Q2 (OCT - DEC)

- Pa Enua Tourism Development Plans
- Tourism Policy Reform
- DSP Existing Initiative Enhancement
- Resource Mobilisation (Climate Financing)

Q4 (APR - JUN)

- DSP Ongoing Implementation & Monitoring
- Systematic Integration and Capacity Building
- CIT FY27 Annual Operating Plans

STAYING TRUE TO OUR VISION AND VALUES

“

At its core, this strategy reflects CIT’s vision that tourism advances the well-being of Cook Islands residents. It takes a purpose-driven approach, ensuring that tourism is not only economically viable but also socially, culturally, and environmentally responsible.

By staying true to the Kia Orana Values, we strengthen the connection between tourism and the unique culture and identity of the Cook Islands. This authenticity is at the heart of our brand, helping to build strong, long-term relationships with visitors while ensuring that tourism benefits the local community in meaningful ways.

”



Meitaki Ma'ata

