



# **Kiribati Tourism Review**

---

**2022**

## Acknowledgements

The Tourism Authority of Kiribati has been able to publish this report through the continued support of the following partners;

- Kiribati Customs Administration and Enforcement – Ministry of Justice;
- Immigration Department – Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Immigration;
- Kiribati National Statistics Office – Ministry of Finance & Economic Development;
- Marine Guard – Ministry of Information, Communications & Transport;
- Air Kiribati Limited;
- all the tourism operators in Kiribati.

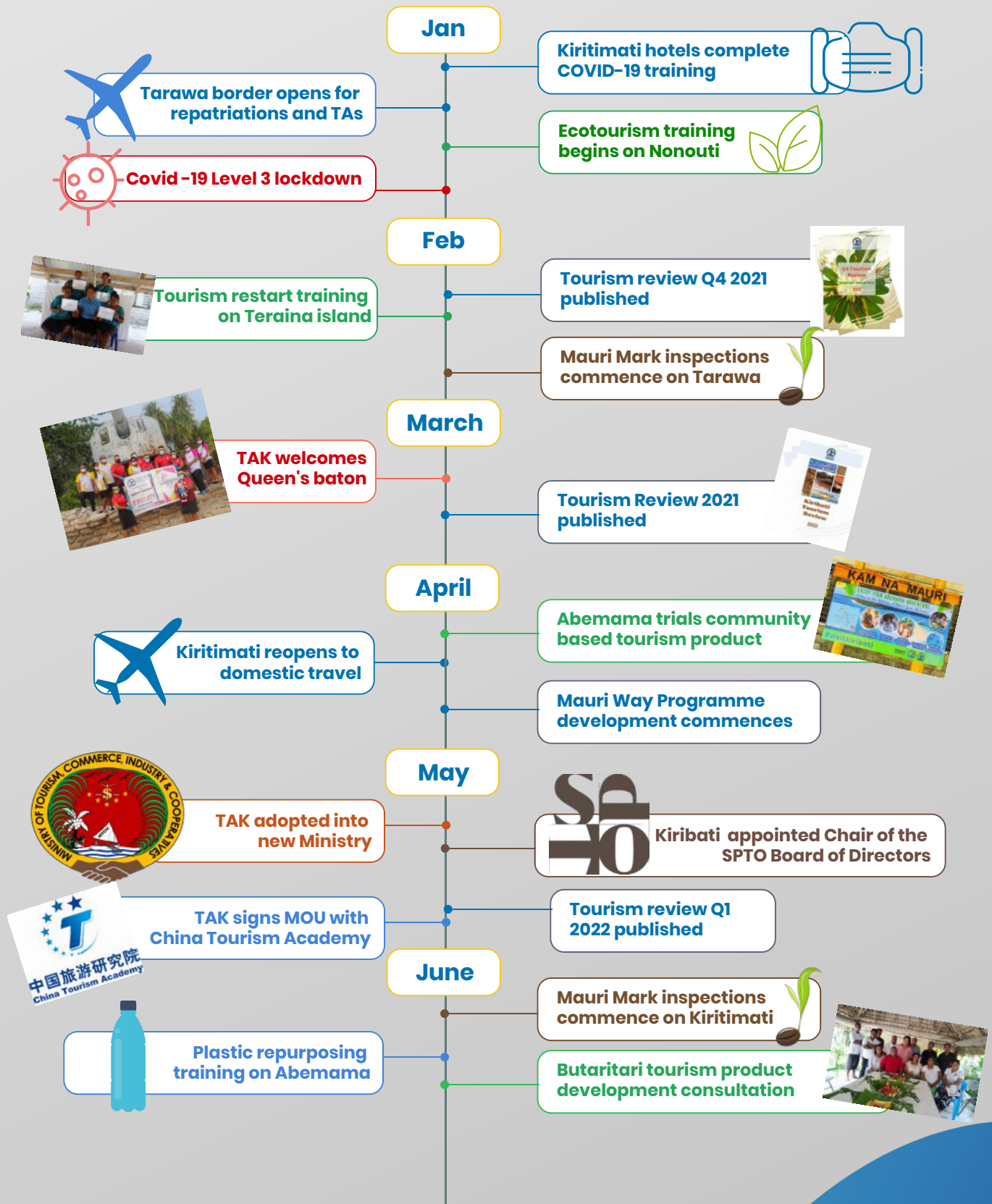
### Disclaimer

This report has been provided for general information only. The Tourism Authority of Kiribati makes no representation to any other person with regard to the completeness or accuracy of the data or information contained herein, and it accepts no responsibility and disclaims all liability (save for liability which cannot be lawfully disclaimed) for loss or damage whatsoever suffered or incurred by any other person resulting from the use of, or reliance upon, the data or information contained herein.

**Tourism Authority of Kiribati** PO Box 479, Takoronga, Betio. E: [info@kiribatitourism.gov.ki](mailto:info@kiribatitourism.gov.ki) P: +68675125998

# Key events & activities

## 2022



# Key events & activities

## 2022

July



Tourism awareness in primary schools

Abemama launches community based tourism product



Aug



Air Kiribati welcomes new aircraft

International borders reopen at Bonriki



Tourism Review Q2 2022 published

80th anniversary of Keuea village bombing

Sept



Kiribati hosts FFA's Forum Fisheries Committee meeting

Tourism awareness in South Tarawa secondary schools



Oct



Covid-19 safety protocols training in Tamana

Nonouti island community based tourism consultations



Kiribati signs Pacific Leader's Sustainable Tourism Commitment

Abemama community based tourism famil



Nov



Pacific Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit

TAK presents at the launch of the 2022 Global Sustainable Tourism Forum - South Korea



79th anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa and Makin



Tourism restart training on Maiana island



Tourism Review Q3 2022 published

Dec

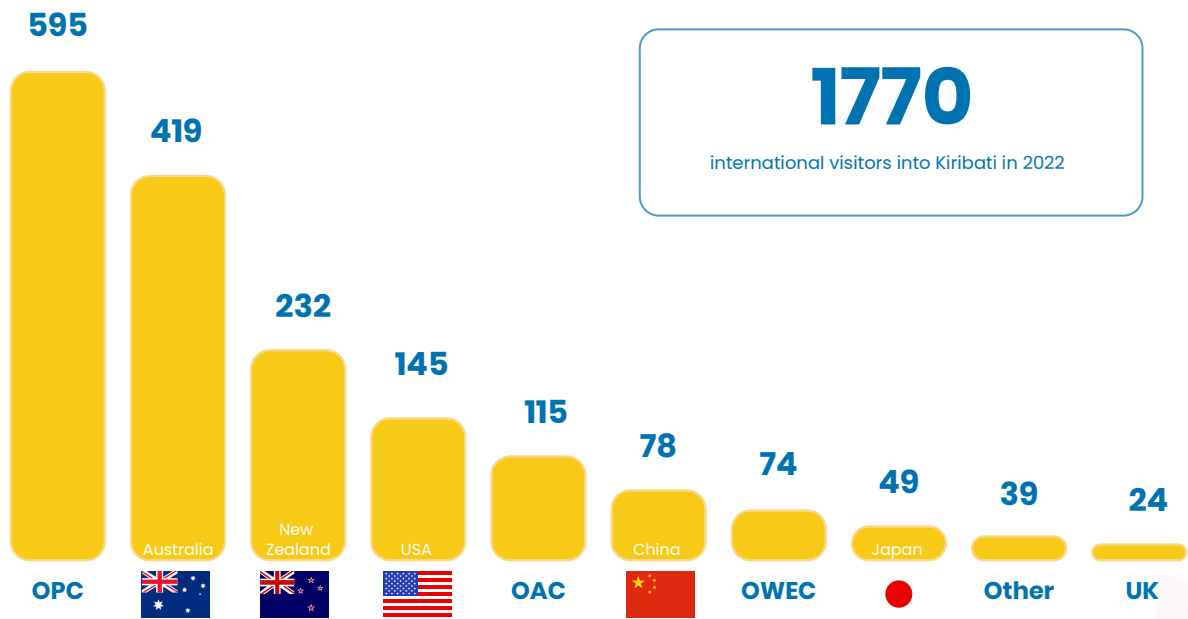


Sustainable tourism indicators development project commences

Visitor Satisfaction Survey continues

TAK submits Kiribati Tourism Operators Registration & Licensing Regulation to Cabinet

# International arrivals



**1770**  
international visitors into Kiribati in 2022

**Key**  
**OPC** Other Pacific countries  
**OAC** Other Asian countries  
**OWEC** Other Western European countries

Figure 1: Breakdown of international visitors into Kiribati by nationality in 2022

Tarawa recorded a total of **1770** international visitors at the end of 2022. This is a huge increase compared to the arrivals in 2021 which had only 65 visitors.

The rise in visitor numbers was attributed to the reopening of Tarawa's border on **1st August 2022**.

The highest number of visitors were Australian with **419** passengers entering Tarawa. New Zealanders second with **232** passengers and the Americans were third with **145** visitors into Tarawa (Figure 1).

The Pacific Islanders combined made up the most visitors with a total of **595** of our neighbours entering Tarawa in 2022.

Of these, approximately 50% were Fijian; 18% Nauruan; 9% Solomon Islander; 6% Marshallese; 4% were Tuvaluan and Tongan; 3% were from PNG and Samoan; 2% were from the FSM and 1% were from Vanuatu.

The Kiritimati border was still closed in 2022 therefore there were no recorded international visitors.

## International arrivals

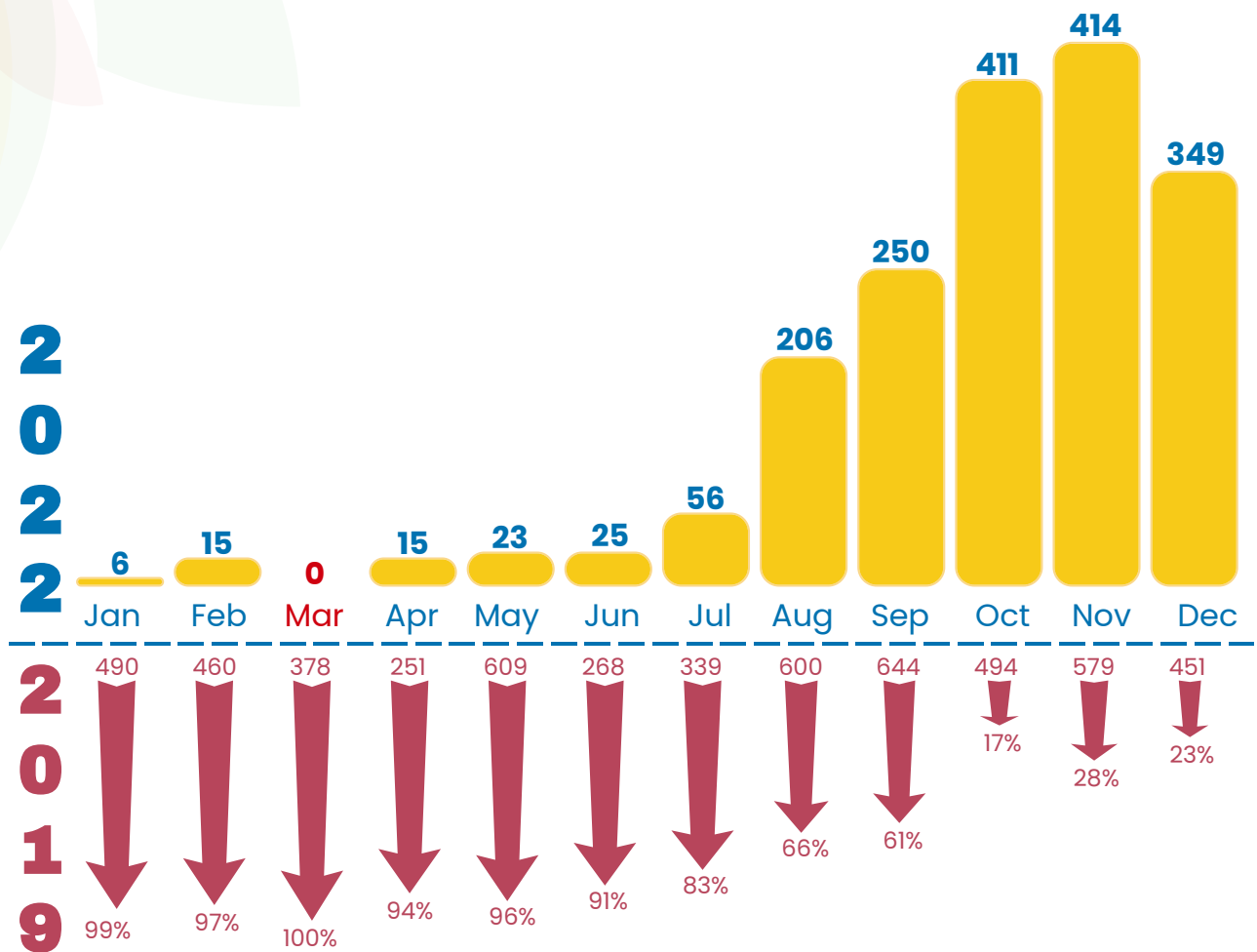


Figure 2 shows a comparison of the 2022 arrival figures against the pre-pandemic figures, i.e., the 2019 visitor numbers.

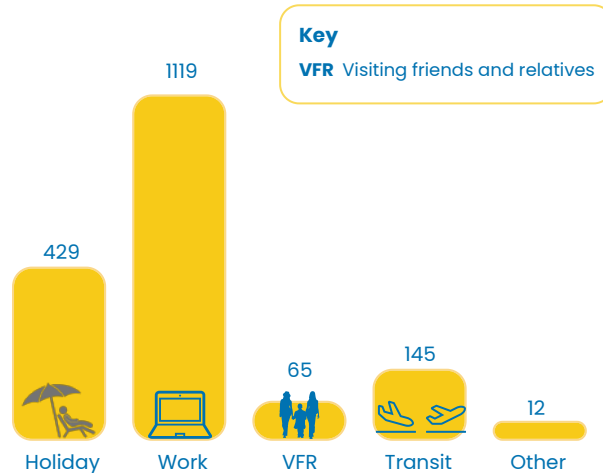
With the reopening of the Tarawa border in August 2022, the arrivals in October 2022 almost caught up to the pre-pandemic levels but fell short by 17%.

Overall, 2022 international visitor arrivals were 68% lower than 2019 arrivals.

The 2019 arrivals used in this analysis are for Tarawa only since the Kiritimati border was still closed in 2022.



**Figure 2:** Breakdown of international visitors into Kiribati by month in 2022 and in comparison to pre-pandemic levels in 2019



**Figure 3:** Breakdown of international visitors into Kiribati by Purpose of Visit in 2022

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of international visitors in 2022 by their purpose of visit. As expected, arrivals for work purposes were at the top with 1119 workers entering Tarawa. These visitors include those arriving for meetings on Tarawa; those arriving as short term technical advisors; and experts here to carry out maintenance work on infrastructure to name a few.

By comparison, approximately 3115 workers arrived in 2019 – 64% more than in 2022.

The next purpose of visit was holiday. Tarawa is seen as the business destination of Kiribati however the lockdown meant that many potential visitors had to postpone their trips and many expatriates on Tarawa were separated from their loved ones. The border reopening made these family reunions possible again.

Many of the holiday makers were actually I-Kiribati diaspora returning for a few weeks holiday.

The 'Other' category typically contained visitors for religious purposes and research.

## Average Length of Stay



# 12.8 nights

Average length of stay in 2022

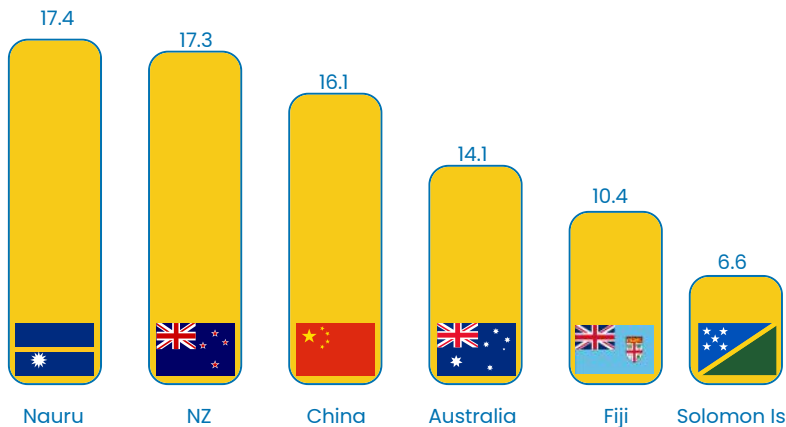


Figure 4: Breakdown of average length of stay by nationality in 2022

The average of length of stay for our visitors in 2022 was close to two weeks at **12.8 nights**.

Nauruans stayed the longest on average at 17.4 nights (Figure 4).

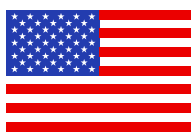
The average length of stay for visitors arriving for work was 13.2 nights. Holiday makers stayed longer at 20.4 nights on average.

The group that stayed the longest at just over 3 weeks (**24.4 nights**) were the VFR travellers. These individuals came to visit friends and relatives and typically travel to the outer islands where they spend most of their time.

## Yachts



### Nationality of the Master



USA



Republic of the Marshall Islands



Norway

### Crew

# 3

# 3

# 2

3 yachts visited Kiribati in November bringing a total of 8 crew. There were no passengers recorded on these vessels.

Notes;



Yacht arrival data did not record:

- which outer islands were to be visited;
- the intended date of departure
- nationalities of the crew
- genders of the crew

Only the nationality of the vessel's Master was recorded.



# International departures

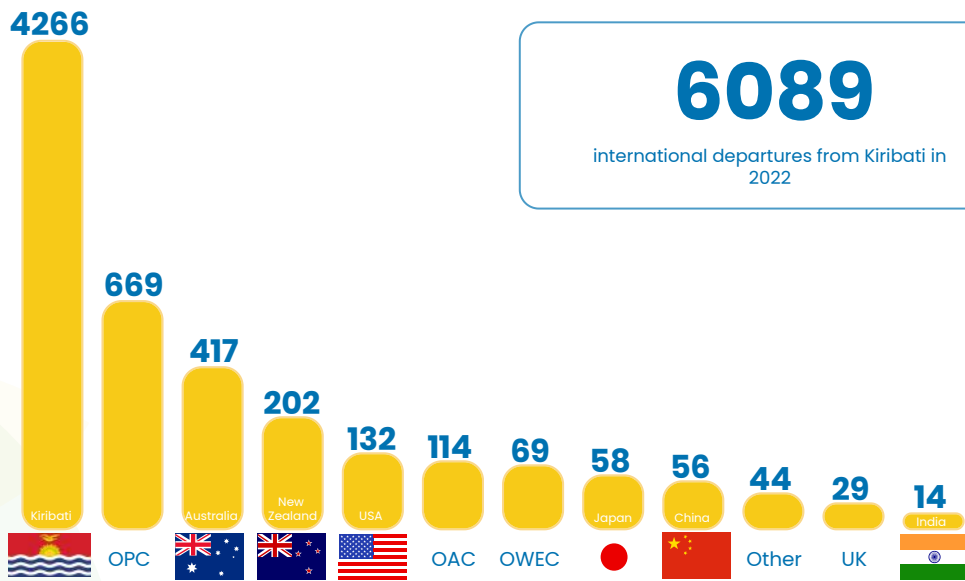


Figure 5: Breakdown of international departures by nationality in 2022

**6089** passengers departed Kiribati by air in 2022 of which 70% were I-Kiribati. The residents departed for a variety of reasons - work (43%); education (24%); visiting friends & relatives (14%); and holiday (7%).

Work travel for Kiribati residents was consistent over the four quarters of 2022, with numbers increasing (over 5-fold) after border reopening in the third quarter. The second half of the year saw many seasonal workers depart for work to New Zealand as Recognised Seasonal Employer workers (11%) and to Australia under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme (89%) as fruit pickers, aged care givers and meat workers.

Holiday travel for Kiribati residents was mostly to Fiji (54%); Australia (8%); and Nauru (6%).

Kiribati residents visited friends and relatives in Fiji (45%); NZ (14%); and Australia (6%).

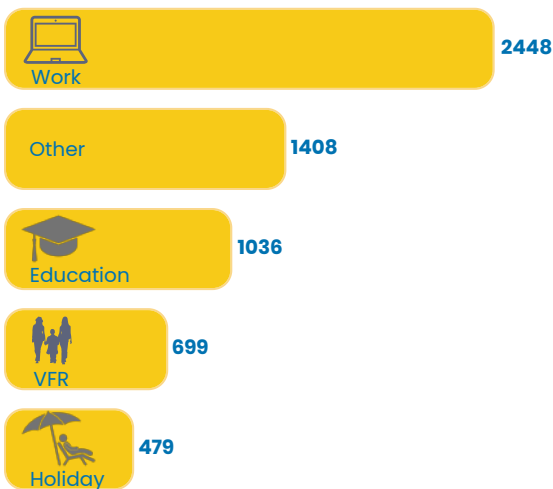


Figure 6 breaks up the travellers by their purpose of trip.

Travelling for work was not only by Kiribati residents, but also by non-residents that were based in Kiribati leaving the country to attend meetings.

The 'Other' category includes returning residents, travel for religious purposes, sports and medical referrals.

Figure 6: Breakdown of international departures by purpose of trip in 2022

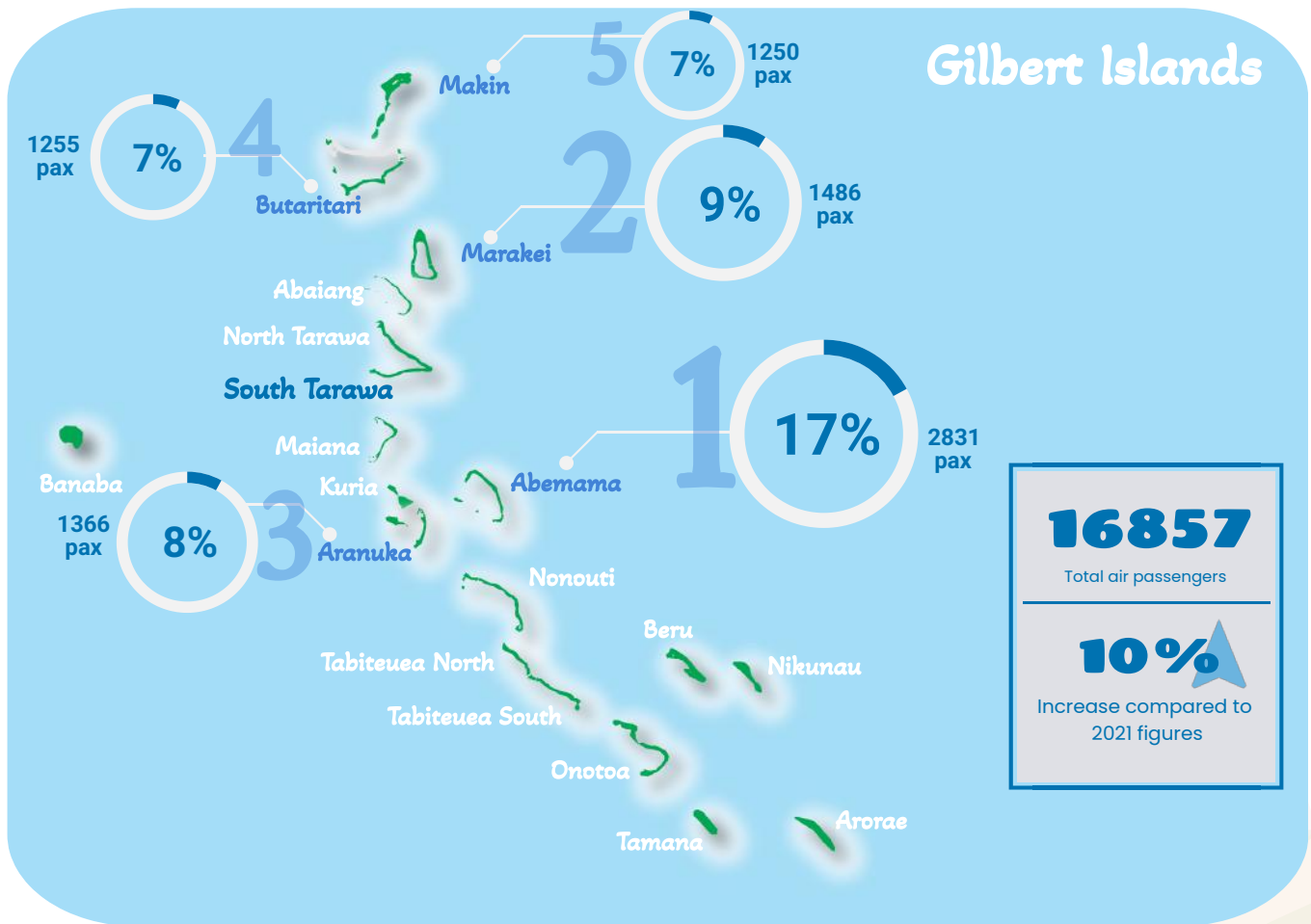


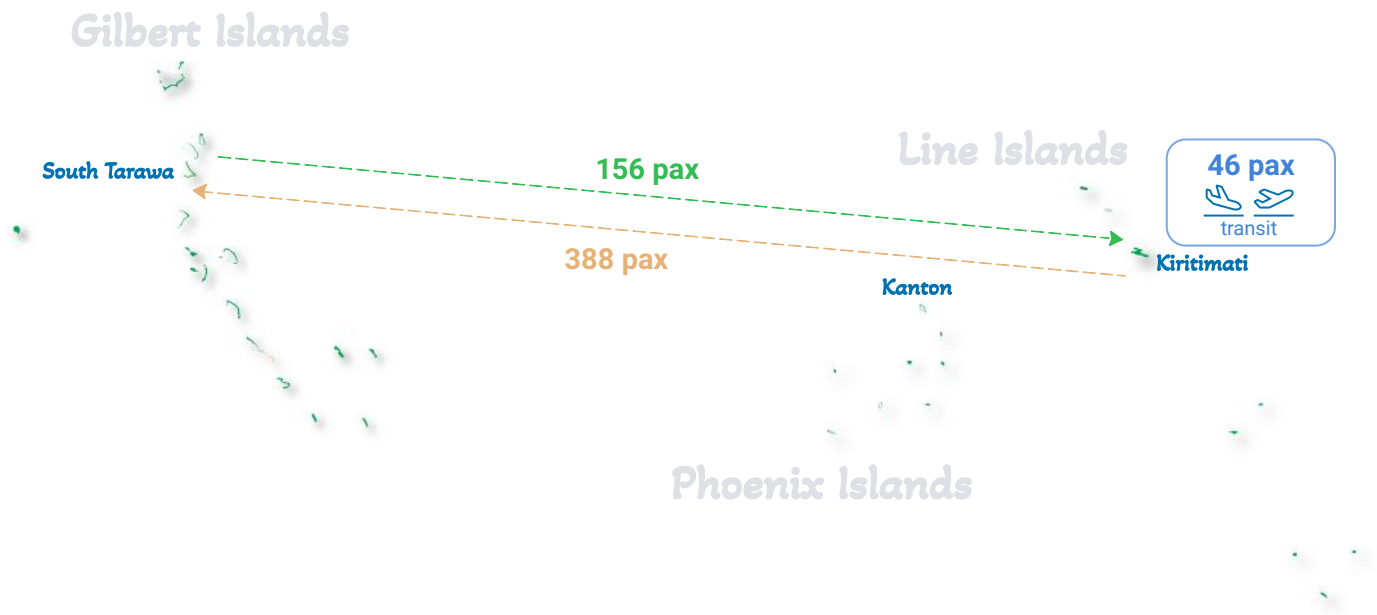
Figure 7: The five most visited outer islands by plane in Kiribati in 2022

Domestic air travel was boosted in 2022 with the addition of a new aircraft increasing the fleet to 2.

Despite several cancelled flights over the year, travel in 2022 increased in comparison to 2021 by 10%.

The most visited island by air was Abemama which captured 17% of the domestic travellers (Figure 7). Next was Marakei (9%), Aranuka (8%), Butaritari (7%) and Makin (7%).

The island of Arorae was the least visited with only 376 passengers arriving in 2022. The neighbouring island of Tamana received only 389 passengers during 2022.



**Figure 8:** Travel between Tarawa and Kiritimati in 2022

Although the Kiritimati border was still closed to international arrivals in 2022, there were a few charter flights organised by the Government to transport essential workers and supplies between Tarawa and Kiritimati. Medivac flights from Samoa were also allowed to land as well as a few refuelling stops.

388 passengers departed Kiritimati for Tarawa in 2022 while 156\* passengers arrived into Kiritimati. An additional 46 arrivals into Kiritimati were for transit - refuelling and medivacs (figure 8).

\* approximate value

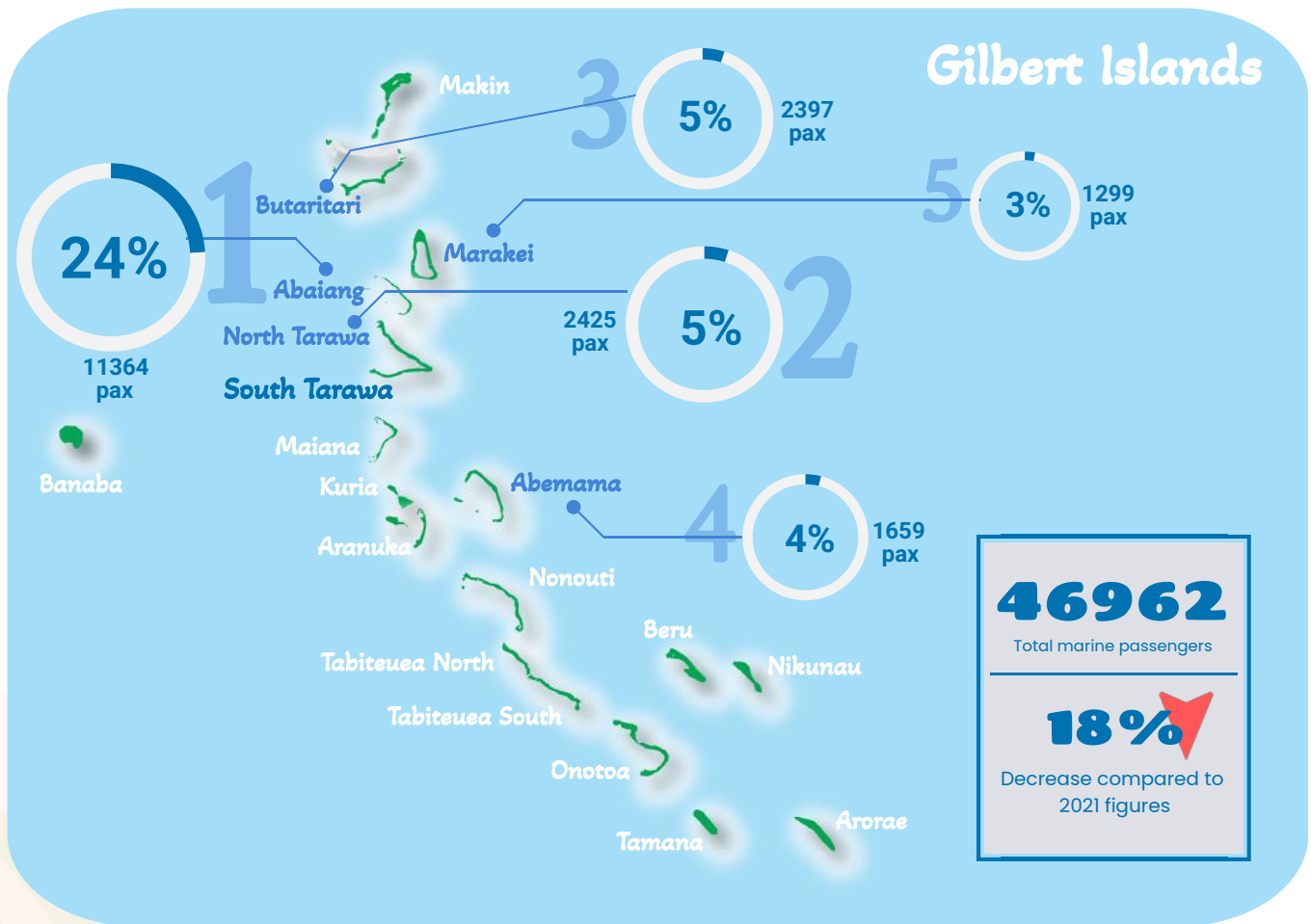


Figure 9: The five most visited outer islands by boat/ship in Kiribati in 2022

Domestic maritime travel in 2022 decreased in comparison to 2021 by 18%. As with air travel, domestic maritime travel in Kiritimati was not recorded in 2022 therefore this report will only show the Gilbert Islands group.

The most visited island by sea was Abaiang with 24% of the domestic traveller market. Next was North Tarawa and Butaritari with 5% each, Abemama (4%) and Marakei (3%).

North Tarawa is the closest to South Tarawa and although it recorded only 2425 maritime passengers, this figure could be greatly understated since only two sea ports out of South Tarawa are monitored while there are many exit points on South Tarawa which private vessels use.

The islands of Tamana and Tabiteuea South recorded zero maritime passenger arrivals and departures.

## Tourism supply



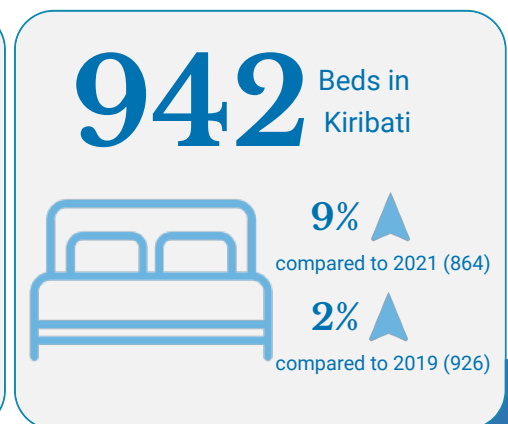
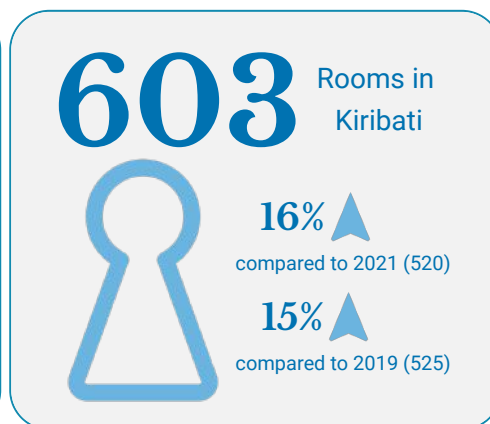
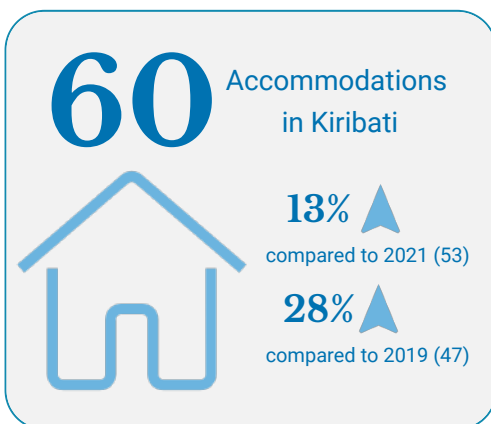
The pandemic provided an opportunity for the private sector to carry out maintenance and refurbishment works on their accommodations. Many new properties popped up in the outer islands as well and this is reflected in the 13% increase in accommodations in 2022 compared to 2021. This is a further 28% increase compared to pre-pandemic numbers.

An increase in properties automatically resulted in an increase in rooms and beds and the 2022 figures surpassed the pre-pandemic figures. Kiribati had 15% more rooms and 2% more beds in 2022 compared to 2019.

Employment overall increased by 4% compared to 2021, however the 2022 figure was a 41% drop compared to 2019. This is because many of the Kiritimati hotels employed male fishing guides who made up the majority of the hotel staff on Kiritimati.

Direct employment by the accommodations in 2022 accounted for **1% of the total workforce** of Kiribati.

It must be noted that these figures are only of the Gilbert islands and not of the rest of Kiribati like the Line and Phoenix islands. The 2019 figures cover all three island groups. This shows that these figures would have been much higher if the other two island groups were open for business. However, in 2022, the Line and Phoenix islands were still closed to international and domestic travel, only allowing special cases like government charters.



# **Kiribati Tourism Review**

---

**2022**

Please contact the Tourism Authority of Kiribati for clarification on any the information contained in this Kiribati Tourism Review 2022 Report.

Kam bati n rabwa.