

Visitor Arrivals and Spending in May 2024: A Snapshot of Hawaii's Tourism Dynamics

HONOLULU— The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) has released preliminary statistics revealing a decline in both total visitor arrivals and spending in May 2024 compared to the same month last year. Despite these declines, the figures still showcase a robust recovery from pre-pandemic levels.

In May 2024, Hawaii welcomed 763,260 visitors, marking a 4.8% decrease from May 2023. Visitor spending also saw a decline, dropping 4.0% to \$1.62 billion. Despite this, the total visitor arrivals in May 2024 represent a significant 90.1% recovery compared to May 2019, and spending was notably higher than in May 2019, which saw \$1.41 billion in spending.

Air and Cruise Arrivals

The vast majority of visitors, 757,841, arrived by air, with the U.S. West and U.S. East being the primary sources. This is a slight dip from the 790,494 air arrivals in May 2023. The cruise ship sector experienced a more dramatic drop, with only 5,420 visitors arriving via out-of-state cruise ships, a 51.1% decrease from May 2023.

Visitor Spending and Demographics

Visitors from the U.S. West and U.S. East continue to be the backbone of Hawaii's tourism industry. In May 2024, the U.S. West contributed 403,981 visitors, spending \$767.9 million, while the U.S. East accounted for 209,711 visitors, with spending totaling \$539.4 million. These figures represent declines from May 2023 but show significant increases compared to May 2019.

Visitors from Japan showed a notable increase, with 46,124 arrivals in May 2024, up 35.1% from May 2023, though still far below the pre-pandemic figures of May 2019. Spending by Japanese visitors also rose by 25.8% compared to May 2023.

Canadian visitors saw a decrease in both arrivals and spending. In May 2024, there were 20,301 visitors from Canada, spending \$44.6 million, both down from the previous year.

Impact on the Economy

DBEDT Director James Kunane Tokioka highlighted the broader economic implications of these trends. The decline in visitor numbers from the U.S. and Canada, combined with the lower-than-expected recovery from Japan due to currency depreciation, has impacted state tax revenues. General excise tax revenue decreased by 1.1%, and transient accommodation tax revenue fell by 12.9% in May 2024 compared to May 2023.

Future Outlook

Looking ahead, there is cautious optimism. Air seats scheduled to Hawaii from June through August 2024 are set to increase by 2.4% compared to the same period last year, suggesting potential growth in visitor arrivals. This planned increase in air capacity comes as a welcome sign, indicating continued recovery and resilience in Hawaii's tourism sector.

While the tourism landscape faces challenges, Hawaii remains a beloved destination with a dynamic visitor industry. The state continues to adapt and anticipate future trends to sustain its economic vitality and offer unforgettable experiences to its visitors.

For more detailed statistical tables and further information, visit the DBEDT website.