



**MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY**  
**News Release**

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*Tourism is Everybody's Business!*

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**NMI JULY 2014 VISITOR ARRIVALS DIP 5%**

**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI)** – July 2014 visitor arrivals to the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) dipped five percent compared to July 2013. According to the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota registered 37,253 visitors in July 2014, compared to 39,287 visitors received in July 2013.

Arrivals from Russia grew by 59 percent to 1,552 visitors in July making Russia the NMI's fastest growing source market during the month. Despite the Ukraine crisis and serious concerns regarding the nation's faltering economy, July is peak summer travel season and with rapidly rising costs for domestic beach holidays within Russia, the NMI remains an extremely attractive family holiday destination for Russians, particularly for those living in the Far East of Russia centered on Vladivostok and Khabarovsk.

Arrivals from China grew 57 percent to 17,575 visitors, making China the largest source market for the NMI in July. Century Tours launched two additional charter flights a week from Shanghai to Saipan starting July 25, which has had a major impact on arrivals from the East China market. In addition, the MVA launched a Key Opinion Leader program on the two major Chinese social media networks -- Sina Weibo and Wechat – starting from June which has generated significant on-line buzz for the NMI in the China market.

Arrivals from Korea dropped 23 percent in July to 10,099 visitors. Given generally weak

outbound travel, Asiana temporarily suspended its Busan flights but has already resumed its Busan-Saipan service since July 23. However, Asiana had an extra flight from July 16-31, which brought in 2,790 additional airseats. Low-cost carrier Jeju Air continues to sell 'Early Bird' tickets through its official website for its new daily non-stop service from Seoul to Saipan launching Oct. 1. To draw more attention to its inaugural flight, Jeju Air has launched a special online promotion in cooperation with the MVA and is launching major campaigns with various partners promoting the new CNMI flights.

Arrivals from Japan fell 42 percent to 6,307 visitors in July, driven partly by the temporary suspension by Delta Air Lines of two night-flights per week from Narita. In addition, there were no Asiana Airlines flights from Tokyo and Osaka during the month of July while by comparison, during the same month in 2013, the airline operated 4,700 seats to the NMI. Boosting air links from Japan to the CNMI remains the MVA's number one overseas marketing priority for the coming months. To this end, the MVA has appointed a new Airlift Development Manager in the Tokyo office to work with all airlines serving the Japan market, and generate new air seats out of the Japan market to the NMI.

### **Source Markets Economic Highlights**

Japan's government upgraded its economic assessment in July for the first time in six months as the impact of the sales tax hike on consumer spending started to ease. The Cabinet Office said that the Japanese economy is on a moderate recovery trend and the decline in spending due to the tax increase is easing. The yen hovered around 102 to the U.S. dollar.

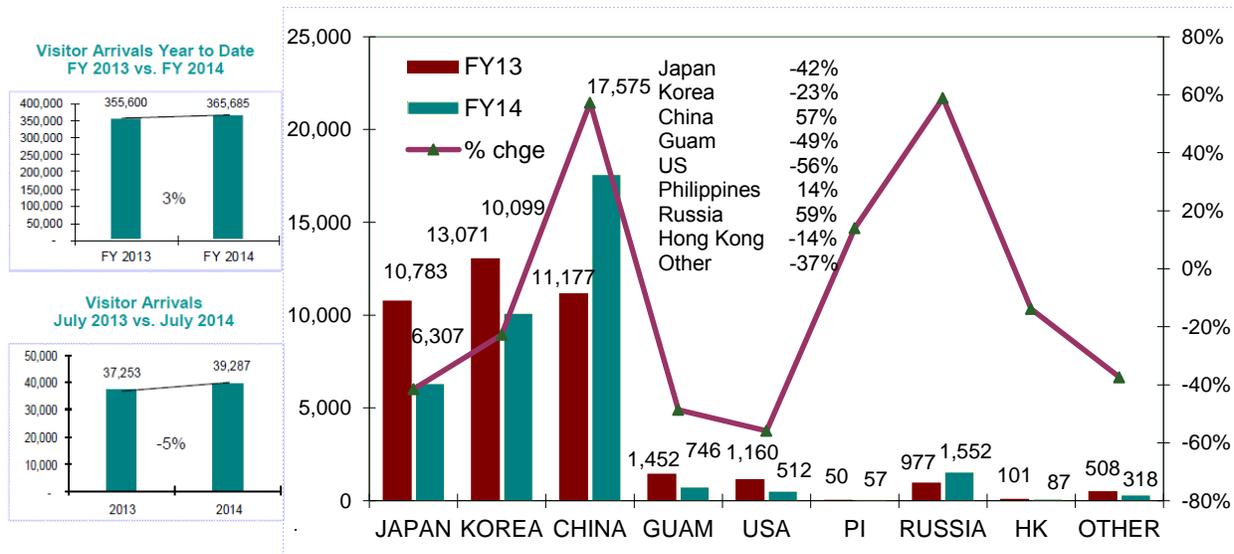
The Korean economic recovery has been slowing despite continuing stability in employment and inflation. GDP growth for 2014 is projected to be 3.8 percent and the forecast for 2015 is 4 percent. The won/dollar exchange rate rose 10.37 over the past month to be closed at 1,023.54 won per dollar. Compulsory tour options will now be eliminated from tour packages, enabling tourists to avoid unwanted stops, such as shopping centers, when booking overseas trips with local travel agencies. A revised ordinance enforced by the Culture Ministry and Korea Tourism Organization stops travel agencies from including such compulsory options, which can cause unwanted expenses, in tour packages.

China's National Bureau of Statistics reported retail sales grew 12.1 percent year-on-year to US\$2.02-trillion in the six months to June, marginally stronger than the 12 percent growth of the

first quarter. The value of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened by 29 basis points to 6.1564 against the U.S. dollar in its central parity in late July, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trading System. Ctrip reported in July that Saipan ranked #7 among the Top 10 most attractive destinations without visa barriers to Chinese visitors during the summer holiday period of 2014.

The Russian economy continues to experience a deceleration as a result of the extended geopolitical tension. On June 30 the exchange rate was 33.63 rubles to the dollar.

### CNMI Source Market Arrivals July 2013 vs. July 2014



The Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are a chain of idyllic islands in the West Pacific, offering a friendly, fun and exciting vacation in paradise. They are an excellent destination for families, adventure and sports-minded travelers, as well as business people looking for a tropical haven. Adventurous travelers from Asia, Australia, Europe and elsewhere looking for new travel discoveries will find them in the Mariana Islands, just three hours travel from most cities in Japan, and four from Asia and Australia. The Northern Marianas are served from Tokyo and Osaka in Japan by Delta and Asiana Airlines. From Korea, Asiana provides direct flights from Seoul and Busan. From China, direct flight service from Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Hangzhou and Wuhan to Saipan is available. United Airlines has daily flight connections from nine cities in Japan to Saipan with one stop. United States mainland connections can be made by Delta Air Lines to Saipan via Tokyo Narita, and United Airlines via Guam. For more information, visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).