

Aberdeen set to smash record-breaking cruise season in 2024

Port of Aberdeen celebrates the end of a record-breaking cruise season and is already on course to surpass this in 2024.

Between May and October this year, Port of Aberdeen welcomed 43 cruise calls with thousands of guests from across the UK and Europe visiting the region. The season was delivered with zero HSE incidents and generated an increase in revenue for the port. To date, 55 cruise calls are scheduled for 2024, with that number expected to increase. The port is also accepting bookings as far as 2026.

Bob Sanguinetti, Chief Executive, Port of Aberdeen, said: "South Harbour has moved Aberdeen into the premier league of UK cruise ports and is transformational for tourism in the North East of Scotland. More than 250 cruise ships sail past Aberdeen every year, and we want to attract as much of that business to the port as we can."

The Renaissance cruise ship had two calls to South Harbour in 2023, and at 220m, is currently the longest vessel to visit the port. The impressive AIDA Sol and AIDA Diva, both measuring more than 250 metres in length, are two of the larger vessels that will berth in Aberdeen South Harbour next year, bringing thousands more guests and crew to the city.

Local businesses in the city and shire have benefitted from the increase in cruise tourism this year, with cruise calls to Scotland generating an average spend of £134 per passenger per call*.

Adrian Watson, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: "There is no doubt our city centre is riding on a welcome wave of success thanks to the record-breaking cruise season at the Port of Aberdeen. Each ship that arrives at the new South Harbour brings a massive influx of visitors into the heart of the Granite City, all of them enjoying - and boosting - the great shops, restaurants, bars and attractions we have. So much so, that many of our levy payers have told us businesses is booming, with some delighted to report their best season in several years, thanks to the arrival of thousands of passengers."

"Cruise ships are transforming the tourism industry in Aberdeen and the north-east, becoming a major driver for footfall and growth in the Granite City. With even more calls already in place for 2024, the cruise ship sector has set course to become an economic powerhouse for Aberdeen and the region."

Mr Sanguinetti continued "The 2023 cruise season was a great success, delivered with an excellent safety record, and positive feedback provided from both guests and cruise lines. We're working with our regional partners and the cruise lines to ensure we can further improve our offering for 2024 and beyond."

VisitAberdeenshire's 'Welcome to Aberdeenshire' volunteering programme has been pivotal in providing cruise guests a unique experience when they arrive in the city. The volunteers play a significant role in educating and assisting guests in discovering what Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire has to offer.

Chris Foy, CEO, VisitAberdeenshire, said "The 'Welcome to Aberdeenshire' volunteers have been a mainstay during the cruise season and have inspired and guided arriving guests. Their dedication and enthusiasm for the region is hugely valued, and we will begin recruiting for new volunteers later in the year. Demand for future visits indicates that South Harbour and the wider region have already impressed cruise operators. We will continue to work closely with Port of Aberdeen, and with shore excursion companies to both attract more vessels and to disperse excursions across the City and Shire."

The Lord Provost of Aberdeen, Dr David Cameron, said: "Since we greeted our first cruise ship to the new South Harbour last May, we have had the enormous pleasure of welcoming thousands of visitors from far and wide to our new gateway to the city and region.

"The arrival of cruise ships and their passengers in Aberdeen has given such a boost both economically and in terms of growing the city's reputation as a welcoming and attractive tourist destination. For me, one of the most pleasing aspects has been the positive feedback from visitors about their time in Aberdeen and I am sure they will have gone home spreading the word to families and friends about what our city and region has to offer."