

Dover celebrates end of successful cruise season, bringing thousands of international guests to Kent on busiest weekends

The Garden of England is home to some of the finest heritage, gardens and landscapes in the world. With the UK cruise industry officially back to pre-pandemic levels and numbers continuing to increase, cruising via Dover has provided a welcome boost to the local economy and community this year.

After admiring the stunning view of the White Cliffs and Dover Castle upon arrival, many guests took a tour locally or ventured further afield on a port of call day. Nearly 60% arrived with a pre-booked shore excursion, exploring Kent's castles, cathedrals, gardens, vineyards, plus hidden gems famous for exceptional culture and produce.

With an equal mix of turnaround and port of call visits, plus some days with three cruise ships docked at once, thousands of people from across the world discovered the local area on the busiest days.

Peter Wright, Head of Cruise at the Port of Dover said: "Cruising in Kent has a significant impact on our local economy and people by helping to sustain the amazing attractions, hotels, and smaller businesses that make the Garden of England one of the most popular travel destinations in the world. Our flagship community event, the Regatta, was sponsored by Fred. Olsen, marking the first time that it has been supported by a cruise line. There is an increasing desire from our global partners to work with us to support our community."

Neil McCollum, Head of Historic Properties English Heritage Kent added: "Dover Castle and the Port of Dover are intertwined in their history. Before it was even a castle, this historic site was a Roman lighthouse - guiding ships into the harbour.

The castle and the port have of course evolved over time, and now as a site enriched in so much history, we very much value our relationship with the Port of Dover and the tour operators that bring international cruise passengers to experience the incredible story of England's mightiest castle."

The cruise team also runs a shuttle bus with YMS Travel to Dover Castle and the town for guests and crew, in addition to partnering with Dover District Council on a welcome desk with expert advice and tips on local tourist hotspots.

North Americans made up the majority of Dover's cruise guests this season at nearly 40%, with British and German guests also visiting in significant numbers. For turnaround calls, more people are booking overnight stays prior to or following their cruise.