

Plymouth cruise bookings up 40% on 2023

In Plymouth, cruise bookings are up 40% on 2023 with the port due to handle 10,000 passengers this season.

Calls start in April and continue until October, with more in the pipeline for 2024, and inquiries coming in for next year and 2026. The bookings are from operators based in the USA, Germany, France and the UK.

'Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City, has been working hard to cement our reputation as a must-see port of call and a great many people are busy behind the scenes to make these cruise visits a huge success,' said Amanda Lumley, Destination Plymouth's chief executive.

She explained, 'We recently hosted a two-day familiarisation visit by some cruise industry representatives, including cruise line executives, cruise media and a cruise line ship management representative, to showcase some of the top attractions we have to offer...The Cruise Plymouth Partnership pulled out all of the stops to ensure our cruise industry guests' visit was memorable.'

During the fam trip, attended by Seatrade Cruise, there were opportunities to discover the National Marine Aquarium, Mount Edgcumbe House and Gardens, the Mayflower Museum, Plymouth's award-winning Museum, gallery and archive The Box, the Elizabethan House living museum and Plymouth Gin Distillery. 'We also took them on a walk through the historic Barbican with a stop at Mayflower Steps, an exclusive visit to the Royal Citadel, an overview of Plymouth Hoe and an experience out on Plymouth Sound to enjoy the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park - the first in the UK - onboard the Pilot boat,' Lumley added.

14 cruise ships are expected to arrive in Plymouth this year - Ambassador Cruise Line's Ambition and Ambience will be among the several ships calling at Plymouth for the first time in 2024.

The destination will also receive: Noble Caledonia's Exploris One, Oceania's Sirena, Phoenix Reisen's Artania, Amadea, and Amara, Ponant's Le Dumont D'urville, Seabourn's Seabourn Venture and Seabourn Sojourn, Silversea's Silver Dawn and Silver Spirit and Windstar Cruises' Star Legend.

According to the chief executive, Plymouth has 'a reputation within the industry as one of the most welcoming ports for cruise ship visits.' Passengers are often met by Cruise Plymouth Ambassador volunteers, the town crier and a performance by Plymouth Maritime Corps of Drums. The cruise industry in Plymouth also has the support of Plymouth Waterfront Partnership - a not-for-profit organisation that aims to improve the entire visitor experience along the waterfront.

As well as providing employment opportunities in Plymouth, the industry offers a significant boost to the local economy; passengers and crew explore the city's attractions while the port benefits from berthing, pilotage and harbour fees.

'Plymouth's cruise business is going from strength to strength and enhancing the city's reputation on an international level,' stated Glen Gardner, Destination Plymouth's new BDM - cruise. 'The familiarisation visits have proved very popular, and were incredibly well-received, with more already planned.'

During the fam trip, there was the opportunity to visit facilities at Millbay Dock that are being upgraded via a multi-million pound investment programme by Associated British Ports to improve conditions for passengers and for cruise ships berthing. The works are due to be completed before the 2025 season gets underway.

In 2021, the Cruise Plymouth Partnership was created to increase the number of cruise calls to the city. It includes the Cattewater Harbour Commissioners, ABP Mill Bay, Destination Plymouth, Business Improvement District (BID,) Plymouth Waterfront Partnership, Plymouth City Centre Company, Plymouth City Council, among others.