

The Port of Tyne in North East England is preparing for a busy cruise season as the number of cruise ships scheduled to arrive and depart from its berths is anticipated to reach record numbers during 2016.

42 cruise ships will be calling at the Port of Tyne's International Passenger Terminal this year, in an almost even balance of turnaround cruises, starting or finishing from the Port and transit cruises, visiting the region's iconic attractions for shore excursions.

2016 is set to be the biggest year ever for cruise with six ships making inaugural calls, and major new cruise lines including Disney and German operated AIDA calling for the first time.

In another first for the Port, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines flag ship Balmoral will be calling Port of Tyne its home with 12 cruise calls. Cruise & Maritime Voyages will be offering 10 sailings from the Port. Returning to the Port is Saga Cruises with the first call of Saga Pearl II and another British operator making a welcome return is Swan Hellenic with Minerva.

New for 2016 is German operated FTI Cruises making an inaugural call with their ship Berlin and the exciting first calls of Disney Magic, AIDA Vita and Holland America Line's Zuiderdam and the yet to be launched Koningsdam. Other cruise lines heading to the Tyne include Oceania Cruises, Phoenix Reisen, Regent Seven Seas and Crystal Cruises.

Andrew Moffat, Port of Tyne Chief Executive Officer, said: "The Port of Tyne is the closest UK Port to the Baltics, the Fjords and Russia and offers easy access to the Canary Islands, The Azores, Portugal, Morocco and Spain. The Tyne is not only an excellent choice to start or finish a cruise but it can rival many European ports in terms of easy access to world-class tourist attractions all within one hour from Port. We hope many people will take advantage of this and spend a day or two in the region before they set off on their cruise."

Recently voted as the Best UK City by The Guardian, Newcastle upon Tyne, and its neighbour Gateshead provide one of the most culturally rich and cosmopolitan cities in the United Kingdom.

Port of Tyne provides superb facilities for vessels over 300m in length and up to 10m in draft at Northumbrian Quay, the Port's purpose-built cruise berth, capable of accommodating 93% of the global fleet of cruise ships and ideally placed to handle all cruise calls. Vessels in excess of 215m can also be accommodated at Whitehill Point the Port's second cruise ship berth.

Nolan Gray, Port of Tyne Business Development Director, said: "With 17 years of cruise expertise, diverse destinations to choose from and an award-winning passenger terminal it's easy to see why cruise operators like Disney Cruise Line are including the Port of Tyne in their first ever UK itineraries and why bookings direct from the Port are on the up. The International Passenger Terminal is well equipped to handle a wide variety of cruise calls and the recent decision by Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines to move their flagship Balmoral to the Port of Tyne as its home port for 2016/17 provides further flexibility for travellers wanting to start their cruise holiday from their local port."

With something for everyone to cater for families, group travellers, culture vultures, and those with a quest for adventure or looking to step one foot in the past - the wide variety of tourist attractions and superb connectivity help make the North East and the Port of Tyne a fantastic destination for any cruise line.

Notes to Editors:

- The Port of Tyne is one of the UK's major deep-sea ports - a vital trading gateway to

world-wide markets

- Operating five business areas including bulk and conventional cargo, car terminals, cruise and ferry, logistics and a commercial property portfolio

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