

Aberdeen set for record cruise season as calls rise 12% in 2026

North East businesses and communities are set to benefit from Aberdeen's growing reputation as a cruise destination, with 73* ships and up to 57,000 guests in 2026.

While estimates vary about how much cruise guests spend per visit, the scale of activity this year is set to deliver a multi-million pound economic boost for the region.

Bob Sanguinetti DL, Chief Executive, Port of Aberdeen, said: "The North East of Scotland is now firmly on the map for cruise tourism and that benefit is felt across the city and Aberdeenshire. This year could see up to 57,000 guests spending their money in local business and communities, helping to diversify the regional economy and our activity within the port."

The season begins with Viking Cruise's Viking Neptune making its maiden call to Port of Aberdeen on 31 March, with cruise calls continuing through to 25 September with Viking Vela. Viking Cruises will account for more than 20 calls across the season, including the newly built Viking Mira during its debut season.

A highlight of the season is expected mid-summer. Norwegian Cruise Line - a new line for Aberdeen - brings the 294m Norwegian Star to the city on 15 July. The maritime giant is set to become the longest ship to berth in Aberdeen and can carry up to 2,348 guests on board.

Port of Aberdeen's increased cruise capacity and capability is highlighted with more than half of the calls for vessels measuring more than 200m-long, enabling an ever-growing number of cruise guests the opportunity to sample the sights and sounds of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

With a healthy schedule for 2027 and 2028 already taking shape, the CruiseAberdeenshire partnership will be represented at Seatrade Cruise Global in Miami and Cruise Europe in Reykjavik as part of ongoing efforts to sustain growth in this important tourism sector.

Mr Sanguinetti continued: "Our bold ambition is to have 100 calls a year by 2028 and the CruiseAberdeenshire partnership is relentless in attracting new cruise operators, including Norwegian Cruise Line this year."

Chris Foy, CEO, VisitAberdeenshire said: "The year-on-year increase is a vote of confidence that the North-east can deliver the wide range of high-quality visitor experiences expected by cruise passengers from across the world. Our distinctive, blue-uniformed 'Welcome to Aberdeenshire' volunteers look forward to greeting passengers when they come ashore and to helping them make the most of their days in the region"

The wider value of cruise tourism to Scotland was highlighted in new research by Oxford Economics, commissioned by Cruise Lines International Association, which found it generated £343 million for the Scottish economy in 2023.

Adrian Watson, chief executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: "Each season the cruise ship sector hits a new high tide mark for Aberdeen, and I am delighted that 2026 will be another record-breaking year. Every cruise ship that comes into Aberdeen brings with it a wealth of opportunity to showcase the Granite City and boost local traders and businesses."

Philip Carry, Partner, Jamieson & Carry said: "The growth of cruise tourism in Aberdeen is incredibly exciting. As an independent Aberdeen business, we recognise the vital role tourism plays in bringing people into the city centre and wider region, supporting the local economy."

Megan Waugh, Director of Supporter Sales & Services, Aberdeen Football Club, said: "We're proud to be part of the welcome for cruise visitors to the Port of Aberdeen. Our stadium tours give people the chance to experience the history, passion, and tradition of Aberdeen FC first-hand, and we look forward to sharing a small part of the club's story with visitors from around the world."

*Subject to change. Cruise calls are accurate at time of publication.